

NEWSLETTER

P. O. Box 10193

Austin, Texas 78766-0193

SUMMER 1995

COME TO SAN ANGELO FOR OUR FALL OPEN BOARD MEETING

— The weekend of October 21st & 22nd —

Mark your calendars now! The fall Mini-Gathering and Open Board Meeting of TJHS will be held the weekend of October 21st in San Angelo, Texas. San Angelo is a small West Texas town with an interesting Jewish history — from its founding to the present day. Services are still held regularly at the synagogue.

Our meeting is being organized very capably by **Suzanne Campbell**, whom you might remember from her outstanding presentation at our Galveston Gathering where she received a standing ovation. Suzanne is planning several tours, including one of Fort Concho, established in 1867, now a national historic landmark where the settler **Mr. Loeb** did business.

The Chamber of Commerce will also lead us on a tour of San Angelo's "First Street" where renovated, historic buildings include those once owned by the **Lepowski Brothers** as well as that of a Jewish man named **Mr. Raas** (pronounced "rice" in West Texas dialect) as well as

other "colorful" businesses such as **Miss Hattie's "Gentleman's Social Center" Bordello Museum**.

You may also wish to visit the Jewish cemetery or the nearby Indian pictographs at Paint Rock dating back more than 1,000 years and which include a six-pointed star.

Or you may want to search for hidden concho pearls, the pink to purple pearls written about in the waters of San Angelo's rivers since the time of the Conquistadores.



Fort Concho, in San Angelo, is among the best preserved Texas frontier military forts.

Please make your plans now to come to San Angelo when the fall holidays are over. The Holiday Inn (phone 915-658-2828) located near the River Walk has given us a rate of \$59 single or double occupancy. Other accommodations include the Ramada Inn, Days Inn, and La Quinta.

We look forward to seeing as many members as possible at this

interesting weekend. For more information, call **Barbara Rosenberg**, TJHS President and chair of the mini-weekend, at (713) 494-2668. We hope to see many of you in San Angelo and at the Open Board Meeting!

NEWS FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Barbara Rosenberg

Dear Members,

First let me thank so many of you for your kind notes and good wishes during my recent surgery and recovery. I am doing fine now, and appreciate your thinking of me. Now I'm ready to get moving again on some of our Texas Jewish Historical Society projects.

I hope you are all having a wonderful summer. I heard from several people before our quarterly meeting in Bay City telling me about various upcoming simchas and exciting travel plans. I hope you can share those experiences with us when we meet again in the fall.

The meeting in Bay City was quite interesting thanks to our hosts **Henrietta and David Krumholz**, who showed us the warm hospitality of the area. Henrietta, an honored citizen of Bay City, is well known as the "Shell Lady" of the area. She shares her knowledge and extensive shell collection with individuals as well as groups, especially school children. She served on the local Board of Education and is quite active in the Matagorda County Historical Society.

TJHS members were treated to an evening at Beth David Hall in Bay City hearing about Henrietta and David's family experiences as well as others who lived in the El Campo/Bay City/Wharton Community. In turn, we shared with them the exhibit by Waco students who were winners in the district history contest of the Texas State Historical Association. Their exhibit on Galveston Jewish immigration — "Oppression to Opportunity" — is quite impressive.

The following day we held our business meeting and then eagerly drove down the road to the annual **Shearith Israel Barbecue** in Wharton. The sign at the Chamber of Commerce on the main highway into Wharton was emblazoned, "**Welcome to the Shearith Israel Barbecue!**" I spoke to people who had come from as far away as Del Rio and Midland. The congregation had prepared to serve 1,500 portions of delicious chicken and famous cole slaw as well as home baked goods, and I believe they sold it all! **Helen Kasman's** original recipe for the slaw is kept in a safety deposit box in a local bank. Can you imagine that?

Before leaving Wharton, some of us stopped to visit the Wharton Historical Museum where we had a delightful visit with **Dan Rather** (yes, the same Dan Rather of CBS News) who was being honored along with another Wharton native, **Horton Foote**, a recent Pulitzer Prize winning author. My, but TJHS outings can be full of surprises! Yes, we did get autographs.

The next meeting will be in West Texas — in San Angelo — the weekend of October 21st. Hope to see you all there! We also have an interesting tour of the Jefferson/Marshall area planned for March 14-17, 1996. Mark your calendars!

B'Shalom,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Rosenberg".

Barbara Rosenberg
President



THE TEXAS JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

is a publication of The Texas Jewish Historical Society
P. O. Box 10193, Austin Texas 78766-0193.

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Oppression to Opportunity: ANOTHER STORY ABOUT THE GALVESTON PLAN

by Mary Ann Thyen (Waco)

“**C**onflict and Compromise” was the theme for the 1995 National History Fair competition. This competition for junior and senior high school students starts in individual schools throughout the nation. Winners in each school proceed to their district level. The top two winners in each district proceed to the state competition and again, only the top two go on to the national competition in Washington, D.C. Categories in which students compete are: individual papers, individual or group project, media presentation and performance.

Four Waco seventh grade boys, **Brandon Gates, James Irwin, Peter Thyen and Drew Walker** won first place at the district fair at Baylor University for their project, *Oppression to Opportunity: The Galveston Immigration Movement*.

Conflict and Compromise. As we thought about our friends here in Waco, it occurred to us that we have Catholics, Baptists and Jews all together as friends. We wondered how our Jewish friends came to Texas and became so easily assimilated into the larger western culture. We began to read **Natalie Ornish's** book, *Pioneer Jewish Texans*. We read about the adventurers, the pirates, and the Jewish heroes of the Republic years. We also read **Rabbi Mordecai Podet's** book, *Pioneer Jews of Waco*.

Then Chapter 8 in the Ornish book, *The Humanitarian*, hit us like a bolt of lightning. **Rabbi Henry Cohen, Jacob Schiff, Morris Waldman and Is-**

rael Zangwill provided the Compromise: the route to America that avoided the ghetto-like conditions of the eastern ports and assistance upon arrival in Galveston. The Conflict that inspired these men to help their fellow men was the oppression of the Jews in Eastern Europe. Conflict went further. The trip from Bremen to Galveston was longer and more difficult than that to the east coast. And, as with all immigrants' arrival in a new land, money, jobs and language

they were researching. The **Mondell's** documentary film, *West of Hester Street*



Drew Walker, James Irwin, Peter Thyen & Brandon Gates, 7th grade students in Waco who won 1st place for their history project about the Jewish immigration movement in Galveston.

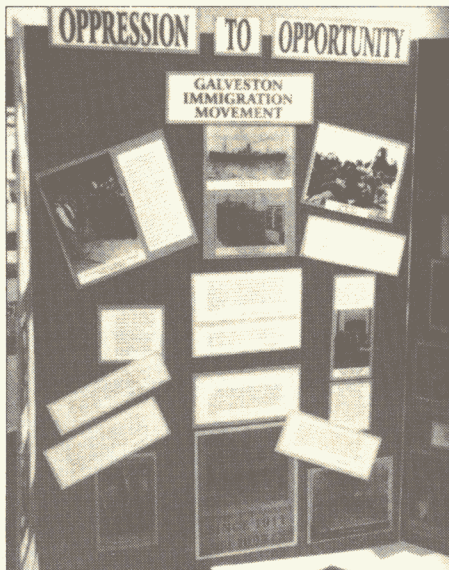
made the historical facts come alive.

The boys interviewed **Sam and Margaret Harelik** and their son, **Harry**, on Sam's 80th birthday. We have a wonderful audio cassette of this interview. The **Hareliks** allowed us access to their wonderful family album which documents

the family's immigration from Russia and their successful assimilation in Texas. Most of the pictures on the project board are computer enhanced copies from the **Harelik Family Album**.

Networking led us to **Ima Joy Gandler** in Waco, **Nate Wesler** in Houston and **Mrs. Michael Jacobs** in Dallas who completed our written interviews. The boys quoted extensively from these interviews to tell the Galveston Plan history.

There are twenty district history fairs in Texas. The boys' project placed first in our district fair at Baylor. They also received three special awards: the Brazos Forum Award, the Baylor Oral History Award and the McLennan Community College History Department Award. We have given the project, along with the **Harelik** taped interview and the written interviews to **Mrs. Gandler** to share with the Texas Jewish Historical Society. We hope you enjoy our work.



up in a small Texas town. These books gave the boys a real sense of the people

Pictures from Bay City & the Wharton Picnic



Henrietta Krumholz and Mayor Charlie Guerra welcomed TJHS members at Beth David Hall in Bay City on June 10th. Henrietta showed family histories and told of Jewish life in small communities.



Helen Kasman showing a letter from Henrietta Szold thanking Jewish women of Bay City and Wharton after her visit in 1917. Helen also told of her family history and what it was like raising children in a small Jewish community.



Barbara Rosenberg and Ima Joy Gandler enjoying the delicious barbecue chicken dinner at the annual Shearith Israel Congregation picnic in Wharton on Sunday, June 11, 1995.



What is this?

**It is the cattle brand of
Bernhard C. Moses'
Great-Grandfather Levi.**

It stands for:

***"Sometimes you are up —
Sometimes you are down!"***

BIG SECRETS OF WHARTON & BAY CITY:

Henrietta Szold, the Shell Lady & Great Barbecue

by Ima Joy Gandler (Waco)

The Texas Jewish Historical Society Open Board Meeting was held June 10-11 in Bay City. Those attending were President **Barbara Rosenberg** (*Sugar Land*), **Ima Joy Gandler** (*Waco*), **Maurice and Virginia Hoffman** (*Houston*), **Herman and Roz Horwitz** (*Beaumont*), **Marvin and Shirley Rich** (*Houston*), **Milton Waghalter** (*Houston*), **Joan Weiss** (*Killeen*) and **Sherry Zander** (*Dallas*).

