



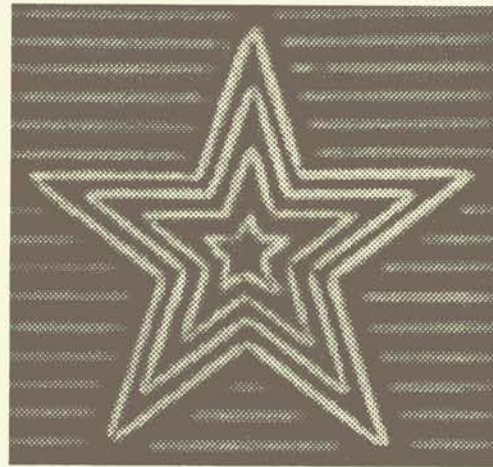
NEWSLETTER

P. O. Box 10193

Austin, Texas 78766-0193

JANUARY 1996

BEAUMONT



COME ONE — COME ALL

TJHS Winter Open Board Meeting

Sunday — January 28 — 9:00 AM

Beaumont Ramada Inn

2525 North 11th Street

NEWS FROM OUR PRESIDENT



BARBARA ROSENBERG

Dear Members,

THANKS TO ALL THOSE WHO HELPED make our San Angelo meeting a success! And to all of our adventurous members who found a way to get to a location which is very difficult to reach by air. I believe we had one of the best turnouts ever for a quarterly meeting. We even had front page news coverage in the local newspaper and a very nice article the following week as well.

We were able to attend services at Congregation Beth Israel, built in 1928. As **Don Teter** pointed out, this is one of the oldest synagogue buildings in Texas still holding services regularly. Every Friday night there is a service, even if a minyan is not present. **Al Ray** is the lay leader now; he also makes many of the repairs and carries out much of the necessary maintenance. The **Polunsky** families (**Robert and Nancy, Syl and Carol**) also carefully oversee the building. In fact, **Syl and Carol** were having new doors hung at the main entrance the Friday afternoon we arrived. There had been a terrible hail storm and tornado a few months earlier which damaged the synagogue severely. The roof had leaked, the lower floor was flooded, and the stained glass windows which had survived the severe West Texas winds, hail, dust storms, and tornadoes for well over half a century, were severely damaged. However, with a great deal of effort, the building was made ready for the crowd from the TJHS — a crowd that little building had not held for many, many years.

If anyone knows of a good stained glass artisan who could help repair those windows — very economically — it would really be a *mitzvah*. There are but a handful of Jewish people remaining in the San Angelo community, and none have as yet attempted antique glass repair!

After the service, we had a lovely Oneg under the direction of **Nancy Polunsky**, who frequently leads tours of the synagogue for school and church groups. **Nancy** also serves the San Angelo community with her involvement in many volunteer capacities and board positions. Handling the registration for TJHS and the Oneg must have been a *piece of cake* for her.

On Saturday morning we heard papers presented on several topics. **Dr. Ralph Chase** spoke about the founder and developer of San Angelo, **Marcus Koenigheim**. **B.J. Mayer** spoke about her husband's family, particularly **Sol Mayer**, a generous rancher and philanthropist. **Brian Cohen** reviewed the Jewish history of Abilene, and I gave a paper about an early Jewish post trader

at Fort Clark in the 1880's and his confrontation with the animosity of a commanding officer.

Saturday afternoon we toured Jewish sites including a building which housed a Jewish business in the late 1880's, other more recent Jewish business sites, the **Sol Mayer** home, other restored historic buildings, and a bordello museum. (The *fellas* seemed to enjoy that museum — it was worth climbing the stairs to meet the costumed "lady" who led our tour).

That evening we toured Ft. Concho, a restored cavalry fort, and had the commissary to ourselves as we feasted on barbecue and listened to a great tongue-in-cheek description by **Steven Polunsky** about growing up Jewish in a small town. **Steven** survived it — perhaps thrived on it — and now lives in Austin with his wife and family. We also heard about the **Hoffman Brothers** from Comanche.

Our business meeting was held on Sunday morning, but as usual we seemed to have more business than time, so you will have the opportunity to continue that segment of our activities as we meet in Beaumont on January 27 and 28. Sorry, guys, Hallmark and the Jewish calendar left off Superbowl Sunday, so we didn't realize that when we set the date. Since there won't be any Texas teams playing, maybe it won't matter. Hopefully, you can get back home in time for it.

Hope to see you in Beaumont on January 27-28 and then in Longview and East Texas for our Annual Gathering March 14-17.

Congratulations are in order: Congratulations, Best Wishes and a hearty Mazel Tov to **Peggy Samet Fine** who married **Mel Fine** just after Thanksgiving. That's certainly one way to get us a new member!

In Memoriam: **Dr. Jacob Marcus**, noted Jewish historian, recently passed away. He was instrumental in our founding of the Texas Jewish Historical Society and addressed us by video at our Bar Mitzvah thirteen year commemoration. He will be missed by all who knew him and those who benefited from his knowledge and joy of life.

B'Shalom,

Barbara Rosenberg

Barbara Rosenberg
TJHS President



THE TEXAS JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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P. O. Box 10193, Austin Texas 78766-0193.

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WINTER OPEN BOARD MEETING TO BE HELD IN BEAUMONT

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UR NEXT Open Board Meeting of the Texas Jewish Historical Society will be held in **Beaumont** the weekend of **January 27 and 28** at the **Beaumont Ramada Inn**. The hotel is located at **2525 North 11th Street** and their phone number is **(409) 898-2111**. Please phone the hotel directly for reservations and men-

tion that you are requesting the special rate for the TJHS meeting. The rate should be \$45 per night per room.

Our special thanks to **Rosalind Horwitz** of Beaumont for making the arrangements for us. She has reserved space for us at **Patrizi's Italian restaurant** for dinner on Saturday evening. Then we will go to the Temple for dessert and a talk by **Rabbi Peter Hyman** and some of the representatives of Beaumont families. Please call

Rosalind at 409-892-8348 to let her know how many to expect.

Don Teter, Nominating Committee Chair, would like to know who wants to serve on the board or as an officer and who does not wish to serve any longer. Please call or write **Don Teter** and express your desires no later than February 15th. If you have been an officer (one year term) or trustee (two year term) for three consecutive terms, you must relinquish the position. If you have not attended at least one board meeting during the calendar year, you are expected to resign your position. Members who have not previously served as officers or trustees are encouraged and welcome to take a more active part in the society. Write **Don Teter** at 5013 Glenhaven, Baytown, Texas 77521; call him at (713) 424-5829.

It is not too soon to begin making plans for our Annual Gathering in Longview. Mark your calendars for March 14-17. Hope to see you in Beaumont on the 27th and 28th of January!

ON THE DEATH OF RABBI JACOB RADER MARCUS, Ph.D.

by Rabbi Jimmy Kessler, DHL, & TJHS Past President



DR. JACOB RADER MARCUS of Cincinnati, Ohio, was the father of American Jewish History as an academic topic, and the teacher for many who now serve the world Jewish community.

AT THE FIRST meeting of the Texas Jewish Historical Society, **Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus** was our guest speaker. **Rabbi Marcus** was the father of American Jewish History as an academic topic, and the teacher for many who now serve the world Jewish community.

Rabbi Marcus' death in November leaves not only the feeling of loss, but also the awareness that an era is ending. He was one of the last great Jewish scholars who trained in Europe and brought that training to American universities and seminaries in the early part of this century. **Dr. Marcus** was the founder and first director of the American Jewish Archives, a past president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the American Jewish Historical Society. He was also an honorary life member of the Texas Jewish Historical Society.

On the occasion of the thirteenth anniversary of the TJHS, a videotape was made of **Dr. Marcus** reflecting upon Texas Jewish history. Clearly, he was very proud

of our accomplishments as an organization for the presence of Jewry in America. He was keenly aware of the number of moribund Jewish historical societies around the country and marveled at the fact that we were alive and well, and one of the largest historical societies functioning.

The Texas Jewish Historical Society was clearly honored to have **Dr. Marcus** celebrate our *Bris* as well as our *Bar Mitzvah*. More over, we were privileged to have him help us set up our constitution and by-laws, and generally help us organize on that weekend in San Antonio almost sixteen years ago.

He was a blessing to us then, he was a blessing thirteen years later, and his memory will continue to be a blessing to us all.

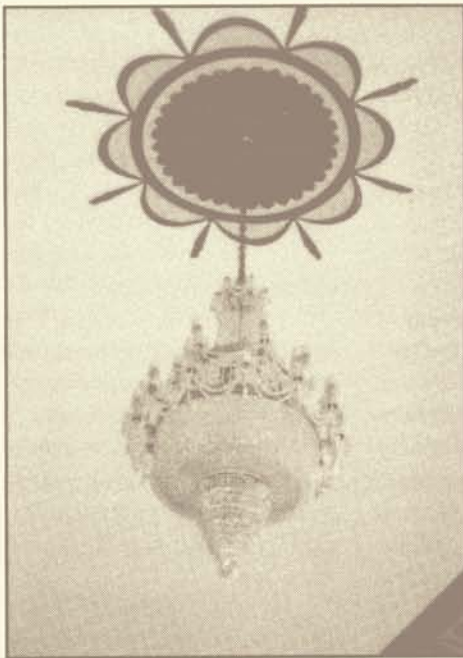
PHOTOS FROM THE LAST TJHS OPEN BOARD MEETING IN SAN ANGELO



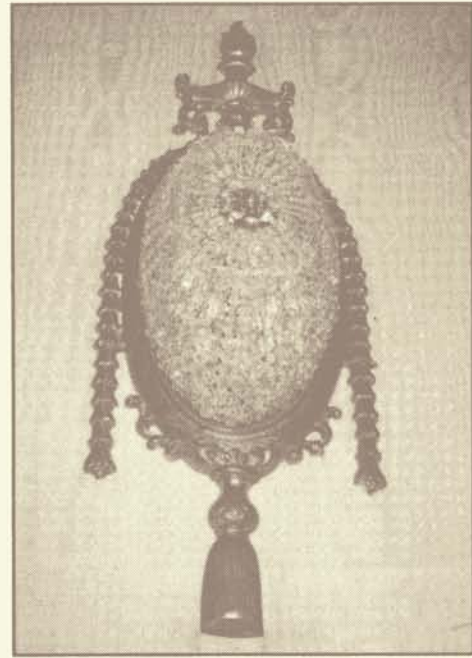
BRIAN COHEN (New York) making a presentation at the Open Board Meeting held in San Angelo October 21-22.



