

# Texas Jewish Historical Society

Preserving Jewish Heritage in Texas  
Established 1980

Summer, 2001

## Newsletter

### Sam Dreben, "The Fighting Jew"



A formal portrait of Sam Dreben, wearing his American and French medals shortly before his final days in the Army, April, 1919. Sometime later, the Belgian and Italian governments decorated him, too.

**The full story of Sam Dreben, "The Fighting Jew," begins on page 4.**

# From the TJHS President



This last July 15th, the Board of the Texas Jewish Historical Society met in Fort Worth at the magnificent new Temple Beth-El for our annual Summer meeting. The

meeting was attended by some 40 members along with a number of visitors and potential new members that were not aware of our mission to preserve our Jewish history (See photos at right).

The morning session was comprised of reports by chairman of the various committees and without exception every facet of the society has had positive results. Leon and Fay Brachman were assigned membership responsibility and have designed a computer program to better keep track of dues payments and mailing lists. For those of you who were either billed twice or not billed at all in the past, we apologize and hope we have solved these problems. If you have not paid your dues for 2001, or for previous years, we have no other option then to cancel your membership, as dues are the lifeblood of the society that keep our research and newsletters viable. As all of you know postage and printing costs keep going up.

The afternoon session was filled with presentations by an oral historian, our own Hollace Weiner,

(author, historian, & President-elect of the Southern Jewish Historical Society) and by individuals reporting on newly found historical information and documents. As was reported in the last newsletter, the new book project is still in committee and was discussed as to the type of format by Rabbi Jimmy Kessler. In my opinion, it was a spirited fact filled meeting in which everyone participated. The next fall board meeting will be held sometime in October with location and dates to be announced. As has been pointed out previously, board meetings are open to all members of the society.

In this newsletter, you will find

a story about a Texan named Sam Dreben, who fought in more military engagements than any other soldier and was know as the "fighting Jew." We have had communications from Florida to Arizona with people wondering why he was never decorated to the extent of some of his comrades-in-arms. I think you will enjoy the story!!

*Jack Gerrick*



*Mike Jacobs, Dallas (Hall of Remembrance – Temple Beth-El)*



*Joyce Gerrick, Fort Worth; Monica Faber, Bells; Sandra Freed, Fort Worth*



*Fay Brachman, Fort Worth; Jack Gerrick, Fort Worth; Frank Kasman, Midland.*



*Jack Gerrick, President, and Allan Livingston, Houston*



*Ima Joy Gandler, Waco; Yetta Leshin, Corpus Christi; Marvin Leshin, Corpus Christi; Susan Gross and Carol Ginsberg, Shreveport.*

# Letter From the Editor

(Or Freedian Slips)



If it is in my province as Editor, I am dedicating this issue to the memory of Samuel Dreben. When you read his incredible

story, you will understand why and why it is so important that he be remembered. Sam Dreben was presented with both France's and Belgium's highest awards for bravery in the defense of their countries at the same time as another American Hero, Sergeant Alvin York. Their devotion to their country was equal. What was not equal was that York was a drafted Christian soldier; Dreben was a Jewish volunteer! York was awarded his country's highest citation, *The Congressional Medal of Honor*. Dreben (to this date) was not. Mr. Gerard Meister of Florida has worked long and hard to correct this appalling error. I thank him for bringing the story of this great Texan to us.

In past Newsletters, I have stressed the importance of writing and submitting the history of your family and their experiences in coming to America. It is not my aim to bore the readers of this column with the same exhortation, but this is a very important aspect of the Society's purpose. We do call ourselves the "Texas Jewish Historical Society". Many of you good readers have said how much you enjoy reading the various stories we have printed. It is up to you to continue the contributions. If you don't, who will?

And if you have a computer and have not given the genealogical resources a go, let me urge you to do

so. My oldest daughter and my wife spend time researching our families and their results have been most gratifying. Sandra found previously unknown relatives living in Israel. Monica located cousins from Russia living in Brooklyn, only a short distance from where another of our daughters lives. How exciting it was to meet *mishpucha* we did not know existed and to compare family notes and old pictures!

And a special thanks to Norma Albert for her report on the TJHS tour to New Mexico; and the picture of Don Teter and his harem.

All Jews are related, one to another. All Jews are responsible, one for the other.

**Wouldn't you  
like to see  
YOUR family's  
history printed  
in this  
newsletter?**

Contact Buddy Freed at  
(817) 926-0455.

## Has Your Address Changed?

Has your address changed? What about your Area Code or phone number? Has your name changed? Do you want your name to appear differently on the TJHS mailing label? Please let us know. We'd really appreciate your help. Please send new information to:

**Fay Brachman**  
**3720 Autumn Dr.**  
**Fort Worth, TX 76109**  
**phone: 817-924-9207**  
**email: leonhb@flash.net**



## Please Note:

The Texas Jewish Historical Society and the editorial staff of this newsletter cannot guarantee the accuracy or authenticity of any article. This is the responsibility of each contributor, so please direct your questions, comments and/or corrections to each author directly.

## The Texas Jewish Historical Society Newsletter

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Jack Gerrick (Fort Worth).....	President
Buddy Freed (Fort Worth).....	Managing Editor
Walter Fein (San Antonio).....	Proofreader
Sandra Freed (Fort Worth).....	Proofreader
Helen Wilk (Corpus Christi).....	Proofreader
Geri Gregory (San Antonio).....	Layout and Typesetting

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# Forgotten Hero

*The remarkable true-life adventures of Samuel Dreben, the fighting Jew.*

By Gerard Meister

*Prologue: Peering from the hotel window as the spectators began to thicken along the parade route on that cold, blustery Armistice Day morning of November 11, 1921, Samuel Dreben, former first sergeant U.S. Army infantry, knew it was time to go. He walked from his hotel to the staging area and fell into formation. As he stood there silently, proudly — his mind flashed back to his boyhood in Kiev. It seemed like another life. Then the parade master gave his signal. Ahead of him, outlined against a slate-gray, rainswept sky, a living black ribbon of American history surged forward, marching slowly up Pennsylvania Avenue towards the National Cemetery at Arlington. Never before was there such a roster of pallbearers. Past Presidents Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt side by side with then President Harding and future president Calvin Coolidge.*

*Fixed in Sammy's gaze was his former commanding officer, General John J. "Black Jack" Pershing, who had asked Dreben, a member of the Texas Delegation to the ceremony, to be an honorary pallbearer escorting the horse drawn catafalque of the Unknown Soldier on its solemn journey to eternity. Obeying Pershing's orders and marching in cadence to the mournful drumbeat the former doughboy, little Sammy Dreben, had come a long way from his shtetl in Russia to the plains of Texas. This is his story...*

## To the Golden Land

It was never easy being a Jew in Russia, but for Samuel Dreben, born in Russia (now the Ukraine) on June 1, 1878, life only worsened as he crossed from youth to manhood. The few

opportunities open to Jews were being choked off by recent anti-Semitic restrictions flowing from the administration of the newly crowned Czar, Nicholas II. The Dreben family moved to Kiev, hoping that life in a big city would open some doors for their son. Secretly, his mother longed for him to become a rabbi, but his father apprenticed him to a tailor instead.

Hunched over his work between stitches, Sammy dreamt of life without a Czar. Twice he ran off to Germany, a step ahead of the Czar's press gangs ferreting out young Jewish boys for that life-numbing twenty-year conscription term in the Russian Army. (Part of the service was active duty, the rest being in the reserves, but once a Jew entered the army he seldom returned to his family.) Young Dreben knew he would not be hard to spot: short and stocky with an important nose on a round, pudgy face — his heritage came through loud and clear — and that fleeing Russia was his only out.

His tearful parents understood. Sammy left home and made his way to Odessa, where in 1898 he shipped out to Liverpool, England. Working on the docks there for a few months, he saved enough money for steerage passage to America, where he was quickly processed through U.S. Immigration and routed to his sponsor, an aunt in Philadelphia, who promptly apprenticed him to a tailor. But the immigrant Sammy was not destined to make pants too long or too short, or even to make pants at all. The stuff of Sammy's dreams was cut from different cloth.

