

# Texas Jewish Historical Society

Preserving Jewish Heritage in Texas  
Est. 1980



July, 2010

## Sadie

by Joseph Billy Pfeffer

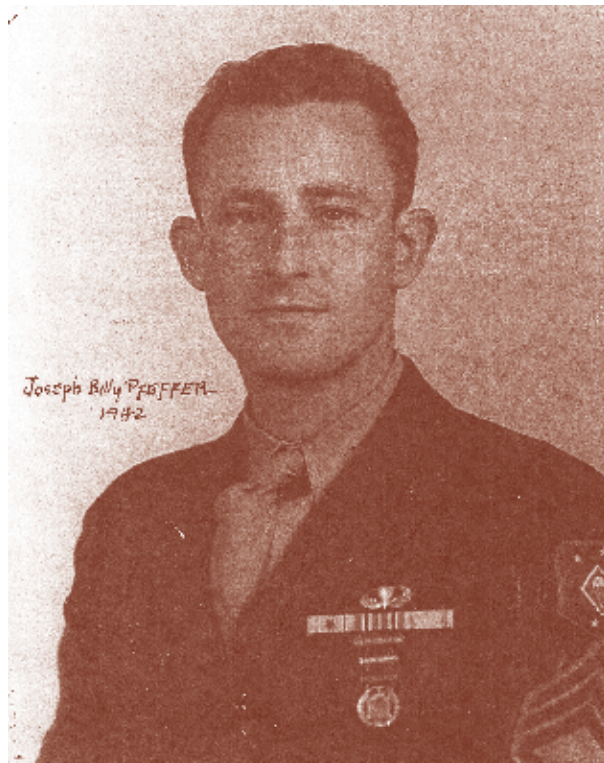
Edited by Davie Lou Solka

Of the hundreds and thousands of immigrants who came to these shores, one would stand above all the others for me. Her name was “Sadie,” and her parents were Lieb and Rosele Nachtigal from Poland.

The family arrived at Ellis Island in late 1892. Upon arriving, Lieb and Rosele were taken to separate rooms, leaving Sadie alone. There were so many people rushing past her that she became confused and began to cry. The doctors and nurses rushed over to her and said, “Please, don’t cry. We are not going to hurt you.” One of the nurses took charge of Sadie and took her to the showers to be inspected for lice.

“Where is my mother?” Sadie asked.

The nurse replied, “Your mother had something on her eye. She had to be checked to be sure it was not



trachoma.”

“My father?” Sadie asked.

“Your father is ok,” said the nurse. “He passed all the inspections and is waiting for you and your mother in the next room.”

Sadie was only sixteen years old and had traveled hundreds of miles from her home in Poland. She was scared that she would be alone in this strange land. After spending the night on Ellis Island, the Nachtigal family was put on the ferry for New York City.

Lieb was carrying two heavy suitcases and Sadie and her mother were carrying a heavy box, when a young man approached them and asked, “Can I help you with that heavy box?” They handed it over to

him and went forward with him following. As they neared

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# Meet Your New President

by Rusty Milstein

Hello all, I am Howard R. "Rusty" Milstein. I was born and reared in Longview, Texas, where I attended public school. In the fall of 1963, I entered the University of Texas at Austin and pledged Phi Sigma Delta. In the early spring, I met a cute little SDT named Mitzi Shapiro and we married in July of 1965 (almost 45 years ago—wow!) We moved back to Longview in February of 1966. We have three children—Randy and his wife Joelle Tanzer Milstein, Jeff, and Amy (who helped with and



attended the Dallas Annual Gathering). We also have two granddaughters—Abby and Hannah.

I have been involved in several community activities. The one that I really enjoyed was following Mike Jacobs' lead and becoming a soccer referee where I achieved state level.

After I retired in 1999, Mitzi and I really became active in the Texas Jewish Historical Society and we have only missed a few meetings in the past ten years.

My goals for this administration are to have total involvement of the

officers and board members. Three officers have already committed to very important duties in TJHS and I hope that others will be as forthcoming as they were. Please be advised: I will not be directly responsible for planning each and every meeting. I hope that one of our vice presidents, with a committee formed from board members, will take on the challenge of finding members to host our meetings. Fortunately, we have commitments already for the Annual Gathering in Texarkana, as well as a future meeting in Brenham.

Well, now you have idea about the person that you elected in April. I hope to live up to your expectations, and that should not be a problem, as I am surrounded by knowledgeable, experienced people who are more than willing to help, and who have already guided me in the proper direction. 🇺🇸

Rusty Milstein  
President, 2010-2011

## The Texas Jewish Historical Society July 2010 Quarterly News Magazine

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

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

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

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## Please Note:

*If you are sending a check to the Texas Jewish Historical Society, please indicate the purpose of the check—dues, gift, contribution, etc.*

The newsletter of the Texas Jewish Historical Society (USPS) is published four times a year by the Texas Jewish Historical Society, P. O. Box 10193, Austin, Texas 78766-0193, Travis County. Periodical postage paid at Houston, Texas. Postmaster: send address changes to the Texas Jewish Historical Society, P. O. Box 10193, Austin, Texas 78766-0193.