This is a photo of the **CACTUS HOTEL BALLROOM** in which **BARBARA & BEN ROSENBERG** were married in her hometown of San Angelo, Texas. The Cactus Hotel was the first Hilton Hotel in the world and was built personally by Conrad Hilton.



This is a photo of an antique crystal light fixture from the ceiling of the **CACTUS HOTEL BALLROOM** in San Angelo, Texas. The Cactus Hotel has been restored and symphony and jazz concerts are now held in its lobby from time to time.



This is a close-up photo of the detail work on an antique crystal light fixture from the ceiling of the **CACTUS HOTEL BALLROOM**. A special "Thank You" to **RUTHE WINEGARTEN** of Austin, Texas for these great photos.



1996 GATHERING TO BE COMBINED WITH TRIP TO LONGVIEW, JEFFERSON & MARSHALL MARCH 14-17

by Ima Joy Gandler (Waco)

This year the Texas Jewish Historical Society Annual Gathering will be combined with a tour-trip to Longview, Jefferson and Marshall, Texas starting on Thursday, March 14th and ending on Sunday, March 17th. The tentative schedule and arrangements are as follows:

Thursday, March 14

Afternoon Arrive in Longview and check into the *Holiday Inn*; 3119 Estes Parkway, phone (903) 758-0700.

Weekend tour-trip registration in Motel Holidome area.

8:00 PM Group gathers for socializing in Motel Holidome area. Weekend events will be discussed.

Friday, March 15

9:00 AM Bus leaves motel for trip to Jefferson. Visit will be made to the Jewish Cemetery.

You will then be on your own until 12:00 NOON. Walking tour maps of Jefferson will be supplied in the arrival packets along with a copy of *The Jeffersonian*, published by Historic Jefferson Foundation. There is a wonderful museum in a former U.S. Post Office. The Excelsior House Hotel has been in continuous operation since the 1850's. Reading the guest registry is a must. Among the antiques are items the **Weisman-Hirsch families**, formerly of Marshall, gave to the Excelsior House.

12:00 NOON Lunch at the Stillwater Inn, a famous Jefferson restaurant and bed and breakfast facility.

1:30 PM Leave Stillwater Inn for tours of the old Hebrew Sinai Synagogue (now the Playhouse), the Rabbi's house and Jay Gould's (the financier) private railroad car. Tours to be conducted by members of the Jefferson Garden Club.

4:00 PM Bus leaves Jefferson for return to motel in Longview.

6:00 PM Shabbat Dinner at Holiday Inn in Longview.

7:15 PM Bus leaves motel for Temple Emanu-El and Shabbat services. Oneg Shabbat and fellowship follow services.

10:00 PM Bus leaves Temple for Holiday Inn.

Saturday, March 16

7:30 AM Shabbat morning services in motel meeting room.

9:00 AM **Helen Wilk** will do Oral Histories of the **Frenkel family**, Russian immigrants currently residing in Longview.

11:00 AM **Jan Statman** of Longview will talk about her book, *Raisins, Almonds and Oil, Jewish Community in East Texas During the Oil Boom*.

12:00 NOON Buffet Lunch at Holiday Inn.

1:00 PM Bus leaves for Marshall. **Mayor Audrey & Louis Kariel Jr.** of Marshall will be our guides. We will visit the Jewish cemetery which contains artifacts from the old Temple, have a short tour of the Historical Museum, go to the **Michelson** Museum of Art, drive through the town to see historic Jewish places of interest and go to the **Weisman-Hirsch** home.

4:30 PM Bus leaves Marshall for Longview to return to Holiday Inn.

6:00 PM Bus leaves for Pinecrest Country Club.

6:30 PM Cash Bar

7:00 PM Banquet.

Barbara Rosenberg, TJHS President, will be Mistress of Ceremonies.

10:00 PM Bus leaves country club for return to Holiday Inn.

Sunday, March 17

8:00 AM Buffet breakfast in the meeting hall.

9:00 AM TJHS business meeting including election of officers, changing of by-laws regarding annual Gathering date, place, and date for next annual meeting, installation of officers.

11:00 AM Adjournment of meeting.

Please plan to attend this great weekend. It should be educational as well as fun and full of new experiences. For more information, please contact **Ima Joy Gandler** at (817) 772-5717.



MARY MEYERS ROSENFELD OF EL CAMPO, TEXAS – SHE'S STILL GOING STRONG!

by Fay Brachman & Debbye Rice (Fort Worth)

LAST SUMMER, TJHS held its Open Board Meeting in Bay City, Texas. Afterwards several TJHS members ventured over to Wharton for the annual Shearith Israel Barbecue Picnic. This picnic has been going on for years, and is a major reunion for past residents of Wharton, El Campo and surrounding communities.

One of the "finds" our TJHS members found at this barbecue was a TJHS member, **Mary Rosenfield**. She is one of the original organizers for the barbecue, and has done so much for the entire community of Wharton and El Campo as well as the Jewish community.

Mary Rosenfield, a life-long resident of El Campo, is one of the earliest Hadassah members in Texas, joining at the age of six. In her words, "**Henrietta Szold** came to Wharton in 1915. The women of the Wharton community were sewing infants' clothing and sending them to Palestine. **Miss Szold** had been in Houston trying to organize a group for Hadassah. She was told that there was a group of women in Wharton interested in Palestine. She came to Wharton and our women were interested. My mother was in this group. Since there were not enough women in Wharton to form an official chapter, our mothers included their daughters. They were paying 25¢ a month for us, so this is how I became a Hadassah member at the age of six."

She says "... growing up in the small



MARY ROSENFELD of El Campo, Texas

community of Wharton was no problem for the Jews. We were accepted and we have always enjoyed our Christian friends."

Mrs. Rosenfield's father was "...ordained as the kosher *scheched* because there was no one to kill chickens and small animals. My father was well educated in Hebrew in Europe, and he went to Houston to receive the Kabbalah until the community was able to get someone else to do this. Keeping kosher in Wharton was no problem as we were used to doing it and knew no better. We always had milk and vegetables and baked our own bread."

Mary Rosenfield ventured West to the

Olympic Games held in 1930 in Los Angeles. "I attended the opening ceremony which was very impressive. The trip to Los Angeles was by car (a Model A Ford) and was quite an adventure. The trip took us fifteen days. We stopped to see all the side trips including the Grand Canyon and the Painted Desert. We crossed the Great Divide in Arizona. It was fun." Can you imagine, driving across country in 1930 and it took fifteen days to get there! Would you want to do it today?

Mary single-handedly organized a local school for retarded children and started the El Campo Council for Retarded Children in 1950 because she needed help for her daughter. At the time, this was only one of three such councils in the entire state of Texas.

She says she only did it because there was a need. **Mrs. Rosenfield** is a strong and very capable woman.

It seems her whole life has been spent doing for others, and she just says, "I did it because it needed to be done."

She also enjoys and knows good music when she hears it. She recently went to a Willie Nelson concert, and said, "I really am not a fan, but I do enjoy his music. The concert was wonderful and an enjoyable evening."

As long as there are women like **Mrs. Mary Rosenfield** in small towns across Texas, the Jewishness of those small Texas towns will remain alive and well.

Mrs. Rosenfield, we salute you!

Love thy neighbor but do not pull down thy hedge.

—Anonymous

The cynic is one who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.

—Oscar Wilde

The man who has not anything to boast of but his illustrious ancestors is like a potato – the only good belonging to him is underground.

—Sir Thomas Overbury

THE EL CAMPO COUNCIL FOR RETARDED CHILDREN: ITS FOUNDING AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

by *Mary Meyers Rosenfield (El Campo)*

(From a written account of an interview taken March 10, 1994)

IN 1950, when my daughter **Rita Sue** was four-years-old, we realized that her speech was not normal. She had her own language that we could not understand. I discussed this problem with **Dr. E.A. Weinheimer**, our family physician. He told us he had received some information about a speech therapist in Houston and suggested we take **Rita Sue** to him. **Mr. Poling** was located in the Hermann Professional Building in Houston.

We took **Rita Sue** to him, and she did start to repeat words but still had no speech. Then **Dr. Haug** wanted to have a class for four children — Mongoloid, brain damaged, aphasic, and **Rita** who did not fit into any category but was a girl. He wanted one girl. This school was experimental and lasted six months. I drove to Houston every day for the class which was one and one-half hours each day.

Houston was in the process of forming a council for retarded children. I was asked to go to Dallas which had already established a council and was trying to get something for the retarded children.

