

# Texas Jewish Historical Society

Preserving Jewish Heritage in Texas  
Est. 1980



July, 2012 News Magazine

## Brave Soldier

by Marc E. Grossberg

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My mother worshipped her mother, Yetta Wachstein Hochman, even more than she worshipped me. While that left me as a runner-up, I still liked my grandmother's visits in the 1940s, when I was a boy in Houston. Even my little dog did. When my grandmother walked haltingly up the stairs, grasping the railing with both hands, the dog kept two steps behind her, as if poised to catch her if she fell.

Every year as July 4 approaches, I have an image in my mind of Granny defiantly holding the American flag high in a small Texas town one afternoon. I wasn't there to see it, but she told me what happened. She was what John Lennon would call a "working-class hero" that day – and always – who knew her own mind and looked after her family in a country and world far different from the one into which she was born. But that's getting ahead of myself.

I had always associated everything about my grandmother with her European origins. That was, of course, wrong. She was not one to dwell on how wonderful things were in the "old country". In fact, when someone remarked that they were taking a trip to Europe, she would say out of the side of her mouth, 'Big deal. I was born there and I couldn't wait to leave.' And although she and my grandfather belonged to the orthodox shul in Galveston, perhaps out of respect for her own father, she saw her Orthodoxy as baggage from Europe and sent her own children to a Reform congregation, which, in her view, offered an environment more in line with the America they had moved to.

When I knew her, my grandmother was in her 70s and looked very old. By then she was only 4 feet 8 inches tall, her body shriveled, her movements labored. At home, she wore a housecoat that hung like a muumuu. Her yellowish gray hair fell below her shoulders and was rarely combed; she put it in a bun when she went out. On those occasions,



Marc Grossberg's grandparents in their wedding photo. (Photo courtesy of the author.)

she wore black leather shoes with thick, wide heels that added perhaps an inch to her height and hose held up to just below her knees by a garter. The only dress I remember was black and fell just below the top of her hose. Although she bathed every day, she had a smell I thought particular to old people because my cousin's other grandmother had it too. The skin on her face was much less wrinkled than the skin on her body. Her deep blue eyes were youthful – they sparkled when she was happy or joking. When she was angry, she suddenly seemed much taller than she was, and her eyes pierced.

It was hard to believe she was the same person who'd been the bride dressed in the high style of the 1890s in the photo displayed on the mantel in my home. There, she wore a high-collared, cinch-waisted white dress with puffy sleeves. Her lovely face exuded the

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# Message from the President

by Marc Wormser

As I roll in and adjust to the duties of the office, I have become aware of the little things that transpire in an organization. Those issues don't seem to be written in the job description—they just go with the territory.

Our June workshop meeting of the board of directors

and officers was very helpful to all of us. We have started addressing the many issues that are on our plate—the bylaw changes, the directory that will come out later this year, membership, website development, etc. The specific information will be reported on at the



October meeting in Big Spring, which will be hosted by Susan Lewis.

In the meantime, I will give a little summation of what has been happening since the Annual Gathering in Fort Worth.

In May, quite unexpectedly, TJHS was able to set up one of our traveling displays at the Hadassah Regional Conference that was held


here in Houston. Many thanks go out to Marvin Rich, Ruth Nathan, Selma Mantel, and Sonny Gerber, who helped me and who greatly added to our presence at the conference. Because I am from a different part of the state, I was amazed and impressed with the people

from the area. (I found out that you cannot talk about anyone because Marvin Rich is probably related to him or her.) The word got out about TJHS, and many attendees thanked us for setting up and highlighting our organization. Hopefully, we will get some new members from this.

Another work in progress is updating our website. Greg Meyer has been helping to update and fix many of the issues on the site. Thanks go to Greg for all of his efforts in this ongoing project. Please visit our site ([www.txjhs.org](http://www.txjhs.org)) and give me comments and suggestions, so that we may continue to improve it.

A big heartfelt thanks goes to Charles (and, I am sure, Jan) Hart for handling the collection and assembly of Volume 2 of the Cemetery book, which is now on sale. Ordering information is available on the website. The original volume, which was put together by Don Teeter, is still available in a spiral-bound edition.

We have gained a few new members in the past couple of months. Their names are elsewhere in this issue.

Again, thanks to everyone for your support and encouragement. 

Marc Wormser  
President

## The Texas Jewish Historical Society July 2012 Quarterly News Magazine

The Texas Jewish Historical Society News Magazine is published four times annually. Stories about Texas Jewish history, oral histories, and requests for assistance with research are welcome, as are photographs and historical documents. Please provide color photocopies or scans at 300 dpi or greater, in .gif, .tif, or .jpg format, and send electronically to Assistant Editor Davie Lou Solka at [editor@txjhs.org](mailto:editor@txjhs.org) or by mail to 3808 Woodbrook Circle, Austin, TX 78759, 512-527-3799. Be sure to include your name and contact information.

**Publisher-Editor** Alexa Kirk  
**Assistant Editor** Davie Lou Solka  
**Photographers** Marvin Rich and Davie Lou Solka

Note: The Texas Jewish Historical Society is unable to guarantee the safe receipt and/or return of documents or photographs. It is strongly recommended that you provide color photocopies of both color and black & white documents. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

*Visit us on the web at [www.txjhs.org](http://www.txjhs.org).*



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confidence of the young and beautiful.

My grandfather was a hardworking man beset by bad luck. He was killed in a hit-and-run accident on New Year's Eve and died the next day, January 1, 1929. His life-insurance policy was paid up only to December 31, 1928, and even though the insurance company office received, on the same day, the payment he had mailed in just before he died, they refused to honor it.

My grandparents had met in Savannah. My grandmother had been married before, an arranged marriage. Her husband left her and their young child, my aunt. For two weeks she was too ashamed to leave the house. Finally her family prevailed on her to rejoin the living. She met my grandfather. They married; he adored her. They moved to New York, then Philadelphia. By this time my mother and three of her sisters had been born. In Philadelphia, two more came along.

But my grandfather had a dishonest business partner and lost nearly everything. Disheartened, he went to a steamship company and said, "I have this much money and this many people in my family. How the hell far can I get away from Philadelphia?" The answer: Galveston, Texas. My grandfather opened a jewelry store in Goose Creek, a small town a ferry ride away.

Years later, when I was around 8 years old, my grandmother and I took a Greyhound bus from Houston to

what had been Goose Creek before it was merged into the city of Baytown. Granny still had some property, there, virtually worthless. I went with her as she made her annual inspection. She bought me a bag of popcorn for the trip from Houston and another for the trip back.

We walked from the bus station. She held her head high, though she seemed to use her left foot to anchor every step she took with her right. The property was a two-story building with a weathered wooden exterior. It had space for three commercial establishments. Two were vacant, and the third was a domino parlor. I remember men sitting at tables on the porch playing dominoes, even though it was mid-afternoon on a work day. They were dressed almost identically – white T-shirts under blue denim overalls, cowboy hats and well-worn work boots. They were drinking beer and playing dominoes. When one of them made a devastating play, he slammed the domino on the table and yelled. Until then I hadn't known that grown-ups played dominoes or that it could be a violent game.

It was because of people like those men that my grandmother's family moved from Goose Creek to Galveston, which was a gentler place and had Jewish houses of worship. Goose Creek had none. In the late 1910s and early 1920s, my grandmother told me, Goose Creek was an oil boom town. The Ku Klux Klan was present and

largely uncontrolled. The catalyst for their move was the tarring and feathering of a black man just down the street from where they lived in Goose Creek.

Once in Galveston, my grandfather began commuting by ferry to Goose Creek, living over the store during the week and returning home on weekends. He did that until he died.

On the bus ride back, I asked my grandmother what it was like living in Goose Creek.

She smiled. "Did I ever tell you about the time I was arrested?"

"No." My eyes widened.

"When we lived in Goose Creek, it was full of roughnecks."

"What's a roughneck?" It was a word that conjured up confusing images, and while I had an approximate idea of what it meant, I wanted very much to understand this important family story.

"A roughneck was a rowdy, uneducated man who worked in the oil fields and drank up his paycheck," she said.

Rowdy, uneducated people who drank, I thought. Bad guys.