Saturday evening, we met at the Matagorda Inn and went with **David and Henrietta Krumholz** to K-Tom's Restaurant for dinner. **Henrietta** asked the cashier for the phone book. The cashier said to nearby customers, "That's the 'Shell Lady.' I don't know her name, but she's known as the 'Shell Lady.'" **Henrietta** acquired that title because she goes to Matagorda Beach and collects shells. She makes artwork out of them which she donates to the local hospitals and museum gift shops. She also gives lectures about shells.

After dinner, we went to the Jewish Community Center, Beth David Hall, for dessert. Bay City Mayor **Charles Guerra** welcomed us. **Marvin Rich** accepted a plaque for the TJHS from **Henrietta Krumholz**. She had made the plaque in the shape of Texas with examples of stages of the Texas lightning whelk, the official Texas seashell.

Helen Kasman, **Sara Lee** (Mrs. **Milton**) **Greenberg**, **Daniel and Rosalie Chasnoff**, **Nathan Blum**, **Dr. Frank Kasman** (*Midland*), **Ann Kasman** (Mrs. **Michael**) **Stool** and her children **Shana and Joshua** (*Del Rio*) and others related stories of how their families and other Jews had come to Bay City, Wharton, El Campo and other nearby towns, and the contributions they had made to these communities.

Helen Kasman told a true story. It

goes like this: **Henrietta Szold** had wanted to speak in Houston, but the Houstonians were not interested in Zionism at that time. **Mrs. Szold** wanted at least ten women for a 'Sewing Circle.' Finding none, she went to Wharton instead of Houston. Since there were only seven women present at the meeting, three young girls were enjoined to form this new Hadassah chapter. **Mary Rosenfield** (*El Campo*), **Marjorie Wadler**, and **Beatrice Zeidman** are the three, and are the oldest surviving charter members of the Wharton Chapter of Hadassah. **Helen Kasman** read us the twenty-fifth anniversary greeting letter from **Henrietta Szold** which is dated December, 1939. This letter is kept in **Helen's** safe deposit box.

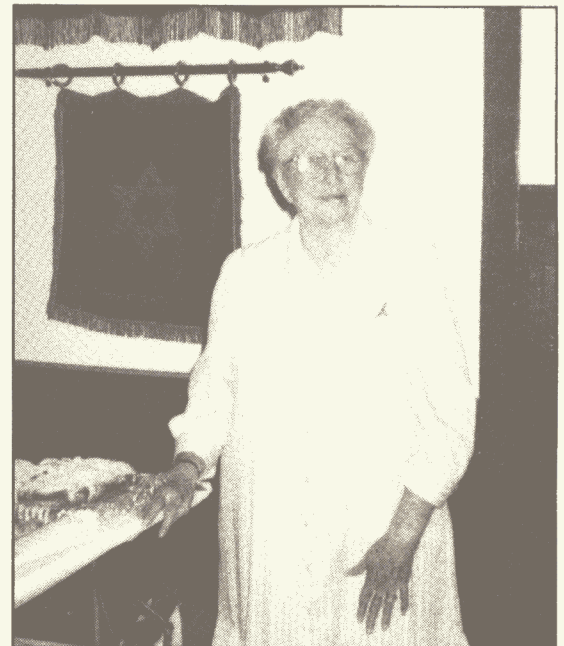
Helen Kasman said five ten-gallon-containers of two hundred fifty pounds of cabbage was prepared for the Shearith Israel barbecue. The cole slaw dressing started with a Mazola recipe for four servings. **Helen** now has the formula to serve fifteen hundred people and she also keeps this recipe in her safe deposit box. That box has quite a heavy load!

After the Open Board Meeting at the Matagorda Inn Sunday morning, we drove to Wharton for the famous barbecue lunch. As we approached the synagogue, police told us where to park depending on whether we were going to take out the food or eat it there. The Wharton Funeral Home provided a canopy over the buffet food lines. Congregants prepared the food, served it and collected the money. Shearith Israel does not have a large membership.

On the way back to Houston, **Barbara Rosenberg** and **Ima Joy Gandler** noticed lots of cars parked at the Wharton County Historical Museum. Turns out

that **Dan Rather** of the CBS Evening News and **Horton Foote**, famous author and playwright, were to speak. **Barbara** and **Ima Joy** paid the admission fee, stayed to hear the two, took pictures and got their autographs.

You never know what will happen when you attend a Texas Jewish Historical Society meeting!



Mary Rosenfield (El Campo) was one of the original charter members of the Wharton "Sewing Circle" which later became known as the Wharton Chapter of Hadassah. She joined in 1917 when she was only six-years-old. Today she is still the best cake baker for the annual Wharton Barbecue Picnic.

Please plan to attend our next Open Board Meeting in San Angelo the weekend of October 21st.



REPORT ON PLANS FOR THE JEWISH EXHIBIT AT THE INSTITUTE OF TEXAN CULTURES IN SAN ANTONIO

by Florence K. Yellen (Houston)

On May 20th, **Florence Yellen** (Houston), **Walter Fein** (San Antonio), **Barry Green** (Tyler), **Frances Kallison** (San Antonio), **Bernard C. Moses** (Houston), **Don Teter** (Baytown), **Selma Weiner** (San Antonio), and **Helen Wilk** (Corpus Christi) met with **Dr. Rex H. Ball** and the staff of the U.T. Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio. **Dr. Ball** told us that a new consultant had been hired by the Institute and a new format is being planned to bring the display into the 21st Century.

An Exhibit Floor Task Force has been formed to work on this new format. The new task force is headed by **Leah Lewis Simpson** who has been traveling across the country to visit historical museums (including the U.S. Memorial Holocaust Museum in D.C.) to learn about the new state-of-the-art displays which the newer museums are using. **Leah** is aided by **Gina Frnka** and **Dave Garrison** who is the Design Supervisor/Audio/Video person for the Institute.

After **Dr. Ball** made the

introductions and beginning remarks, we gave him the transparencies of the drawings which we had shown at the State Meeting in Houston. This gave their team an idea of our suggestions for changing the look of the Jewish space. **Dave Garrison** was especially glad to see our plans and seemed eager to work with us.

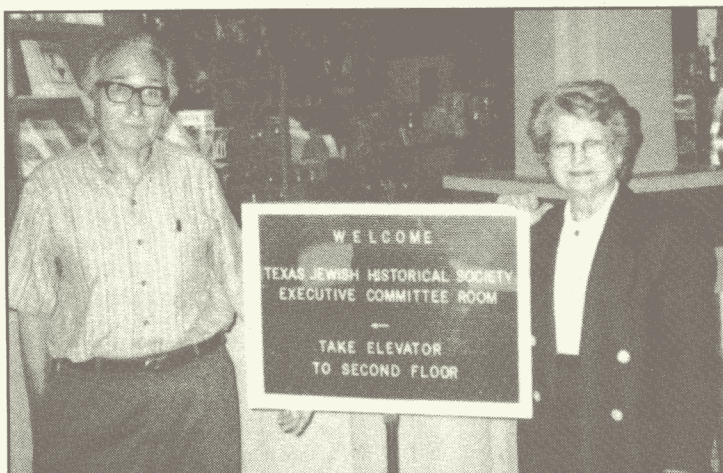
However, **Dr. Ball** suggested that major changes would have to wait until their plans are further along. I pointed out that a complete revision of the Institute would probably take eight to ten years of planning and construction and we would be happy NOW with the simple, inexpensive plans we have submitted. We also

reiterated our willingness to help finance the change at this time. We were given a glimmer of hope that it could be done. They would talk about it and expect us to give them input and information we have on the Jewish community statewide, which we would like the new display to include.

They mentioned using more artifacts in their new plans to illustrate 'the message' in preference to dry text and photos. Their newest display of the Indian Natives of Texas illustrates this well and is only a slight modification of our 'accordion wall.'

I believe we have to get the message out to every corner of the state that we need input from the membership to bring to light history of their ancestors which we have not put to use as yet. I feel that many early settlers have been overlooked, but that is another letter.

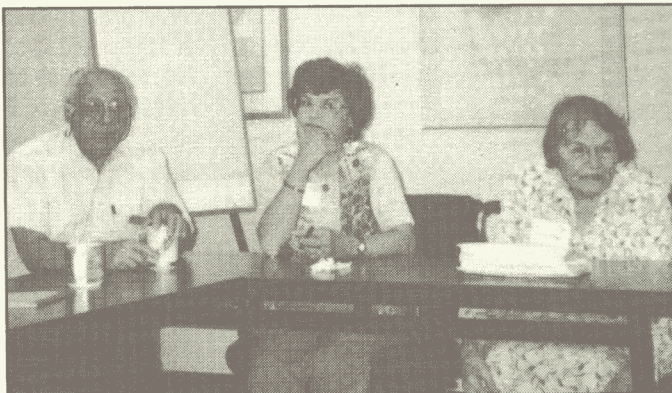
If you would like to join this committee and help this worthwhile project get off the ground, please contact **Florence Yellen**, Committee Chair, at (713) 520-8485. This is a worthy project and its benefits will be seen by thousands. Please help us preserve Jewish history.



Don Teter & Florence Yellen in the lobby of San Antonio's Institute of Texan Cultures on May 20th.



Barry Green, Florence Yellen & Don Teter at the meeting at San Antonio's Institute of Texan Cultures.



Walter Fein, Helen Wilk & Frances Kallison at the meeting at San Antonio's Institute of Texan Cultures.