I was told by **Mr. Poling** and **Dr. Haug** that I should continue with **Rita** in the hope that she would improve. I was fortunate to find **Mary Lou Meyers** who was attending Texas Women's College at Denton and majoring in speech therapy. I hired her without pay as this was to be her thesis. We went to Houston and equipped a room in a building my father had in his yard. **Mary Lou** worked with **Rita** all summer and did help some.

In the meantime I met **Alva Spellman** that summer. She told me about her son **Royce** who had a speech problem and was in public school with **Mrs. Alfred Dittert**. We contacted **Mrs. Dittert**, and by September we had four children — **Rita Sue**, **Royce Spellman**, **Bobby Odom**, and **Dickie Lucas** — with **Mrs. Dittert** helping them as best she could. As she did not have any training in this field, **Mrs. Spellman** and I realized we needed more so we organized our Council for the Retarded with me, **Mary Rosenfield**, as president. El Campo was the third town in Texas to have a council for retarded children.

We decided to ask the school to have a class for these children. **Louis Hudson** was principal and **Arleigh Templeton** was superintendent. We went every day to talk to **Mr. Hudson**.

We begged and cried, and he finally told **Mr. Templeton** that something had to be done. He was tired of us! **Mr. Templeton** told us if we could find a teacher, he would consider it. **Mrs. Spellman** and I went to San Marcos to see **Mr. Berglund**, and he had one teacher who was available. We asked her to come to El Campo, and that is how we got **Mrs. Ethel Dismukes**. **Mr. Templeton** gave her a classroom, and that was a start. The school tested the children, and she had a room full.

We then realized that we needed to start at a younger age. We held a clinic in the First Christian Church for speech and hearing with **Dr. Jack Bangs** and his wife who was qualified. We advertised in the newspaper, and we had a full day. **Mrs. Howard Laird** who had a small nursery school for pre-school children said she would take these retarded. She also had no training, but our council paid for her to go to San Marcos in the summer for some training.

By 1954-55 we began to get more children, and we needed more rooms. We held classes in churches, private homes, Girl Scout cabins, or any place we could find. Our council became very popular. All the El Campo civic clubs — Rotary, Jaycees, Lions, Masonic Lodge — as well as the churches became interested. Students came from Columbus, Blessing, Palacios, Bay City, Louise, and Edna.

We decided we needed a building of our own so the **Wilbur Swansons** allowed us to construct a two-room building with a kitchen on their property. United Fund contributions helped finance the building. **Mrs. Hefner** of Garwood, **Mrs. Laird**, and then **Mrs. Frank Ramsey** came to help. **Mrs. Ramsey** was wonderful! By this time we had **Mr. Willis Vickery**, a speech therapist, in our public school. Our school board saw the need and realized what could be done for these handicapped.

Now we have the Meadow Lane School which is so wonderful. The trained personnel have made this one of the finest schools of its kind in Texas. I have been on the Board of Directors for this school and have received many honors for my interest in this cause.

During the process of establishing the Council for Retarded Children and providing for the needs of the children, we had no major obstacles. Many organizations gave both time and money. The newspapers provided wonderful publicity for the cause.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Perhaps we could hear about more interesting people like Mary Rosenfield from our readers?

Please write and send your stories to Debbye Rice, 2108 West Freeway, Fort Worth Texas 76102, or fax to (817) 877-5450 (to the attention of Debbye Rice).

Remember, everything is newsworthy, nothing is sacred, and almost everything is interesting.

Lewis A. & Mary A. Levy: HOUSTON PIONEERS

by Rosanne & Daniel Leeson (Los Altos, CA)

LEWIS A. LEVY (1799-1861) and his wife, **MARY A. LEVY** (1800-1888), moved to Houston in 1841. They were married in England in 1817, lived in Richmond, Virginia, from 1818 to 1828, and then in New Orleans and Philadelphia. Shortly after moving to Houston, they began investing in land. **Lewis** bought a lot from **Sam Houston** in 1843, and **Mary** bought land in her own name from **Jacob de Cordova** in 1844.

Since **Mary** was illiterate, she had to sign her name with an "x." The couple had twenty children. **Mary** was pregnant from the age of seventeen until forty-eight.

In 1847, their daughter **Hannah** married **Henry Wiener**, an auctioneer. It may have been the first Jewish marriage in Texas.

Lewis had several letters published in the *Asmonean*, a New York Jewish paper, in 1850. One urged European Jews to settle in Texas where, he said, "No obstacles are in their way to acquire

property." The other was entitled, "*The Punishment and Blessings of Israel*" and dealt with the history of anti-Semitism through the ages.

In 1854, **Lewis**, Houston's first unofficial Jewish community leader, collected \$33 for yellow fever victims in New Orleans. He probably organized Houston's Hebrew cemetery the same year because the first burial was on December 10. By the spring of 1855, Houston had a Hebrew Benevolent Association, chaired by **Levy**. It was apparently a well-respected institution and participated in the city's July Fourth celebration in 1856.

After **Lewis**' death, **Mary** went to live with her daughter **Julia Levy Simon** in Brenham. In 1989, gravestone markers for **Mary** and **Julia** were erected by the Daughters of the Republic of Texas in the Jewish section of Brenham's Prairie Lea Cemetery.

This article was sent to us by Garland Weiner of Friendswood, Texas. Mary A. and Louis A. Levy were his great, great, great grandparents.

History, like wine,
gets better with age.



REQUEST FOR MATERIALS FOR A BOOK ON JEWISH CONFEDERATES

ROBERT N. ROSEN of Charleston, South Carolina, is in the process of collecting materials for a book on Jewish Confederates. He has published two books on the history of Charleston, and the University of South Carolina Press will publish this new work.

Mr. Rosen is interested not only in Jewish soldiers who fought in the Confederate army but also in Jewish men and women who lived in the South during the Civil War years, 1861-1865.

Rosen hopes his new work, *The Jewish Confederates*, will cover all eleven states of the Confederacy and the contributions which the Jewish community made to (or against) the Confederate cause, both in the military and in civilian life.

He is particularly interested in old photographs. Needless to say, there are very few

photographs of Jewish Confederate soldiers or Jewish Southerners during the Civil War years.

Rosen wishes to be sent copies of any histories of Texas congregations, if any exist. He says, "Even if it is typewritten or informal, I can still use it." He is also interested in any diaries, letters or memoirs of Jewish people during this period (1861-1865) and in any published articles or books on local Jewish history.

Rosen hopes that he will be pointed in the direction of material, particularly photographs and illustrations of the Jews of Texas during the Civil War.

Contact Robert N. Rosen at (800) 476-5146, Monday through Friday, 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM, EST. His home telephone number is (803) 577-0870. His mailing address is 134 Meeting Street #200, Charleston, SC 29401-2224.

TRIUMPH OVER TRAGEDY: HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL IN TYLER

by Phil Hurwitz (Tyler)

Editor's Note: The Holocaust memorial sculpture, "Triumph Over Tragedy," was donated to Temple Beth El in Tyler by Mr. and Mrs. Phil Hurwitz in 1994.

The sculpture presents more than one hundred figures of men, women and children — each individually sculpted by the artist in bronze and copper.

The tragic history of Germany's "Final Solution of the Jewish Problem" unfolds in five concentric circles, surmounted by a towering figure holding aloft a Torah.

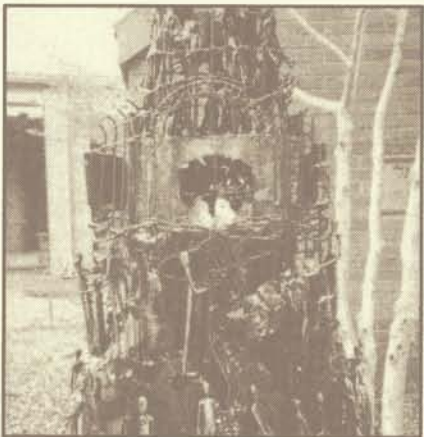
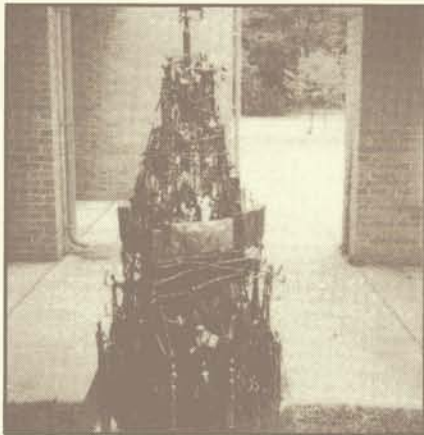
Linda Gissen's creation, topping a marble pedestal, stands over six feet tall. The artist says: "One does not view, one experiences it."

AFTER the completion of my challenge to the Congregation for the building of a new Temple, and after the Temple was fully built and occupied, I thought how nice it would be to have a permanent memorial to the Holocaust.

My thoughts for this project were related to my friend and co-worker, **Raymond Edelman**. His visit to the Temple in Waco revealed a wall memorial to the Holocaust by the artist, **Linda Gissen**.

Mrs. Gissen was contacted and told of our desires. She later submitted a sketch of what she thought would be appropriate. Her drawing was submitted to our Board of Trustees, who accepted it unanimously. The artist was then commissioned to proceed with the project.

My original thought was to create a mini-course in Sunday School for the Confirmation Class using the sculpture as a teaching tool so our youth would learn and know just what happened during the Third Reich. If this is not done soon in all of our schools, our youth will be ignorant of what happened to the Jews at that period.