"All the roughnecks were members of the Klan," she said. "Your grandfather was a very respected man in Goose Creek. When he died, the whole town closed. He was a poor man, but very respected." She meant not only that my grandfather was poor

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## We need Your Stories!

We are currently looking for stories with ties to Texas Jewish history! Any kind of story about your family history or your Temple's history can fill the pages of our quarterly news magazine. Write your story, and if you have questions or need help, call our

assistant editor.

Everyone has a story to tell, long or short. Your history is of interest to members across Texas and the nation! And you will be able to see your family's history in print. It is a wonderful keepsake and a valuable piece of genealogy for fu-

ture generations.

So what are you waiting for? Send your article to our assistant editor, Davie Lou Solka, at [editor@txjhs.org](mailto:editor@txjhs.org), mail it to 3808 Woodbrook Circle, Austin, TX 78759, or call her at 512-527-3799.

# TJHS Workshop Board Meeting

## Houston, Texas, June 22-23, 2012



*Clockwise from top left photo: Past TJHS President Sally Drayer presented the board orientation. Board members Kay Goldman, Claire Brooks, and Dick Brooks. TJHS Treasurer Ruth Nathan gave the financial report. Joan Katz and Bob Gindler. TJHS Corresponding Secretary Samylu Rubin.*



### Membership Directory

The membership database is current as of June 25, 2012. If you need to make any changes to your information, please notify Marc Wormser at 832-288-3494 or [marc.wormser@att.net](mailto:marc.wormser@att.net). The new membership directory will be completed and mailed by the end of this year. Please do not rely on the existing directory to see if changes have already been submitted. One way to check your address information is to look at the printed address on your news magazine.



but respected, but also that the whole of Goose Creek was greater than the sum of its roughnecks. The respectable people of the town had the collective decency to recognize with dignity the passing of a hardworking, contributing member of the community.

"Anyway," she continued, "when the family lived there, the Klan was very powerful. They didn't like Jews. One day, when your grandfather was away on a buying trip, a group of them started milling around the house and the crowd got bigger and louder. They were drunk. Your mother and her sisters and your uncle, the youngest, were in the house. I didn't know what would happen if it just went on.

"I'll tell you what I did. With my left hand, I grabbed the American flag that we kept in the house and grabbed a heavy, cast-iron skillet in my right. Then, I stepped outside. One of the roughnecks was standing on the steps not a foot away. His name was Barbour. He was over 6 feet tall and even standing on one of the lower steps, he was taller than I was. I took that skillet and I hit him on the head as hard as I could and I knocked him out. I held the flag up as high as I could and I said, 'I am an American and you are Americans. I have just as many rights as you have. You have the right to say who can be on your property, and I have just as many rights as you have. You have the right to say who can be on your property, and I have right to say who can be on my property. Now

get the hell off my property or I'll go inside and get the shotgun.'"

I was agog. "Granny, did you have a shotgun?"

"Papa had one. He fired it once a year."

"Did you know how to use it?"

"No." Her blue eyes twinkled as she smiled the smile of a triumphantly mischievous young girl. Even to that day, she was enormously proud of her bravado.

"Did they leave?"

"Yes, very quickly and very quietly."

I wondered what would have happened if they'd called her bluff, but I didn't mention it.

"Then Barbour filed criminal charges against me. The trial was in Houston. At the end the judge said 'Mrs. Hochman, I am sorry that in these proceedings I only have the power to find you not guilty. I wish I had the authority to give you a medal. You not only defended yourself and your family, as you had every right to do, but you taught us all an important lesson.'"

But the story doesn't end here. I remember that Granny frequently referred to herself as a "brave soldier," but it wasn't my impression then or now, some 60 years later, that she called herself that because of her moment against the Klan.

After my grandfather died in 1928, the jewelry store was liquidated, leaving only a few souvenirs for each child to keep. After the traditional period of

mourning had passed, no further sadness was allowed in the house. My grandmother went about the business of life for her children and herself. She took in washing and she kept a milk cow in the back yard. One of my mother's chores was to walk the milk in pails to sell to the dairy, which she did, less her reward, the cost of a pickle, which she ate on the way back.

The people I respect the most are the ones who plow ahead in the face of hardship and accept the responsibilities they have chosen or that have been thrust upon them, rather than the ones who have distinct moments of glory. Society depends upon people like that.

Not one of my grandmother's children felt herself or himself to have been deprived or short-changed of anything but the loving presence of their father. The only son, the youngest, got a college education and a law degree. All the children grew up to be hardworking, honest, responsible and socially conscious members of their communities, helping to provide the children of the next generation with the opportunity to reach their aspirations.

I am so proud of that moment in Goose Creek when my grandmother, flag in hand, cold-cocked the roughneck bigot. But I'm even prouder of the years she spent keeping a family together, being a brave soldier.

*This article is reprinted from Tablet Magazine, at [tabletmag.com](http://tabletmag.com), the online magazine of Jewish news, ideas, and culture.* 

## Does TJHS Have Your Current Email Address?

Is your email address current? Has it changed since the 2010-2011 directory was printed? Have you changed email providers? If so, please send Marc Wormser an email at [marc.wormser@att.net](mailto:marc.wormser@att.net) so that he can update your information in the database. To reduce postage costs and printing delays, we are going to



be electronically sending as much mail as possible, so don't be left out or behind—send your current information today!

Please put "email change" in the subject line and with your name in the text of your message, and send it today! Thank you.

# — My First Yarmulke was Made of Steel —

by Roy A. Elsner, USMCR

You might wonder why I have submitted this article to a Jewish organization's newsletter, particularly a historical one. Let me explain. After World War II, Rabbi Roland Gittelsohn became known as one of the most learned rabbis and authors. Back in the 1960s, I used one of his text-books titled *A Little Lower Than the Angels*, to teach a class in our Temple's Sunday School. That's the historical part.

As terrible as war can be, there are situations that bring forth the natural humor in all of us. This applies to the title of my little tale.

During World War II, I was a rifle-totin' infantry man and a member of the 27th Marine Regiment, 5th Marine Division. Our unit was one of several that initiated the invasion of the Island of Iwo Jima on February 19, 1945. The Japanese enemy's defense of the island was fierce, and the loss of life on both sides was horrible. This battle cost America almost 6,900 of its young men and saw 21,000 wounded. Our job was to find and destroy the enemy.

After a few days, our platoon of about forty men had been ordered to halt where we were, and we were to continue our mission in the morning. We set up a "perimeter" to protect ourselves from enemy attack during the night. My buddy Jay Young and I were preparing to eat one of our meager dry meals—K rations. We were hunkered down in what was called a "fox hole," a small hole or depression that we dug out of the hard ground, to

give us protection from being shot by the Japanese or struck by bomb bursts.

A messenger came crawling up to our place of seclusion with the information that Jewish Sabbath services were taking place in an area about seventy-five yards away, for anyone who wished to participate. Jay wasn't Jewish and stayed behind, but I put on my metal helmet, gathered up my rifle and a bandolier of ammunition, and began to slowly and carefully crawl to the area that the runner had indicated.

Let me pause here to explain "the helmet." Our headgear in World War II consisted of a hard fiber liner that could be worn by itself when protection was not required. In training and combat situations, a steel bucket-like helmet was worn over the liner. One could write an entire book on the green metal hat. It was the most utilitarian piece of equipment ever issued to a member of the armed forces. We used it as a wash basin, a food container, and a bathroom.

Since there had been enemy snipers shooting at us from nearby secluded hiding places, I was careful to keep my head and body down and to be as small a target as possible. I soon came to a large crater that had been hollowed out by one of the thousands of bombs fired from the 450 American ships in the harbor. I rolled my body down in the shell hole and stood up.

Our pastor, "Holy Joe" in marine parlance, was a young rabbi, Navy Lieutenant Commander Roland Gittelsohn. He had joined the 5th Marine division as its Jewish chaplain in early 1944 and served us well, enticing us into participating in Jewish observances. In Hawaii, where we received intense training before sailing to invade

Iwo Jima, he commandeered the mess hall. During Chanukah, my buddies and I helped him provide hamantashen for the almost fifteen hundred Jewish Marines (I know—hamantashen are really for Purim). The Rabbi was well liked and respected by all Marines in our division because of his easy manner and straightforward way of speaking. When we had a problem, Chaplain Gittelsohn was easy to talk to. But, I digress.