## You're in the Army Now

The curtain rose on Sammy's new life when the U.S. Army opened a recruiting campaign for the Spanish-American War. Sammy was stunned; "What a country," he thought. "When

the United States needs an army, not only do they pay fifteen dollars a month and give you three square meals a day, they ask if you'd like to join. In Russia they just come and grab you away!" Now he knew why America was called "The Golden Land." Sammy wanted to enlist, but wondered whether the Army was any place for a Jewish boy. Would he have time for his daily prayers, morning and night? What would he eat, when everything would be *trayf*? Sammy prayed hard that night, but couldn't get the lure of adventure out of his mind. The God of Abraham, young Sammy was sure, would understand and forgive. The next morning Sammy walked into the enlistment office with God in his heart, but his *yarmulke* in a back pocket. He was accepted and sworn in on June 27, 1899. By September of that year the army fulfilled its recruitment pledge, shipping Sammy to Cavite Viejo, outside Manila on Luzon, just across the bay from the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines.

The new enlistee's baptism of fire came hot and quick. The Aguinaldo Insurrection against the American occupation forces was at its full fury. The Filipinos were enraged, feeling that we had only replaced the Spanish colonialists with ones made in America and were fighting hard for their independence. Sammy's company commander ordered an attack against a fortified bridge held by native patriots. Sammy's heart pounded as he fixed his bayonet and fell in four abreast, prepared to charge. "Double-quick time," the officer shouted as he led the way. After fifty yards, all the troopers were panting in the tropical sun; no time to think, just follow orders. Then, as Sammy and his comrades closed in on the enemy trench, an artillery round landed in their midst. Eleven troopers, including the captain, lay dead or wounded. The rest took cover; well, almost all the rest. But

better to hear the story from an eyewitness, then trooper, later writer/reporter and distinguished editor of the *San Antonio Daily Light*, Edward S. "Tex" O'Reilly, as he recounted the incident years later:

"As I lay watching this slaughter only a few yards away, I suddenly saw one soldier emerge from the smoke, still trotting forward toward the bridge. He was the loneliest figure I have ever seen, jogging along like a boy running an errand. There were several thousand

*insurrectos* in those trenches and the bullets were snapping around him, but he didn't seem to notice. Down the road he went, over the bridge, and into the trenches as if he were taking part in a drill on the parade ground. Other troops came sweeping up to us, and the command came to charge the trench. Over we went. The natives broke and stampeded. In the trench we found the lone soldier who had tried to win the battle single-handed. He was still fighting. Who is this little wildcat? I asked someone. 'Oh, that's little Sammie Dreben, the fighting Jew,' he said. The name stuck."

### Sammy's Next Two Wars

By the summer of 1900, the war in the Philippines cooled down, while the Boxer Rebellion in China heated up. Sammy's outfit, the Fourteenth Infantry was shipped to China, landing in time to play a major role in the relief of the siege of Peking. In time the city was freed and the Chinese forced to sign a humiliating treaty, ending a dismal chapter in the

history of imperialism, but opening a new one for Sammy. The American contingent, part of a multinational force, put Sammy in contact with British, French, German, Russian and Japanese troops in their joint maneuvers. This experience helped shape him, a scant two years out of the Pale of Settlement, into a seasoned veteran by his twenty-second birthday.

When his outfit was finally shipped back to Manila, the fighting

Misamis, a fortified outpost on Mindanao.

This time, instead of formations of ragtag troops, religious fanatics who had sworn an oath to kill infidels in the name of Allah confronted Sam. If this meant forfeiting their lives in the *ji*had so much the better; they believed that a place in the Seventh Heaven was reserved for such Islamic martyrs. The fanatic Moro (called a *juramentado*) would fast, chant his

final prayers, bind his extremities (arms, legs, and genitals) to slow blood loss when wounded, don his white burial shroud and carrying a kris (a type of long, wavy dagger) in each hand, stalk forth to his morbid destiny.

One night, while Sam was standing alone on sentry duty one of the holy killers charged. Sam got off a single shot, hitting the white apparition in the



*Sam at the cannon: Sam was not only prolific with machine guns, he also dabbled in artillery, shown here with a 3-inch field gun.*

there was just about over and Pvt. Dreben had to settle down to the dreary monotony of garrison duty. Peacetime soldiering held little appeal to the trooper from Kiev. To Sammy, it was now the din of battle that sounded the siren song. His taste for adventure would not go unrequited.

In the southern islands (Mindanao, mainly) the Moros, a tribe of Muslim converts, were on the warpath. It was a particularly nasty kind of warfare, what we today would call terrorism. Manila newspapers were full of tales of the new war. A young captain, John J. Pershing, was making a name for himself in the savage jungle encounters. Dreben longed for a new challenge. His transfer application was finally granted early in 1901, when he was shipped to

leg, but not stopping his rush. Sam was still trying to slam another cartridge into the breech, when a passing trooper put a round into the *juramentado*'s head, dropping him in his tracks.

Because the struggle against the Moros never seemed to end (the War Department did not close the books on the campaign until 1913), the Army was forced to rotate troops in and out in an effort to keep morale up and fresh recruits on the field. That's why Sammy had to shed his uniform in the summer of 1902, when he picked up an honorable discharge and donned civilian clothes.

*Continued on page 6*

## Of Russians and Potatoes

For the next couple of years, Sammy tried the life of a civilian. A succession of odd jobs: streetcar conductor, lumber-camp laborer, and teamster helper all ended the same way, a square Sammy in a round world. In danger of becoming a drifter, he reluctantly fell back on tailoring, this time in Los Angeles. But Sammy's destiny always seemed to be there, marking time, waiting for him to grab the magic ring. Now it was the increasing beat of *pogroms* in Russia that got to Sammy. The one in Kishiniev in 1903 was a particular horror. Sammy read the reports and seethed. Innocent blood was being spilled and he ached for revenge. If he could only get to Japan, he'd show those Russkies a thing or two.

His opportunity came when the Russo-Japanese War broke out in February, 1904. He found an army tanker, the *USS Thomas*, bound for Manila with a stop in Nagasaki. Dreben signed on as a waiter to work off his passage. His waitering proved a disaster, so he peeled potatoes for the thirty-two day voyage to Japan, where he slipped ashore. The Japa-

nese, displaying their customary degree of paranoia with foreigners, thought he might be a Russian Trojan Horse and turned down his services. He bounced around Nagasaki, literally starving, when he landed a job in the Nagasaki Hotel, again peeling potatoes. Eventually, he shipped back to the states on a tramp steamer, paying for part of the passage with his newfound skill, peeling potatoes.

Back in the States by mid-summer of 1904, and not seeing anything in his future, he re-enlisted and was shipped to Fort Bliss, near El Paso, Texas. There he spent three years coming to peace with himself, making friends in El Paso and learning how to work those newfangled machine guns, which would, in the years to come, have an impact on the course of history in the Americas.

When his Army hitch ended in 1907, Dreben once again faced making a life as a civilian. The usual series of odd jobs came and went, including one disastrous day as the Municipal Rat Catcher for San Francisco. But destiny never keeps one of its fated few waiting for long. This time it was the eradication of yellow fever in Panama that opened a new American frontier. With the deadly scourge conquered, work on

the canal began to make progress. Each blow of the pick-ax unearthed new opportunities and adventures. The ex-trooper shipped out on the first available freighter.

Landing in the Canal Zone, he found that his honorable discharge after six years of Army service was a powerful resume in an environment that fast resembled a wild-west theme park. Before the day was out he was hired as a security guard. Of course the Gods of Fate were just toying with Sammy when he won fifty dollars in the Panama Lottery and, through a long, lucky roll at a crap game, parlayed it into a half ownership of The Blue Eagle Saloon. Sammy thought he was on his way, but destiny had other plans. His partner disappeared with a month's receipts and Dreben, who never could refuse a drink to a tapped-out buddy, soon found himself bankrupt.