These three photos show the Holocaust memorial sculpture, "Triumph Over Tragedy," a gift to Temple Beth El in Tyler from JEANNE & PHIL HURWITZ.

MY STARS!

LOOK
WHAT'S
HAPPENING
IN
THE
TEXAS
JEWISH
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
NOW!

TO
FIND
OUT,
CALL
(713)
494-2668

CAN YOU FIND YOURSELF IN THESE PICTURES?



This picture was taken during the Southwest Regional AZA Convention held in Fort Worth, Texas during the Christmas holidays on December 25-26, 1938. Were you there?

EDITOR'S NOTE:

We thank the Fort Worth Jewish Archives Chairs — **Fay Brachman, Mildred Klimist & Adelene Myers**, for providing these photographs for our use. The photographs are the property of the Fort Worth Jewish Archives, which is sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Fort Worth and Tarrant County, and is housed at Congregation Ahavath Sholom.

- *If you can recognize any people in the photos, please let us know.*
- *Perhaps you might have some materials you would like to donate to the archives.*
- *Do you have any "Mystery Pictures" that contain unidentified people in them? We'd be happy to publish the photographs for you. Who knows? Perhaps your mysteries will be solved!*
- *Please call **Fay Brachman** at (817) 924-9207. Thank you.*



*This is a photograph of the **Abraham Rosenthal** family of Fort Worth, Texas. The photo was taken in 1934 at Fort Worth's Capps Park on the occasion of **Abraham Rosenthal's** 70th birthday.*



*This is a photograph of the Sabbath School children of **Congregation Ahavath Sholom** of Fort Worth, Texas. The photo was taken on the front steps of the synagogue in downtown Fort Worth on **December 11, 1925**.*

BRIAN COHEN

A 'SMALL-TOWN' GUY WITH 'BIG-TOWN' IDEAS



BRIAN COHEN at work.

"My daddy was a rabbi in Washington DC. Then he got a call from Galveston saying that they needed a rabbi and would he be interested. So that's where we went. The ships would come in with the refugees, and my daddy would meet all these ships, and take off some of the Jews who were allowed to get off. And the congregation would get together and they got jobs for these people if they wanted to stay in Galveston; or if they wanted to go anywhere else, we got tickets and money."
—Beatrice Abramson Clark

SO BEGINS the upcoming documentary *At Home On The Range: Jewish Life in Texas*; producer and director **Brian Cohen**'s latest project on the Jewish Texans. Focusing on the communities which developed in the smaller towns, this program attempts to show through oral histories and archival material how Jews originally came into these areas and how they were able to establish and maintain communities.

Originally from Abilene, **Brian** has always viewed his Jewishness through the prism of small-town life. Whether it was having a rabbi come in from out-of-town once a month for services, or having his Bar Mitzvah in front of a congregation which was only ten percent Jewish, he has always understood that there are struggles and dynamics which are quite unique to small-town life. With this project, he hopes to make this understandable to those who are unfamiliar with this experience.

Since moving to New York in 1992, **Brian** has produced programming for numerous Jewish organizations. He has worked with the Anti-Defamation League, The Jewish Student's Appeal, and he is currently an interviewer for **Steven Spielberg**'s Survivors of the Shoah Foundation. While his work for them has mainly been in the tri-state area (New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut), he will begin interviewing Holocaust survivors in Texas. "It is a privilege to be able to interview these people wherever they may be; but to be able to do this work in Texas and with Texans is a special thrill," **Brian** says.

At Home On The Range, a Documentary

by *Brian Cohen*

I BEGAN TO CONSIDER the idea for this documentary when I first moved to New York a few years ago. Not only were the people there amazed that Jews live in the West, but it was inconceivable to them that any could exist in the small towns which dot the Texas landscape. I began to think about my own history and the forces which brought my family (through the Galveston Movement) into the Abilene area. From that premise I began to develop the project. Before long, the documentary had grown to include not only West Texas, but all areas of the state with small Jewish communities.

While it was impossible to include every community, a number of places were chosen to be representative of their area. With South Texas, for instance, we looked at McAllen and Mercedes. For East Texas, we included Longview and Kilgore. In Central Texas it was Brenham and Hamilton. Finally, for West Texas, we looked at Abilene, Roscoe and San Angelo.

In addition to traveling to these areas, I also had the opportunity to record the oral histories of many TJHS members during the Fall Open Board Meeting in San Angelo. Ten members gave one-hour interviews speaking about their lives and experiences in their respective towns. Stories from places such as Alice, Del Rio, and Harlingen were collected and preserved on video tape. Not only will this material always be a part of the TJHS archives, but much of this footage has found its way into the documentary. **Steven Polunsky** of San Angelo, for example, recounts his experiences growing up in a small West Texas town. **Milton Hareluk** of Hamilton takes us from his father's days as a banana peddler to his son's successful retelling of that story in his play *The Immigrant*. **Suzanne Campbell** gives us a terrific overview of the Jewish experience in Texas while acting as the historical thread which runs throughout the documentary.

*"San Angelo was originally a garrison town which served Fort Concho. At one point, in the 1870's, the town was actually owned by a Jew, **Marcus Koenigheim**. He had lent **Bart Dewitt** \$1500 so he could buy the land in that area. When **Dewitt** defaulted on the loan, **Koenigheim** found himself the owner of a garrison town full of saloons and brothels and gambling dens. He once tried to trade all of it for a barrel of whiskey, but the man with the barrel refused, saying that at least his whiskey was worth something."*
—*Suzanne Campbell*

In getting the project started, the first step was to raise the money. A number of organizations, both Jewish and non-Jewish, stepped in and supplied the initial grants.

This was augmented by numerous gifts from individuals. This funding allowed a camera crew and myself to spend three weeks in Texas visiting all areas of the state. Over twenty-five hours of interviews were collected and brought back to New York for editing. It is impossible to underestimate the task of taking such a large amount of material and somehow reducing it to a one-hour show.

The documentary itself is made up of the remembrances of people who have lived their lives in these small towns. Some provide historical background and others provide personal accounts of their experiences. It is those personal recollections which make this project unique.

"The sheriff we had here was named Goldberg. I got a call from a Goldberg in Houston. He said: 'Leon, I want to ask you a question. There's a sheriff in Brenham named Goldberg, is he Jewish?' So I stopped him on the street one day and I said: 'Sheriff, I want to ask you a question. There's a Goldberg in Houston and he wants to know if you're Jewish.' The sheriff said: 'Leon, I was probably Jewish. But my family came here and there weren't any Jewish girls to marry. Everyone intermarried and we're Lutheran today. But I were probably Jewish at one time.'"
—Leon Toubin

Last March, with editing ready to begin, the TJHS stepped in with a sizable grant to help finance that process. Using that grant, a rough edit was produced and then sent out to the PBS affiliates across the state for their consideration. Their response was overwhelming. To date, six stations have committed to airing the program. These affiliates range from KACV in Amarillo to KEDT in Corpus Christi. KEDT, in fact, was so taken with the show that they have offered to provide a satellite uplink. This means that they will broadcast the show to a satellite and then every affiliate in Texas will be able to record the signal and make it available to their audiences. This guarantees that the program will be shown in every part of the state.

The documentary is also headed overseas. After discussions with the Diaspora Museum in Tel Aviv, they have agreed to make it available to their visitors and it will remain a permanent part of their archives. I am currently working with the SBS network in Australia (their equivalent of our PBS) to make this show available to Australian audiences. What has interested them about this story is how closely the Jewish experience in Texas mirrors the Jewish experience in Australia. After broadcast in the U.S. and abroad, the documentary will be available for sale on video cassette for schools, synagogues and individuals.

For myself, this program is an important document shedding light on one of the lesser known aspects of Texas history. The great perseverance which these early pioneers showed in establishing and maintaining a Jewish presence in these small towns is a remarkable chapter in our history. It is a story which celebrates the Jewish people's ability to overcome adversity and to establish, in the most unlikely of places, communities of great achievement.

The Institute of Texan Cultures

FOR SOME TIME the Texas Jewish Historical Society has been considering ways to improve the Jewish exhibit at the Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio. It is felt that the current exhibit should be updated and brought into the 21st Century. I was recently asked to think about how this might be done and then to submit a proposal to the TJHS.

I visited the Institute to get a feel for the current exhibit. As I walked through I saw the photographs on the wall, a few text blurbs, and a handful of Jewish objects. Then I went upstairs. On the third floor is where the archives of the Institute are kept. I began to look through the hundreds of photographs that they have in their Jewish collection. I realized that it was here, within these filing cabinets, that the full story of the Jewish Texans was being told. Yet few visitors ever see it. As I looked through their collection, I also remembered the material that I had seen in the Texas Jewish Historical Society's archives at the Barker Center in Austin. I felt that if this exhibit at the Institute was to be successful, all of this material would have to be made available.

The problem, of course, was space. The Jewish exhibit did not have room enough for even a fraction of this material. A new technology would have to be introduced which could display all of this information while not requiring more space than was currently available.

The solution, I found, was to use a computer. I produced a proposal based on an interactive computer program (known as a CD-ROM) which would integrate different types of media (video, photographs, etc.) into an easy and usable format. This program could store thousands of pieces of information on a single disk which would fit inside the computer. For the first time, every visitor who enters the exhibit would have at his fingertips video interviews from Jewish Texans, hundreds of photographs, selections of Jewish music, and countless volumes of documents and historical papers. All aspects of Texas Jewish history would be made available while adding nothing more to the exhibit space than a desktop computer.