When I arrived in the shell hole, he had already donned his tallit and was preparing to begin the Sabbath service. I joined the group of about fifteen Marines and dutifully removed my metal helmet. I was raised in a VERY liberal Reform congregation in Chicago, and we never prayed "covered"—wearing a yarmulke or skullcap. In addition, our Sabbath services were on Sunday morning—not Friday or Saturday.

The Rabbi looked at me for a moment and ordered me to put on my helmet. I responded that I had grown up not wearing a head covering when praying and that I wasn't about to start now. A small grin crept over his face, and he said, "Elsner, I am a Reform Rabbi and I am also unaccustomed to a head cover during a religious service, but people out here are shooting at us. Put on your helmet." Obediently, I donned my helmet, and the service continued.

Chaplain Gittelsohn was made famous by the sermon that he preached while conducting the Jewish service in the Iwo Jima cemetery at the conclusion of the vicious battle—a sermon clouded in controversy because of the prejudice shown by some of the Christian chaplains. That sermon, however, continues to be repeated and reprinted by Marines to this day.

Fourteen days later, I was wound-

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# Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities

*The Texas Jewish Historical Society awarded a grant to the Institute of Southern Jewish Life to re-search and publish the histories of Jews in Texas towns. These histories are available on the Institute's website and are called "Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities." We will print one of these histories in each issue of our News Magazine. Thanks to Dr. Stuart Rockoff, director of the History Department, for permission to reprint these articles. To see other towns, go to the Institute of Southern Jewish Life website and click on "Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities."*

## Palestine, Texas

In the mid-19th century, Palestine was a small town of about 200 residents, with only a few businesses. Before 1886, some Jews, almost all of whom were immigrants to the United States, had arrived in Palestine. Among the first Jews to settle permanently in Palestine was Philip Unger, a Hungarian immigrant who, according to legend, arrived in town with his belongings tied in a red bandana. He became a peddler in the 1850s, opened a general store by 1866, and later became a farmer and a gardener. Unger was known for his charity and helped new residents of Palestine establish themselves in the city. Among those who received his assistance was Michael Ash, a German immigrant, who, in the mid-1850s, arrived in Palestine and found work as a clerk. Ash later became a successful banker and dry-goods merchant and was instrumental in helping to organize Palestine's Jewish community.

Another Prussian immigrant, Edward Teah, who later went into business with Ash, arrived in Palestine in 1858. Michael Ash's brother, Henry, first arrived in Palestine in 1850 but later moved away, returning in 1868. He became a prosperous dry-goods merchant and by the turn of the century, he was a banker, serving on the board of the First National Bank of Palestine.

By 1880, Jewish immigrants were playing a prominent role in Palestine's commercial economy. Several owned

dry-goods stores, including I. Epstein, Charles Jacobs, Adolph Kohn, and Abraham Teah. Other Jews found work as clerks, often in stores owned by other Jews. Michael Ash's brother, Gabriel, worked as a cashier in his store, while Lewis Knopf clerked in Charles Jacobs's store. Many of these clerks later became successful businessmen. Sam Lucas started out working as a clerk in the store of Charles Jacobs, his uncle, but he later became a prominent merchant and cotton buyer. Other Jewish businessmen in town included Lucas Nathan and Sol Maier, who arrived in Palestine in 1882. He got his start as a saloon keeper but later became president of both the Palestine Salt and Coal Company and the Mechanic's Building and Loan Company.

Newspaper editor Charles Wessolowsky visited Palestine in 1879 and noted the enthusiasm with which the Jewish residents "engaged in business." He also noted that the Jews of Palestine, satisfied and happy in their current environment, omitted the traditional recitation of the line "next year in Jerusalem" from the Passover Haggadah. But he also noted that there were no Jewish organizations in the city. Perhaps because of his expression of concern, that fact soon changed.

In the early 1880s, the Jews of Palestine finally began formally organizing themselves. An 1882 newspaper article noted that High Holy Day

services were held in the Masonic Temple, with a sermon delivered by Manuel Winner, a German immigrant who was a jeweler and watchmaker by trade. For many years, the newspapers referred to Winner as "rabbi" or "reverend." He served the Jews of Palestine as lay leader and performed weddings, as well as many High Holy Day services, including those that were held at Library Hall in 1885.

Before 1883, local Jews founded the Palestine Hebrew Association, and in April of that year, Michael Ash purchased an acre of land and deeded it and part of another nearby tract to the Association. This land became the Jewish cemetery, and upon Ash's death in May 1883, his will bequeathed funds for the continued upkeep of the burial ground in which he was laid to rest. Jewish communities in local towns, as well as individuals from Bryan, Crockett, Henderson, Oakwoods, and Tyler, utilized the cemetery. Henderson native Charles I. Brachfield, a former state senator and district and county judge, is also buried in the Palestine Jewish Cemetery.

In addition to creating Jewish institutions, the Jews of Palestine also took part in the development of the city itself. They were so important in the city's business sector that on the first day of Rosh Hashanah in 1904, a newspaper stated that "things look a little sleepy with the Jewish stores closed." On Yom Kippur in 1909, a

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similar notice appeared, claiming that the town looked “dull.” The Jews’ devotion to their faith, even at the expense of the town’s economy, drew praise from the local newspaper.

As Palestine Jews established successful businesses, they began to discuss constructing a synagogue. The fundraising effort began in the 1880s with money that Michael Ash left in his will for a synagogue. Other fundraising efforts were held, and in 1900, a formal fundraising campaign began. It was successful, and by April of that year, land was purchased on the corner of Magnolia and Dallas Streets. The building was completed in 1901 and was dedicated to the memory of Michael Ash. Twenty-five Palestine Jews had formally established Congregation Beth Israel.

In its first ten years, Beth Israel was served by various rabbis. Reform Rabbi L. Weiss led the congregation from 1901 until 1904. Following his tenure, various rabbis served the congregation, including Rabbi Alfred Godshaw of the UAHC Congregations of Cincinnati and Rabbi Henry Cohen of Galveston. Lack of a full-time rabbi did not prevent organizational developments within Beth Israel. By 1905, the congregation, which met on holidays and held services in English, had affiliated with the UAHC. By 1907, a Ladies Auxiliary was formed and a B’nai B’rith chapter had been founded. A Sunday School was held with four classes and twenty students.

By 1910, Beth Israel had dropped its membership in the UAHC, more for economic reasons rather than theological. It was at this time that Rabbi Solomon Schaumburg, a German native, was hired. He served the congregation until 1930, when his eyesight began to fail and he was forced to retire. He was followed by Rabbi Gottlieb. When there was no rabbi, lay leaders, including Leo Davidson and Hyman Ettlinger, a mathematics professor at

the University of Texas, served the congregation.

During the early twentieth century, Palestine Jews maintained their commercial and civic influence within the city. Harry Myers served as president of the Palestine Bar Association and was named “Mr. Palestine.” In the early 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan was active in Palestine, with over one thousand members. Beth Israel’s membership was at forty members, and there are no reports of local Jews facing any prejudice or discrimination. They were among Palestine’s most notable citizens.


During the early twentieth century, Palestine’s population swelled, while the Jewish population did not grow. In 1901, there were an estimated ninety-seven Jews in Palestine, and in 1919, the number was ninety-five.

Only a few Jewish families arrived in Palestine in the early twentieth century. Sam Brooks, a Romanian immigrant, opened “The Fashion,” and Joe Chotiner joined his brother and opened Chotiner Brothers Dry Goods Store. Other new Jewish residents included Ralph Hart, a cotton buyer who brought professional baseball to Palestine in the 1920s, and Morris Pearlman, who built a salvage-hardware business. Others included merchants William Kelfer, Abraham Skuy, and Abe Roth. By 1927, there were 127 Jews living in Palestine.

Over the next decade, the Jewish community went into sharp decline. With the lack of new arrivals and many of the community’s children settling elsewhere, the Jewish population of Palestine fell to fifty-six people in 1937.