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the gate, Sadie turned around and the nice young man was nowhere to be seen. He had stolen the box! A man from the Jewish Benevolent Society, who was sponsoring them, was waiting and a policeman motioned for them to move on. They were upset, but there was nothing to do about the theft.

The Benevolent Society had been told that Sadie Nachtigal would be able to take care of her family. She was skilled in three languages and would have no trouble finding a job as an interpreter. She decided to find a family who had a small child that would need help in learning a foreign language.

Sadie saw an ad in the newspaper and applied for it. She rode the subway, and asked the conductor to let her off when they came to the street listed in the ad. After a short ride, he waved at her and she got off the subway. A lady passing by showed her the house she needed. It was a large two-story house and was terrifying to a girl from Poland. Taking a deep breath, Sadie knocked on the door.

The door opened and the lady of the house said, "Hello." In broken English, Sadie said, "I want the job taking care of your daughter. I speak three languages—French, Russian, and Yiddish, and also a little German. I can sew and clean your house. I work real hard for you."

The lady, Mrs. Green, smiled and looked at the pretty girl who was so frightened. "Please come in," she said. "And don't be so frightened. You are so young. When did you get off the boat?"

Sadie said, "Two days ago. My mother and father are with me. We

live in Brooklyn." The young girl was so clean and pretty that Mrs. Green said, "Sadie, you are hired. You will help clean the house and help in the kitchen. Your main job is to teach my daughter, Rebecca, to speak French. She is well spoken in Yiddish."

Rebecca came home in the late afternoon. She was eight years old and had long shiny red hair with a pleasant smile. Sadie was waiting for her by the steps. Mrs. Green introduced Sadie as the French tutor. Rebecca smiled and said, "So you are going to teach me French. Welcome." When Sadie told Rebecca her name, Rebecca asked what it meant. Sadie said, "Nachtigal—a bird that sings."

"How beautiful," replied Rebecca, "I think we are going to be good friends, Sadie."

Rebecca was a gem of a child. She had respect and a tremendous drive to learn. Sadie's days were fun. Rebecca taught her how to dance, helped her with her English, and treated Sadie as a member of the family.

Life for the Nachtigal family was good. Lieb got a job with a small school close to the rented apartment and Rosele learned how to press felt hats, which gave her a steady job. They kept a kosher home and were satisfied with what they had.

Lieb had a distant friend in Houston, Texas, by the name of Geller. The Geller family was contacted and they invited Sadie to come for a visit. Sadie began to get ready for the trip and bought some new dresses. Rebecca and her mother were happy for Sadie. They gave her a lovely gift and told her when she came back, she would still have her job.

Abraham Geller, Sadie's cousin,

met her when she arrived in Houston. He had prepared a room for her, and invited friends to meet her. One of the guests was a young man by the name of Ben Pfeffer. Sadie met Ben and was attracted to him. At the end of the day, Ben invited Sadie to go out for a picnic. He borrowed his father's car and they went to Sylan Beach, a few miles out of town.

They had a lovely day at the beach and began to learn things about each other. Sadie asked Ben what kind of work he did, and he replied that he owned a small dry goods store on Oden Avenue. When Ben asked Sadie what she did, she replied "I'm a tutor—I teach children languages. And I love stage plays. In New York I never miss a Jewish play. I once met Molly Picon. That was a real thrill."

Sadie and Ben began to see each other on a regular basis, and soon realized that they were in love. When Ben told Sadie that he wanted to marry her, she replied, "Yes, yes, yes! Ben I love you with all my heart." They were married in 1907 with Rabbi Wilner officiating. When Ben placed the ring on Sadie's finger, Rabbi Wilner said, "The ring you put on your bride's finger is round. Your lives will be like this ring, never to be broken." Ben broke the glass and kissed Sadie. Ben's father, Peritz, provided everything for the couple. Sadie felt sad that her parents could not be at the wedding, but they were too old to travel.

Sadie went to work helping her husband in the dry goods store. She kept the books, ordered merchandise, and waited on customers. The

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women liked for Sadie to help them because she had good taste in materials used for dresses and knew all the latest fashions. Life and business was good, and soon their family began to grow. Three boys were born: Shannon, Harry, and me—Billy.

As the years passed, the loving vows exchanged by the couple were forgotten by Ben. There was no excitement, no more warm glow. Hard work and taking care of the children was too much for Ben. He began to look at other women. He broke Sadie's heart, but she could not stop loving him.

Peritz Pfeffer stayed out of Ben's life. I don't think he cared for Sadie or his grandchildren. I remember sitting at his Seder table with his second wife. His first wife, Gertrude, had died.

Sadie was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. She and Ben had divorced and her whole world was coming apart. She felt abandoned, alone, and at a loss. She had no one to whom to turn for advice, so she decided that it was time to return to New York.

After making our breakfast one Sunday morning, she sat down and said to my brothers and me, "Children, I am going to New York to help my mother and father, who are very old and sick. You will stay with your father for a while. He will take good care of you." Shannon, the oldest, just nodded his head, Harry, the middle son, asked if she really had to leave, and I just cried and ran to my mother and hugged her.