Now thirty, the adventurous immigrant took stock; he felt he ought to try a more traditional way of life, something in keeping with his roots. One day he would have to settle down, make a living, marry and have children. All Jewish boys do. Yes, his mother would really like that. Dreben then had a capital idea: everyone in the Canal Zone would need a clean new shirt when the Canal finally opened, and he'd be there to sell it to them. After all, selling on the run out of a pushcart or a suitcase was high on the list of those prosaic occupations that for generations shaped the Jewish immigrant experience. It was commonplace to see a black-frocked, bearded Son of Abraham wandering the hinterlands hawking everything from pots and pans to piece goods. Still, the sight of a Russian Jew traipsing through an equatorial jungle in a blue serge suit, peddling shirts from a mill in Massachusetts, must have been startling.

But the yoke of commerce hung heavy on Sam's neck. Soon, he was again beset with qualms, not that they returned, but that they had never left. Just as with every other time Sammy tried to fit himself into a conventional mold, the cast shattered. Instead of finding Sam married and settled down somewhere, the next

## Texas Jewish Historical Society Website

Texas Jewish Historical Society • P.O. Box 10193 Austin, TX 78766

Telephone - (281) 276-9693

**E-Mail address - [txjhs@yahoo.com](mailto:txjhs@yahoo.com)**

**Web Site address: <http://www.txjhs.org>**

The Texas Jewish Historical Society draws its membership from across the State of Texas, bordering states and across our great nation. TJHS supports a wide-ranging agenda. Quarterly Board Meetings are held at points of particular interest, an extensive newsletter is published regularly, and a speakers bureau is maintained. A variety of research projects are facilitated through the Jewish Archives in the Barker Library, or supported directly such as "Virtual Restoration of Small-Town Synagogues in Texas."

We are very proud of our organization and ask you to look us up and celebrate the joys of Texas history.

record of him is in the mountain uplands of central Guatemala, fighting alongside native Indians in their revolt against a repressive dictator, General Estrada Cabrera.

What was the springboard for this quantum leap? Did Sammy's yearning to breathe free echo the same voice Emma Lazarus heard when she inscribed that emotion on the base of The Statue of Liberty? Apparently so, for he marched only to freedom's drummer from this point on.

### Wounded in Action

The revolution in Guatemala failed; not the first time a battle was lost to the forces of darkness, and surely, not the last. Stung by defeat, and unaware that redemption was already waiting in the wings, Dreben slipped back into Panama, a step ahead of the firing squad.

May 1910 found the Canal Zone looking like a Grade B movie and a bad one at that. The local *cantinas* (saloons) were half-filled with *agents-provocateurs* plotting the overthrow of one dictator or another, while the other half of the saloon held spies for the same dictators working to keep their benefactors in power. Intrigue was everywhere.

One night, while Dreben was in his favorite bar trying to wash away the bitter aftertaste of Guatemala, an argument boiled over. A gang of toughs set upon a tall American in a white linen suit. Sam, on his feet in a heartbeat, charged into the knot of thugs and bowled over enough of them to help the white suit make it out the door. Once they were safe, Sammy asked what the hell was going on in there. The stranger explained that he was General Victor Gordon, recruiting troops to fight for the freedom of Nicaragua and the gang of cutthroats was on the payroll of General Zelaya, the strongman in power there. "My friend," the General said, "our army could sure use a guy like you! Any time you need a job, you got one."

Sam paused for a moment. After the failure in Guatemala, he'd been thinking of getting back into his blue serge suit and selling shirts again.

"It's just not for me," Sammy admitted to himself as the moment passed and the shirts and suit were put back in the closet and the battle joined. So well was the battle joined that Dreben suffered his one wound in twenty years of warfare. As he turned away to light a cigarette, Sammy was shot in the seat of the pants. But this was no laughing matter. In the days before sulfa and antibiotics such wounds were serious indeed, but not to Sam. "[t]he sons-of-guns dassent kill me," he said, laughingly. "There ain't a Jewish cemetery in this country!"

The success of the revolution in Nicaragua was a milestone in Dreben's career. Not only did the revolutionary committee award him \$2000 in gold as *gratificacion* for his role in the cause of freedom, but the accounts of his newfound prowess with the machine gun, and bravery in the line of fire, grew to heroic proportions.

### Banana Split

In 1911, Honduras was caught in a tug-of-war between two rival banana moguls. One of them, Sam Zemurray of Cuyamel Fruit, and like Sam, an immigrant, felt that he wasn't getting an even split of the banana business from the regime in power, which favored his rival, the Vaccaro Bros. of Standard Fruit. Zemurray called on General Lee Christmas, most noted of the Central American soldiers of fortune, to overthrow the government. In turn, Christmas asked Dreben, who was in New Orleans looking for a cause, to accept the rank of Colonel in the rebel army and man the lone machine gun the General had in his arsenal. Dreben agreed. Zemurray purchased a small, decommissioned U.S. naval ship, the *Hornet*, and the invasion of Honduras was on.

After being put ashore, the small band of adventurers marched up the coastal plain from Trujillo to the port city of La Ceiba. They had to pass through several villages where federal sharpshooters, barricaded high up in the local church steeple were firing freely, slowing the advance. Whenever the column got pinned the

call went out for Dreben and his machine gun. Sam's pinpoint strafing would soon roust the *federalistas* from their perch, allowing the parish priest to come out of hiding and bless Sammy for his good deed. The regiment then resumed its march.

The campaign nearly ended when General Christmas, tricked by an ambush, was captured and thrown into a local prison to await execution. His staff, instead of ordering a frontal assault with its potential for casualties, called in Dreben who quickly shot the door off the stucco jailhouse freeing his commander. But Sam's heroics were not all fire and bluster. When a fellow officer fell seriously ill with dengue fever, it was Sammy who trekked eight miles through the jungle to bring his comrade a pot of chicken soup.

It was a short campaign. After barely four months of conflict, a compromise treaty was signed in Tegucigalpa. Sammy pocketed his final month's pay of \$600 and was out of a job once more. But not for long.

### Commuting to Work

In Mexico the long reign of Porfirio Diaz, the dictator since 1877, was on its last legs, challenged by a democratic movement led by the young lawyer Francisco I. Madero. Inevitably, Madero and Dreben found each other. Before the year 1911 was out, Sam and his machine gun were on the payroll, spearheading a successful drive to Mexico City, where Madero was installed as President.

But Mexico quickly became a textbook case of the corruptibility of power. No sooner was an idealist seated in the presidential palace, than he himself became a tyrant. So before Sammy had finished coating his weapon with Cosmoline and packed it away, the next revolution broke out. And the next and the next one after that. Dreben was so busy fighting for Huerta, Orozco, Carranza, Salazar and Pancho Villa (among others) on their way to the palace and then fighting against them once they got there, that

*Continued on page 8*

he took up residence in El Paso, Texas. The first place he called home since he left Russia, and an easy commute to whichever revolution was currently playing across the Rio Grande.

His feats with the machine gun were now almost mythic. Dreben would enter a battle with a wheelbarrow or two – a harbinger of mechanized warfare, one might say – and a couple of helpers, then race from flank to flank, his helpers trundling along, pushing the wheelbarrow heaped with ammunition, tripod and gun, ready to set up shop wherever the maestro directed.