By 1940, Beth Israel closed its doors and the congregation disbanded. The building was sold in 1950 and demolished in 1954. Some of the Jews who remained in Palestine joined congregations in the area. Morris Pearlman attended synagogue at Congregation Beth Shalom in Kilgore, while Henry Leon joined Temple Beth El in Tyler.

The last recorded Jews in Palestine, shoestore owner Henry Leon and wife Diane, arrived in 1938, two years before Beth Israel’s closing. Their son, Larry, the last Jewish graduate of Palestine High School, moved to Dallas as an adult. Henry and Diane were involved in the preservation and upkeep of Beth Israel Cemetery, and Henry was buried there in 1986. Diane, the last Jewish resident of Palestine, passed away in 2002 and was the last burial in the Jewish cemetery.


Today, Temple Beth Israel Cemetery in Palestine remains the final testament to what was once a thriving Jewish presence in the city. The cemetery is mostly empty, its open expanse revealing the anticipated growth and longevity of the Jews of Palestine that never came to be. Though there is no longer a Jewish presence in Palestine, the remarkable impact that Jews had on the city cannot be undone. 

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*Steel Yarmulke, continued from page 6*

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ed by a bomb burst that injured my head, destroyed the triceps in one arm, and blew a large hole in the very helmet that the Rabbi had cautioned me to wear. He went on to great success in the rabbinate, with pulpits in Boston and other eastern parts of the United States, and he was respected as one of the most learned American scholars and authors of his day.

Just for old times’ sake, a couple of years before his death, I phoned him at his home, where he lived in retirement. We had a delightful chat, and he graciously agreed to inscribe my copy of his book from which I had taught and still treasure to this day. And now you know why “my first yarmulke was made of steel.” 

# A Surprise Discovery Unlocks a Family Mystery

by Stuart Rockoff

*reprinted with permission from the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life*

During the summer of 2011, my research into Texas Jewish History became personal in Palestine when I visited the Jewish cemetery with my interns. We already had a complete list of burials there, except for one gravestone that was entirely in Hebrew. This stone stuck out because the rest of the gravestones were almost entirely in English, representing the assimilated nature of the Palestine Jewish community at that time.

Jon Cohen, one of the interns, was fluent in Hebrew and tried to decipher the unknown grave. The stone was weathered and very hard to read. We soon gave up and went to the Palestine library. There was a file of obituaries of people buried in the Palestine Jewish cemetery and a picture of the

unknown Hebrew gravestone, with an English date: December 5, 1905. I then flipped the page and saw a local newspaper article about a tragic fire, and I realized that the unknown Hebrew grave was that of Chaïke Ratner, my great grandfather Moses Shapiro's first wife.

I had always heard that Moses' first wife had died and that he had a new wife who came over from Russia. It was his second wife who gave birth to my grandfather, Sam Shapiro. I never knew how his first wife died, where she was buried, or even her name. According to the newspaper article, Chaïke perished after her dress caught fire from a stove in her house in the tiny town of Oakwoods. They buried her in Palestine, since it had the

closest Jewish cemetery.

After this discovery, we went back to the cemetery and tried to decipher the gravestone. We found the Hebrew phrase "Wife of Moïshe Shapiro" on it. One of the reasons that it was so hard to read is that the Hebrew carving was quite shallow. The English date was professionally done, but the rest was clearly done by an amateur. Moses may have done it himself. Living in rural East Texas, my great grandfather was probably unable to find a stone carver who knew Hebrew.

Finding this small gravestone, which helped unlock my family's mysteries, was a meaningful and poignant reminder of how we are all connected to our history. 🇺🇸

Visit us on the web at [www.txjhs.org](http://www.txjhs.org).

## New Publication

The Texas Jewish Historical Society has published *Texas Jewish Burials, Volume 2*. This volume is an addition to the first edition of *Texas Jewish Burials* and is available in hardbound and spiral-bound copies. The hardbound copies are \$50, and the spiral-bound copies are \$25. These prices include shipping and handling. Please send your order, including payment and shipping address, to TJHS, P.O. Box 10193, Austin, TX 78766-0193. There are still a few copies of Volume 1, which are available for \$23 each (the price includes shipping and handling).



## Temple Beth El Tyler, Texas

Rabbi Neal Katz, TJHS board member from Tyler, Texas, has prepared a twenty-minute video of the history

of Temple Beth El in Tyler for its 125th anniversary celebration. You can view this amazing video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4UC96thAAM>.



## From Our Archives

# The Mystery of Selig Deutschman

by Vickie Vogel

While researching another article, I ran across a file with a half inch stack of to-whom-it-may-concern letters of recommendation for Selig Deutschman. There was an undated cover letter from Frances Kallison to “Ruth” saying they should be preserved for researchers in the future. She says Deutschman was an attorney and one of the few Jews who took part in politics in pre-World War I days in San Antonio and Bexar County. He was active in the organization of Congregation Agudas Achim, at that time Orthodox, but now Conservative. Deutschman had married an Hispanic Catholic wife who died around 1915. He wanted her to be buried in his family plot in the Agudas Achim Cemetery on Palmetto Street. This caused a “great rift in the congregation, resulting in the Orthodox group resigning,” and taking the “saintly, peace-loving Rabbi Solomon” with them to found Rodfei Sholom. For many years, this story was “super ‘hush-hush.’”<sup>1</sup> Frances heard it from a founder of Agudas Achim.<sup>2</sup> Deutschman was “an interesting character,” according to Kallison, and “deserving of a record in the annals of San Antonio Jewish history and the TJHS.”

After reading the testimonials, I had to agree with Frances and wondered how much I could glean from



*Selig Deutschman. Photo courtesy of Allan Glazerman, Executive Director, Congregation Agudas Achim, San Antonio.*

them about his life. It was obvious that Deutschman must have prepared a list of “talking points” to help the writer compose his letter, as there were many basic similarities. For example, they all began with an acknowledgement of how long they had known him and almost all mentioned certain skills, such as an amazing organizational ability and his fluency in German and Spanish. Just from the letters in our archive, here’s what we can learn about his life.

Selig Deutschman was a friend of many powerful people in 1917, including mayors, judges, civic leaders, and the governor of Texas, when he sought an appointment from President Woodrow Wilson to the Department of Food Control, or other department that would be useful in the war against Germany. His organizational skills would be of great value to the government in “marshaling of its forces and resources for this war.”<sup>3</sup> Several letters speak of his great patriotism. “He is a thorough democrat and an American in feeling and sympathies...,”<sup>4</sup> a “true patriot and worthy of the highest trust,”<sup>5</sup> and “thoroughly patriotic and loyal.”<sup>6</sup>

R. J. Boyle adds an interesting clue to the position applied for. The Vice President and General Counsel, S.A. & A.P. Ry. recommends that in “any plan, having in mind the use of Mexican labor for food conservation, his services would be especially valuable.”

In 1917, Congress passed into law a bill to restrict the flow of Mexican nationals across the border, but exempted temporary agricultural workers as a concession to farmers.

From 1917 to 1923, some 200,000 workers contracted with growers to fill the labor shortage of that era. This was the first Bracero-like program.<sup>7</sup>

Deutschman would have been

*continued on page 11*

uniquely qualified to administer such a program due to his interests, and his fluency in Spanish. Proclaimed “the best friend of the Mexicans,” who was “raised among them,” Deutschman’s standing with President Carranza was praised, as well as his humanitarian efforts among the middle and poorer classes of Mexican people “in helping to elevate their position, so much so that he has perhaps more influence with the best element than any man outside their own race.”<sup>8</sup>

Sr. Don Ignacio Lozano, owner and publisher of *La Prensa*,<sup>9</sup> judged Deutschman to be well acquainted with “the present situation in the Republic of Mexico, and has quite a host of friends among business men [sic] of that country, as well as among Mexican politicians of every party.”

Praising Deutschman for his support of President Carranza, George D. Armistead, the Postmaster of San Antonio, said, “I know this and I know that General Carranza knows it.”