Being Jewish in Small Town America

by Milton I. Harelik (Hamilton)

“**W**hat is it like being a minority living in ‘small-town America’ in the 1990’s?”

asks a person who wanted me to write this article. After seventy-five years (1920 to present) I wasn’t sure I could give a definitive answer without going into a tirade of clichés. However, a challenge is a challenge, and although there will undoubtedly be some lapses of memory, let me try.

My first thought was to say what is the relevancy of small city versus large city? However, I think the main thought was how did it affect my Jewishness and what were my responses to different situations. Let me begin by giving background and see what words come out.

My parents immigrated to America from what was known as “White Russia” in the years 1909 and 1912 respectively. Papa was included in a group that came through Galveston and became a banana peddler. Mamma came later in 1912 and they were wed in Hamilton, Texas, by a Justice of the Peace and later through Jewish ceremonies as is customary. My brother, **Sam**, was born in 1914; my brother **Louis** in 1916, and I (the caboose) in 1920. The story goes that Mamma cried for three days after my birth because I was supposed to be a girl. I suppose she got over it as she never exhibited any outward animosity toward me in later years. As a matter of fact, being the baby of the family, I am sure I received more than my share of what should have been equal treatment. I acknowledge this because I am sure the others know this for sure.

We seem to have gotten along well with the neighborhood children and although there may have been a few disagreements, my two big brothers always took care of **Muttie** (*mineh yiddish nomen*).

My early memories of teachers was always with affection and special treatment. We, as Jews, seemed to have been treated with respect — partly because our parents set up examples for us to follow

and partly because we were taught to try and be a step above the average both in scholarship and demeanor. I played with my little Christian friends and although they seemed to know we were of a different faith, most of them respected our rights and although there was an occasional reference to our Judaism, most of the time it was done in a teasing manner and not meant to hurt our feelings. At least that was the way I always took it. In the first place, I was always small of stature and not too muscular. Consequently I reasoned it was better to laugh than fight. For me, it seemed to work so that a good sense of h u m o r outmatched a set of m u s c l e s every time.

I n school our g r a d e s seemed to be adequate, although I suppose I went over *fool’s hill* with the same aplomb as my contemporaries. The term *fool’s hill* seems to allude to a time in a teen’s life when he does foolish things in classrooms either to attract attention or to succumb to peer pressure.

I must tell you about an incident that had more than a little effect on my future behavior. One day in classroom, I was little more than obnoxious to my teacher who was just out of college in her first teaching assignment. She picked up a yardstick and said to me, “Do you want me to break this over your head?” And I replied, “Why you can’t do that, my Daddy is on the school board.”

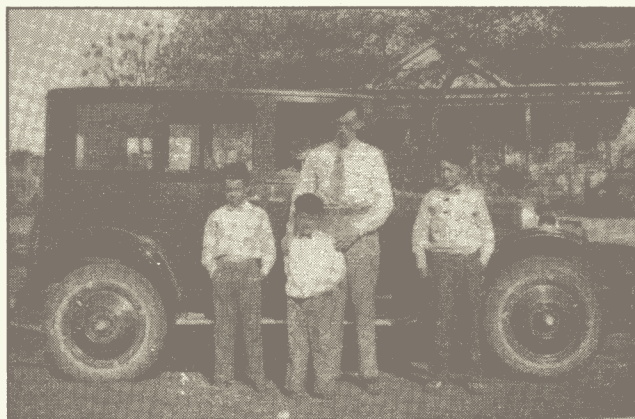
First thing I knew — I was in the principal’s office with a very stern looking man looking me straight in the eye and telling me what he was going to do. Next thing I knew, I was bent over his lap and

he whacked me several good licks. Then he called up my Dad on the telephone and explained what he had done and why. When I got home that night, I discovered that what I had said was not only in bad taste, but earned me the right to another good spanking which I certainly deserved. Needless to say, I never repeated that particular behavior again.

It was also instilled in me that there was no advantage to having fathers on school boards.

I might mention a side item here: my

father was elected to the school board for m a n y years and to my knowledge was the only member of a s c h o o l board (at least in Hamilton County) who never



Haskell Harelik and his three sons.
Photo taken in 1926 in Hamilton, Texas.

attended public schools a day in his life.

Another aside: for the four years I was in high school, my mother never missed a day of Friday morning school gatherings we called *chapel*. Both my parents were extra proud to be living in a country where education was of primary concern for all groups of people.

My only regret in retrospect was that there was no formal teaching of religious Hebrew. Papa tried with my two older brothers in the teaching of Hebrew and the basic prayers but because of his time consumed in trying to put bread on the table (during the depression days) there was no cooperation between the participants and he finally gave up on me. However we did observe Friday night services and most all of the holidays. Our store was always closed on Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur and our business never suffered because of it. As a matter of fact, the

days before and after the Holy Days were busier than average.

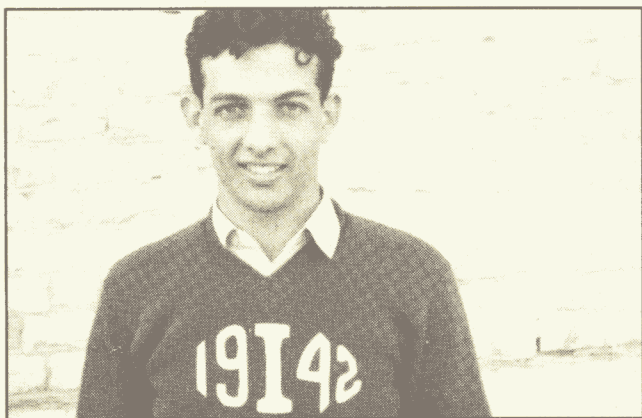
Early in our childhood, we held our own services within the homes of relatives close by. We had enough of our own groups to have a minyan and my **Uncle Velvel Novit** was so well versed in the Torah that his davening was a memory I shall always cherish. When he and Papa and **Charlie Hoffman** from Comanche chanted together in three-part harmony, there was nothing to compare it with. I have not heard anything to equal the wonderful memories and the Jewishness it exposed us to. As children

grew up in the different households, the **Novits** from Dublin moved to Dallas, the **Hoffmans** from Comanche moved to Austin, and Mom and Pop joined the Shule in Waco. I was never formally bar mitzvahed although at age thirteen I was required to attend all services and managed to keep up by reading the English version of most of the services. I learned some of the basic prayers by transliteration.

Some of my local friends were jealous when Hanukah came around and I would get a gift each night while they only celebrated Xmas one day. I remember my brothers pacifying some of them by giving them what they thought was their Hebrew name in Yiddish. This backfired one day when one of the neighbors was so proud that he repeated what he thought his name was in Yiddish to my Mother. It happened to be "*Kushin Tuchus*" and I thought Mamma would fall over backward. We all got thoroughly reprimanded and did not pull that trick any more.

As with most Yiddisher Mamas in those days, ours was a particularly good cook and generous in seeing that all of our friends whom we invited in regularly tasted all of her goodies. Her bagels were without match and to this day I'm still looking

for even a close resemblance. She had wonderful pickles although **Mr. Betampt** is a close facsimile, but her shabbas rye bread was incomparable. We called it rye, but I think it was mixture of white and rye as the color seemed to be deep gray but fabulously good. (Even while writing this my mouth is watering.) She always made at least three loaves of Shabbas bread because our friends would eat up a couple of loaves before Friday night came around.



Milton Harelik at the University of Texas at Austin. Photo taken in 1942.

I had a l w a y s loved music and ended up being a trumpet player in the local band although I couldn't sight read music. We had four or five of my friends who organized what we called "Clodhoppers." Our type of music resembled what is called western swing but Pappa called it *Nuch Ahmul* as much of it was repetitious and he thought if it wasn't

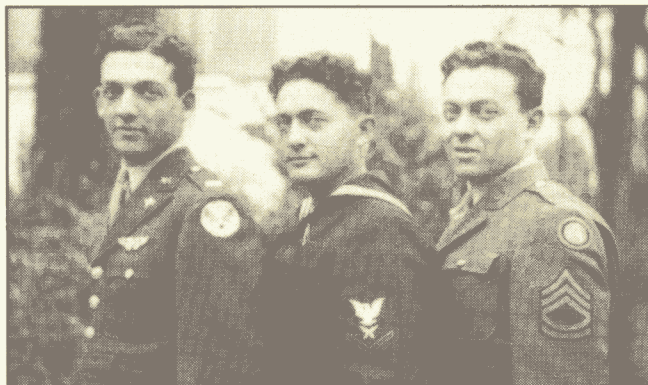
classical or Yiddish in nature it w a s n ' t worth listening to. We started this little band when I was a r o u n d twelve and kept it up until after h i g h school and played at most functions in and around Hamilton. At one time I sang with a trio that sang in some local churches until my folks thought it was inappropriate for me to do this although I was never approached about joining other religious organizations until after I was grown. At any rate, I conceded and in spite of outside influence managed to retain my self-professed Jewishness.

World War II brought about changes in local attitudes because of the fact that there were many German communities in and around Hamilton. We tried to keep from making distinctions although Poppa would sometimes think that some of the older members of these communities were died-in-the-wool Nazis. I think the fact that all three of us ended up in service was uppermost in his mind and he was more protective than convinced.

At any rate, we all got through service with no injuries and proud of the fact that we could serve our chosen land for such a great cause. I am reminded of what one of my old buddies said about my entry into the war. Spurlin said "You know, old Harelik thought he was just as good as the rest of us until he got in service." He meant that in jest of course, and as I stated at the outset — being able to see humor in mankind beats damaging your fists all to hell. Right? Right!!

As previously stated, many changes occurred after the war and many service people returned to their former methods of living. Some went back to their hometowns, some went off to further their education, some got married and some wandered around like lost sheep for a spell.