Sadie said, "Shannon, you are the oldest and it is your duty to watch over



your brothers. Whoever needs your help, you will help. Harry, you watch over Billy. He is the youngest and will need more help. I love each of you, but I must leave." She packed her bags, told Shannon to call his father to pick them up at Union Station after she left. We waited at the station until the train left. Shannon found Sadie a seat by the window, put her suitcase in the above storage rack, kissed her goodbye and said, "Don't worry, Mama—I'll watch out for the kids. I love you." The three of us watched the train pull out of the station and waved goodbye to our mother.

Sadie arrived in New York and immediately went to her parents' home. They were waiting with open arms. After a Shabbat meal and a lot of talking, they went to bed. Sadie woke the next morning and began to read the newspaper looking for a job. There was a job for a man to take care of an apartment building. Since it was within walking distance, she decided to apply. Going up a flight of stairs, she found the owner's apartment and

knocked on the door. A small, stout, clean-looking man opened the door, and Sadie said she wanted to apply for the job. "You are a woman and the ad said it was a job for a man," answered the owner.

Sadie replied, "Mister, I speak three foreign languages plus good English. I owned my own business in Texas, and know how to keep books. I am an honest person and will not steal from you." The man, Mr. Brandywine, was so taken back by a woman with such a mouth that he hired her on the spot. "You will collect rent each Sunday morning, make the tenants keep the hallways

clean, and make sure that trash is put outside. You will see that all repairs are made. After the rent is counted, we will have to know if anything is needed and have the janitor check the furnaces and steam heaters. Can you do that?"

Sadie said, "Yes, I can do all of that."

Mr. Brandywine replied, "Your salary will be \$50 per week, and if you do a good job, you can have a two-bedroom apartment at no charge."

Sadie was thrilled. It wasn't long before the Nachtigal family moved in with her.

Mr. Brandywine was ten years older than Sadie. Every Sunday morning, he would wait for her to show up with the rents, but he did not even check the records. They would talk about anything that needed to be done, and then Mr. Brandywine would toast bagels, make coffee, and they would eat. He had fallen in love with Sadie. He knew how much she liked the theatre, so he would take her to plays.

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*Sadie, continued from page 4*

One Sunday evening, they went to a nice restaurant, and he said to her, “Sadie, I am an old man. God has given me another chance to fall in love. Will you marry me?”

Sadie looked at the man sitting across from her. On the outside he wasn’t much to see—a little heavy, and his face was lined with age, but as she looked deeper, she didn’t see an old man, but a man with a kind heart who would love and protect her for life.

“Yes,” she said. “I will marry you because I love you, respect you and will treat you with kindness all the days of my life,”

Later, when they arrived home, Sadie told him about her three children in Texas. “What would you do if I sent them some money so that they could come here to visit?” she asked.

“Sadie,” Mr. Brandywine replied. “Your children will be my children.”

The next day, Mr. Brandywine took Sadie to his lawyer and had the paperwork made so that Sadie could live in her apartment all of her life. He said that she should be in complete charge of his apartments and continue to collect the rents. All she had to do was pay the taxes. If he died before her, this should continue and



upon her death, the property would revert back to his children. Sadie just sat and thought about Ben. This was something he would never do. This man knew what love and honor was, and she had at last found her deserved happiness. A few years later, Lieb and Rose died, followed by Mr. Brandywine. Sadie was alone, but still in charge of the apartments.

Sadie died in 1945 of a heart attack. When I went to New York, I

found her in a small funeral home in Brooklyn. I traveled with her on a train to Houston where my brother Shannon had made arrangements for her burial in Beth Yeshurun Cemetery on Allen Parkway. My father, Ben, is also buried there.

I loved both my father and mother, and after Sadie left Ben to go back to New York, he would travel to small towns putting on sales for clothing stores. While he was away, I had to make arrangements to sleep at different relative’s houses. I wasn’t sure where I would sleep each night and my grades in school suffered. I was always scared. Ben and Sadie were from different

worlds, and there were big cultural differences. Ben was outgoing and somewhat of a ladies’ man, and Sadie was old-world and traditional. He was a very gentle person and I never heard him argue with my mother. He never punished me, and although it may be hard to believe, he did love his sons. I think of him often and can still feel his arm around mine as we walked the streets of Houston.

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## We need Your Stories!

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

call our Assistant Editor.

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

alogy for future generations.

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



# From Our Archives

by Vickie Vogel

This is the seventh in a series of articles on materials and information that can be found in the TJHS archives at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas in Austin. If you would like to write an article on any of the items in the archives, please visit <http://www.cah.utexas.edu/services/using.php>.