One of the many advantages of this technology is that once a program such as this is developed, it can be inexpensively duplicated and made available to schools, libraries or individuals. Every public library in the state, for instance, could have for their computers a comprehensive history of the Jewish Texans. With the vast material which is currently available from the archives of both the Institute of Texan Cultures and the Texas Jewish Historical Society, a program such as this would be a welcome addition to any research or educational institution.

It is truly amazing what technology has now made possible. And there are few limits to how far it can go. Today, the TJHS has the opportunity to make the rich history of the Jewish Texans available not only to the visitors at the Institute in San Antonio, but throughout the state and to entirely new groups of people.

SPLICES OF LIFE

by Greg Jaklewicz, Weekend Editor of the Abilene Reporter-News
(This article appeared in the Sunday, August 28, 1994 edition of that newspaper)

Filmmaker Cohen documents life of Jewish Texans

WHEN THINKING about Texas, Fort Worth just might cross your mind. But probably not the state's Jewish communities. **Brian Cohen**, however, is looking at his home state beyond stockyards and country music. The 1987 Cooper High School graduate completed a 2½-week film project in Texas, documenting Jewish communities in what he calls "rural, small towns."

His list includes Abilene, representative of West Texas and his last stop before he returned to New York City where he now lives and works.

Cohen, an Abilene native, traveled as far south as McAllen, where he discovered a community of 150 families. That contrasted to just "a few" families in Corsicana in mid-East Texas. He attempted to visit all areas of the state.

Abilene, he says, has maintained a "stable" 20-30 families since the 1920's, though the Jewish population peaked during the Camp Barkeley years.

The surge inspired the construction of Temple Mizpah on Chestnut Street. Funding was provided primarily by non-Jews, because, they believed, Jewish soldiers "needed to have a place to go" to worship, **Cohen** said.

Galveston, a seaport city, had a large Jewish community at the turn of the century. But that has diminished across the decades as the city became less of a primary entrance point into the state. McAllen's Jewish population, on the other hand, should continue to thrive because of the economic impact of NAFTA, **Cohen** said.

Cohen graduated from the University of Texas two years ago, majoring in architecture.

"But I got on a media track," he said, after filming and interviewing was completed here.

A Jew, **Cohen** has a natural interest in the subject. But he also regards the interaction of members of the Jewish faith and their communities as another, important means to view the history of Texas.

He interviewed young people and older people, noting what the community was and what its future will be. A four or five-man Epel-Tzimis Productions crew worked 12-14 hours daily, sometimes

filming in two cities. He regrets, with a sigh, not putting an odometer to his intrastate travels.

Along the way **Cohen** discovered both an absence of discrimination and anti-Semitism. In some places, the struggle to co-exist within a community was terrific; in others, Jews blended easily into social and economic groups.

Jews in Texas, he said, "experienced it all."

While he admits every story intrigued him, **Cohen** singled out the tale of a Jewish woman in McAllen, who came to Texas from Mexico. "She had a lot to overcome," he said, noting barriers of religion, sex and ancestry.

Cohen came up with the idea for a film project when quizzed about how it was, growing up Jewish in Texas.

After initial investigation, **Cohen** found "there was a lot to learn."

He raised start-up capital to begin the independent project. He now must raise more money to complete it. **Cohen** wouldn't give a project cost estimate, but said, grinning, it doesn't have a Hollywood price tag. However, he corralled "enough money so he could do quite a bit."

Back in New York again, **Cohen** and his crew will edit the material to 60 minutes. Targeted for completion before the year is out, the film will be offered to

PBS and other cable networks, as well as edited for use by museums as a touring exhibit. Already, the Diaspora Museum in Tel Aviv, Israel, has expressed interest in the film.

The museum angle particularly interests **Cohen** because of its educational value. The film can be presented along with still photographs, also taken on the trip. The film, he said, could be divided into six or seven interviews shown on separate monitors.

Cohen believes Jews and non-Jews will be interested in his work, from both historic and religious perspectives. His timing couldn't be better; **Steven Spielberg's** Holocaust epic "Schindler's List" won this year's Academy Award for best picture.

Speaking of **Spielberg**, **Cohen** aspires to make feature films. More immediately he'll be involved in projects with the Anti-Defamation League in New York City.

Until then, "this will be my life."

His father, **Louis Cohen**, still lives in Abilene. His mother, **Marlene**, now lives in Houston.



From left: **BRIAN COHEN, PHILIP LEVENS & ROBB BINDLER** prepare an exterior shot for **COHEN's** documentary.



From left: **ROBB BINDLER & BRIAN COHEN** prepare to record an interview in Mercedes, Texas.



From left: **PHILIP LEVENS, BRIAN COHEN, & ROBB BINDLER** collecting footage from Longview, Texas.

WHAT BEING JEWISH MEANS TO ME

by Jeffrey Hoffman, Astronaut

(This article appeared in the September 24, 1995 *The New York Times* on its Op-Ed Page)

EVER SINCE I was a child, I have looked towards the future, seeking knowledge and new horizons. Space was the unknown frontier that I dreamed of exploring, in theory and in fantasy, like my childhood heroes Albert Einstein and Flash Gordon. I feel very lucky that, as an astrophysicist and astronaut, I have been able to realize these dreams.

Having spent more than a month in orbit on four space flights, I have had time to reflect on the influence of spaceflight on my thinking. Floating in the hostile vacuum of space, I felt a deep reverence for our life-nurturing Earth. I know that this sense of awe and wonder is intimately related to the spiritual tradition of Judaism.

Perhaps it is ironic that one whose work is so future-oriented finds himself so deeply rooted in a 3500-year-old tradition. I am proud to be the bearer of the Jewish heritage transmitted by my parents and grandparents; I am privileged to hand it down to my children.

Throughout the history of human exploration, people have carried with them memories of home and community, symbols of personal, cultural, and spiritual significance. On each of my space flights, I took Jewish ceremonial objects of great meaning to me, including a *mezuzah* which, following the ancient custom, I later affixed to the doorpost of our home. I also took

with me several *atarot* which were to adorn our sons' prayer shawls at their Bar Mitzvahs. The *mezuzah* and the *atarot* rode the fire into the heavens and returned with me to earth. Sharing them with my family has given us a strong sense of *ledor vador*, of transmitting Jewish heritage, values and identity from one generation to the next.

On my most recent flight to repair the Hubble space telescope, I celebrated the festival of Chanukah in orbit with a *menorah* and a *dreidel*. In this way, I am continuing an age-old tradition of my people; in all their wanderings from the ancestral homeland, they carried with them the building blocks of Jewish family and community.

The human spirit yearns to expand, to reach beyond itself to the unknown. Synagogues on Mars? Maybe not soon, but even when our descendants have established themselves beyond the terrestrial cradle, they will continue to face human issues: good and evil, suffering and redemption, faith and doubt.

The core values of Judaism — the sanctity of life, the goodness of human beings, the commitment to law and to social justice, a vision of peace between peoples and nations — these are necessary if humanity is to survive.

We will need modern technology to enable us to reach new frontiers. Yet, the wisdom gained from our religious traditions will teach us how to live in new worlds. Until then, we need this wisdom to help us live on our only home, planet Earth.

Jeffrey Hoffman lives in Houston and is an active member of Congregation B'rith Shalom.

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JEWISH LIFE IN CHILDRESS, TEXAS

by Mark D. Nussbaum (Childress)

I THINK that the TJHS is doing a stand-up job of preserving Jewish history in Texas. My family history originated in small Texas towns starting with the original settlers coming to this country through Galveston. My mother's family is from Bay City and my father's family is from Eagle Lake.

I moved my family to Childress (population 5055) two years ago and have totally enjoyed the experience. We have

been embraced by the community and my wife, **Lorin**, was even invited to join a women's sorority that is very selective when nominating new members. I have joined the Elks Club and currently serve as Secretary/Treasurer of the Rotary Club. My children are very active in daily activities both in school and out.

We attend services in Amarillo (109 miles away) at a small but nice temple, but wish there was a congregation a little closer to Childress. The services are geared more toward Reform Judaism and the Rabbi travels

in from New Mexico. As you know, this is the norm for West Texas. We are just happy to have a synagogue to attend!

Please let people know that there are still Jews in rural Texas and, yes, they still practice their traditional Jewish religion. Both my wife and I were raised in a conservative synagogue and were Bar and Bat Mitzvahed and plan on our children doing the same.

Mark D. Nussbaum can be reached at 911 Avenue G, NW; Childress, Texas 79201; phone (817) 937-6866.



A message taken over the Internet . . .

"THANK YOU" TO THE HAUSER, KLEIN, SILBERMAN AND RABBI COHEN FAMILIES

by Howard Rosen (Los Angeles, CA)

I hope this message of thanks gets to the right people: the descendants of these people living in Galveston, Texas in the early 1900's: **Rabbi Henry Cohen, Isaac Hauser, Morris Klein & Louis Silberman.**

I don't know how else or where to communicate our family's thanks for the help my grandfather, **Nochem Rosen**, received when he arrived in Galveston in 1905.

"Dr. (Rabbi Henry) Cohen's figure was as familiar to passengers on incoming steamers as the immigration officials. He met every vessel bringing aliens to the new country, met them as a friend and not as an official, talked to them in their own language, cheered them, and comforted them and found them jobs."

—The Galveston Daily News, March 22, 1931

Isaac Hauser and Morris Klein, owners of a clothing store bearing their names, in some way as yet unknown to me must

have sponsored my grandfather, as they were listed as his destination in Galveston.

