

# Texas Jewish Historical Society

Preserving Jewish Heritage in Texas

Established 1980

TEXAS JEWISH  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

November, 2002 - Feb. 2003

## Rabbi Jimmy Kessler



Rabbi Kessler's story begins on page 4.



## From the Prez

The Winter quarterly Board meeting was held in

Tyler the weekend of January 24-27, 2003, with over 60 attending. Below are some pictures from that event. The Host committee responsible for making the arrangements were members Phil Hurwitz, Evelyn Muntz, Sylvan Mellinger, and Cris Selman. Sam Roosth led the team, along with his Secretary, Glenda Kennemer. A& and Mrs Seymour Van Os took care of the registration table. We were all surprised with a "goody bag" upon registering that contained among other things a beautiful Tyler Rose Bush. Friday evening the Society attended services at Temple Beth El, where yours truly was invited to the Bimah for an Aliyah.

Saturday morning we heard an interesting discussion on early day businesses in Tyler. Sam Roosth led

the discussion with Barry Green, Phil Hurwitz, Florence Leonard, Evelyn Muntz, and Mrs. Sol Roosth participating. After lunch the group had a bus tour of The University of Texas at Tyler College, and then went to Kilgore, where we toured the East Texas Oil Museum. Mr. Joe White Museum Director, and Mr. Terry Stembridge, a local author, discussed the oil boom of the 1930s. Saturday night we enjoyed a Havdala service and a very good meal at the hotel, followed by our guest speaker, Mr. Randy Gilbert, a local Attorney/Historian. He told us the story of Camp Fannin, the Confederate Prisoner of War camp that was located in Tyler. One POW was a Jewish prisoner, who after being released went to Chicago, where he opened a business that became "Spiegel Catalog" sales.

The quarterly Board meeting was held Sunday morning. Fay Brachman reported that we have over 860 family memberships. Reports were given by the standing committees The remaining Historical Synagogue note cards will be given to Judaica shops and will not be sold in the future by the

Society. Gladys Leff, gave a brief report on the upcoming Annual Gathering to be held in Dallas, TX, April 25-27, 2003. At this time we are looking at having the Summer board meeting in San Antonio. Any suggestions on locations for future Board meetings and the 2004 Annual Gathering would be appreciated.

Don't forget that we have two traveling exhibits that are available for display. Contact Jack Gerrick for details.

For the past few years, we have been fortunate to have Buddy Freed as our Newsletter Editor. The Society owes him a debt of thanks in doing a wonderful job of making the Newsletter into something that all members look forward to reading. It has been said that the Newsletter is 'the glue that holds the Society together'. Thanks Buddy for the great job you have done. Our new editor is Louis Sokol from Houston. He has many new ideas and we look forward to Louis becoming Editor.

Hope to see many of you in Dallas at the Annual Gathering. Lets make this Gathering the best ever.



*Noel Graubart is greeted by Milton and Dorothy Harelak*



*Florence Leonard talks about the "good old days."*

*Shirley Rich and Miriam Rubin haven't seen each other since high school in Houston.*





# Letter From the Editor

*or Freedman Slips*

This will be my last issue as Editor of the

Texas Jewish Historical Society's newsletter.

Since I began this job with the June 2000 issue, I have enjoyed the many hours that it takes to publish each issue. Many things have been accomplished. Some things have not!

What has been done has been to get each issue to our members as soon as possible after each board meeting. I want to thank Alexa Kirk for her total cooperation in preparing and publishing so this could be accomplished. Without her great assistance, these editions would not have been as prompt as they have become.

I also appreciate the time that my wife, Sandra has spent helping me. She not only has been one of the dedicated proofreaders, she has had to listen to my ideas and rantings. Sandra has tried to guide me in more moderate paths. Other proofreaders have been invaluable and their names have been listed in each issue. Thanks to them, corrections have been made before going to press.

Paula Johnson must be mentioned here for doing a great job of getting the mail from our Austin mail box, sorting it, recording the checks and forwarding each piece of mail to the

proper TJHS member, giving them the opportunity to act timely on it. Thanks to her doing this job so enthusiastically, we don't have a frustrating lag time getting the mail to where it belongs.