By 1913, it was Pancho Villa's turn to head the next revolution. Sammy believed that Villa, the charismatic, illiterate peasant would finally bring democracy to the Mexican people. Dreben became Villa's purchasing agent in El Paso, smuggling arms across the Rio Grande, helping the cause however he could. The struggle dragged on for years. Defeats and victories ran into one another as Villa rode his white charger from one battle to another. Then Villa made a terrible error. Stung by a few recent defeats, his followers raided Columbus, New Mexico on March 10, 1916, killing seventeen innocent Americans and wounding a score of others. This inexplicable, unprovoked sneak attack, America's first taste of infamy, was as incomprehensible as it was unforgivable. President Woodrow Wilson did not hesitate. He summoned the cavalry and asked General John J. "Black Jack" Pershing to lead a punitive expedition against Villa. Pershing didn't hesitate either. Short of scouts for the type campaign he planned, Pershing called for volunteers. Dreben answered the call, never to serve Villa again..

### **With Pershing Here**

Once at Pershing's side Dreben was often the General's personal chauffeur, at other times a scout, still others a spy. When he was sent out as a squad leader to reconnoi-

ter, his troopers were called Drebeneers. Perhaps it was around the campfire one night that a young lieutenant with the expedition, George S. Patton, heard a few tales of the legendary Dreben.

By mid-February 1917, our entry into WWI was fast approaching and the chase for Villa had to be broken off. Pershing had more important things ahead of him. So did Sam, now 39 years old and tired of fighting one war or another for the last eighteen years. He decided it was finally time to settle down, marry and have children. In the early spring of 1917, after a whirlwind courtship Sam married Helen Spence, a stunning nineteen year old, and bought a house in El Paso. By late April, his young wife was expecting.

### **And Over There**

President Wilson called for volunteers on April 6, 1917, the day Congress declared war on Germany. Sam, now retired from the Army ten years, was torn between his country's needs and obligations to a wife and expected child. For the first time since 1899, Sam did not answer the call. He stayed home. Yet inexplicably, ten months later on February 12, 1918, less than a month after his daughter was born, Dreben was in the recruitment office of the Texas National Guard putting on an Army uniform for the third and last time. He turned down a commission to enlist as a First Sergeant with Company A commanded by his friend Captain William F. Burges, an attorney and member of a prominent El Paso family. Company A was eventually assigned to the 141st Infantry, also an El Paso outfit, and shipped "Over There," by mid-summer of 1917. Once in uniform, Sammy itched for action, but before he saw any, there was devastating news. A letter from his wife finally caught up with him and the first-time father learned that his baby had died while he was en route to France. Whether Dreben could have done anything about getting back to his wife in Texas, we will never know. What we do know is that there is no record of his

asking for a hardship discharge. Apparently, duty to his adopted country won out over all else. Thus began Samuel Dreben's short, but remarkable tour of duty in the war to end all wars.

In early October 1918 the advance of the American and French armies was stalemated at St. Etienne in France. One nest of four German machine guns was raising particular hell. Sam knew those guns had to be put out of action. According to the official citation describing Dreben's heroism, "He discovered a party of German troops going to the support of a machine gun nest situated in a pocket near where the French and American lines joined. He called for volunteers and with the aid of about 30 men rushed the German positions, captured four machine guns, killed 40 of the enemy, captured two and returned to our lines without the loss of a man." For this action Sgt. Dreben was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, with the Croix de Guerre and the Medaille Militaire added by the French (their highest honor). Later the Italian and Belgian governments decorated him similarly.

As singular as this honor was, what happened next far surpasses any such decoration. The event unfolded on a rainy day when the lead column of his regiment arrived at the post that marked the boundary between France and Alsace. At last they were to set foot on German soil. The officer in command of the regiment halted the column and ordered up the band. The bandsmen drew up beside the muddy road. An order echoed down the line: "Sergeant Dreben, front and center!" Through the mud the muffled little sergeant came plodding, wondering what it was all about. "Sergeant Dreben, we are entering German territory. You've earned the right to set the first foot on enemy soil. Take the point." Then the regimental band (inexplicably) struck up, "My Old Kentucky Home" as Sam marched across the line and onto the scroll of history.

When the armistice followed shortly thereafter, General Pershing personally granted Sergeant Dreben

leave in Paris. No doubt Sammy could have asked for an early discharge, which almost certainly would have been granted, but, again, did not. Was Sammy ashamed to go home and face his wife? Was he drowning his guilt in the excesses of Paris? For whatever reason, Samuel Dreben, husband and father-in-mourning, stuck with the army until April 17, 1919, when he was honorably discharged for the third and final time. But his last battle was still to be fought.

### Home at Last

When Dreben finally got back to El Paso he hoped his wife would forgive him, that they would share in the grief of losing a child. But she seemed strangely aloof, almost disconnected from him. Perhaps, he thought, a woman once scorned, as she must have felt when he left her with a three week-old infant, would never be the same. Then he began to hear whispers that she had been unfaithful while he was overseas. When Sam confronted Helen with the rumors, her silence confirmed his suspicions. He filed for and was granted a divorce on June 19, 1919. Sam had been home in Texas just sixty days.

Faced with the age-old dilemma of the cuckold: whether to stay put and suffer the knowing smirks or to start fresh in some other place, brought the curse of sleepless nights to Sam for the first time in his life. Once he realized it was not in him to run, that he had to stay, had to hang tough, his self-esteem returned on the same wings as his sleep. He knew things would work out.

As 1919 drew to a close, Sam,

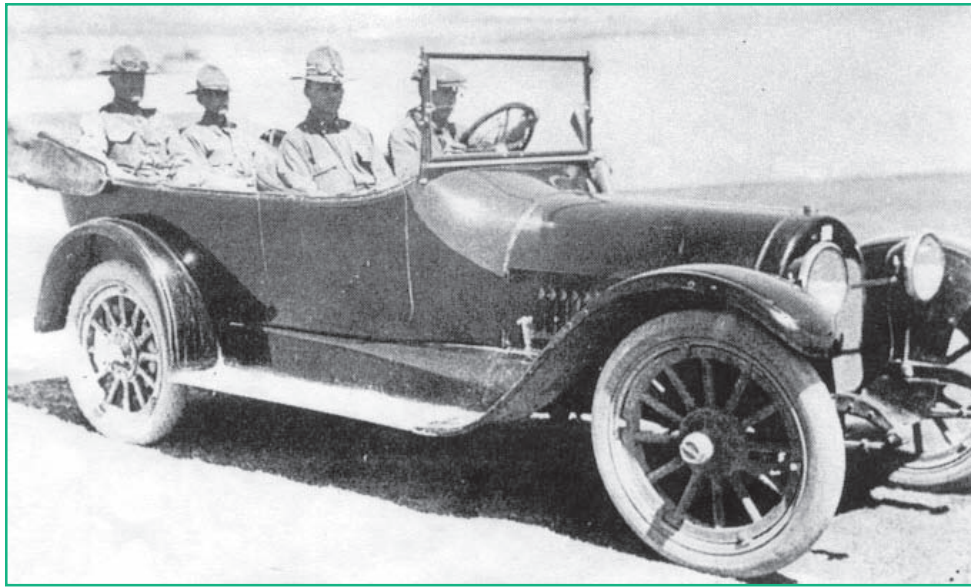
no longer forlorn, met life more than halfway. He dabbled in oil and insurance and joined the Kiwanis Club and all the veteran's organizations. It seemed that El Paso couldn't get enough of its hometown hero. Seizing the moment the citizen-soldier opened an insurance office and success came quickly. In a couple of years he was making a comfortable living.

In May, 1921 yet another

incident read as if the fate of Dreben and the L.A.P.D. were in the hands of an accomplished novelist as the protagonists are drawn together by some immutable force, linking up at the critical juncture, thickening the plot, making it work. This is what happened: while Sam was checking his medals and uniform in Texas, California's cast of characters came to center stage. Walking Scot-free out of California's

high security prison was three-time loser "Little Phil" Alguin, discharged for time served, one time too many. Little Phil, a violence prone thug, had a rap sheet as thick as a phone book: dope pusher, addict, fence, burglar, armed robber and now about to become a cop-killer.

Alguin was not out of jail a month when he shot and killed L.A.P.D. Detective John J.