Louis Silberman was his employer. In his men's clothing shop **Nochem** became a "presser" before moving on to Los Angeles where my father was born.

Lastly, a public thank you to the Rosenberg Library in Galveston, and especially to **Shelly Henley**, an assistant archivist there. She has been wonderful in providing a picture of what happened to immigrants arriving there in the early part of this century, including my little tailor grandfather who came from Lomza with \$10.

Howard Rosen of Los Angeles, California, may be reached on the Internet at HNRosen@aol.com.

This message was forwarded to us by **Rosanne D. Leeson**, a TJHS member from Los Altos, California, who came across this while surfing the 'Net. Thanks, Rosanne!

RIGHTING CYCLONES AND ILLITERACY

HOW ONE JEWISH FAMILY CHANGED THE LIFE OF A TEXAS FRONTIER TOWN

by Sue Gardner of Washington, D.C.

(from the August 18-24, 1995 edition of *The Jewish Week*, a weekly newspaper printed in Washington D.C.)

WHEN THE AROMA of my mother's baking for the Sabbath filled the house, I would come into the kitchen and ask about her family's life, years ago in Texas. The odor of cinnamon cakes in the oven has always had a special appeal for me, because I remember picking up the cinnamon and sugar, the nuts raisins, which fell off the strips of dough she rolled up for "bulkies."

"Tell me about the Cyclone Cellar — how did Grandpa ever get from Russia to Waco, Texas and build his store?"

Then she would go back and tell me how her father brought the family to New York in the 1880's planning to open an office for their import-export business. But my grandmother caught the 'flu' that first winter, and having no Miami Beach, my grandfather wrote to a Russian-Jewish doctor who settled in the Waco area. He advised my grandparents to come to Waco because of its good climate. But, he didn't mention the occasional cyclones.

My grandparents found the people kind and considerate and although there were very few Jews in the area and they — the **Freemans** — were Orthodox, they began talking about settling there.

Cyclone hit the town

One day a cyclone hit Waco and cut a wide swath through the homes. The day after the storm, many of the residents of the area packed their belongings and left for greener — and less stormy pastures.

Fortunately the doctor's home withstood the gales and shortly after that, my grandfather came home one day with a horse and cart — the latter stocked with staples for sale to farmers. He had fabric, needles and pins, pots and pans, and kitchen utensils.

"I want to build a store here, but you have to know how people live and what they need before you can sell them any wares," he told my grandmother who looked stunned by her husband, the peddler.

"What difference does it make if I sell lumber from Russia or spice from the Orient

instead of kitchenware to farmers?" he asked. "We will help them rebuild the town here and be among people who have treated us well."

For months, he traveled about selling his wares and asking what people wanted him to stock. Then he imported an architect from the North who designed and built a store with a deep cellar that would not blow away in a cyclone. For a long time, no storm came and the brick building became known as "**Freeman's Folly**." The store was actually named **Freeman Brothers**, because my grandfather planned it as a business for his sons.

The bronze plaque on the building read, "In time of storm, all are welcome to seek shelter here, regardless of race, creed or color."

Within a short time a sturdy storehouse joined the store compound. My grandfather had become a southern distributor for many large firms wanting to sell their products to communities in the South.

Dream came true

And, my grandfather's dream of a minyan materialized when a committee for the placement of Russian-Jewish refugees visited him. He took on 10 young men, gave them a house in which to live, and created a wrapping department for them, because they did not speak enough English to work as salesmen.

My grandmother had her own way of contributing to the culture of the town. The family now had its own home on spacious grounds and twice a week my grandmother would hold classes for any of the ladies who wanted to learn how to read and write.

"She taught them from the Old Testament," my mother said.

"Wasn't that a difficult primer?" I wanted to know.

"Not at all. You could not teach grown women from a primer, but most everyone knew the Bible because all had gone to Sunday school," she explained. "It was going from the known to the unknown — the stories they learned orally could now be read from a book."

Then one day, a cyclone did come.

Storm warnings went up for miles and people came in groups to the cyclone cellar, which had been hastily divested of surplus stores for the selling area.

Oddly enough, the groups stayed with their own congregations; the Catholics prayed with their priest, the Baptists and other Protestants with their ministers. And, a black community occupied one area, singing spirituals as the storm gained momentum.

"The cyclone started with a black dot on the horizon," my mother would relate. "Then it grew larger and took on the shape of a funnel. As it blew by the building, it whirled about, bringing parts of houses, furniture, or fences in its wake.

Prayers grew louder

"Everything grew dark and the sound of the storm became stronger as the prayers grew louder. It went on for what seemed a very long time, but finally it subsided and we all went out to see what had gone and what had remained untouched by the cyclone."

What the community found was that all in the cellar had weathered the storm and the store compound had not been damaged by the cyclone.

However, one day, when I had heard various versions of this story many times, something bothered me about my mother's narrative.

"I can understand about the storm, Mamma, but how did you manage to see so much of it from a basement window?"

"Oh well," she smiled. "You see, we knew that a strong brick building with sturdy construction would not blow away in a cyclone. Your grandfather wanted to encourage people to build more permanent structures for their homes and businesses. Actually, the cyclone cellar was for the customers. The family waited until the guests were all settled downstairs. Then, we went to the attic to see the storm."

Submitted by Saul Viener, a TJHS honorary member, of Richmond, VA. Viener told us, "Grandfather & Grandmother Freeman came to Waco in 1884 and Grandfather's name was Joel (Mendel) Manuel Freeman."

Runaway Memory

By Linda Wolfe

(This article was published in The New York Times Magazine in the fall of 1995)

MEMORIES ARE like fool's gold. We tell ourselves that they are firm and shining treasures that we can store and relish forever, and that no matter what pains or losses life may impose on us, at least it cannot take from us our memories.

But that this is not so, I have lately come to realize in a very personal way.

It is not my own memories but those of my mother, once an ambitious concert singer but 90 now and living in a nursing home in Chicago, that have brought me to this unwanted knowledge. Some of her earliest memories are featured in a touring exhibit called "Becoming American Women: Clothing and the Jewish Immigrant Experience, 1880-1920," at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum. In the catalogue of the show, there is a haunting picture of her at 14. Her face is a delicate oval, her skin is as smooth as silk. She is carrying the kind of hat I'm sure must have delighted her gypsy spirit — wide-brimmed, trimmed with ribbon and fluttering with feathers. The placards that accompany the various exhibits include numerous observations drawn from her memoirs.



She wrote in the memoirs about being 6-years-old and living through a pogrom in Russia by hiding in the rafters of a house where, trembling, she watched another stowaway smother an infant when it started to cry. She wrote about being 7 and journeying to the United States with her desperately seasick mother and baby brother, who had to be nursed by a fellow passenger, and about arriving at Ellis Island and being carried, sleepy, stunned and "marveling at all the twinkling lights, so different from the village streets of Kislavich," on the broad shoulders of her father. She wrote about being 8 and living in a sixth-floor walk-up on the Lower East Side, and about being 9 and attending an after-school

program at Christadorn House, a settlement house where slum children were taught to sew and wash and iron clothes. There they were given, as an inducement for attendance, a cup of thick, hot cocoa, a drink she considered ambrosial. She spent weeks trying to gear up her courage to demand of a "forbidding Amazon" of a matron a second cup, only to be told, when she finally did ask, that she was a greedy girl, and made to stand in a corner, where embarrassment and anguish caused her to wet her underpants.

And she wrote about how, when she was 12, her grade-school English teacher visited her father and begged him to let her go to high school because she had shown talent in composition, and the stern man said, "Girls don't need a high school education to wash diapers," and sent her to work as an errand girl in a factory so that she could help with the family's finances.

My brother and I, both of whom became writers, remember vividly her experiences in the Russian rafters and on the tossing ship and the teeming Lower East Side. The stories she told us about them were as much a part of our literary heritage as "Cinderella"

and "Rumpelstiltskin" and all the other tales she read to us in her melodious voice. And indeed, it was we who urged her, one day when she was in her 70's and no longer singing, to put aside her sorrow at having lost her voice by writing down some of her delicious stories.

She did, and the time she spent writing was, in its way, as satisfying to her as all those years she'd spent studying music and giving concerts. There was in her, had always been in her ever since that girlhood expulsion from the Garden of Eden that high school represented for her, a terrible need for recognition. And as she wrote, she imagined, as so many writers do, that at last she had found the way to impress upon the world that she, **Mina Romanoffsky Kaufman**, had

passed through here, had existed on this planet and sat, however far from the roiling center of things, in the bleachers of history.

When the memoirs were finished, she wanted badly to see them published. But the stories weren't as good on paper as they were when she told them. The writing wasn't crisp, a couple of editors pointed out, and the material was overly familiar.

She was depressed after that. So sad. And I think she never quite got over it — amateur writers are far more sensitive to rejection than professionals, for whom it's just part of the process. And when memoir writers are rejected, it is not just their words but also their lives that seem to them to have been deemed worthless. But in time she aged, and the fate of the memoirs got pushed to the back of her mind as she began to contend with even greater disappointments, with diabetes, with an injured hip, with an inability to remember things that had been said to her yesterday, this morning, a few minutes ago. Maybe it was Alzheimer's, the doctors said. Maybe just senile dementia. Whatever, it was so debilitating that she could no longer function without assistance and had to be put in a nursing home.

*"Good stories,"
my mother said,
forgetting that they
were her stories.*

It was not long afterward that my brother, who teaches in Chicago, saw a bulletin board notice that the Chicago Historical Society was seeking reminiscences about the Jewish immigrant experience. He gave a copy of our mother's memoirs to the Historical Society, and a short while later received word that the curator wanted to include pieces from them in the exhibit. She was in the show!