## From the Footlights by Vickie Vogel

Our TJHS Archives at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History has files of many people listed by occupation. For this issue, I took a look at two women in the “Actors” file: Pauline Hecht and Leona Westheimer Liedeker. They are very different—one a professional stage performer with a long career, and one an amateur whose acting experience is largely undocumented.<sup>1</sup>

Pauline Hecht was born December 27, 1912 in Lake Charles, Louisiana to Carrie Dreyfus and Marcus Nathaniel Meyer. The family moved to Houston ten years later and Pauline spent her life there. Her sister was Regina Meyer Stern. Pauline attended San Jacinto High School and received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Rice University (Rice Institute at the time) with honors. At graduate school at Columbia University in New York, she met her future husband. Pauline married Harold Hecht on May 9, 1936 and they had three children.

At 5' 1", 105 pounds, with brown hair and eyes, Pauline's energy carried her through fifty years on the Houston stage beginning in 1946: the Alley Theatre (*Gigi*, *Anastasia*, and *Middle of the Night* with Ed Begley), Theatre Under the Stars (*Bells Are Ringing*, *West Side Story*, *Pippin*, *My Fair Lady*, and *Follies* with Juliet Prowse and Patrice Munsel), Marietta's Dinner Theatre (*Prisoner of Second Avenue*), Dean Goss Dinner Theatre (*Arsenic and Old Lace*, *Once Upon a Mattress*, *Come Blow Your Horn*, *The Gazebo*,

and *Prisoner of Second Avenue*), Houston Music Theatre (*The Music Man* with Hal March and *The Unsinkable Molly Brown* with Jaye P. Morgan), Equinox Theatre (*Deathtrap*), Houston Theatre Center (*Blue Denim* with Robert Foxworth and *Take Her, She's Mine*), Houston Grand Opera (*Hin Und Zuruck*), Summertime Light Opera Company (*Rose Marie*), Texas Stage (*Charley's Aunt* and *The Imaginary Invalid*), and Houston Little Theatre (*Major Barbara* and nine more). She also appeared at the Fifth Avenue Theatre in Seattle, Washington.

A photo of her portrayal of Berthe in *Pippin* at Theatre Under the Stars is found in Ruthe Winegarten and Cathy Schechter's *Deep in the Heart: The Lives and Legends of Texas Jews*.<sup>2</sup> She also shared the stage with Dennis Quaid, Stubby Kaye, and Tommy Tune. Hecht worked with Maxine Messinger in the series “Behind the Showcase.”

Hecht also did a one-woman show (*Have Hatbox, Will Travel*) for the River Oaks Country Club, The



Leona Westheimer Liedeker (l) with daughter Carolyn holding baby Ross, Hannah Fox Westheimer (r).

Junior League, The Houston Club, Braeburn Country Club, Westwood Country Club, The Doctors' Club, Houston Engineering Society, and for various women's clubs and convention groups. She also found time for television commercials: Continental Trailways Bus (national), Texas Commerce Bank, Capitol National Bank of Austin, and Weingarten's.

Pauline was renowned for her various accents, including a “Jewish accent” in *Bye Bye Birdie*, a proper British accent, as well as a cockney lilt for *Major Barbara*, a German accent in *Papa is All*, a Dutch accent in *Tovarich*, and even a hillbilly drawl. It

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is not surprising since she had a love of languages—she had four years of French, two of German, and two of Italian while studying at Rice.

As a writer, Pauline composed poetry and stories for her grandchildren.

Finding time for charity and civic work, Pauline read to children and recorded for the blind and taught religious school classes. In her spare time, she loved to play bridge and was recognized as an accomplished player.

Pauline Hecht died June 11, 2009 at her home in Houston. Her obituary quotes one critic who said, “With the vivacity of Judy Holliday, the enthusiasm of a Milwaukee Brave’s fan and the energy of a long-range jet, wide-eyed Pauline Hecht, actress-wife-mother, is most amazing.”<sup>33</sup>

Also in the same archival box with Pauline Hecht is a thick file on the Westheimer family. There were so many fascinating Westheimers, it was hard to keep my focus on the actor in the family—Leona Westheimer Liedeker, the younger daughter (b. 1899) of Sigmund J. Westheimer (b. 1865, arrived in Houston 1882). Sigmund is one of the five nephews whom H. L. Westheimer (b. 1831) brought over to help build his empire,<sup>4</sup> and is pretty interesting himself. He bought the Attwater Natural History Collection and donated it to the City of Houston to become one of the founding collections of the Houston Museum of Natural Science.<sup>5</sup> Leona’s mother was tiny Hannah Fox Westheimer (4’ 9”, 74 pounds at the time of her death in 1963, two months before her 94th birthday). When her parents died around 1880, Hannah went to work in her brother’s store downtown (“the first Houston woman to work in a retail store”) where she met Sigmund. He kept returning to the store and Hannah wondered “why he needed so many things.” After a short engagement, they married.<sup>6</sup>

Leona was one of three children



Leona and Louis Liedeker

[I. B. (1893-1980)<sup>7</sup> and Bertha Westheimer Furman (1891-1956) are the other siblings] of Hannah and Sigmund, and their home became a “mecca for much of the Jewish community.”<sup>8</sup> There’s a copy of a photo of the family c. 1914-1915 with the children standing behind their seated parents.<sup>9</sup> It also appears in *Deep in the Heart*, on page 34.<sup>10</sup>

Leona showed an early interest in acting. The Jewish Herald edition of December 28, 1911 reported Miss Leona Westheimer was improving after being seriously ill.<sup>11</sup> It was probably after her recovery from this illness that she traveled to Chicago to complete her studies in dramatic art and voice culture under Maude France Donovan and Herbert Witherspoon at the Chicago Music College. Witherspoon was a bass singer and opera manager who retired from singing in 1914 to concentrate on teaching.<sup>12</sup> A newspaper clipping with a photo of Leona stated that she returned after a year’s study, and was giving a recital at the YMCA

assembly hall to announce the opening of her studio in Houston.