Other than the character traits attributed to Selig Deutschman in these letters, such as being fair, calm, working incessantly and skillfully, a leader, an original thinker, able, energetic, industrious, courteous yet aggressive, a man of the highest integrity, an effective public speaker, knowledgeable about men, etc., we learn little about his life. We know he was “a staunch Democrat” and “one of the leading citizens of this state,” according to Governor James E. Ferguson,<sup>10</sup> and participated in few “political or business elections in San Antonio during the past twenty years that he has not managed the winning side.”<sup>11</sup> Deutschman never ran for political office himself, but was a strong advocate for legislation and educational reforms.<sup>12</sup> Several letters mention his political affiliation and support of President Wilson, no doubt assuming that would be a mark in his favor for the appointment. Postmaster

Armistead wrote that Deutschman was “among the first in Texas to espouse the cause of Woodrow Wilson and his fealty to our President has never faltered. I can think of no higher praise in commending any man.”

Deutschman was a leader in “practically every movement of the past twenty years which has had for its object the upbuilding of San Antonio and Southwest Texas.”<sup>13</sup>

Specifically, Deutschman was credited with planning the 1918 Bicentennial Anniversary celebration of the founding of San Antonio. Unfortunately, it was postponed because of America’s entry into the war. Along with Albert Kronkosky, Deutschman organized the West Side Improvement Association to clean up “a certain section” of San Antonio. “This involved work of a nature to try the mettle of anyone, and Mr. Deutschman handled the legal, as well as the executive end of this organization and brought it to a successful conclusion.”<sup>14</sup>

Other letters mention Deutschman’s ability to sway opinions without causing rancor. “His ability to make other people see things as he does, without friction, makes him a valuable man in anything requiring the handling of difficult and intricate subjects.”<sup>15</sup>

The International Club was organized by Deutschman to unite the people of Mexico and the United States. The eruption of the Mexican Revolution interfered with its objectives. He began to quietly promote a Mexican Board of Trade. He also was the organizer and managing secretary without pay of the San Antonio spring festival known as Fiesta.

Not until we get to the letter of Charles Graebner, the President of Duerler Mfg. Co. and former president of the Chamber of Commerce, do we get a real feel for Selig Deutschman, the man. “The first time I saw Selig Deutschman,” he writes, “was in Au-

gust of 1883. He was running a little fruit stand opposite the United States Arsenal and learning English and Spanish at the same time. He was less than 18 years old...” The implication of this statement is that he had newly arrived in the United States.

Graebner credited Deutschman with turning San Antonio’s “little narrow Spanish streets” into modern thoroughfares: “No man who was ever engaged in work of that kind knows the amount of patience, ingenuity and hard work that is required to make all the property owners see things in the right light.” Commerce, a major street downtown, was widened through the skills of Deutschman acting as attorney, executor and agent for the Citizens Committee without a single court action. He was also interested in the public school system and worked to divorce it from politics. Graebner credited him with getting many school houses built in poorer sections of San Antonio. An advocate of industrial education, Deutschman was called the “father of the commercial branch of the high school.” Not a man of means, he secured the help of those who had money.

Professor W. J. Knox, Assistant Superintendent of Public Schools and principal of Navarro Public School, stated he had known Deutschman “since we were boys.” While conducting a small business (apparently the fruit stand), he attained an education and studied law. Knox wrote, “He is somewhat like the man who said, ‘We will fight it out along this line if it takes the whole summer.’”

Praised by a number of Chamber

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**If you need TJHS membership applications for an event, program, personal use, etc., please contact Rusty Milstein at [hrmilstein@prodigy.net](mailto:hrmilstein@prodigy.net).**

of Commerce presidents and business leaders, Deutschman was also spoken of highly by labor leader William L. Hoefgen<sup>16</sup> who emphasized the respect in which Selig Deutschman was held among Union members. "While in no sense a partisan, yet he has always been fair to our people and all recognize in him a sincere friend of Organized Labor."

There is a cover page for a letter from Rev. Nathan Gerstein, Rabbi of the Orthodox Jewish Community, but sadly, the letter is not in the file. The Rt. Rev. William Theodotus Capers, D. D. Bishop West Texas Diocese says, "I will describe Mr. Deutschman as being a Catholic Orthodox Jew. His adherence to the honored faith of his fathers has not narrowed him in his sympathies, nor has it made it hard for him to move among every phase of religious thought and belief." Capers had served on a civic committee with Deutschman.

From online sources, we learn that Selig Deutschman was born October 1, 1866. His father's name was Ruben. He married Marie Antoinette Rodriguez, who was born in Texas in 1881.<sup>17</sup> They had two daughters, Ruth (born 1900) and Hannah. From ads in San Antonio papers, we know Selig was practicing law by at least 1900, possibly as early as 1892. The 1891 City Directory lists his occupation as "stamps, stencils, checks, etc. (Heide-mann Mfg. Co.)."<sup>18</sup> We can surmise he was a member of Rotary and the Masons, perhaps Woodmen of the World, since leaders of those organizations wrote letters for him. He was a president of Congregation Agudas Achim.<sup>19</sup>

His daughter Ruth died October 15, 1918 in Washington, D.C.<sup>20</sup> Can we assume from this that Selig received the appointment he sought? Was Ruth a victim of the 1918 influenza epidemic? Daughter Hannah spent summers in California (1926) and

weekends in Laredo (1908) according to the society pages. In 1920, Hannah was studying at Columbia University. She was living in California at the time of the Kallison letter. Hannah married John Gideon Morris of Laredo who died in 1937. They had four sons, John, Jr.; Thomas; Joseph;<sup>21</sup> and Robert Selig.<sup>22</sup> After Morris' death, Hannah married Arthur M. Gaines. They had one son, Arthur John Gaines.

Selig Deutschman died September 5, 1922 in Bexar County. His death, after a "long illness" made the front page of the San Antonio Evening News ("Well Known Citizen and Lawyer Dies").<sup>23</sup> Another source on the political history of San Antonio cites Deutschman as the architect of the 1914 reform charter for city government. An attempt to rein in the "boss" government of Mayor Bryan Callaghan, who died in 1912, resulted in continuing resistance. The report states Deutschman was beaten so badly during a later campaign that he died of his injuries.<sup>24</sup> This scenario seems unlikely since none of the obituaries or news items refer to it.

Another obituary was located in the Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library that added a few details. He died after an illness of several months, and services were held in his home at 202 Warren Street with interment in the Agudas Achim cemetery. Pallbearers were Max Karotkin, Max Goot, Sol Dalkowitz, Ike Tobias and M. Scharinck. Honorary pallbearers included Rabbi Sidney Tedesche, Alexander Joske, Jessie Oppenheimer, several judges, and some twenty others. This obituary states that Deutschman's earliest business experience was when he was twelve years old, working for an uncle in the wholesale leather business in Berlin. It mentions his fruit stand opposite the arsenal which he managed for a year, before he went into partnership with George Roe in a small mercantile

business, studying law in his free time. After Marie died, Deutschman married Hattie Grace Rabe.<sup>25</sup> Rabe wrote a book, "My Heart Sings," in 1914.<sup>26</sup>

A reference in the archives of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas in San Antonio led to a micro-filmed Jewish Herald obituary at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History which adds more details.<sup>27</sup> Deutschman died at Santa Rosa Hospital at 9:15 a.m. "after a long illness." He had been taken to the hospital a few days earlier when his condition became critical after having been ill for several months.<sup>28</sup>

A microfilmed obituary for daughter Ruth was also available at the Briscoe, which explains why Ruth was in Washington. She, with sister Hannah, was attending Sullin's College in Bristol, Virginia from 1916 to 1918.<sup>29</sup> She died at George Washington University Hospital of an acute attack of pneumonia developing, as we surmised, from influenza. Deutschman, however, was not in Washington. He arrived from San Antonio in response to a telegraphed summons shortly before his daughter's death. He returned with the body to San Antonio for the funeral from the family residence at 525 Jackson. The obituary states that attendance was large, floral offerings were many, and the service was beautiful.<sup>30</sup>

With this final piece of the puzzle I discovered, we know that Selig was not living in D.C. in 1918, but we still cannot determine if he received the appointment sought in the Wilson administration. Perhaps he served but briefly, which would explain why his daughters chose nearby Sullin's College for their education.

Hopefully, someone reading this article can tell us more about the life of Selig Deutschman. Write a letter to the editor. He was clearly important in San Antonio history and, as Frances Kallison wrote, deserves to be remem-


*continued on page 13*

bered.