My brother went to the nursing home to tell her the good news. "Just think, your memoirs are going to be published at last!" he said. "Or at least a part of them." She looked at him blankly and it was clear that she had no idea what he was talking about. "You know," he prompted her. "The baby in the rafters. The second cup of cocoa." But still she didn't comprehend.

My brother was distressed, but he thought that maybe hearing the old stories might prompt her increasingly recalcitrant comprehension. So the next time he visited, he sat down and read them aloud to her.

She liked what she heard. "Good stories," she murmured. She had always loved stories. But she had no idea that they were her stories, that she was listening to the ragged memories of her own life.

I have been emotionally under the weather ever since this happened. I have felt over and over again, and with a sharper and sharper intensity, the fear of aging that haunts all of us, the dread of Alzheimer's and incapacitation, and the bitter recognition that memory is not something to be counted on as giving solace in one's later years.

Linda Wolf is the author of "Double Life" about Sol Wachtler, the former Chief Judge of the New York Court of Appeals.



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THE UNVEILING OF THE ROBINOWITZ BROTHERS HISTORICAL MARKER IN ROSENBERG

ON SEPTEMBER 24, 1995 in Rosenberg, Texas, a special ceremony was held honoring the **Robinowitz Family** of Rosenberg with an official Historical Marker of the State of Texas. The Marker is inscribed with the following message:

"The Robinowitz Family immigrated to the United States from Russia between 1898 and 1910. Beginning a new life in Texas, the brothers worked as peddlers for several years before opening stores in Richmond, Beasley, and Rosenberg."

"As merchants and builders, Cecil, Abe and Libby Robinowitz contributed to Downtown Rosenberg at a significant time in the city's growth and development."

"Early 1920s Robinowitz buildings on Avenue G housed the Rosenberg Post Office, Libby's Dress Shop, and the RB Grocery Store."



Photo of AILEEN GOLDSTEIN of the ROBINOWITZ FAMILY of Rosenberg, Texas holding an old writing tablet for school children which has the Robinowitz store emblem and address on the cover. The tablet was given to MRS. GOLDSTEIN by a local resident who had kept it since childhood.

JEWISH LIFE IN LUBBOCK

By Norma Skibell (Lubbock)

ORGANIZED JUDAISM began in Lubbock in a room at the Lubbock Hotel. About fifteen families would gather for the High Holiday services. **Moshe Forbstein**, a salesman from Kansas City, would conduct the services. He was not a rabbi but a knowledgeable layman. This was in the early 1930's.

As more Jewish people moved here there was a growing need to have a schul. At that time we all considered ourselves as Orthodox, but leaned more to Conservatism. The membership roster had many names — some you will recognize from a few relatives that still call Lubbock home. Some who have passed on are remembered on our memorial wall.

How did these people earn a living? Most of the families were in business for themselves. Merchants were the mainstay and the chief support of the community. **Morris and Bill Levine** had a four story department store on Broadway and some of the families were in their employ. To name a few: **Boy Finberg, Dave Arker, Barney Spector**, and my daddy, **A.I. Glassman**. Other merchants were **Louie Freed, Claude Grollman, Jerry Jarett, Charles Laskey, Sam Kirschner, Sam Koretsky, Hymie Kligman, Sam Rosenthal, Rose Segal**, and **Mr. Miller**. They were all in dry goods or ready-to-wear. The **Finbergs** were in finance. The **Feldmans** were in pipe and steel. The **Levas, Marvin's** grandparents, had the Hungarian Cafe, a restaurant you wouldn't believe could exist in little old Lubbock. True, Jewish foods were cooked daily by **Mama Leva. Herman Fink** and **Sam Kelisky** were the architects of many homes and buildings that are still standing in our city today.

We also want to remember the people who worshipped with us from surrounding towns: **The Kessels** from Slaton; **Nathan and Lottie Stool** from Portales, New Mexico; **Al and Annie Lehman** from Tahoka; and **Esther and Nathan Houstman** from Lubbock and Levelland.

These were the people with vision. They enticed their families and friends to move to Lubbock. The **Grollmans** brought **Abe Favorman** and his daughter **Sarah** here.

Sarah married **Ben Beaird**, which was the first Jewish wedding in town. Yes, the congregation invested in a *chuppa* which they thought would never be used again. But **Albert** and I made use of it some years later. **Rose Segal** made her contribution to the community by encouraging her daughters **Rae Roth, Eve Carson** and **Eddie Wilk** and their families to move here. The **Rosenthals** brought **Adelaide's** parents, the **Michaelsons**, who insisted their daughter and son-in-law, **Dorothy and Sylvan Skibell**, be part of this town. **Fanny and Sam Kirschner** wanted their sons near, so we gained **Jerry and Dorothy** and **Martin and Lillian**.

These are the people who planted the roots for us to grow on. They took a giant step forward to establish a synagogue at Sixteenth and Avenue X. A small frame house became our treasured house of worship. **Jenny Feldman** remodeled and decorated it. **Isadore Garsek** was our first rabbi.

More Jews discovered Lubbock, Texas, the Hub of the Plains. Good climate, good living conditions, good schools, and a good place to make a living which meant more influx, more members, more money, and a larger synagogue was needed.

Sam Kelisky was the architect for the schul at 23rd and Avenue Q. The year was 1942. **Rabbi Garsek** had joined the army and we again were without a leader. We had to revert to lay services. When **Rabbi Garsek** came back, he brought his new wife, **Sadye Maye** from Fort Worth. They remained here until 1948. Then **Rabbi Julius Kerman** and **Ethel** served two years, followed by **Rabbi Adolf Phillipsborn** and his wife **Trudy**. After they left, **Rabbi Stanley Yedwab** and his wife **Myra** came for a short time and after they left, we were without leadership once again. Fortunately, **Chaplain Israel Kaplan** came to us on a temporary basis. Then **Rabbi Alexander Kline** and **Elenore** came in 1960 and stayed until his retirement in 1981. After that **Rabbi Stephen Weisberg** and his wife **DeeDee** led us into our magnificent new temple.

When **Rabbi Weisberg** left, we were again without a religious head. But we were fortunate to have a young man, a pre-med

student, conduct Sabbath services. We were without an ordained rabbi, but **Fred Senatore** helped keep the congregation together and we did worship together, and had a continuity of Jewish life. Now we are enjoying the efforts of **Rabbi Sherman Stein** and his wife, **Lila**. We have a knowledgeable teacher, an authority on all things Jewish, who is willing to teach you if you will listen.

We did hold services at two other places. While this building was being built the Second Baptist Church invited us to hold our Friday night services in their parlor, which we did. They were most considerate of our needs and gave us a place to keep a Torah. So a closet became our Holy Ark for several months. That year Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur were celebrated at the Shriner's Building on Avenue Q. While we were at 23rd and Avenue Q, we knew more space was needed. We wanted a fellowship hall, a larger kitchen and more classrooms. You may not realize we only had the sanctuary for praying, playing, and teaching. We had to expand!

At that time the **Houstmans** took the initiative and donated a sum of considerable proportion. A fund was begun and soon thereafter we had five classrooms, a larger kitchen and **Houstman Hall**. While we worshipped there in our little schul we went through a transformation.

One Friday night we came to services and our siddurs had disappeared, vanished, replaced by new prayer books we had never seen before. Suddenly we were **REFORM JEWS**.

Perhaps the time was right for a change. Religious modern movements were happening throughout the country. Many of our new members were Reform Jews. Lubbock certainly could not support a synagogue and a temple. Very few of the congregants could read Hebrew, let alone translate it. Our children went to religious school, but there was no Hebrew school. When it was time, our twelve-year-old sons crammed into two or three months enough to be Bar Mitzvahed.

Maybe some things don't change, but most of us enjoyed services more when more English was read. We were one congregation with one aim, and that was to practice

Judaism as generations before us had. There was one concession, *yarmalkas* were to be worn in respect to our Orthodox heritage.

Once again realization struck. We were bursting out of our revered place of worship. We had outgrown another building. What to do? There were pros and cons — to expand, not to expand; to build, not to build. It came down to the fact we did not have what it takes to build what we needed. MONEY!

Note: Norma Skibell wrote and presented this article on February 11, 1995, upon the 10th anniversary of the new building of Congregation Sheareth Israel in Lubbock and in honor of Marvin Feldman, their mentor.

When you are going through your books and things, please think of the Texas Jewish Historical Society. We'd love to share your family histories and wonderful stories with all our members. Mail to **Debbie Rice**, 2108 West Freeway, Fort Worth, TX 76102 or call (817) 332-1610. You'll receive your material back. Thank you!



FOR SOME IMMIGRANTS, ENGLISH WAS BEST KEY TO SUCCESS

by Mark Patinkin (Providence, RI Journal)
(This article appeared in the Dec. 11, 1995 Houston Chronicle)

I HAD A CLASSIC old-world grandmother. A great lady, but I didn't always understand her. She came to America at age 16, lived to her late 80's but never mastered English.

Her most fluent tongue was of the village where she grew up — I say village, not country, because it shifted. Depending on wars and politics, it was Russia some years, Poland others. "Thank goodness, we're Russian again," the people there used to say. "I couldn't stand another Polish winter."

Of course, there was no need for people like **Grandma Celia** to learn English in America if they didn't want to — not back then, not with a flood of immigrants forming insular neighborhoods. There were newspapers in German, Polish, Italian, Yiddish.