Leona’s sister Bertha directed a vaudeville show in 1906 as a fundraiser for the Jewish Literary Society at the Prince Theatre in Houston. No doubt Leona was involved.<sup>13</sup> Leona performed in many entertainment programs during World War I, given for soldiers at Camp Logan and Ellington Field. The Housewives’ League Red Cross Auxiliary report lists Miss Leona Westheimer among those deserving special mention for their war work.<sup>14</sup>

Her crowning performance must be the one for which the playbill appears in the archives. She played Herlofs-Marte in the Red Lantern Players production of *The Witch* by John Masefield,<sup>15</sup> directed by Fred C. Minster, October 26-28, 1920. The playbill, however, is incomplete. The play *Anne Pedersdotter* was actually written by H. Weirs-Jenssen in Norwegian and the English version was adapted by John Masefield. It is set in 1754 and deals with a young woman put to trial for witchcraft.<sup>16</sup> Leona’s is not the central character, but her character drives the action.

Leona met Louis Lawrence Liedeker, who was born in 1893 in Cleburne, the son of Latvian emigrants Isaac and Anna Goldberg Liedeker, and married him on January 21, 1924 in a double wedding ceremony in Houston with Leona’s cousin Irene Eve Westheimer and Louis Waldvogel.<sup>17</sup> Groomsmen were Isador Westheimer and Mendel Westheimer. Leona and Louis had one daughter, Carolyn, born July 11, 1928 in Houston. Louis was a purchasing agent for the City of Houston and a veteran of World Wars I and II. He died December 24, 1952 in Houston at the age of 59.<sup>18</sup>

Leona’s interest in the stage resulted in Carolyn meeting her future husband. Her sister Bertha put on a show,

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Leona Westheimer Liedeker and baby Carolyn

and Robert Epstein's mother, who was a friend of Leona, saw Carolyn dancing. She told her son he should meet her. "She's so cute!" she said.<sup>19</sup>

Carolyn and Robert<sup>20</sup> married May 31, 1947. They had three children: Ross, Lauren, and Neal. There are seven grandchildren. Only Ross was born before his grandfather Louis' death.

Leona taught elocution and many consecration classes at Congregation Emanu El in Houston. She was a speech coach for bar mitzvah boys, including grandson Ross Epstein at Beth Israel, and later on, bat mitzvah girls.<sup>21</sup> Leona was the aunt of TJHS member Christy Cave's father-in-law. Christy corresponded with Leona until her death. "She was one of my favorite people in the whole world," she said.<sup>22</sup> She was unaware of Leona's early stage experiences, but knew her as an eloquent speaker and elocution teacher.

Leona was described as "a hand-

some woman" who wore hats "with such style." A founding member of Emanu El, she was also active in Eastern Star, a president of the American Legion Auxiliary and a volunteer for years at the VA Hospital.<sup>23</sup>

Leona died December 20, 1984 in Houston. She is buried in Emanu El Memorial Park.<sup>24</sup> Rabbi Robert I. Kahn and Rabbi Roy Walter officiated at the funeral. In his eulogy, Rabbi Kahn said, "Leona was an eloquent speaker. I heard her so many times. She could read a poem, a speech, a statement, a story, with so much skill and convey its meaning so richly. And what a teacher of children!" He described

Leona on the pulpit at Simchat Torah facing a group of children. She would lead them saying, "Little Torah, little Torah, let me hold you tight." She taught hundreds of children and imbued them with a love of Judaism. Later, a kindergarten room was named for her at Emanu El.<sup>25</sup>

Pauline Hecht and Leona Westheimer Liedeker led very different lives, but they are united by their love of the stage and language.

### References

- <sup>1</sup>Box 3A167, Texas Jewish Historical Society Collection, 1824-2009, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. All materials in this article are found there unless otherwise attributed.
- <sup>2</sup>Winegarten, Ruthe, and Cathy Schechter. *Deep in the Heart: The Lives and Legends of Texas Jews*. Austin: Eakin Press, 1990, p. 197.
- <sup>3</sup><http://txobits.blogspot.com/2009/06/texas-obituaries-61309.html>. A photo of Pauline can be seen at this

website.

<sup>4</sup>See *Handbook of Texas* entry submitted by Lionel Schooler November 6, 1992. A copy of the submission is in Box 3A167. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/WW/fwets.html>. The nephews were the children of M. L.'s brother Joseph and his wife Sophie Boettingheimer Westheimer, who remained in Germany.