### References

- <sup>1</sup> Letter from Frances Kallison, Box 3A190, Texas Jewish Historical Society Collection, The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin. All information is from this file unless otherwise noted.
- <sup>2</sup> This incident is mentioned in Winegarten, Ruthe, and Cathy Schechter. *Deep in the Heart: The Lives and Legends of Texas Jews*. Austin: Eakin Press, 1990, p. 100. Winegarten may be the "Ruth" that Kallison's letter is addressed to.
- <sup>3</sup> P. H. Swearingen, Associate Justice, Court of Civil Appeals, 4th Supreme Judicial District of Texas for San Antonio.
- <sup>4</sup> R. B. Minor, Judge 57th Judicial District of Texas, San Antonio.
- <sup>5</sup> Rt. Rev. Wm Theodotus Capers, D. D. Bishop West Texas Diocese, San Antonio.
- <sup>6</sup> Nelson Phillips. Phillips was Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Texas 1915-1921. <http://www.supreme.courts.state.tx.us/court/1876.asp>. See also R. J. Boyle, op cit, who calls him a "loyal American."
- <sup>7</sup> <http://www1.american.edu/ted/bracero.htm>
- <sup>8</sup> F. A. Chapa, Lt. Col. T.N.G.; Sam C. Bell Mayor of San Antonio and Vice President Central Trust Co.
- <sup>9</sup> Ignacio Eugenio Lozano, Sr. founded La Prensa as a Spanish language daily newspaper in 1913. His granddaughter, Monica C. Lozano, would later say though La Prensa was not the first Spanish language daily, it became the largest. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignacio\\_E.\\_Lozano,\\_Sr](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignacio_E._Lozano,_Sr).
- <sup>10</sup> Ferguson was elected in 1914 and reelected in 1916, but was impeached in 1917 and removed from office. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ffe05>
- <sup>11</sup> Swearingen, op cit.
- <sup>12</sup> R. C. Jones, Secretary and Treasurer, San Antonio Gas & Electric Co. and former President of the Rotary Club.
- <sup>13</sup> Marshall Hicks, former Mayor of San Antonio and former State Senator.
- <sup>14</sup> Albert Kronkosky, Vice President San Antonio Drug Company, member National Chamber of Commerce.
- <sup>15</sup> J. F. Garland, Commissioner of Taxation

of San Antonio.

- <sup>16</sup> Hoefgen was a former President of the American Federation of Labor in Texas and a National Organizer.
- <sup>17</sup> [http://www.interment.net/data/us/tx/bexar/agudas/achim\\_ak.htm](http://www.interment.net/data/us/tx/bexar/agudas/achim_ak.htm)
- <sup>18</sup> [http://txbexar.eppygen.org/Records/Re\\_CD\\_1891\\_D.htm](http://txbexar.eppygen.org/Records/Re_CD_1891_D.htm)
- <sup>19</sup> Email Allan Glazerman, Executive Director, Congregation Agudas Achim San Antonio, April 24, 2012.
- <sup>20</sup> [bexargenealogy.com/archives/family-files/olivari.rtf](http://bexargenealogy.com/archives/family-files/olivari.rtf), <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/93913970/Marcelino-Martinez---Bexar-Genealogy-Home-Pagertf>; [http://search.ancestry.ca/cgi-bin/sse.dll?gl=NP\\_NEWSPAPERS&rank=1&new=1&so=3&MSAV=0&msT=1&gss=ms\\_f-149&gsfn=Ruth&gsln=Deutschman&msypn\\_\\_ftp=San+Antonio%2C+Bexar%2C+Texas%2C+USA&msypn=76338&msypn\\_PInfo=8-%7C0%7C1652393%7C0%7C2%7C3249%7C46%7C0%7C302%7C76338%7C0%7C&sbo=1&uidh=ax2](http://search.ancestry.ca/cgi-bin/sse.dll?gl=NP_NEWSPAPERS&rank=1&new=1&so=3&MSAV=0&msT=1&gss=ms_f-149&gsfn=Ruth&gsln=Deutschman&msypn__ftp=San+Antonio%2C+Bexar%2C+Texas%2C+USA&msypn=76338&msypn_PInfo=8-%7C0%7C1652393%7C0%7C2%7C3249%7C46%7C0%7C302%7C76338%7C0%7C&sbo=1&uidh=ax2); <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F10B15FE3F5C17738DDDAE0894DB405B8285F0D3>. October 15, according to tombstone record. [http://www.interment.net/data/us/tx/bexar/agudas/achim\\_ak.htm](http://www.interment.net/data/us/tx/bexar/agudas/achim_ak.htm)
- <sup>21</sup> <http://newspaperarchive.com/laredo-times/1937-06-24>
- <sup>22</sup> Robert Selig Morris died in 2005. <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jrterry/colemancounty/obituaries/2005-03.html>. He was married to Lillian Padgitt, granddaughter of Samuel Maverick who signed the Texas Declaration of Independence. <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jrterry/colemancounty/obituaries/2007-07.html>
- <sup>23</sup> <http://newspaperarchive.com/san-antonio-evening-news/1922-09-05/>
- <sup>24</sup> <http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph39846/m1/63/?q=selig%20deutschman> quoting from Frank Bushick, *Glamorous Days* (San Antonio, 1934), pp 82-86.
- <sup>25</sup> Obituary from unknown newspaper, hand-dated September 7, 1922. Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library, Item ID 4009536. Dates in various accounts are inconsistent. This obituary says Marie died in 1897, elsewhere the date is given as 1915. If Ruth was born in 1900, the 1897 date is in error. If Marie died in 1915, the second marriage date of 1911 is in error.
- <sup>26</sup> Apparently it is a book of poetry, since it is only 23 pages long. [http://books.google.com/books?id=wIq8tgAACAAJ&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](http://books.google.com/books?id=wIq8tgAACAAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s)
- <sup>27</sup> TJHS has helped in the funding of microfilming of Texas Jewish newspapers.
- <sup>28</sup> *Jewish Herald-Voice*, September 7, 1922, Vol 15#1p1c2, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.
- <sup>29</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sullins\\_College](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sullins_College)
- <sup>30</sup> *Jewish Herald-Voice*, October 24, 1918, Vol 11#7p3c1, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin. 

## TJHS Membership Dues

We have received 422 dues payments from our 647 members. Our fiscal year is based upon the calendar year. If you are one of the members who has inadvertently missed paying TJHS dues for 2012, please help us by sending your payment at your earliest convenience. If you are not sure whether you have paid and want to verify, contact Marc at [marc.wormser@att.net](mailto:marc.wormser@att.net).

## Save the Date

**October 12-  
14, 2012**

Fall Meeting in  
Big Spring, Texas

**January, 2013**

Winter Meeting  
in San Angelo,  
Texas

# Honor or Memorialize a Friend or a Loved One With a Donation to the TJHS Endowment Fund

When you honor or memorialize a friend or a loved one with a donation to the Texas Jewish Historical Society's Endowment Fund, you help support important programs. Send the honoree's full name, type of honor (memorial, congratulations, or occasion—birthday, anniversary, award, new child or grandchild, etc.) and your name, along with a check in the amount of your choice, to

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*Your gift will further the efforts to record, preserve, and disseminate historic information about Texas Jewish culture.*

## TJHS Exhibit at Hadassah Conference



Frances Beckman, Hadassah member, and Ruth Nathan, TJHS Treasurer, chat in front of "Shalom Ya'll," one of TJHS's traveling exhibits, at the Greater Southwest and Desert Mountain Region Conference held in Houston, May 4-6, 2012.

## Grant Requests

Sonny Gerber has assumed the chairmanship of the Grant Committee. All requests for grants should be directed to Sonny at 5610 Grape, Houston, TX 77096. Sonny can be reached at 713-817-6290.

**The deadline for  
the November 2012  
TJHS News  
Magazine is Satur-  
day, October 6.**

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# Camp Memories

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CAMP BONIM   CAMP YOUNG JUDEA   ECHO HILL RANCH   GREENE FAMILY CAMP

*The following memories of attending Jewish camps were received by our editor.  
We will continue to welcome any other article by former campers. Send them to [editor@txjhs.org](mailto:editor@txjhs.org).*

## Jan Siegel Hart

Around 1954, Camp Young Judea opened in Center Point, Texas, near Kerrville. I was thirteen, and my brother, Louis, was eleven when we were sent there to have an experience with other Jewish kids. We lived in the small town of Dublin, Texas, where there were no other Jewish children.