Through her last years, **Grandma Celia** still read one of those papers. Most Ellis Island families today probably had someone like her, and thank goodness, because they helped preserve the richness of our heritage.

But I'll tell you something — had she wanted a job, I doubt she could have gotten much of one. She never embraced English.

And yet she wanted her children to. She understood that if they didn't, they would be held back.

The emerging debate in Congress about whether English should be the country's official language got me wondering how things were during the turn-of-the-century immigration.

I called my father. He began with my grandfather, who died before I was born. His story is almost a cliché: Came over at 16 and began with a horse-drawn junk cart. In time, he built that into a wholesale shop and finally a scrap yard that employed 100, where he often bought from those still pulling carts.

What made the difference between immigrants who succeeded and those

who struggled? Many things, but almost all successes included an essential ingredient: The successes learned English.

"I remember," my dad told me, "watching my father bent over American newspapers and books, pointing with his finger, reading one word at a time."

He understood how important it was to learn the language. He almost obsessed on it. But both he and **Grandma Celia** obsessed even more on their children learning it.

This surprised me about my grandmother. I figured her as so traditional, she'd have been happy if the whole clan grew up only with old-world ways, speaking only the old-world tongue.

"The opposite," my dad said. "They spoke the old language to each other, but always English to us."

Almost all households were the same. Everyone wanted their kids to do better in life than they, and all saw English as essential to that.

I asked: "Weren't your parents worried about losing their heritage?"

"Nah. That was a given. They were proud of it, immersed in it." Learning English didn't mean losing your roots. No reason you couldn't have both.

Once the kids got to be teenagers, with English their mother tongue, they ended up pushing their parents to learn just as the parents once pushed them. My dad remembers being embarrassed if he had friends over and his mom began speaking her native tongue on the phone.

Then he shared with me his most vivid memory of the subject. It's a memory of his mother looking proudly at his English handwriting.

"Isn't it wonderful how well you can write," she'd say. "Isn't it beautiful."

She couldn't read it, but to her, it was beautiful.

It meant her son would be able to go as far as he could.

WHAT'S NEW WITH OUR ARCHIVES IN AUSTIN?

O

VER THE PAST few years, TJHS has been very fortunate to have had **Ruth Ginsburg** of Austin working diligently as a volunteer to catalogue Jewish materials donated to the archives at the Center for American History at the University of Texas (Barker Center). Through her efforts there

were numerous materials available for research which might not otherwise have been available for years due to the staff limitations at the Center. However, **Ruth** and her husband have recently moved to Fort Worth, so she will no longer be able to continue her work at the Center. We owe **Ruth** a tremendous debt of gratitude and wish her well in Fort Worth.

Fortuitously, a short time after the last TJHS meeting in San Angelo where we approved finances to hire someone to complete the cataloging of the materials that went into the book, *Deep in the Heart*, we received a call from **Sarah Demb**. She will be

completing her Master's Degree in Library and Information Science at UT-Austin in May 1996 and has been working at the archives on another project for the UT Alumni Band Collection. **Sarah** was very interested in working with our materials because she "started doing research on the Galveston Movement for a paper because my family wound up in Kansas City and I've always wondered how and why — now I know! In the course of my research, I found out a little bit about Texas Jewry and my interest has been piqued. It would be great to work with the materials at Barker."

Sarah will be able to begin working in mid-January, so we encourage our members to visit the Barker and send in materials which will be valuable to researchers (reprints of important news articles relating to Jews in Texas, originals or copies of manuscripts, originals or copies of documents, and identified photos). Until we are sure of the address where to send materials, please send them to your president: **Barbara Rosenberg** — 219 Lombardy, Sugar Land, Texas 77478. Original documents and photos should be sent by registered mail.

OUR TJHS CEMETERY PROJECT IS NEARING COMPLETION

by *Don Teter (Baytown)*

The cemetery project is nearing completion. Essentially all the Jewish cemeteries and known Jewish burials in other cemeteries have been placed in a big file ready to be printed within the early part of 1996. The number of burials will approach 30,000.

It is the burials in "other" cemeteries which is incomplete. These can only be included if we are informed, as it is impossible to search every cemetery in the state.

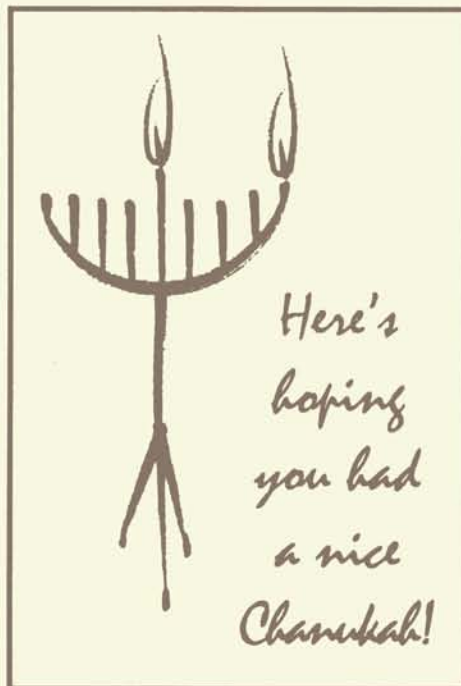
Even if it were possible, there are many markers of Jewish people on which there is no indication of religion. If you know of family or friends who are interred in non-

Jewish cemeteries, please advise us as soon as possible with name, birth date, death date, and cemetery name and location.

An example is the **Restlawn Cemetery** in **Dallas**. There are some Jewish burials there, but the only way to identify them is from people who know. We hope someone in Dallas might investigate this.

Another is the **military cemetery** in **San Antonio** which ought to be visited by someone from that city. If you can do this and want further help and advice, please contact us soon.

Call *Gertrude and Don Teter* at (713) 424-5829 or write them at 5013 Glenhaven, Baytown, Texas 77521.



Have you been working on your **FAMILY TREE** lately?
Have you taken any **ORAL HISTORIES** lately?
NOW is a good time to get started!

Searching for Information . . .

THE GOODICH FAMILY

A person is seeking information about a relative whose last name is **GOODICH** and who might have been buried in Dallas.

Anyone having information regarding this name, please contact **Don Teter** at (713) 424-5829.

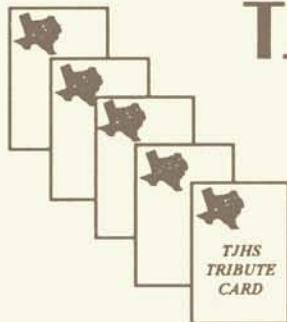
HYNDA HERENSZTADT

MOLLY BRETON of Rancho Mirage, California is doing a family tree of the **HERENSZTADT/HERNSTAT** family and needs more information on her aunt known as **HYNDA HERENSZTADT** (maiden name) born in Warsaw (Poland) Russia on May 18, 1861.

Breton believes her aunt could be buried by her Americanized name of **HILDA HERNSTAT**. Although her aunt was

married, **Breton** does not know the married name nor when she died. She heard that her aunt's husband was a sheriff, constable, or involved with the government in some way, and that they might have owned a ranch near Austin or Galveston. She asks for help in her research.

Molly Breton can be reached at P.O. Box 386, Rancho Mirage, California 92270; phone (619) 328-3000.



TJHS TRIBUTE CARDS

REMINDER: We have lovely tribute cards which can be sent to acknowledge your donation to TJHS in memory of a loved one, or in honor of a simcha.

Donations can be mailed to TJHS at P.O. Box 10193, Austin, Texas 78766-0193. Please include the name and address where you wish the acknowledgment to be sent.

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 1996 membership year.

Membership Classification: \$25-Annual Member \$50-Supporting Member \$100-Sponsor
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Contributions to TJHS are tax deductible within the limits of the law.
Please clip and send to address on reverse side.

DATES TO REMEMBER

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28
TJHS WINTER OPEN BOARD MEETING

9:00 AM
Beaumont Ramada Inn
2525 North 11th Street — (409) 898-2111
Come Saturday & we'll have dinner too!

FEBRUARY 5
TU B'SHEVAT

MARCH 5
PURIM

MARCH 14-17
1996 TJHS GATHERING
Longview - Jefferson - Marshall

April 4-11
PASSOVER

Welcome New Members!

Julie & Drew Alexander	Houston	Elya & William Naxon	Dallas
Leah Braunfeld	Houston	Ann & Rubin Oppman	Houston
Marilyn & Coleman Caplovitz	Houston	Ben Pfeffer	Houston
Brian Cohen	New York, NY	Mrs. Evelyn Ray	Reseda, CA
Rachel & Benny Frank	El Paso	Roseanne & Billy Rosenthal	Fort Worth
Steve Freidkin	Phoenix, AZ	Eleanor & Morton Rudberg	Dallas
Carolyn & Jim Goldman	Houston	Shirley & Gene Schaffer	Lincoln, NE
Sharon Kahn	Austin	Florence & Bernard Schoichet	El Paso
Susan & Michael L. Kottwitz	Dallas	Marcia & Barry Silverberg	Austin
Henrietta & David Krumholz	Bay City	Stephen J. Smith	Bellaire
Mrs. Aaron Kuperman	Fort Worth	Bryan E. Stone	Austin
Michael Luther	College Station	Mr. & Mrs. Charles Sugarman	San Antonio
Mrs. Georgia McInnis	Houston	Phyllis & Irving Tobin	Hillside, NJ
Mrs. Hannah F. Meyer	Fort Worth	Leah & Garland Wiener	Friendswood
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