There had been major changes in our family as well. My middle brother who had left home for service at age 26 was a l o n e - s o u l in want of companionship. He met and married a



(L to R): Milton, Sam & Louis Harelik of Hamilton, TX. Three brothers in the service. Photo taken in 1942.

hometown young person who was, as we say "out of faith." Our Poppa, a man of the old school, was devastated. He got in touch with my older brother and me. He wanted to *sit shiva* and never mention my brother's name again. Momma was torn between what must have been a terrible dilemma. She was most loyal to her husband but she could not abandon her own flesh and blood. My older brother and I of

course shared their deep feelings, but at the same time we were and still are very close to our brother. So we banded together and pleaded with Pop to accept what we could not change and prayed for an understanding that stronger men than we must sometimes endure. In the end, he might not have forgotten—but he did forgive—and I don't remember it ever being brought up again,

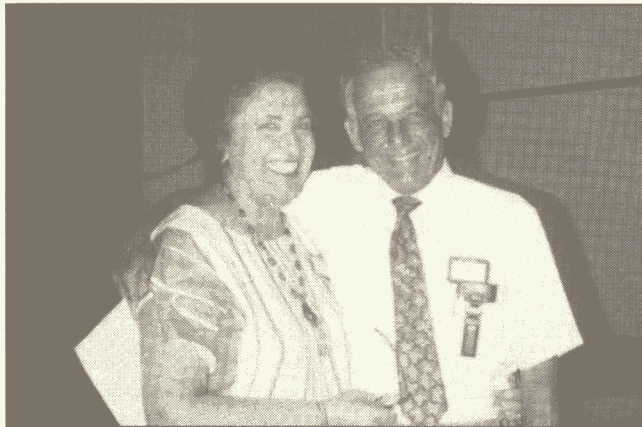
at least not in my presence. Remember, this was during the WWII and many changes were due to come. During the coming year, his first grandson arrived and I think the replacement of new life for old hurts is soothing medicine.

When **Sam** and I came back, some of our missing Jewishness must have returned. We dated girls of the faith until our soulmates showed up. We had returned to the old hometown and went back to work in our Dad's dry goods store. In 1946 **Sam** found **Margaret** in Waco via our Jewish contact – Agudath Jacob synagogue. In 1948, I found University of Texas sophomore **Gerry** while visiting a cousin who was also going to the University of Texas at Austin. We were wed in Hutchinson, Kansas, and moved to — guess where! — the old hometown.

In the meantime Pop wisely decided that in order to promote local peace and harmony among the natives, we should

each have the opportunity to run our own operations. You see, when there are all chiefs and no Indians, there is bound to be chaos. So **Louis** and family moved to Comanche, **Sam** located in Waco and guess who was elected to stay home? Our

families grew due to natural elements and soon there were eight grandchildren. The businesses seemed to prosper in their own way and the years passed by.



Dorothy & Milton Harelik. Photo taken in 1987.

The changing of times, the changing of attitudes also produced changes in affiliations. **Sam's** family and my personal family remained true to the faith. Brother **Louis** was never a practicing Jew, but he never forgot his faith. Once so ill from diabetes and open heart surgery that the doctor had doubts of his recovery, **Louis'** family sent a preacher of *their* faith to pray for him. As sick as he was, he fluttered his eyes open and said, "I'm sorry, Preacher So-and-So, but what you are saying will do no good because I'm Jewish!" There was never a doubt in my mind that he carried this faith to his grave. It did much to strengthen my own personal beliefs which had occasion to be tested.

In my own case, we had an opportunity to move to Hutchinson, Kansas, to help my wife's father who had suffered a recent heart attack. Hutchinson had a population of 60,000 people in comparison to Hamilton with only 2,780. The Jewish

population was just a few families more with a Jewish community center, but the closest temple or synagogue was 60 miles away in Wichita, Kansas. I took my oldest son, **Mark**, for his lessons in bar mitzvah until his 13th birthday. He became proficient in reading Hebrew through the help of an Israeli student. As each of my children, **Mark**, **Marcia** and **Matt**, would start studying Hebrew, I would try to learn with them. However, by the time they had learned the alphabet and vowel sounds, I found I was still struggling with the *alef* and *bet*. So I was the dropout — three times in succession.

About that time, we found that my wife **Gerry** had Hodgkins, a disease of the lymph glands. After eighteen months of treatment, she passed away, and the test of my faith proved faultless.

There were many answers to my prayers, albeit they were not done in the tongue of my forefathers. There were listeners and there were doers. I ended up moving back to — another guess — good old Hamilton.

To those who wish me to move for more yiddishkite, I say walk in my shoes! The roots are very deep and every day I get a chance to practice what the sages have taught for generations. Do unto others . . . prayers are answered even for those that profess the faith but cannot *forstchay* the mother tongue.

In 1972, perhaps my Angel Momma heard my pleas and sent me **Dorothy** to care for a sick father and adopt three of my children for her very own.

The fact is, I could have gotten this same assistance if I had been in New York, Gallop, or Muleshoe. But what I'm really saying is, it ain't where you live so much as where your heart is. *N'est Pas?*

As they say in the fourth estate, it's thirty for now!



Looks like the Harelik family tree is in order. Is yours?

SEASONED VOLUNTEERS SHARE THEIR KNOWLEDGE IN WACO SCHOOL

by Lynn Bulmahn of the Waco Tribune-Herald Staff
Printed in the January 1, 1995 Fort Worth Star Telegram

WACO — George Brown is in the first grade. He is 88 years old. Sam Harelik's elementary school class threw him a surprise birthday party. They even decorated the classroom for the occasion. There were 80 candles on his cake.

The two men are not late bloomers, but volunteers for the Adopt-A-School project at Crestview Elementary School in Waco.

Harelik and Brown are members of the Waco Founder Lions Club. Because the club's headquarters lie a few blocks from the school on North 42nd Street, it was natural for a partnership to emerge between the civic club and Crestview.

Although Founder Lions is not exclusively a senior citizens club, its older members find that they have plenty of time to volunteer. Brown and Harelik spend hours at the school, tutoring students who need a little extra help and attention.

Brown, a retired Clifton Manufacturing salesman who ran B&B Specialties for 17 years, began volunteering this year. Brown goes to the school after the noon meeting of the Lions Club on Wednesdays. Staff members confide that he gets there earlier each time. Brown's special friend in Linda McCartney's first-grade class is Samuel Henry. "He's helped a whole lot," McCartney said. "This really helps the self-esteem of Sam. He's more confident." The youngster often waits at the classroom door, asking if Brown is going to visit that day, she said.

"Mr. Brown said he's not sure if he's helping the kids or if the kids are helping him," said Cookie Davis, the school's Adopt-A-School coordinator. "But the kids love him."

One Wednesday, Brown and Samuel worked at coloring a worksheet together. The design on the worksheet was coded by numbers, and the student had to match the right number with the color it represented. When Samuel realized that he had colored one design incorrectly, he slapped his hand to his mouth. Brown said Samuel does that any time he makes a mistake. But, he said, the errors are becoming fewer. "He is as smart as all get-out," Brown said of Samuel. "But when he sees the end of something, he's not interested in it."

"What color are you looking for?" Brown asked his student.

"No. 3," Samuel replied.

"What color is No. 3?" Brown asked.

"Yellow."

When Samuel could not find a yellow crayon, Brown suggested that he substitute a light orange one. McCartney said Brown's influence has been positive. By working one-on-one, she said, an Adopt-A-School volunteer learns what the student needs and how to relate to the child.

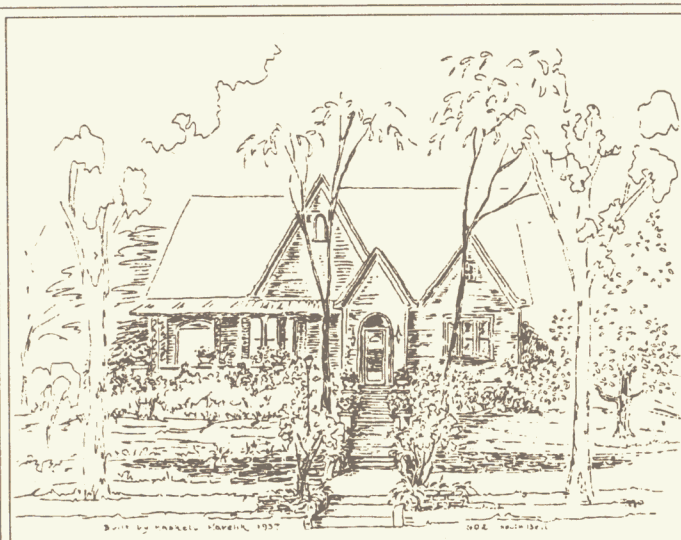
Harelik, who operated Harelik's Man Shoppe for many years, is a veteran Adopt-A-School volunteer. He knows all the children by name. And he knows who is — and isn't — in the room.

Harelik takes a personal interest in his students.

"I haven't had a bad bunch," Harelik said, thinking back through the years that he has volunteered. He helps in several areas, but Harelik says his preference is reading.

"My theory of the three R's is that it is reading, reading, reading," he said. "I don't think they can accomplish anything else unless they can get their reading down good."

He admits children often squabble about which ones will go and read with Harelik. "They love to read," he said.



Haskell Harelik, a Russian Jewish immigrant arrived in Galveston, Texas in 1909.

He became a Banana Peddler, moved to Hamilton Texas and established Harelik's Grocery - later converting to Dry Goods in 1924. His Grand son, Mark, wrote a play called THE IMMIGRANT, A HAMILTON COUNTY ALBUM which has had wide success on the stages of the MARK TAPER in L.A. THE ARENA in Washington, D.C. the ALLEY in Houston, THE DENVER CIVIC THEATER, and THE GEARY THEATER in San Francisco.