I had been to Camp Tres Rios in Glen Rose, Texas, for three years, and I really enjoyed the camping experience. At Camp Young Judea, I was in the oldest girls' cabin and had a great time with the other girls. The camp was pretty primitive—we had only a mudhole for swimming. When it was my turn for kitchen duty—or KP—I picked up a platter for my table and burned my hand on it. That kept me from swimming for several days. The other big event for me was that with the help of the other girls, I shaved my legs for the first time.

The sessions ran for six weeks, and Parents' Day was at the end of the third week. Louis and I begged to go home. It wasn't that we were having a bad time, but we were curious to see what was going on at home. My parents were renovating the kitchen, and they wanted us out of the way. No sooner had I arrived back home when I was shipped off to visit my cousin, Terry Waisman, in Brownwood. I kept in touch with a few of the girls from Camp Young Judea for several years and even visited one of them in San Antonio.

The next camping experience for me was in 1960, after one year of college, when I applied for work as a counselor at Echo Hill Ranch, near Medina, Texas. In 1953, Min and Tom

Friedman bought the camp for Jewish children, especially those from small towns, to have a chance to meet each other. Tom was working on his Ph.D. and was using the staff to do his doctoral research at the camp. Because I had never been a camp counselor, I did not know that it was unusual to have a weekly meeting at which we filled out forms regarding the campers and what had happened that week.

Because I took archery as a P.E. course at the University of Texas, I was qualified to teach it. Some of my other responsibilities were to keep the office running and to help mimeograph the weekly newspaper. Rabbi Jimmy Kessler, who was a camper at the time, tells me that his claim to fame is that I taught him how to use the mimeograph machine. People were in and out of the office all day, looking for this or that, and I helped with whatever was going on. Richard "Kinky" Friedman and his brother, Roger, were also campers. Even then, Kinky was writing some of his famous songs. Because I enjoy singing, I was often tapped to lead the singing in the dining hall after meals.

My main duty was shared with another girl. We were cabin counselors to about ten girls. The major event of that summer was that I met my future husband, Wrangler Charles "Chuck" Hart. He says that the first time that he saw me, I was lying on the ground after being thrown off a horse. Whether that is true, I did get his attention. Once, Chuck invited me on an early morning ride to bring in the horses. That was a real thrill, and I even managed to stay on the horse. We spent days off together and, with other staff members, enjoyed the beautiful

Hill Country.

The next summer, Chuck and I married, and two days after our wedding, we returned to work at Echo Hill Ranch. I say that we shared our honeymoon with one hundred kids! That was the last summer of my employment at Echo Hill, but after many years away, Chuck is back on staff and for the past twelve years has spent part of every summer there. One summer, there were three generations of Harts in attendance, when our son, David, and our grandchildren, Jake, Rachel, and Joshua, attended. The summer of 2012 finds grandchildren Jake Roberson working as a counselor, Rachel Roberson in leadership training, and Joshua Weimer as a camper.

## Charles B. Hart

Before my 1953 high-school graduation in Houston, my mother, Elsie M. Hart, suggested that I talk to Minnie S. Friedman, her close friend from B'nai B'rith Women's

Organization, about working at a new summer camp located near Medina, Texas.

Minnie and her husband, Tom, were about to open Echo Hill Ranch, in the beautiful Hill Country of Texas, in June.

I made an appointment to visit the Friedman home on Sunset Boulevard in Houston and went for an interview. I discussed with the Friedmans my desire to become the cowboy-horseback-



*continued on page 16*

riding instructor at their new Jewish camp. Minnie told me that she really needed someone with experience. I had been riding horses for a number of years, but I had no experience in teaching horseback riding. By sheer luck, I found an advertisement in the newspaper for a wrangler at Camp Karankawa, the music camp. This camp was owned and run by the family of the first-chair violinist of the Houston Symphony Orchestra, the Franklin Family of Houston. The camp was located in Center Point, Texas. I was hired as the wrangler/horseback-riding instructor and worked there every summer until 1958, when I was drafted into the U.S. Army.

In 1960, when I returned from Army duty in Germany, I needed a summer job before starting college again. I called the Friedmans and arranged an interview. They hired me as the wrangler for Echo Hill Ranch that summer. When I arrived at camp, Aunt Min took me aside and said, "Charles, I think you need a more cowboy name. How about us calling you 'Chuck'?" Since then, I have been known as "Chuck the wrangler" to all my Echo Hill Ranch friends and associates. The summer of 1960 was an enjoyable beginning of my close relationship with the Friedman family and Echo Hill Ranch.

"Uncle Tom" and "Aunt Min," as they were called by the staff and campers, developed the camp to bring together Jewish children who lived outside of the metropolitan cities of Texas. It was an opportunity for those Jewish children from small communities to interact and socialize with each other. Another tenet of the camp was to have a "child-centered, non-competitive camp," much different from other camps that were popular at that time. This tenet has held true to this day, and Shabbat services are camper-led.

There was a staff meeting held each week with Uncle Tom. We were asked to complete questionnaires about

the campers and their activities, likes and dislikes, etc. Little did we know that Uncle Tom was gathering this information as research to earn his Ph.D. at the University of Texas.

I was living in the senior-boys bunk—the "Crow's Nest"—which was the closest bunk to the horse corral. One morning, Uncle Tom said that he needed to talk to me. He told me that I would have to move out of the bunkhouse because there were too many campers coming for the next session. I was shocked and wanted to know where I would have a bed. He told me that he had a World War II army squad tent that he would set up next to the bunkhouse. An electrical extension cord would run to the tent for a light. A bunk bed and my foot locker were moved to this tent, and I spent the rest of the summer there. Some years later, a new bunkhouse, which was named "Tent City," was built for the Counselors-in-Training boys. I have come full circle and now live in Tent City every summer.

One early morning, I was riding my horse through camp to locate the horses that had not come in for their usual morning feed. It was a misty, overcast morning, and my horse was acting "funny." I sensed that something was about to happen, and just then an animal jumped off a tree limb above me and, with a fierce scream, jumped over me and my horse. My horse jumped, and as I looked around, I recognized that it was a bobcat. I quickly rounded up the horses and went on with my day.

Earlier that summer, I "saved" a young lady whose horse ran up to a tree and stopped, but she didn't—she kept going and fell to the ground. This is how I met the camp secretary, Jan Siegel, who was in charge of the office. On days off, groups of the staff would go to Bandera or Criders at Hunt, Texas, to eat and go country-and-western dancing. Jan and I joined them.

After camp was over, I gathered

my courage and made a phone call to Dublin, Texas, and asked to speak to Jan, who lived there with her parents, Minnie and Nathan Siegel, and her siblings, Louis and Pam. That was the start of a long-distance romance for me and my future bride. We became engaged in November 1960 and were married on June 4, 1961, at Congregation Ahavath Sholom in Fort Worth, Texas. We spent our honeymoon with over one hundred campers and staff at Echo Hill Ranch. Uncle Tom provided us with a cottage in Medina, Texas, and we drove back and forth to camp every day. After I worked during the summer of 1962, I completed my college education and began a full-time job to support my growing family. We were the first Echo Hill Ranch staff members to meet at Echo Hill Ranch and get married. Since then, there have been several others.

Our daughters, Debbie and Kathy, attended Echo Hill Ranch in the mid-1970s and our son, David, was a staff member for over ten years. We stayed in touch with the Friedmans throughout the years.

I had been retired from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for a few years when Uncle Tom called me in 2000 and said that he needed me that summer and asked if I would come back as the wrangler. That was the start of a nine-year run as a wrangler at the ranch. I am no longer the wrangler, but I am associate director, which encompasses many diverse jobs throughout the year, as well as being at the camp during the summer. During the winter, I usually bring some of the camp horses to my home in Temple, Texas, and care for them. The current camp directors are Dr. Roger Friedman and his wife, Roz. Roger is Uncle Tom and Aunt Min's son.