<sup>5</sup>Read more at [http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note\\_id=178531170098](http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=178531170098)

<sup>6</sup>Newspaper article on Hannah Fox Westheimer on her 90th birthday. Box 3A167 op. cit.

<sup>7</sup>There are three I. Westheimers listed at <http://www.faqs.org/people-search/westheimer/> but only one is I. B. His dates, however, are 1918 to 1989 which makes it more likely that he is I. B. Westheimer, Jr.

<sup>8</sup>1986 newspaper article in Box 3A167, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup>The photo is from Bettie Schlamme, granddaughter of Hannah and Sigmund. Bettie attended the first meeting of TJHS and was interested in restoring old cemeteries, according to a Ruthe Winegarten interview in the archives. Bettie died in 1995. <http://www.genealogybuff.com/tx/9502houc.htm>

<sup>10</sup>Winegarten and Schechter, *Deep in the Heart*, op. cit., p. 34

<sup>11</sup><http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn93068209/1911-12-28/ed-1/seq-5/?words=Leona+Westheimer>

<sup>12</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert\\_Witherspoon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_Witherspoon). Witherspoon became president of the Chicago Music College in 1925.

<sup>13</sup>Winegarten and Schechter, *Deep in the Heart*, op. cit. p. 34

<sup>14</sup>Baines, Mrs. W. M., Editor. *Houston's Part in the World War*. Houston. 1919. <http://books.google.com/books?id=Dp3vAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA45&lpg=PA45&>

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

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

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

From the Footlights, continued from page 8

dq=leona+westheimer&source=bl&ots=WOzMy3sprW&sig=Pqe1nIXIymh8yGeEgqht-3YJyZ0&hl=en&ei=vlfwS73gB4OC8gbTvu9Cg&sa=X&oi=book\_result&ct=result&resnum=4&ved=0CBoQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=leona%20westheimer&f=false

<sup>15</sup>After wondering why *The Witch* was not listed in Masefield's bibliography, I stumbled across the truth at <http://www.headlandview.co.uk/tower/plays/1935/p3509.htm>

<sup>16</sup>[http://books.google.com/books?id=hpR\\_hPSqYa0C&pg=PA109&lpg=PA109&dq=h+weirs-jenssen&source=bl&ots=uV7\\_XBlNev&sig=556HKp60o3ZOZGKRn2OFyq1ZPb0&hl=en&ei=L2HwS-98Ab0tpiACw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=4&ved=0CB0Q6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=the%20witch&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=hpR_hPSqYa0C&pg=PA109&lpg=PA109&dq=h+weirs-jenssen&source=bl&ots=uV7_XBlNev&sig=556HKp60o3ZOZGKRn2OFyq1ZPb0&hl=en&ei=L2HwS-98Ab0tpiACw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=4&ved=0CB0Q6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=the%20witch&f=false)

<sup>17</sup>A 50th Wedding Anniversary article and photo appeared in the January 10, 1974 issue of the Colorado County Citizen. Email from George Sellnau, May 24, 2010.

<sup>18</sup><http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=45569738>

<sup>19</sup>Telephone conversation with Robert Epstein, May 24, 2010.

<sup>20</sup>Robert Allen Epstein was born April 25, 1923 in Benton, Illinois. Genealogy papers provided by Christy Cave, who was married to Louis Liedeker's sister's grandson. Many of the dates and names in this article were found in those papers.

<sup>21</sup>Telephone conversation with Ross Epstein, May 19, 2010. He is in insurance in Austin.

<sup>22</sup>Interview with Christy Cave, La Grange, May 18, 2010.

<sup>23</sup>Rabbi Robert Kahn, eulogy of Leona Westheimer Liedeker, unlabeled photocopy from Christy Cave. Based on the context, the eulogy may have been reprinted in the Emanu El bulletin.

<sup>24</sup><http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=Westheimer&GSiman=1&GRid=45570110&>

<sup>25</sup>Eulogy, op cit. 

## In Memoriam

**Shirley Alter**, TJHS member, died May, 2010, in Beaumont, Texas.

**May her memory be a blessing.**

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# Henry Gindler

## by Robert I. Gindler

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Henry Gindler was born to Mr. and Mrs. Leon Gindler on August 8, 1888, in Vertuzshany, Bessarabia, which was a part of Rumania. Leon was born in September, 1853, and died October 18, 1931, in San Antonio, Texas.

Henry Gindler was inducted into the Russian army in 1909, but his love for freedom and equality led him to join the Social Democrat Party. Caught with forbidden literature, he deserted the army in 1911, and was smuggled across the border to Bremen, Germany, where he secured passage on a ship to Galveston, Texas.

His first job was in Beaumont, followed by Port Arthur and in 1912, he

arrived in Weimar with little more than a sack of shoes slung across his back. A cobbler by trade under the tutelage of his shoe-maker father in Rumania, he opened a small shoe repair shop. One day, a smooth-talking salesman



*Bob, Davis, and Otto Gindler*

suggested that young Gindler should be selling shoes instead of just repairing them, and thus the retail establishment of Gindlers was born in 1913.

His stock expanded to include soft goods, ready-to-wear, hardware, school supplies, and many other items. The store began to look like a general mercantile store. He operated the store until his death on April 11, 1947 following a heart attack.