Haskell Harelik passed away August 10, 1987 - three weeks short of his 100th birthday - but his life story lives on in this poignant tribute on stage and possibly on screen.

The Harelik Home
Hamilton, Texas
1937

A note card depicting the Harelik family home and giving a short synopsis of the Harelik family in Hamilton.

CEMETERY PROJECT REPORT

by Don Teter (Baytown)

One of the largest cemeteries in the state is the Beth Yeshurun Allen Parkway Cemetery in Houston. The synagogue furnished a print-out of the names, death date and burial date of those interred there. We needed the birth and death dates as shown on the markers for our records.

So Sunday, June 9, was designated as the work day. The synagogue announced in its newsletter that volunteers were needed and four in addition to Gertrude and myself showed up.

Shirley and Marvin Rich, Manet Schepps, Isabel Marmelstein, Gertrude and I documented almost all of the cemetery in about five hours. I completed the remainder on another day. We found and

corrected several error and omissions on the printout, which the congregation will hopefully appreciate.



Marvin & Shirley Rich & Don Teter taking a census of Beth Yeshurun's Allen Parkway Cemetery in Houston.

This is an example of how this project can be accomplished. There are still several large cemeteries that will need to be documented, and volunteers are needed. The Dallas cemeteries, with the exception of Temple Emanuel, all need to be done and volunteers are needed. I will gladly give all the assistance required and will even work with volunteers.

Another cemetery I have not heard from is Agudas Achim in San Antonio. Anyone wishing to volunteer there,

please contact Don Teter at (713) 424-5829. Help on this worthy project would be appreciated greatly.

THE BROWNS OF EL PASO

by Robert W. Brown (El Paso)

I am not certain that you will want to publish this information, but I thought it might be of some use. Reading the TJHS Newsletter for the fall of '94, I came across the article about the cemetery at Clarksville, Texas.

Years ago while still living in Cleveland, Ohio, I met a girl from Clarksville while she was visiting her grandparents in Cleveland. The family name was **Kushner** and I used to write to her at their place of business which was called **The Hub**. I wrote to her for a couple of years and then went off to college, the Army and then married a beautiful Texan named **Blanche**

Kopilowitz from El Paso, Texas.

The letter writing took place probably around 1938-40. I wonder if anyone in the Society knew of them and what happened to them. I thought you might be interested in this information about the name **Kushner**.

Also, the oral history of Alexander A. Brown caught my attention. Our family name is also **Brown**. I am a retired dairy farmer who at one time had one of the largest herd of milking cows being milked on one farm, in one barn. At the time of the sale of our herd I was milking close to 3,000 Holstein cows. Yes, that's 3,000 cows. I have a degree in Animal Hus-

bandry from Ohio University.

I retired several years ago and now am in investments in real estate with my brother-in-law, **Ben Schoichet**. The other farmers in the area were always amazed that I was a Jewish farmer.

I am always being asked what my name was before **Brown** and they never believe me when I say, "Always Brown!" My folks came from a small town outside of Warsaw, Poland. I don't have the name of it. This article sort of clears up how we got the name **Brown**.

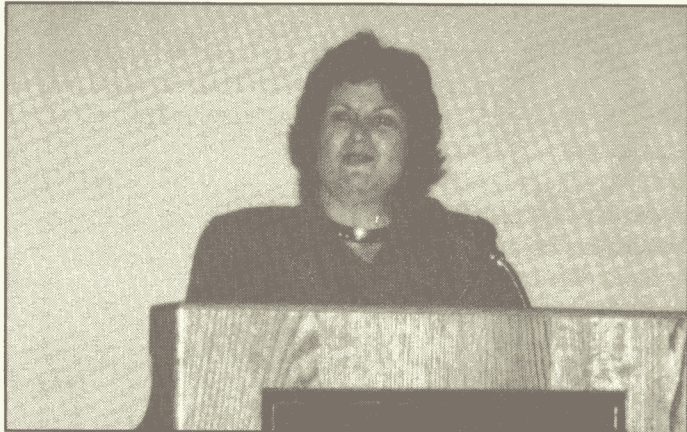
P.S. I know all of the El Paso members and have lunch with Herb Given every Wednesday.

*For a Chanukah present,
why not give your children or grandchildren
a personalized history of your family?*

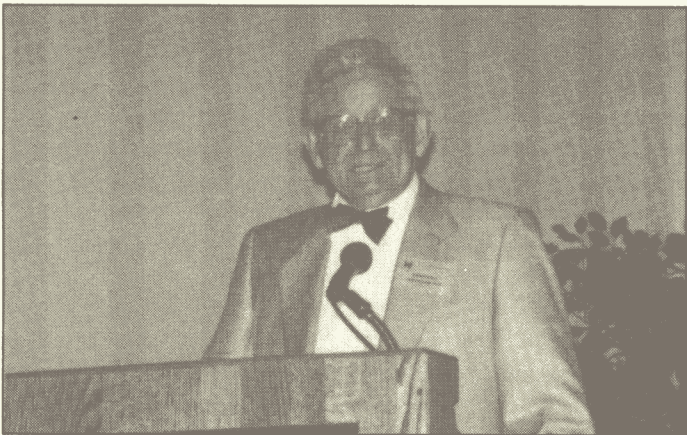
Photos from the Gathering in Houston



Helen Wilk, Oral History Chair, interviewing Coen Rood, a Holocaust survivor from Holland. This special interview took place during the Gathering session on Oral History.



Our feature speaker at the Gathering, the world renowned Genealogist Miriam Weiner. She spoke during the Gathering session on Jewish Genealogy.



Bernard Weingarten of Houston telling of the successful family business (Weingarten's Grocery Stores & Realty) started by his parents, and still thriving today. He spoke during the Gathering session on Jewish Entrepreneurs.



Sol Weiner of Houston telling of the successful family business (Weiner's Department Stores) started by his father, I. Weiner. He spoke during the Gathering session on Jewish Entrepreneurs.



Marshall Mayor Audrey Kariel telling of her experiences serving as the first Jewish woman mayor of her city. She spoke during the Gathering session on Jewish Politicians.



Senator A.R. (Babe) Schwartz of Galveston telling of his experiences in the Texas Legislature. He spoke during the Gathering session on Jewish Politicians.

PROPHET IN A NEW FRONTIER

Rabbi's longtime ministry in Corpus Christi crossed denominational, racial and social boundaries
by Hollace Ava Weiner of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram (reprinted here with her permission)



Rabbi Sidney A. Wolf as a young man

Rabbi Sidney A. Wolf was no stranger to auditions. A musician by feel and a theologian by training, he paid his way through the seminary as a piano man performing in barrooms and ballrooms everything from boogie woogie to Bach.

Three months past his ordination and still without a congregation in the depths of the Great Depression, he anxiously accepted an offer from 70 Jews in Corpus Christi for a three-month trial at \$31.25 a week.

He stayed 50 years.

Cleveland-born and Ohio-educated, Wolf spent the rest of his life working for harmony — symphonic and civic — in a Gulf Coast port where bales of cotton bulged along the docks and oil spouted on the golf course.

Improvising from the start, the rabbi invited Christians to worship with Jews, a move so rare in 1930's America that *Time* magazine reported on the service. He taught English to Mexican-Americans and invited African-American speakers to preach from his pulpit in an ethnically splintered town.

"When Sidney retired, the bishop gave him this hat," said the rabbi's widow, Bebe Wolf, twirling a bright pink skullcap that is the mark of a Catholic bishop.

To the 30,000 people of Corpus Christi, the rabbi with the slight build and the resonant bass voice seemed a prophet in a new frontier. The blue-eyed, brown-haired, studious man of God was the first Hebrew pastor to settle into their isolated city on the lip of the bay.

So rare was a rabbi in the region that when Wolf spoke one night at the Methodist church in neighboring Bishop, every light in the farm town was turned out except at the church, where the entire populace had gathered to see what a rabbi was. To Texans accustomed to twangs and harangues from the pulpit, the young clergyman with the Midwestern accent seemed a moral mix of mainstream America and ancient tradition.

Sidney Abraham Wolf arrived by steam train in Corpus Christi in the hot summer of 1932. He was a curious picture: a 26-year-old with rimless glasses pinched to his nose, wearing a pair of striped trousers, a white shirt and a frock jacket that extended to mid-thigh. To this coastal city awash in sun and white sand, he carried an umbrella.

"This is a rainless town," the rabbi wrote years later in his memoirs. "I must have presented quite a figure."

Although his congregation of 70 souls seemed relatively well-to-do — their stores lined Leopard Street and some had homes dotting the prestigious bluff overlooking the bay — the synagogue they escorted him to on an inconspicuous corner was in his words, only a "simple shack."

"To heat the structure there was a potbellied stove and for cooling, a few well-placed electric fans," he wrote in his memoirs. "On Sunday mornings when the children met for classes, we managed somehow to divide the one room into classrooms with burlap curtains for walls. There were no screens on the windows and the pews consisted of hard folding chairs. A pump organ that wheezed more than it gave any semblance of musical sound was

played to accompany a choir."

For his first wedding service four months later at Temple Beth El, the diminutive rabbi mounted a platform to appear as tall as the bride and groom. For his own wedding, he returned to Cincinnati and married Sara Phillips in June 1933.

Sara — slender, stately, blond — shared the rabbi's love of music. The couple had met two years before when he and other students at Hebrew Union College visited her home to hear her father's recording of Tchaikowsky's *Fourth Symphony*.