I have invited many Echo Hill Ranch alumni to join me over weekends for general camp maintenance and preparation of the facilities for

*continued on page 17*

the summer's activities. We call the area "The Little Green Valley" and enjoy the camaraderie and beauty of the Texas Hill Country. Jan and I have made many longlasting friendships through Echo Hill Ranch and look forward to seeing many of them at the 60th reunion this summer.

### **Rabbi Jimmy Kessler**

Three years after opening, Echo Hill Ranch became my summer home for a total of fourteen years. For me, the Hill was one of the shaping influences in my life and, as a consequence, of my forty years as a rabbi.

I arrived on the camp bus from Houston, a frightened overweight kid who wasn't sure how he was going to survive six weeks in a place with bugs, bunk beds, and no air conditioning. I left as a camper who wanted to return and just knew that I had found a place of which to be a part.

Under the guiding hands of Min and Tom Friedman, Echo Hill Ranch strengthened the talents of each camper and helped others to identify and use talents that they didn't know that they possessed. Each youngster was made to feel special, and each need was addressed, while making the youth a part of the group.

I spent four years as a camper, received the prized Echo Hill belt and pen set, and then became a counselor-in-training and, later, a counselor. I learned the importance of each person as a special blessing, even when he or she was difficult. Moreover, I came to understand that taking a little time or spending a little money to recognize a person's worth was beyond measurable value.

My ten years as a counselor taught me how to listen and to know how to ask appropriate questions. The tutelage of the Friedmans and the other counselors expanded my understanding of people and their life experiences. The mixture of the staff embellished my awareness of the world in which I

lived. It was an incredible education.

And Echo Hill Ranch was fun. Mud fights, short-sheeting beds, snipe hunts, and campouts spiced the arts and crafts, the horseback riding, the swimming, the rifle shooting, the nature study, the archery, and a host of other programs that brought bunk-houses together in performances, skits, song contests, and campfires.

The early challenges to get involved and participate, along with the later responsibilities of getting others to be involved and participate, gave me tools that I use today as a rabbi. Clearly, if I have had any successes in serving the Jewish community, much of the credit goes to my years at Echo Hill Ranch and the experiences that I gained there.

Today, many of my friends from all stages of my life shared years at the Hill. Kinky (Richard Friedman) and I began in the same bunk, while Roger (Dr. Roger Friedman, Echo Hill Ranch Director) was just a little kid; and Marcie wasn't born yet. I may forget some of the names, but the memories continue to live on and my gratitude only increases.

### **Susan Regan Donnenfield**


I was privileged to have attended Echo Hill Ranch back in the day of Kinky, Aunt Min, and Uncle Tom Friedman—1968-69. It began with a bus ride from Temple Emanu El in Dallas, with a stop in Waco, and then on to Medina, Texas. Over forty years later, I still have an unbroken bond with camp friends.

My best memories of camp are of the sing-alongs lead by Kinky himself, who was just back from the Peace Corps in Malaysia. I thought that he taught us such cool songs, which I later realized were anti-war (Vietnam) ballads. Among these were Medgar Evers's lullaby and many others.

Our rustic bunkhouses were the best—complete with cen-

tipedes crawling across the rafters. Clean-up chores for inspection were done with the hope of a first-place award for "most clean." There were less-than-fun times brought on by teenage girls and the usual "mean-ness." These called for bull sessions with counselors. Friday nights were a favorite with very short Shabbat evening services, a good dinner, and talent shows or a social, which, for many of us, were our first dates.

The competitive campers, including me, really went after the sports and possible awards. Echo Hill provided the opportunity to hone one's archery, shooting, and nature skills and to win ribbons or medals. The culmination was the awards ceremony at the end of the four-week session and a camp-wide horseshoe competition. I am proud to this day of the "gold horseshoe" that I won with my twin sister in the finals. A win earned you a call home.

Echo Hill holds lots of memories and "firsts." It was my first time away from home for an extended period, my first homesickness, my first overnight campouts, my first unexplained rashes, and my first "bug" juice, to name just a few. So many Echo Hill attendees, including Kinky (Friedman) and Thomas (Tommy) Schlamme, one of my counselors, have become famous/infamous. Always, smiling, I share these stories with my children who are Greene Family Camp Campers. 

## **— Contributions —**

The following donations have been received by the Texas Jewish Historical Society:

### **A Gift to the Endowment Fund:**

In Honor of Audrey Daniels Kariel, on Mother's Day

From Mark Kariel and Al Risher

### **A Membership Gift:**

For Brian and Gayle Gerrick

From their parents, Jack and Joyce Gerrick

## In Memoriam



**Max Aaron Friedman**, TJHS member, died in Houston on May 31, 2012. He is survived by his son and daughter-in-law, Arthur and Suzanne

Friedman; his son Bruce; his daughter and son-in-law, Claire and Andrew Haut; and seven grandchildren.



**Bernard Rappaport**, TJHS member, died on April 5, 2012 in Waco at the age of 94. He is survived by his wife Audre; his son and daughter-in-

law, Robert and Patricia Rappaport; and two grandchildren.

**May their memories be a blessing.**

## Can You Guess This Member?

The picture directly below shows two men standing in front of a bus. The man on the right is a TJHS member. The man on the left is not a member, but he grew up in Texas and is well known in several areas, including Texas, camping, and music. Do you know who this member is? Email your guess to Davie Lou Soka at [editor@txjhs.org](mailto:editor@txjhs.org). The first person who guesses correctly will receive one free year of membership. The winner will be announced in the next issue.



## Welcome New Members!

**Robert Cullick & Dr. Suzanne Seriff**  
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Austin, TX 78731  
523-459-1514

**Marc Grossberg & Tamara Mast**  
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**Bonnie Korman**  
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**Rabbi Susan Lippe**  
**Congregation Beth Israel**  
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**Dr. Scott & Staci (Begal) Reznik**  
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**Dr. Joe Rosenstein**  
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**Jerry & Bobbi (Mayerson) Wells**  
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Plano, TX 75023-1103  
972-618-4912  
[jb.wells@verizon.net](mailto:jb.wells@verizon.net)

## Has Your Address Changed?

If you have any changes in your information, please send them to **Marc Wormser at 1601 S. Riviera Ct., Pearland, TX 77581, 832-288-3494, or [marc.wormser@att.net](mailto:marc.wormser@att.net).**

In the last issue of the news magazine, we ran the photo below. The first couple who correctly identified this picture of Immediate Past President Rusty Milstein and his wife, Mitzi, was Marvin and Shirley Rich of Houston, who will receive a free membership to TJHS for 2013. Mazel Tov to Marvin & Shirley.





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## — Mazel Tov — to the following Texas Jewish Historical Society Members

**Marvin Rich, Vickie Vogel, and Rosalie Weisfeld** have been elected delegates to the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina. Marvin, a past president of TJHS, was elected from Senate District #17. Vickie, also a past president of TJHS, was elected from Senate District #18. Rosalie was elected from Senate District #20.

*Please send information for this column to Davie Lou Solka at [editor@txjhs.org](mailto:editor@txjhs.org).*

## TJHS Traveling Exhibit

The Texas Jewish Historical Society has compiled two museum-quality photo exhibits, with explanations, depicting early Jewish life and contributions. Both exhibits highlight the lives of Jews in Texas since the early part of the century.

Each exhibit is comprised of approximately thirty-six photographs that can be either self-standing with an easel back or hung on a wall. There is no charge for the exhibits, and they will be shipped, prepaid freight via UPS in waterproof

boxes, to your location. The only expense to the borrower will be the shipping of the exhibit back via UPS ground.

The exhibits have been displayed in various locations in Texas and other parts of the United States, including Rhode Island and California. They are an excellent program for schools, congregations, and other organizations. To schedule the exhibits, please contact Jack Gerrick at 817-927-8765 or email him at [texbed@charter.net](mailto:texbed@charter.net).

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Join the Texas Jewish Historical Society today! Or use this form to update your contact information. Complete each section below. Clip out and mail this form with your check made payable to the Texas Jewish Historical Society, P.O. Box 10193, Austin, TX 78766-0193. **Please PRINT.**

☐ **YES!** Count me in! My dues are enclosed. ☐ Please **update** my information

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*Contributions to the Texas Jewish Historical Society are tax deductible within the limits of the law.*