*Pershing in staff car: General Pershing, back seat, left, with staff officials in his command car, a rented Dodge Touring sedan.*

honor arrived: an invitation from General Pershing to serve as honorary pallbearer for the Unknown Soldier being entombed in Arlington National Cemetery that November. Glowing with pride, the veteran trooper checked his boots first – it was a long march down Pennsylvania Avenue to Arlington – then took out all his medals, arranged and rearranged the way he would wear them a dozen times before he tried on his old uniform. He'd go on a diet, lose a few pounds and spit-shine his boots. He was going to look spiffy for the trip to Washington, ready for anything.

But instead of a cause or a battle, the anything this time came in the form of Louis D. Oaks, Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department and the most improbable posse ever assembled, even for Texas. Indeed, the old newspaper accounts of this

Fitzgerald in the course of a blown stake-out on June 18, 1921. Now wanted as a cold-blooded cop-killer, the American born, Hispanic looking, fluent-in-Spanish gangster fled to his ancestral home in Mexico, which at that time, was feuding with the United States, and refused to extradite Little Phil or anyone else. Emboldened by this stroke of luck Alguin left the dry hills of Chihuahua for the comforts of Ciudad Juarez, where he managed to stay hidden for several months. It wasn't long before Little Phil learned that his hideout was a poor choice. Juarez lies just across the river from El Paso. Dreben territory.

By mid-September, word reached Chief Oaks at the L.A.P.D. that Little Phil was holed up in Juarez, thumbing his nose with impunity at the

*Continued on page 10*

police in El Paso. Oaks called his counterpart there, Chief Peyton Edwards, to ask for help. Oaks was told that El Paso stood ready to do its part to nab a cop killer, come on down. The Los Angeles Chief spent the rest of the week tying up loose ends at the office, took the Pullman sleeper out of Union Station on Sunday night, September 24th, and got to El Paso early the next afternoon. He went directly from the train station to police headquarters to meet with his counterpart. The word “kidnap” was never spoken, but Oaks and Edwards knew that’s where they were heading. A strategy meeting was set for the next morning, leaving it to Edwards to invite some “good old boys,” boys with the right kind of stuff. Edwards called Dreben that night. (The El Paso police chief, sensing the extent of the problem when he first spoke to Los Angeles, had briefed Sam the week before.)

It was an informal council of war; a round of introductions, then everyone grabbed a chair. Besides Dreben, Edwards invited his First Deputy, Captain W.A. Simpson, and Chief of Detectives, Claude Smith. When Chief Oaks began to clear his throat, Dreben shifted in his seat, “I have a plan,” he said. All eyes turned to Sam. The ex-sergeant explained that after Chief Edwards first briefed him, he slipped into Juarez for a few days to get the lay of the land. He learned that Little Phil was extremely sensitive about a dead give-a-way tattoo on his right forearm, a flower superimposed with another of his sobriquets “Arizona Phil,” and had asked a few local doctors if it could be removed, which in pre-laser days was next to impossible.

All we have to do, Sam reasoned, is open a doctor’s office in Juarez, advertise that a new American specialist has arrived and his specialty was removing tattoos. Sam reasoned that Little Phil couldn’t resist checking out a new doctor. Then, when the killer drops into the office, we’ll knock him out with a mickey or something put him in a waiting car and scoot

across the International Bridge back to El Paso. Sam, cocksure of himself, already had enlisted another Texan, San Antonio detective J. H. Kelly, who had fought alongside Sam a couple of Mexican revolutions ago, to act as the American doctor and had gotten a real M.D., Dr. R.H. Ellis, an El Paso physician, to agree to be a “technical” advisor. (Sam had an easy time recruiting his posse, because Chief Oaks had posted a \$5,000.00 reward when he came to El Paso.) Dr. Ellis, a stickler for details, gave detective Kelly a short course on hypodermics, supplied a couple of syringes, the anesthetic (chloroform), some medical accouterments to throw around the office and a phony diploma to hang on the wall. The power of Dreben’s persona was such that six grown men, including a physician and two police chiefs, all nodded in approval. Sam left for Juarez to rent something appropriate.

Tuesday, Sam put a couple of ads in local papers and printed up some handbills. Wednesday, the ‘doctor’ and his ‘nurse’ (a brilliant touch by Kelly) opened the office and began their wait. Nurse and doctor were astonished when Little Phil, as if on cue, walked through the door on Friday. After the doctor examined the offending tattoo, an appointment was made to perform the procedure next Monday in Little Phil’s house, the only place where the wary con would agree to undergo anesthesia. The canny “Dr. Kelly” got a deposit out of Little Phil before he left.

That night the posse met and decided they would need two cars for the stakeout and getaway. Chief Oaks would drive one (no chance of his getting recognized), the others would pile into a cab, which, they reasoned, would make them invisible; after all, who takes a cab to a kidnapping? Everything was in motion: Detective/ Dr. Kelly walked into Little Phil’s house carrying a telltale doctor’s bag, ordered his patient to lie down and administered the chloroform, while the stakeout cars (one hailed from the El Paso Public Livery stand!) got into position. All that had to happen now was for Kelly to spit through an open

window, the agreed signal that the felon was out cold. As with all the best-laid plans, this one didn’t work either. Little Phil was groggy, but not completely out. Dreben decided to make a run for it anyway, he would stuff the fugitive on the floor of the car and race across the bridge to El Paso.

By the time Little Phil was dragged from the house to the car, he was wide awake, kicking and screaming in Spanish that he was being kidnapped by *gringos*. A mob quickly gathered, blocking the car. Police were called. Sam, Detective Claude Smith and the hapless cab driver were arrested, and Alguin set free. Kelly, who had melted into the crowd, made it back to El Paso, as did Chief Oaks who drove off when the trouble started.

The situation grew uglier by the hour. A lynch mob surrounded the jail. Only the timely intervention of one of Sam’s legion of friends in Mexico, General J.J. Mendez, commandant of the local garrison, who ordered troops into the melee with fixed bayonets, saved the Americans. The Juarez press screamed for the prisoners’ execution.

When El Paso learned of Dreben’s predicament the city came running. El Paso Mayor Charlie Davis led the charge. He appealed to Congress, the governor’s office, the State Department and Army Chief of Staff, General John J. Hines (who, in a great piece of luck for Sam, was passing through El Paso at the time). Pressure mounted on Mexico to release the prisoners. American troops massed at the border. Mexico blinked. Sam and his cohorts were released after three days in jail. (Little Phil Alguin was eventually extradited and tried for the murder of the Los Angeles detective. Convicted in 1923 and given a life sentence, Little Phil was paroled in 1953. He disappeared into Mexico and was never heard from again.)

Sam’s stint in jail made him a hero all over again. He couldn’t walk a block in any direction without someone stopping to applaud or salute him. Then during the march in Washington, where a million bystanders stood silently in the rain to honor their

nation's heroes, a new feeling stirred in Sam. He felt vindicated, that finally everyone understood that duty and honor came before all else, and that he was, at least in his mind, forgiven for abandoning his wife, for not being there when their baby lay dying. For the first time Sam knew he had nothing more to prove in El Paso, that there was more to life than business and parades. Once he made his mind up, Sam charged ahead as if he was attacking an enemy trench: stepping up visits to old Army buddies, speaking out for Veteran's causes and, for the first time in years, dating. In 1923, he met and married Meada Andrews a beautiful young widow from Dallas. His new wife, sensing the baggage that came along with life in El Paso, urged Sam to forget Texas and get a fresh start in California. Sam agreed. By year's end he closed his main street office in El Paso, packed his bags, shook everyone's hand, kissed no one good-bye and was on a train heading west, eager to start a new life in California.

### **California Again, But For the Last Time**

Sam hit the ground running when he got to the coast. Somehow he sensed that L.A. was his last chance to lead a 'normal' life. In double-quick time the affable war hero became a special agent for the West Coast Life Insurance Company, joined the usual assortment of Veterans' groups and made a score of new friends. By 1925, he was so totally immersed in the here and now lifestyle of California that the memory of past battles and roads not taken soon dimmed. Samuel Dreben was finally just a regular, every day kind of guy.