For Sara and Sidney, the music faded in January 1936. Pregnant with their first child, she traveled from Texas back to Ohio and into the bitter cold, for the final weeks of her confinement. Six days after the birth of a son nicknamed "Pinney," short for Phincas, she died of double pneumonia.

The rabbi, who stood sentry at her deathbed, was devastated, yet he couldn't linger to mourn. He had two weddings scheduled the next weekend in Texas. Leaving the infant in the care of his mother-in-law, he dispiritedly made the slow train ride home.

"It seemed that my own little private world had come to an end," he wrote three decades later. "Disconsolate, I returned to Corpus Christi a crushed and devastatingly lonely man."

During that bleak winter, the rabbi was comforted by his Episcopal colleague and neighbor, the Rev. William Capers Munds, rector of The Church of the Good Shepherd. Like the rabbi, Munds was from Cleveland; like the rabbi, he had an extensive collection of classical recordings; and like the rabbi, he had Sunday afternoons free.

"We used to meet on Sunday afternoons to play records," says church member Arthur Elliott, an oil company accountant at the time. "The rector had a good phonograph, a Victor. It was a big box. Sidney would explain what the record was, the circumstances under which that symphony was composed. Then we would play the music."

Elliott, now 90, recalls that there was no local symphony then, but these soirees would provide the impetus for launching one. The main entertainment in those days was indoors — dancing at the Nueces Hotel — and outdoors — watching the drawbridge open and close for tanker ships crossing the bay.

“There was not so much to do,” remembers oilman George Farenthold, 78, a Catholic and a cotton farmer, who got to know the rabbi through the Rotary Club and the country club. “The *Caller* came out in the morning and the *Times* in the evening. You would wait for the afternoon paper, *Time* and *Life* — we read those magazines assiduously.”

When the Nov. 30, 1936, edition of *Time* hit the stands, Corpus Christi got its first 15 minutes of fame. There were Rabbi Wolf and the Rev. Munds featured in the magazine’s religion section, side by side, the rector in a robe, the rabbi in his frock coat. The accompanying article spotlighted the interfaith Thanksgiving service they had started two years before, a joint worship experiment so embedded in Corpus Christi it continues to the present.

“Corpus Christi’s interfaith venture, probably unique in the U.S., owes much to the caliber of its brotherly shepherds,” the anonymous *Time* reporter wrote.

Those shepherds also met some of their flock on the country club golf course — thanks to the half-price membership of \$300 extended to men of the cloth. Rabbi Wolf played golf with Elliott, his Episcopal friend who remembers the rabbi as “...a miserable golfer. He did it for the exercise.”

The fellowship was congenial and interdenominational. No one worried about the tab. Oil had been discovered on the golf course, so there were no monthly bills, but rather oil royalty checks to members totaling up to \$10 per month, Farenthold recalls.

Rabbi Wolf had come to Texas during what was a formative time for Corpus Christi. Oil derricks were being erected in and around the vicinity throughout the 1930’s. The “black gold,” which sold for 85 cents a barrel compared to \$14 today, didn’t turn Corpus Christi into an overnight boom town. But as the number of wells exploded from 60 rigs in 1935 to 894 by 1937, newcomers moved in and kept the city from going bust during the Great Depression.

Cotton was still king in this elbow of the Gulf Coast. During picking and shipping season, migrant workers who earned \$1.25 a day crowded the docks and shopped at Jewish-owned stores such as Weil’s

Grocery. For special gifts — a watch fob or a flapper dress — folks spent their dollars at Lichtenstein’s, the home-grown Jewish department store.

Buoyed by the economic upturn, Temple Beth El’s board of directors tore down their wooden tabernacle and broke ground in 1936 for a \$33,000 Moorish-style, stucco synagogue. The Jewish commu-

nity had inched up to 150 members, and the local populace had climbed past 40,000.

“It was becoming a boom town,” Elliott says, sighing, “but there still weren’t many pretty women here.”

The rabbi, young and single a second time around, likewise realized that eligible women were few, and less so among the miniscule Jewish community. Surveying his congregation, he counted 42 bachelors and launched a singles group to ease his loneliness. He wrote about organizing a so-called bachelor’s club “for the purpose of pooling our problems, hopefully to attract the attention of eligible young ladies.”

Some dates came by train from San Antonio, decked out in wide-brimmed hats, cloth gloves and tailored Kelly-girl suits. They picnicked. They danced. And they paired off into couples.

The matchmaking worked for so many that by the summer of 1937, the bachelor club was disbanding with the rabbi still a lone Wolf ... until friends from his hometown of Cleveland interceded with the address of an unattached Jewish girl from a musical family in Louisiana.

After an initial exchange of letters, the lonely rabbi took a night train 450 miles to Lafayette, La., to meet his blind date. It was love at first sight. A five-month courtship and a 46-year marriage followed.

The woman the rabbi met in Lafayette was a spunky native of Chantilly, France, 20 miles outside of Paris. She was the youngest of five sisters, born in 1912 and named Bertha Rosenthal but called “Bebe” because she was the baby of the bunch.

Bebe had grown up in a house filled with music and intellect. Her paternal grandfather was a champion chess player. Her mother taught piano in France and later in America. Two of her sisters moved to Louisiana as young adults to live with relatives; and when Bebe’s father died in 1933, the rest of the family migrated to the bayou region.

Unlike the rabbi’s first wife, Bebe was dark-haired and dark-eyed, with a foreigner’s flair for turning a phrase. To her tongue, the local Loaves & Fishes soup kitchen was “*fishers and loafers*.” She joined the board of Planned Parenthood, and when her husband delivered an unpopular sermon — promoting birth control in 1947 or opposing the Vietnam War in the 1960’s — she bluntly assessed the reaction: “Not everybody loved it.”

When she was invited to teach sex education to the most unruly class of teenagers at the temple, the rabbi’s spouse let parents and religious educators know she would teach on her own terms:

“There is nothing going to be hidden,” she said. “We are going to talk about homosexuals...IUDs...pulling out... We are going to be embarrassed. We are going to get used to it. Children love frankness and honesty.”

Just as Bebe was no straitlaced pastor’s wife, Sidney was no Bible-thumping clergyman. This eldest of three children, born on Dec. 8, 1906, he was the offspring of a Polish father and Lithuanian mother, immigrants to America who spoke Yiddish at home. He felt that they steered him



Rabbi Sidney Wolf & the Reverend Munds as shown in *Time Magazine*.

more toward religion than music; his Hebrew tutoring started at age 5, and piano lessons were delayed until he was 7.

Sidney's religious upbringing had an Orthodox — or fundamentalist — Jewish bent, with adherence to dietary restrictions and introspective discussions of biblical passages. Throughout high school, he attended the Cleveland Jewish Center. Because his two best friends and classmates were planning to become less traditional Reform rabbis, Sidney listened to their reasoning and followed suit.

"I was more drawn to the Reform rabbinate where it appeared to me that the men were more community-minded," he wrote in his memoirs.

Bebe likewise hailed from a community-oriented background. Outwardly her family was more French than Jewish, and more musical than anything else. Once Bebe met Sidney, they played duets at the keyboard and worked in concert, their own, for as long as they both lived.

As newlyweds, they had planned an extended six-month honeymoon in Texas without Sidney's 2-year-old son. But when Bebe realized that the tot's caretaker-grandmother in Cincinnati was disabled by arthritis and that Sidney carried a weight of guilt over the separation from his child, the new bride said, "Enough."

Three months after their marriage in June 1938, the rabbi retrieved his child. Bebe said it was her decision. She had "cleaned up his life and put everything back together."

With Bebe and Pinney on board, the Wolf home became a veritable synagogue annex. Here the confirmation class of a dozen members met to study religion and consume the hamburgers Bebe served on a huge wicker platter; here bar mitzvah boys came to listen to classical music, then listen to the rabbi impatiently correct their Hebrew diction; here Jewish families and Catholic sisters convened for an annual

Passover holiday meal.

As Bebe and Sidney settled into the rhythm of their married life, the winds of war were blowing across Europe. Beginning in 1934, the first of 35 refugee families fleeing the Nazi terror came to Corpus Christi. One of the first to arrive was



Rabbi Wolf with his beloved wife, Bebe

Elizabeth Reck from Dresden. She came alone, arriving fully a year before her fiancée, Otto Kuehn, managed his escape. Because Elizabeth was Lutheran and Otto was Jewish, they could not wed or court openly in Hitler's Germany. Safe in

South Texas, they married, though paranoia lingered.

Elizabeth remembers that "When I walked with Otto down the street in Corpus Christi, I looked around. I thought the Gestapo was after me. For a long time I had that fear."

The reality of impending war hit home for the rest of Corpus Christi in March 1941, when Congress created the Naval Air Station, the world's largest such facility, at the southern entrance to Corpus Christi Bay.

As men in uniform streamed into town, the population doubled. Synagogue attendance swelled as well. Rabbi Wolf volunteered his services as auxiliary chaplain, welcoming servicemen to his home for weekend open houses and Jewish weddings in the parlor.

"Every Sunday we didn't know who was coming to dinner," recalls Bebe, the indefatigable caterer of the buffets. Bebe also stood in as mother of the war brides, taking long-distance instructions from relatives who inevitably had last-minute requests. One mother phoned repeatedly from New York, telling Bebe, "Don't forget to put her veil down her face."

War united Corpus Christi ... and divided it. During one of the Rotary Club's Thursday meetings at the old Plaza Hotel,

Rabbi Wolf bristled when a fellow Rotarian declared that "the Jews should buy more war bonds. If they did not, then Hitler would come over here and give Sidney Wolf a pickaxe and order him to dig."