Henry Gindler married Alice Sherman July 29, 1914. Their daughter, Lillian, was born May 21, 1915 and married Sam Ginsberg in 1934.


Sam managed the Gindlers' store in Co-

lumbus, Texas until his death in 1971. Lillian and Sam have two sons—Leon, born January 15, 1936, and Alan, who was born in 1942. Alice Sherman Gindler died July 24, 1917, following complications of giving birth to their second daughter. Both are buried in the Weimar Cemetery.

Henry Gindler returned to Bessarabia in 1920 and married Esther Soffer. She was born June 26, 1896. Her parents were Rabbi Isaac Leon Soffer and Eva Gaiser Soffer. In 1924, Henry and Esther's twin sons, Otto and Davis were born, followed by Robert in 1929. A daughter was born in 1931 who lived only nine months, dying of lockjaw, and was buried in San Antonio.

Upon Henry Gindler's sudden death in 1947, Otto and Davis, who had just returned from military service in World War II, and Robert, who had just graduated from high school, formed a partnership to continue the family business.

The two older brothers took turns managing the store while they completed their respective educations at the University of Texas in Austin.

Eventually, all three brothers earned degrees in business administration. The stores were expanded to other towns in south central Texas, including Weimar, Hallettsville, Gonzales, Columbus, La-Grange, Yoakum, and Smithville. They were closed in 1998. 



*Esther and Henry Gindler with twins Davis and Otto. Lillian is in the back.*

lumbus, Texas until his death in 1971.



*Henry, Esther, and unknown Gindler*



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# Dr. Newton Friedman: A Brief Biography

## by W. T. Block

In 1957, Dr. Newton Friedman came to Beaumont as Associate Rabbi of Temple Emanuel, and was slated to replace Rabbi Samuel Rosinger upon the latter's retirement. Since Dr. Rosinger had served the congregations for fifty years, two generations of Temple members had grown to adulthood during his rabbinical career. He chose to retire in 1960, and became Rabbi Emeritus.

Rabbi Friedman was born in 1909 in Cleveland, Ohio. He was a graduate of Case Western Reserve University and its graduate school, where he graduated with high honors. Later, he attended Williams College and Harvard University. After graduating from Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, he was ordained a Rabbi in 1936. In 1955, he was awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree by Barton Seminary, and in 1959, he was awarded a Doctor of Theology degree by Hebrew Union College. He was the first native-born Rabbi to serve Temple Emanuel.

Although I am not of the Jewish faith, I had cause to interview Rabbi Friedman three times during his undergraduate years at Lamar University. In fact, on two occasions, Dr. Friedman obtained for me masters theses from Hebrew Union College, and trusted me to return them.

Dr. Friedman held a total of four rabbinate during his lifetime—in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania; Austin, Texas; Macon, Georgia; and Beaumont. He was the Rabbi at Congregation Beth Israel in Austin during World War II, and the congregation met in an auditorium above a movie theater. Dr. Friedman helped bring Hillel Foundation to the University of Texas and served as chaplain at Camp Swift and Bergstrom Air Base. He spent five years in Macon, Georgia before com-

ing to Beaumont.

Dr. Friedman quickly ingratiated himself into the religious and civic life of Beaumont. On a national level, he was a delegate to the World Union for Progressive Judaism meeting in Paris in 1955, and the World Conference of Christians and Jews meeting in Brussels. He was a longtime member of B'nai B'rith, the Texas Kallah of Rabbis, and the American Jewish Committee.


Locally, he was the first Rabbi to serve as President of the Beaumont Ministerial Alliance. He was a member of the American Red Cross, Rotary Club, Beaumont Cancer Society, Beaumont Community Council, Beaumont Country Club, and Suicide Rescue, Inc.

While living in Beaumont, Dr. Friedman and his wife, Rosalie, resided at 5895 Clinton. They had two sons, Dr. Gary Friedman and Jeffrey Friedman.

After thirty-five years as mentor and Rabbi, with thirteen of them in Beaumont, Dr. Friedman died on February 1, 1970, following a short illness. His sudden death came as a shock to his family, his congregation, and the community. He was interred in Emanu El Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Houston.

Paul Kessler, who was President of Temple Emanuel in 1970, gave a eulogy at the funeral and he recalled

that Dr. Friedman was a "great orator and inspirational leader, and easy to work with. His death certainly left a void in our community." The Messrs. Irving and Jerry Nathan were pallbearers, and Jerry Nathan recalls that Dr. Friedman "was his close confidante, mentor, and a great public speaker, beloved by all. His sermons were very inspirational, and had great meaning and depth."

Dr. Friedman's legacy will long be remembered at Lamar University. Soon after his death, his family donated his extensive library to Gray Library. In 2003, his widow, Mrs. Rosalie Shaw, of Houston, established the \$100,000 Rabbi Friedman Fund at Lamar University to finance scholarships for pre-med students. 