On March 14, when the sweet scent of spring was already in the air, Sammy had an appointment for a routine visit to his doctor, who was a personal friend. Doctor, nurse and patient were all making small talk, when the nurse, possibly distracted by the banter, accidentally filled a hypodermic with a toxic substance in place of the prescribed medicine and gently eased the needle into Sammy's vein. Mortally stricken, he was rushed to the

Good Samaritan Hospital, where he expired quietly the next morning when his brave heart finally stopped beating.

### **The Last Battle**

The Coroner's Office decreed that an autopsy must be performed and took charge of Dreben's remains. The war veterans argued that their hero should be interred in The National Cemetery at Arlington under a full panoply of military honors. Captain Burges, Sam's comrade-in-arms, asked for permission to bury his former First Sergeant in the Burges family plot in El Paso. Sam's widow, Meada, along with the rest of his family, felt besieged. The sacrilege of an autopsy on an observant Jew was bad enough, but not to be buried in consecrated ground was unthinkable.

By the next afternoon, the Coroner ruled the accident in the doctor's office to be the cause of death. The American Legion sprung into action, whisking Sam's remains to the Grand View Memorial Park in Glendale, where they kept a number of grave sites, and which, they felt, was a livable compromise to Arlington or El Paso. Final services and the still contested interment were scheduled for 3:30 P.M. the following day, even though the family, still confused by Sam's status as military hero, Texan and observant Jew, had not agreed to the Legionnaires' terms.

Nevertheless, the casket was wheeled into the cemetery chapel at the appointed hour. The assemblage parted along the lines of its opposing burial rites, stoking the acrimony that had flared up between the American Legion chaplain and the family's rabbi, who began to rail at one another across the aisle. Being pushed to the wall seemed to stiffen the family's resolve: in these circumstances you cannot serve God and country at the same time. The impasse filled the room, choking off any hope of a compromise, until the rabbi, Meyer Winkler of Temple Sinai, proposed a Solomon-like solution: Carl De Mott, the Legion's chaplain, would preside over full military honors in the chapel, then lead the Legionnaires' cortege to the graveside where a bugler's taps

would sound its plaintive farewell. At this point, with the Corps standing at parade rest, the family would come forward to chant the *kadish* as the rabbi leads them through the final service, consecrating the burial in accordance with the laws of Moses and of Zion.

His last battle had been fought. Now Samuel Dreben, the fighting Jew, could rest in peace.

### **Epilogue**

Samuel Dreben fought in more of our nation's wars than General Douglas MacArthur. Newspapers from coast to coast — including The New York Times — carried his obituary. Nationally syndicated columnist, Damon Runyon, eulogized him with a poem, The New Yorker magazine with a two-page profile. The Texas State Legislature, upon learning of his death, lowered its flag to half-staff and recessed for the day.

*In what has to be a tribute without parallel, General Pershing, commander of over a million American fighting men in World War I, wrote to Sam's widow: "Your husband was the finest soldier and one of the bravest men I ever met."*

*As the sands of time shift into the new millenium, it is rare to find a living soul who ever heard of Samuel Dreben, America's "Forgotten Hero." Until now.*



*Author Gerard Meister*

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# TJHS Tour to New Mexico, the Land of Enchantment

The TJHS had a trip to New Mexico led by Don and Gertrude Teter June 17-24. The group met in Albuquerque where Don rented a 15 passenger van and drove his harem to points of interest in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Los Alamos and Taos. His harem included his wife, Gertrude, Ima Joy Gandler and Hilda Ruttenberg of Waco, Selma and Melissa Mantel of Houston and Berta Schlesinger and Norma Albert of McAllen.

While spending two days in Albuquerque we had a guided tour, including visits to Temple Albert, which celebrated its 100th anniversary two years ago, Congregation B'nai Israel and the Jewish Community Center. Also visited were the University of New Mexico, the Albuquerque Museum, historic Old Town and the tram ride to Sandia Peak. We also toured up and down Route 66 which runs through Albuquerque. They are celebrating the 75th anniversary of this famous highway in July of this year.

We then traveled to Santa Fe where we visited the New Mexico capitol, the exhibit on the history of the Jews in New Mexico at the Governor's Palace Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts, the International Museum of Folk Art, and the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture. Also visited were several art galleries and

the Georgia O'Keefe Museum. We spent an enjoyable evening with members of the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society at the home of its president. We viewed a video presentation about the Crypto-Jews, given by a Santa Fe couple who have studied

where the atom bomb was developed, and the community is still made up of many of the scientists who participated in that achievement. We were informed that the Jewish congregation did not have any lawyers and only one M.D.

Taos gave us an opportunity to view and purchase many of the Indian works and products. Due to very strong winds we were unable to visit the Pueblo but we enjoyed the town of Taos. On the way back from Taos we stopped at the Camel Rock Casino where we had a delicious meal and could indulge in some casino activities.

We spent our final day and night in Santa Fe and Albuquerque. We visited art galleries, famous Canyon Road lined with art galleries and shops, historical Bishop's Lodge and the Shidoni foundry where we watched the bronze casting of sculptures that

will be featured in many of the galleries.

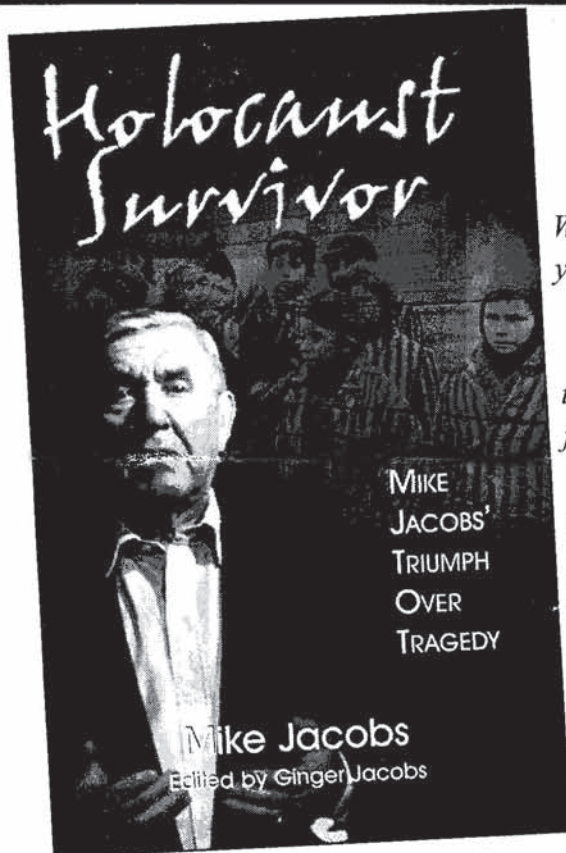
Don and Gertrude led us on a wonderful tour. They had made all the arrangements, tour guides, appointments, etc. This was the fourth trip that they had planned for the TJHS and everyone who took advantage of their leadership had nothing but praise for the trips. Not only did we see and learn a lot about the area, but we had fun and lots of laughs. Thank you Don and Gertrude. We also gained a new member for the Society. Welcome to Hilda Ruttenberg of Waco.

*Norma Albert*



this subject for many years.