As Wolf rose to counter the speaker, a minister restrained him. Instead of the rabbi taking issue, a prominent businessman stood to brand the remarks out of order and in conflict with the spirit of Rotary.

Although Jews represented less than one-half of 1 percent of the city's population, 10 percent of the local boys in uniform were Jewish. When the war took the life of Mayor Robert T. Wilson's son, the rabbi mourned with the Protestant mayor. And in postwar 1946, when the rabbi convened a banquet at the Driscoll Hotel to raise money for Europe's displaced Jews, he invited the mayor to offer the customary greetings to the Jewish community.

Instead of platitudes, the mayor "in a subdued but deeply moving voice, pledged \$5,000 in memory of his beloved son, who had lost his life on the battlefields of Europe," the rabbi wrote. "Whereupon it seemed as if the whole crowd rose en masse to its feet to follow the Mayor's example, raising its pledges to meet an astronomical sum" — \$126,611.

By then, the rabbi's stature extended well beyond the city's pulpits, deep into the secular community.

Although he kept a low profile, he was well-known in town and respected as a humanitarian," recalls Dr. Hector Garcia, founder of the American GI Forum, one of the nation's oldest Hispanic civil-rights organizations. "Any time the poor people needed help with money or jobs or food, we would send them to the rabbi. He was one of those people who served everybody."

Ever certain that music nourishes a community's soul, the rabbi was instrumental in founding the Corpus Christi Symphony in 1945. The orchestra made its debut in the seaport's largest hall, a 600-seat auditorium at Corpus Christi High School.

"The acoustics weren't too bad," according to Ralph Thibodeau, former music critic at the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* who also taught music at the city's Del Mar College.

"We had a 40-piece orchestra then — now it's 75 — and when it started they

didn't have a performing schedule. They would rehearse and rehearse, and when they were ready they just put an ad in the paper," Thibodeau says.

The symphony's founding president was the rabbi. Its program annotator was the rabbi. Its radio promoter was the rabbi. "This is Sidney Wolf, your musical companion," he would announce over the local airwaves.

When the symphony performed Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, the rabbi narrated. The audience delighted in the pun on his name and his unforgettable bass

voice, which his friend Thibodeau rated "as good as any movie star's."

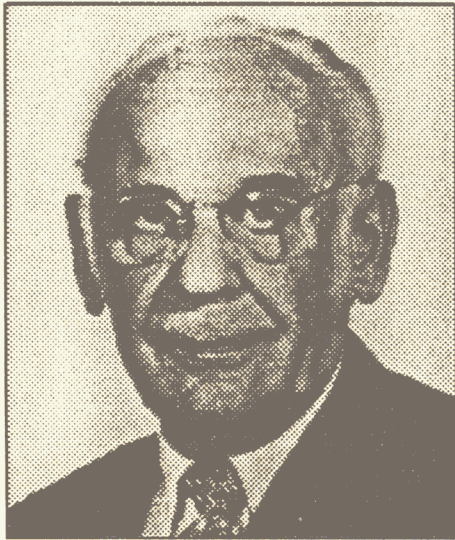
Thibodeau, a tenor, got to know the rabbi personally by substituting in the Temple Beth El choir: "As a liberal Catholic, I felt close to Reform Judaism. When I went to the temple, there was nothing in the service that offended me in the least. It gave me an indication of where Christianity came from. We have more in common than things to argue about."

Wolf perceived the similarities among religions and believed others should too. In 1948, he began taking his teenage students on annual tours of St. John Baptist Church, an African-American institution. Architect Jack Solka, then a confirmation student at Temple Beth El, remembers vividly the impression these visits made in an era when waiting rooms, water fountains and lunch counters were segregated.

"Rather than the typical blond angel, the angels on the wall at the church were black," Solka recalls. "It made me wonder and think. It was a real amazement on my part."

The rabbi wanted to stir similar inter-racial thinking among the adults in his congregation. So one Friday night in 1950, during the reception after Sabbath services, Rabbi Wolf tossed out the idea of featuring a black minister in his pulpit in observance of Brotherhood Week.

Bebe Wolf remembers: "Some people said, 'Why be the first one, rabbi?' Others said it was not the right time. Afterward I asked him, 'Sidney: What are you going to do?' And he said, 'I've already done it!'"



Rabbi Sidney A. Wolf

The next Friday evening, the first black minister preached from the pulpit at Temple Beth El — the Rev. Sidney R. Smith of the First Congregational Church. With the minister were his wife, Beulah Smith, along with the choir she directed at the segregated Solomon M. Coles High School.

The student choir returned year after year for subse-

quent Inter-Racial Relations Sabbaths, but with different speakers. Among them were a dentist who integrated Corpus Christi's prestigious Ocean Drive, but not without a lawsuit against a home builder; and a physician who called on the rabbi's influence when the local hospitals refused to admit his African-American patients.

Thelma Spencer Caesar, who sang the Hallelujah Chorus with the black high school choir, looked forward to the annual engagement: "The synagogue had the handsomest men and the people were so friendly. People would introduce themselves — Mr. Grossman, Mr. Kane, the Wolfsons ... It sort of gave you a good feeling that these people knew something about what you were going through."

When African-Americans fought to integrate the city's municipal golf course in the early 1950's, Sidney Wolf pushed the measure through while sitting on the Park and Recreation Department Board. In 1953, when blacks complained that they were still barred from golf course concessions, locker rooms and showers, Wolf was irate.

"We don't hesitate to collect taxes from everybody," the rabbi told the board. "These men are only asking for elementary rights. They want to be able to buy a Coke or use a locker. It is not for us to feel that we can grant or withhold these rights

at our own discretion." A motion to integrate the facilities passed unanimously.

"All of this was most unusual in Corpus Christi, as well as for the South as a matter of fact," says the Rev. Harold T. Branch, minister at St. John Baptist for a 32-year span and the first black elected to the Corpus Christi City Council in 1971.

During the 60's, when Hispanics and blacks pushed for tri-ethnic composition on city boards and commissions, they counted on the rabbi's moral persuasion to secure Anglo backing.

"Rabbi Wolf was a link between the Hispanic community and not only the Jewish community but, in a way, the establishment," recalls Corpus Christi attorney Tony Bonilla. "If all else might fail, call Rabbi Wolf."

Twice the rabbi seriously pondered leaving Corpus Christi: Once after his first wife died, to be closer to his infant son; and later during the war years, when a Toronto synagogue courted him, offering a larger pulpit in a more culturally sophisticated region.

By then the rabbi was entrenched in South Texas and committed to the war-time effort at the Naval base. His oldest son, Pinney, seemed pure Texan. Joanne, the daughter born to Sidney and Bebe Wolf in 1940, was starting school.

"I never heard any regrets over the decision to stay," Bebe said.

When Rabbi Wolf moved to Texas from Ohio, he left a region with thousands of Jews for a community with less than four score. At first he was a curiosity, but soon he was a key player, whether imitating a wolf at a children's concert or marching for public accommodations.

Three months before the rabbi's death from cancer in February 1983, the Corpus Christi City Council, by then presiding over a town of 231,000 proclaimed a "Rabbi Sidney Wolf Day." And when he died, the newspaper eulogized him on its editorial pages.

The Cleveland-born rabbi who went to Corpus Christi for a three-month tryout had found his calling in a town named for the body of Christ.

A revised version of this article is to be included in a book called The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights. A great deal of information in this biographical essay is derived from primary source materials gathered by Helen Wilk of the TJHS.

LIFE IN VICTORIA, TEXAS

by Gary S. Branfman, M.D. (Victoria)

My family and I have been living in Victoria for the past four years and have found it an absolutely delightful community. I established the Victoria Plastic Surgery Center in 1991. This was an excellent opportunity since the community had never had a plastic surgeon prior to my arrival.

It was essential for my family and for myself to investigate the Jewish community prior to our relocation. Our investigation revealed that the **Congregation B'nai Israel** was informally organized in 1858 by five pioneer families and has served the Jewish community in Victoria for 131 years. Prior to 1858, part of Evergreen Cemetery was set aside for those of the Jewish faith. Headstones date back to 1853. As early as 1849 local Jewish services were conducted by rabbis from Houston, Galveston, and New Orleans.

The congregation was formally reorganized in 1872. **Abraham Levi** served as president of the congregation until 1901. He was succeeded by his son, **Godcheax Levi**, who served as president until 1906. **Simon Levy**, followed by his son **Jake Levy**, then served several years in that office. Since then, a new president has been elected annually.

Dr. M.G. Soloman was the first resident rabbi of **Temple B'nai Israel**. He was followed by **Dr. M.M. Sessler** who served from 1907 until 1909. The congregation has not had a resident rabbi for many years. Services have been conducted by lay readers. Among the first lay readers were **G.A. Levi**, **Mose L. Potash**, and **R. Kleinsmith** who served as reader for more than 25 years. **Izzy Bettin** followed for the next 15 years. Since then, various members of the congrega-

tion have served as lay readers. From 1980 through 1987, **Rabbi James Kessler** was Victoria's full-time, non-resident rabbi.

The Temple B'nai Israel Sisterhood, formerly known as the Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society, was organized in 1871 by **Mrs. Ben Alexander**, who also served as the first president. The B'nai B'rith Max Bettin Lodge No. 212 was founded in 1875.

When the congregation was first organized, services were conducted above the Old Telephone Building on Main Street in the site that was later occupied by Dunlap's Department Store. The congregation later met in the Masonic Hall. The present Temple was built in 1923.

The first Jewish immigrants came to Victoria from the Alsace-Lorraine area of Germany near the French border. Some of the early Jewish families including the **Levis**, **Oppheimers**, **Wertheimers**, **Alexanders**, and **Potashes** came by way of New Orleans. Between 1900 and 1912 the **Bettins**, **Elkowitz**, **Lerners**, **Slotnicks**, **Lazors**, **Simons**, and **Geitzes** came through the port of Galveston.