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**The deadline for the November, 2010 TJHS Newsletter is October 15.**

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# TJHS Summer Board Meeting

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*TJHS members at the summer board meeting.*



*Willie & Doug Braudaway*



*Stuart Rockoff, Director of th History Department  
at the Goldring Woldenberg Institute of Southern  
Jewish Life*



*Left to right:  
Lynn Greenberg,  
Joan Katz,  
Lonnie Schooler,  
Rabbi Jimmy  
Kessler, David  
Leff, and Scott  
Langston*



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**— Houston, Texas, June 12-13, 2010 —**

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*Rusty Milstein, TJHS President*



*Vickie Vogel, former TJHS president, presenting Board Orientation.*



*Lonnie Schooler (left) and Rabbi Jimmy Kessler, "Founding Fathers" who presented a history of TJHS.*

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# First Rabbi Saw Many Changes in Early Beaumont

by W. T. Block

In April, 1925, Beaumonters often watched as an elderly man of small stature walked along Broadway and Calder Streets. His steps were short and his hair was silvery. He was Dr. Aaron Levy, Beaumont's first Rabbi, and one discerned that a great fountain of knowledge existed between his ears.

Dr. Aaron and his wife, Estelle, had married fifty years earlier on May 3, 1875, at the old Lopez Confectionary in New Orleans, and their children and grandchildren were preparing to celebrate their parents' fiftieth anniversary at Beaumont's Harmony Club.

Born in Sarribourg, Lorraine, on September 14, 1846, Dr. Levy grew up on the Rue des Juives, only two doors away from Estelle. Although the French province of Lorraine was later lost to Germany at the end of the Franco-Prussian War of 1871, French remained the spoken language in the province.

Dr. Levy enjoyed a classical and Latin school education in Metz and Paris, having also matriculated at the rabbinical school in Metz. He spoke six languages fluently—French, German, English, Latin, Hebrew, and Yiddish.

His future wife, Estelle, was the first one to migrate from Europe to New Orleans, where she boarded in the home of her future brother-in-law. A few months later, Dr. Levy followed her to New Orleans, where the couple soon began preparations for their marriage.

His first rabbinical assignment was at Temple Shaare Zedek on Rampart Street in New Orleans. During the next twenty years, he served congregations in Jackson, Mississippi, and Congregation Beth El in Austin, Texas. It was in Austin that he became an intimate friend of Governor Jim Hogg and U. S. Senator Charles Culbertson.

When Dr. Levy arrived in Beaumont

in 1895, the population totaled only five thousand souls. There were muddy streets and a few wooden sidewalks. During the wintry rainy season, buggies and wagons churned the mud on Pearl Street into a soupy quagmire the consistency of molasses. Dr. Levy watched as the Lucas gusher spouted, and its oily message across the nation resulted in a maelstrom of new drillers and roughnecks. He watched as young Beaumonters marched away to the Spanish-American War and World War I.

His Congregation Temple Emanuel worshipped at first in a wooden building at Pine and Crockett Streets. A few years later, the congregation built their first synagogue at Willow and Broadway Streets. To augment his meager salary, he began a Latin School in a wooden building on Pine Street, near the old Enterprise Building.


Being a distinguished mathematician, linguist, and liberal arts scholar, Levy was a natural choice for the classroom. His first school had only forty students, but when he closed it

several years later, more than five hundred scholars had passed through its portals. Some of his students included Hilton Duster; Willie, Frank, Harry, and Albert Shepherd; Sol Gordon; Leon Hecht; and several children from the Keith and Ogden families.

"Did you ever have to use the paddle?" one reporter asked him in 1925.

"Of course!" the Rabbi responded. "It was necessary to keep strict discipline in the school, and one Beaumont man that I know of can well attest to that fact!"


Long after another Rabbi had replaced him, Dr. Levy continued to assist the Jewish religious service at the Temple, and he was also present when a new Temple was dedicated at 1120 Broadway in 1923. He threw himself wholeheartedly into community life, and was a member of the Masonic Lodge, Sons of Hermann, and B'nai Brith.

Although wrinkled and gray at age eighty, Dr. Levy lived each of his years to the fullest and was never able to quench his thirst for more knowledge. He lived a life that others should dare to emulate. 

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*Sadie, continued from page 5*

My brother Shannon was married to Evelyn Gordon Pfeffer and their children are Helene, Susan, and Larry. My brother Harry married Rae Kubby Pfeffer from El Paso, Texas, and their children are Ben and Gary. I married Mildred Reisman Pfeffer from San Diego, California, and our children are Nancy Pfeffer Israel and Sheldon. Nancy has two sons, Bryan and Jay Weisberg and five grandchildren, making Mildred and me great-grandparents.

I am the last of Ben and Sadie's children, and am 92 years old. My wife and I have been married for 66 years. I spend my time painting and writing or reading. I have exhibited my paintings at the Houston Holocaust Museum, and have a new group of paintings ready for sponsorship. Mildred is in a wheel chair, and although I wear a hearing aid, I cannot hear words clearly. She is my ears and I am her eyes. 





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**October 22-24**

Joint Meeting  
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**Date TBD**

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**In Memory of Ima Joy Gandler**  
From Ruth Heidenheimer

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

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