In Los Alamos we visited the Jewish Center and learned that they have about 50-60 members, a Temple-Community Center, a Rabbi (whose day job is as a scientist at the Los Alamos lab), Hebrew classes, religious school and study groups. We viewed a video about the development of Los Alamos at the Bradbury Science Museum. During the war the area was so secret that everyone had the same address, a P.O. Box in Santa Fe. All the children born there during that time also had the same P.O. Box address as their place of birth. This is the area



## *Holocaust Survivor*

Mike Jacobs' Triumph Over Tragedy

by Mike Jacobs, edited by Ginger Jacobs

*When the tattooing was over, the SS man looked at me and said, "Do you know what this number is all about?"*

*"No, sir," I answered.*

*"Now you are not human anymore. You are a number, and you better remember this number, because that's what you will be called from now on."*

*They put the same number on my shirt, and so I became B4990. But in my mind, I was still a free person.*

A penetrating memoir by the founder of the Dallas Holocaust Memorial Center, who has spoken since 1950 to an estimated 500,000 people about the Holocaust. Mike Jacobs was born in the small Polish town of Konin, where the Jewish community dated from 1397. When Poland was invaded by the Nazis in 1939, Jacobs spent five years confined in ghettos and concentration camps, but he kept hope alive in his heart. He shared that hope by helping others whenever he could—and

by undermining Nazi efforts, no matter the risk to himself. A story told without hatred or bitterness, *Holocaust Survivor* teaches us that when we recognize that freedom comes from within, we are never completely powerless.

.....

Founder of the Dallas Holocaust Memorial Center, **Mike Jacobs** was born in the small Polish town of Konin, where the Jewish community dated from 1397. He speaks about the Holocaust to thousands each year, to remind people of the destruction that hatred causes—and of the power of faith.

**Ginger Jacobs**, a native Dallasite of Russian and Latvian descent, has worked throughout her life for Israel and Jewish education. She holds a master's degree in sociology from SMU and has taught at many schools, including Ursuline Academy and Brookhaven College. She is author of *The Levin Years: A Golden Era, 1929–1951*.



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# History of the Rosenwasser Family, Lockhart

by Gladys Rosenwasser Schaffer, Corpus Christi

This 1999 narrative of the Rosenwasser family history is based on memories from Gladys Schaffer, the last surviving child of Morris and Annie Rosenwasser, and information from the Lockhart Chamber of Commerce, the *Lockhart Post-Register*, Lockhart's Dr. Eugene Clark Library, the novel, *Historical Caldwell County: Where Roots Intertwine*, and the *San Antonio Express-News*.

In 1890, my father, Morris Rosenwasser, arrived in New York on a ship after traveling alone all the way from a small town in Hungary. He was born in 1874, so he must have been only about 16 years old. He then set out by boat for Galveston, Texas.

For the next 10 years, he worked as a pack peddler, selling his wares throughout South Texas before settling in Central Texas and opening what would be an 80-year successful family-run business.

In 1900, he opened a small dry goods store on the public square in Lockhart, Texas, a small cotton farming village with a population of 2,500.

Despite farmers' predictions of a poor cotton crop that year, my father optimistically unloaded packing cases of merchandise at his Red Front Store, which later was changed to the name of Rosenwasser's. Opening day was an exciting event to the crowds of skepti-

cal onlookers. As it turned out, farms had the greatest acre yield of cotton ever produced. A good sign, a good beginning.

My father's wagon was a

feed and water the mules, talk of the news of the day, news of the county seat, or news from the state capital.

I recall a funny story about one particular visit my father had with a farm family. It began to rain, and water poured down steadily over the next few days, causing the two creeks around the farm to rise dangerously. As a result, my father was forced to spend the week with the family. And for seven days they ate nothing but hominy. Needless to say, he never wanted to taste another bite of hominy the rest of his life!

On one of his early buying trips to New York, my father met my mother, Miss Annie Freedman, in the home of a mutual friend. She had been on a pleasure trip to New York City. Born in York, Pennsylvania in 1883, she was the daughter of Isaac and Rosa Joseph Freedman. My father and mother married in Houston, Texas on August 18, 1901 and returned to Lockhart to set up house.

They raised five children: my four brothers Gershon, Isadore, Jesse, Marcus, and me. I was the youngest and only daughter. We all attended the University of Texas, earning college degrees.

My high school years were happy. I had lots of friends and was into all sorts of activities, from acting in plays to competing in declamations,



*Our family in our home on Pecan Street in Lockhart.  
My brothers Gershon, Isadore, Jesse, Marcus,  
and my Mother, I, and my Father.*

welcome sight at farm houses. His fluency in Polish and German stood him in good stead with Caldwell County farmers. On a typical visit, the farmer came in from the field, while his wife and children examined my father's clothing. Then they would

winning city and county competitions.

My college years were wonderful. I met Henry Schaffer, my love and husband, the first weekend at the University of Texas. About a month later, we were going steady.

I was a true sorority girl, serving as president of Alpha Epsilon Phi. My brothers all had been in the Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity. I graduated *summa cum laude* with a B.A. degree in education. I still have many close friends from my college days.

My mother was active in the store and in the community of Lockhart, including being a charter member of the local Order of the Eastern Star. Her home was always open to the people she loved. She liked to garden, cook, can, pickle, and share recipes with others. Neighbors remarked on her graciousness.

Home, I understand, was always open to friends and relatives from my father's home town. They must have been a strange bunch to Lockhart - they were foreigners, didn't speak English, and were very religious. My mother was Americanized, but she welcomed them into her home. They bought merchandise from my father and peddled goods in wagons around Lockhart.

Incidentally, these same men later opened big department stores in Austin, Houston, and San Antonio. But my father preferred to stay in Lockhart, believing that it was going to grow and become a big city one day.

Over the years, the Rosenwasser name became synonymous with progress in Lockhart. Our

family grew as did Lockhart. Our histories were intertwined. On the historic occasion of Texas' 100th birthday in 1936, my father suddenly died.

The Centennial Edition of the *Lockhart Post-Register* memorialized him. His compassion and business ethics were known to all the citizens of Caldwell County. His business philosophy to stay abreast of the times had served him well. He had built a

*ous nature of Morris Rosenwasser. Not only did he give of his merchandise to cover those suffering from the rain and cold but without money to buy, contributed of his means to purchase food for the hungry and gave freely of his time ...."*

In the same newspaper, our family described their dedication to Lockhart: "*As Texas celebrates its one hundredth anniversary,*

*Rosenwasser's is proud of its 36-year record of service. Sharing the prosperity and depressions of Lockhart, this business has striven to uphold the tradition of honesty and integrity which was implanted into that first small store in 1900."*

During my last year in college, my father died unexpectedly at the age of 62, and the business was handed on



*On closing day, Rosenwasser's Store was mobbed by people crying and reminiscing.*

reputation for fairness and goodwill.

The newspaper article, "*Thirty-Six Years of Fair Dealing In Good Merchandise Has Built A Reputation For Local Establishment,*" talks about my father's adaptability as a merchant in the Lockhart Trading Territory and his generosity to its residents. When the boll weevil devastated Lockhart during the early 1900s, he opened his business doors, much the same way my mother had opened her home.

The article said:

*"It was in this time of distress that people learned the gener-*

to my brothers Gershon and Isadore to run. And they did, conducting themselves honorably in our father's footsteps. They continued our family's involvement in organizations such as the Kiwanis Club, Lockhart Chamber of Commerce, Masonic Lodge, and Ben Hur Shrine Temple. My mother also remained active until her death at the age of 94 in 1977.

The importance of our store's contributions to early Texas manufacturers was noted in an article in 1970

*Continued on page 18*

in the *San Antonio Express-News*. The article credited my father with giving the Williamson-Dickie company, one of the state's work and sports clothing makers, its first sale. In "Texans Can Almost Live Off the Land," the reporter wrote:

*"Typical of the difficulties of early Texas manufacturers is the story of the very first sale made by Williamson-Dickie.- The company's first salesman started out with the first sample garments to come off the sewing machines in the little plant in Fort Worth. He drove southward, stopping at such places as as Cleburne, Hillsboro, Waco, Temple, Georgetown, Austin - and not one merchant would give him even a trial order. Some refused to even look at his samples. At Lockhart, he visited Morris Rosenwasser's small department store and Mr. Rosenwasser, a gentle, warm and friendly person, gave the discouraged salesman his very first order - the first order for the new factory.. ."*

After almost eight decades of business, Rosenwasser's made its final sale and closed in 1979. It had experienced the ups and downs of changing times. A passage from the 1984 book, *Historical Caldwell County: Where Roots Intertwine*, chronicled those changing times:

*"The business survived lean years of boll weevil infestation, prosperity, long hours of the oil boom days, depression and wars, adjusting to suit the times."*

The Rosenwasser family's devotion to the people of Lockhart was heartfelt. On closing day, the store was mobbed by people crying and reminiscing. Some recalled how they

had bought their first pair of shoes or pants from our store; others the material for a wedding dress. We loved Lockhart and Lockhart loved our family.