Today, the Victoria Jewish community numbers about 100 people. Although we are a small congregation, monthly services are conducted by visiting rabbis and cantors. There is an active Sunday School with an experienced religious school/Hebrew educator from Houston, and currently there are five children preparing for Bar/Bat Mitzvahs.

If you wish to correspond with Dr. Branfman, his address and phone number follow: 601 East San Antonio St., Suite 402; DeTar Medical Plaza, West Tower; Victoria, TX 77901; phone (512) 572-9833.



(L to R): Don Teter, Ima Joy Gandler, Fay Brachman & Blanche Sheiness. Photo taken during the TJHS trip to Brownsville, McAllen and the Valley this past February.

"Money"

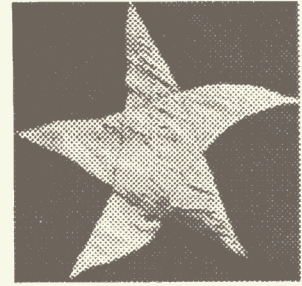
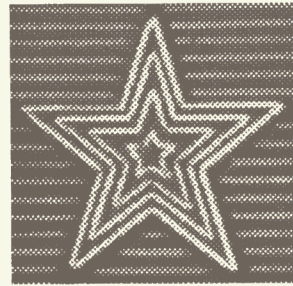
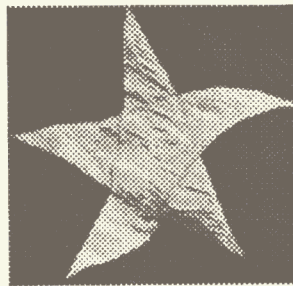
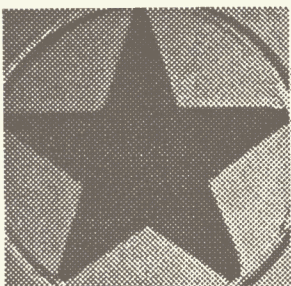
by Richard Armour

Workers earn it, Spendthrifts burn it,
 Bankers lend it, Women spend it,
 Forgers fake it, Taxes take it,
 Dying leave it, Heirs receive it,
 Thrifty save it, Misers crave it,
 Robbers seize it, Rich increase it,
 Gamblers lose it . . . I could use it.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

Dr. & Mrs. B. J. Caplan *Arlington*
 Dr. & Mrs. Neil Gurwitz *Bastrop*
 Mrs. Henry Kasman *Bay City*
 Mr. & Mrs. Abraham I. Miller *Beaumont*
 Debby Hein *Bedford*
 Jane & Stuart Weil *Bellaire*
 Mr. Ralph L. Frapart *Brownsville*
 Mr. & Mrs. Irwin Reizenman *Brownsville*
 Mr. & Mrs. Davis A. Fahlquist *Bryan*
 Mr. & Mrs. Richard Karon *Colleyville*
 Dr. Kalman Shwartz *Corsicana*
 Ms. Marion Edelstein Cohn *Dallas*
 Charlotte Dubin *Dallas*
 Mr. & Mrs. Jack Eisenberg *Dallas*
 Mr. R.L. Glazer *Dallas*
 Ollie Goldfarb *Dallas*
 Mr. & Mrs. Harry Goodman *Dallas*
 Mrs. Meyer H. Grassman *Dallas*
 Mrs. Lois Kravetz *Dallas*
 Leon Levine *Dallas*
 David Newman *Dallas*
 Evelyn Oppenheimer *Dallas*
 Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Pincus *Dallas*
 Mrs. Morton H. Sanger *Dallas*
 Sarah L. Siegel *Dallas*
 Mrs. Steven Spiritas *Dallas*
 Mr. & Mrs. Edward Tonkon *Dallas*
 Mrs. Sol Wald *Dallas*
 Mrs. Reuben Williams *Dallas*
 Mrs. Dorothy L. Wolchansky *Dallas*
 Mrs. Orien Woolf *Dallas*
 Mr. & Mrs. Meyer Berke *El Paso*
 Judge Morris A. Galatzan *El Paso*
 Mr. & Mrs. Bob Given *El Paso*
 Mr. & Mrs. Judd Vermillion *El Paso*
 Mr. & Mrs. Ed Bond *Fort Worth*
 Mrs. Sadye Maye Garsek *Fort Worth*

Mr. & Mrs. David Luskey *Fort Worth*
 Mr. & Mrs. James Rosenthal *Fort Worth*
 Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Taylor *Fort Worth*
 Mr. & Mrs. Alfred Dricks *Galveston*
 Mr. & Mrs. Morris Framer *Galveston*
 Dr. Marilyn Marx *Galveston*
 Mr. & Mrs. David Simmons *Galveston*
 Joan B. Brotman *Harlingen*
 Dr. & Mrs. J. Cohen *Harlingen*
 Mr. & Mrs. Charles Feldman *Harlingen*
 Mr. & Mrs. Albert Wolf, Jr. *Harlingen*
 Laurel Agris *Houston*
 Mr. & Mrs. Frank Bearden *Houston*
 Shirley & Allen Becker *Houston*
 Mr. & Mrs. Eddie Brook *Houston*
 Mr. & Mrs. William Coorsh *Houston*
 Mr. & Mrs. Richard Fox *Houston*
 Patsy Morganstern Graham *Houston*
 Ms. Vivian Levin *Houston*
 Ms. Marsha Amdur Malev *Houston*
 Dr. & Mrs. Ralph H. Minchen *Houston*
 Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Wetcher *Houston*
 Ms. Birdie Wheeler *Houston*
 Mr. & Mrs. Ronnie Winter *Houston*
 Mrs. Rosalie Weisfeld *McAllen*
 Dr. Frank Kasman *Midland*
 Dr. Wayne Margolis *Nederland*
 Mr. & Mrs. Roy Elsner *Odessa*
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Glast *Odessa*
 Mr. & Mrs. David J. Kaplan *Plano*
 Dr. Sol D. Lurie *Richardson*
 Dr. Adam S. Miner *Richardson*
 Mr. & Mrs. Herschel L. Sheiness *San Antonio*
 Mr. & Mrs. C. Selig *Seguin*
 Mrs. Don Perry *Wetmore, TX*
 Mr. & Mrs. Albert Gerrick *Encino, CA*



**The 1995-1996 TJHS Yearbook will be out soon.
Do we have your correct name, address & phone number listed?
If not, call Debbye Rice at (817) 332-1610 to make corrections.
Thank you.**

Kudos to Membership Chair Fay Brachman

Look at the list of New Members in this edition of the TJHS Newsletter. Our organization just keeps growing leaps and bounds. It is certainly thanks in part to **Fay Brachman**, our able Membership Chair. Her phone keeps ringing off the wall with new members who want to join our ranks.

Fay is happy to announce that the Texas Jewish History Society now has over 720 family memberships and we are still growing steadily.

If anyone needs membership brochures to hand out, or want brochures mailed to friends, please let Fay Brachman know.

Call Fay Brachman at (817) 924-9207.

"Deep In The Heart" ERRATA

A final list of corrections for errors in our book, *Deep In The Heart*, is being gathered. TJHS is saddened to announce that "Yes, folks, there are errors in the book!" But we are hoping to correct this now — once and for all.

We have received information for corrections by word of mouth and in written form.

If you know of any corrections, *even if you have submitted them previously*, please jot the errors down — along with the correct information and any known source of verification — along with the page number of the error, and send these to:

**TJHS ERRATA
P.O. Box 10193
Austin, TX
78766-0193**

TEXAS JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

I am enclosing my dues payment of: **\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1,000**
to the Texas Jewish Historical Society for the 1993-1994 membership year.

<i>Membership Classification:</i>	\$25-Annual Member	\$50-Supporting Member	\$100-Sponsor
	\$250-Sustaining Member	\$500-Benefactor	\$1,000-Patron

Name: _____

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT CLEARLY IN INK

Name of Spouse: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Tel #: _____ Office Tel #: _____ Fax #: _____

My areas of interest are: _____

*Contributions to TJHS are tax deductible within the limits of the law.
Please clip and send to TJHS, P.O. Box 10193, Austin, TX 78766-0193.*

DATE TO REMEMBER

Sunday — October 22, 1995

**1995 FALL
OPEN BOARD MEETING**

San Angelo, Texas

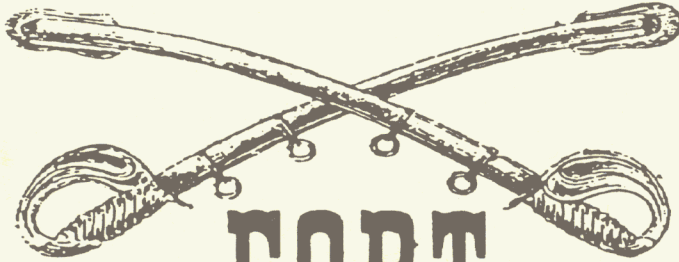
(713) 494-2668 for information

**NEWSLETTER
PUBLICATION
SCHEDULE**

<u>Issue Date</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
Fall 1995	August 20, 1995
Winter 1995	Oct. 25, 1995

Please send materials for the Newsletter to:

DEBBYE RICE
P.O. BOX 2200
FORT WORTH, TX 76113-2200
or Fax: (817) 877-5450



**FORT
CONCHO**
NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARK

*See you in
San Angelo
the weekend of
October 21st & 22nd
for our next TJHS
Open Board Meeting*

TEXAS JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 10193

Austin, Texas 78766-0193

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