My husband, Henry Schaffer, and I had a beautiful life. A very happy one, filled with love and devo-



*Gladys Rosenwasser Schaffer today, in Corpus Christi.*

tion We shared 50 wonderful years together. Our children were our life. They brought us so much joy. We loved to travel and took our children for yearly family vacations that Marcia and Rick still remember.

Henry worked as a pharmacist. Affectionately called "Doc" Schaffer by many, he owned the Schaffer Modern Pharmacy in Gaslight Square, Corpus Christi. With its old-fashioned soda fountain, the pharmacy was a gathering place in the city for many years. Henry was a graduate of Rice University and the U. T. Pharmacy School and was active in

Temple Beth El

I was a very busy person from the first year we moved to Corpus Christi. I was one of 50 women appointed as a Friend of the Court to advise the new corporate court judge. I also served as president of many organizations, including the first

Abused Women's Shelter at Cabaniss Field, the Temple Beth El Sisterhood, the Settlement House, and Menger PTA. I also served as treasurer of the Parent-Child Guidance Clinic run by Dr. Christopher Morris and was a charter member of the Little Theatre.

Real estate was a big part of my life. I enjoyed my association with the people I worked with and the lovely people I sold property to.

Today; In addition to my terrific son-in-law Russell, I have four handsome grandsons, Ito, Lance, Richard and Tad, and two beautiful granddaughters by marriage, Robin and Michelle, who are the love of my life now.

I'd like to share one of my favorite songs written by Oscar Hammerstein:

*"A bell's not a bell till you ring it; A song's not a song till you sing it; Love in your heart wasn't put there to stay; Love isn't love till you give it away!"*

Those lyrics best express how I feel about my wonderful life which has been full of love over the years.



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## Do You Recognize Anyone in This Photo?



This photo came from Gladys Rosenwasser Schaffer of Corpus Christi. She was an undergraduate of UT in Austin from 1932-1936 and this is her Sorority, AEPhi. Can you help identify any of these gals? Here are the names of the gals Gladys was able to recall:

Row 1, on walk, left to right: #1?, #2 is Teresa Burgauer, #3, 4?

Row 2, sitting on stoop #1 is Pauline \_\_\_, #2, 3?, #4 is Myra Caplan (Ravel), #5? and #6 on right stoop is Jane Stone (Sanger).

Rows 3 and 4: No IDs.

Row 5 (top row): #1 is Ruth Blaugran, #2?, #3 is Jean Nussbaum, #4 is Frances Levy (Kahn), #5 is Gladys Rosenwasser, #6?

If you have any information on any of the missing gals, please email Helen Wilk at [lhwlk@earthlink.net](mailto:lhwlk@earthlink.net), or write to her at 260 Cape Aron, Corpus Christi, TX 78412.

# Welcome New Members!

May 2, 2001 – July 25, 2001

**Steve and Helen G. Breen**  
5165 Swallow Dr.; Beaumont, 77707

**George Cohen**

**Carl Dawson and Peggy Snofsky**  
6909 Shenandoah; Fort Worth,  
76140

**Gertrude Denn** (Rosenzweig)  
2600 Bellefontaine #B-11; Houston,  
77025

**Michael Dunn**  
1226 W. Northgate Dr.; Irving,  
75062

**Relda Hoffer**  
2727 Essex Terrace; Houston, 77027

**Dr. Alex and Sandy Hoffman**  
4201 Hildring Dr. East; Fort Worth,  
76109

**Lenny and Lynn Krasnow**  
16131 Amberwood Rd.; Dallas,  
75248

**Jason Kristall**

**Nora A. Laufman**  
3627 North Braeswood Blvd.;  
Houston, 77025

**Dr. Marc and Michelle Lefkowitz**  
212 Center Street; Deer Park, 77536

**Robert Markman**  
12107 Nova Dr.; Houston, 77077

**Gary Mann**

**Dr. A. Aaron and Jo Mintz**  
252 Sugarberry Circle; Houston,  
77024

**Regina Rogers**  
2030 Thomas Rd.; Beaumont, 77706

**Roz and Manny Rosenthal**  
3950 Sarita Park #11; Fort Worth,  
76109

**Alan and Norma Sampson**  
1740 THomas Rd.; Beaumont,  
77706

**Gloria Schwartz**  
524 N. Post Oak Lane; Houston,  
77024

**David and Dolly Seligman**  
3766 Steck Ave.; Austin, 78759

**Muriel Shaw**  
4625 N. Braeswood Blvd. #306-C;  
Houston, 77096

**Patsy Williamson**  
6346 Mercer Street; Houston, 77005

*We apologize for any incorrect listings,  
as we are in the process of installing a new computer program.*

## Our membership is now 425!

Your membership enables us to accomplish our goals of collecting and disseminating the valuable information about the interesting heritage of the Jews of Texas.

For a non-recorded message on the further benefits of TJHS membership, call **817-924-9207**.



## In Memoriam

**Rabbi Richard Dryer**  
(San Antonio)

**Audrey Given** (El Paso)  
**Max Stiefel**

(Laguna Woods, California)

TJHS extends condolences  
to their families.

**NOTE:** If you know of any TJHS members who have passed away or married, requiring a change in membership status, please notify:

**Fay Brachman; 3720 Autumn Dr.; Fort Worth, TX 76109**  
**Phone: 817-924-9207; Email: leonhb@flash.net**

Thank you!

## Texas Jewish Historical Society Donor Cards

This card is available for anyone wishing to honor or memorialize an individual through our endowment fund. Upon receipt of your gift, the Society will respond with this acknowledgement. To the members who have sent in funds in the past, thank you on behalf of TJHS. To all those who will send funds in the future, please send your gift to:

**Texas Jewish Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 10193**  
**Austin, Texas 78766-0193**

### The Texas Jewish Historical Society

gratefully acknowledges your gift to our

Endowment Fund

of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

in \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

An acknowledgement has been sent to the party you specified.

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

## Have Exhibit, Will Travel

The Texas Jewish Historical Society, in cooperation with the Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio, has designed an exhibit to be used as an educational tool for schools, Sunday Schools, Jewish Community Centers, Synagogues, Temples, and Special Events in any town or city in Texas.

The exhibit depicts the journey of Jews in tiny villages and shtetls in Europe to America and their eventual settlement in the communities of Texas. It shows families, businesses, homes, children, religion, and holidays.

The exhibit is designed to be either hung on walls or set up on tables on foam board with an easel stand. The entire exhibit comes in two boxes, weighs 40 lbs., and can be shipped very easily via UPS. There is no charge for the exhibit and the only cost is the return charges via UPS.

**To reserve the exhibit, along with a speaker, contact Jack Gerrick at (817) 927-8765.**



# Texas Jewish Historical Society Annual Membership

☐ **YES!** I am enclosing my dues payment to the Texas Jewish Historical Society for the 2001 membership year. I am a ☐ New Member ☐ Renewing Member.

☐ \$36 – Annual Member

☐ \$50 – Supporting Member

☐ \$100 – Sponsor

☐ \$250 – Sustaining Member

☐ \$500 – Benefactor

☐ \$1,000 – Patron

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E-mail address(es): \_\_\_\_\_

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

Please clip and send with your check to **TJHS**, P.O. Box 10193, Austin, TX 78766-0193.

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