Others who have made this job less of a chore have been Jack Gerrick and Hollace Weiner and the Brachmans, Fay and Leon. They have been great resources and inspirations. They, along with Sandra, are icons of volunteer dedication. They not only helped me, they are dedicated servants to the Jewish way of life.

We have available at this time some 56 issues of the Newsletter on CD ROM, thanks to Jay Hoffman. Jay is the person who scanned all of the old issues, formatted them and made our master CD so that each additional issue could be added. These CDs should be most useful to anyone wanting to do research on the Texas Jewish Experience.

Now, what hasn't been done? In my opinion, the members of the Texas Jewish Historical Society have supported this effort with their membership dues and some are regulars at the meetings. But few, very few, have taken the time and effort to submit their histories for inclusion in this great endeavor. So what is the purpose of editing 24 pages of a boilerplate publication? After these two and a half years of soliciting your family history, I realize that either I have failed or you don't care. Either way, I wish my successor great achievement. A final thought: perhaps a name change would be appropriate—The Texas Jewish Society. Our history is our history. If we do not write it, who will?

Shalom.

## The Texas Jewish Historical Society Newsletter

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Charles B. Hart (Temple)  
Buddy Freed (Fort Worth)  
Sandra Freed (Fort Worth)  
Alexa Kirk (Fort Worth)

*President*  
*Managing Editor*  
*Proofreader*  
*Layout and Typesetting*

## Texas Jewish Historical Society Website

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

Telephone: 817-927-8765

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

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

# The Texas Jewish Historical Society

By Rabbi Jimmy Kessler

## Part I

Clearly the preservation of the Texas Jewish experience goes back much further than my efforts. Rabbi Henry Cohen helped produce a wonderful booklet on the Jews in Texas for the Centennial of the State in 1936. Since Dr. Cohen came to Galveston in 1888, he was lucky enough to have visited with direct descendants of founding Jews in the State. Decades later, our fabulous past president Frances Kallison continued that tradition with her writings and her efforts. The Society is privileged to be blessed with her presence and her leadership.

My interest in preserving the Texas Jewish experience goes back to Pershing Junior High School in Houston and seventh grade. Like every seventh grader, I was required to take a course in Texas history. Also during those years, there was no provision for students missing school for a religious festival.

And so it was that on Yom Kippur, a test was given in Texas History and obviously the Jewish students were absent. The teacher gave every Jewish kid an "F" on the exam. A couple of days after the results hit home, one of the parents came to the class, during my class period, to ask the teacher for an explanation. Among many of the comments, I distinctly remember her telling my classmate's mother that, "we Jews had to remember that were weren't here in Texas - early on - and had nothing to do with Texas history." I'm sure the Texas history teacher's comments didn't settle well with the parent, and I can assure you that they have remained with me for more than 40 years.

Time passed and in the summer of 1967 I found myself a first year stu-

dent at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio. One of the first buildings pointed out to us new comers was the American Jewish Archives. This modest, but most intriguing facility was established by Rabbi Jacob Rader Marcus, PhD, Professor of American Jewish History in 1948. As a matter of fact, Dr. Marcus was the father of American Jewish History as an academic subject.

The students were told to visit the Archives and check out the three walls of card catalogues that registered the holdings of the institution. They represented a collection of original materials given by folk from all over the world and reflecting some aspect of the American Jewish experience.

So after a few days, I found myself standing in front of the box containing "Ke" cards and looked for "Kessler". The only one I found was a Yiddish theatre actor from the early 1900's. The next search was in the "Te" box for cards on "Texas". There I found only two cards. One, a newspaper article on Rabbi Henry Cohen of Galveston and the other a card typed in red noting sealed records on the split of Temple Beth Israel of Houston in 1944 over the Basic Principles. And that was it.

It didn't bother me too much that there were no cards on Kessler, but I must admit that as a chauvinistic Texan, it did bother me that there were only two cards from my state. When I look under New York, there were several boxes!

In my third year of Rabbinical school, I took the required course in American Jewish History taught by Dr. Marcus. During one of his lectures, Dr. Marcus commented that nothing of importance happened in

American Jewish history before 1900 east of the Mississippi River; and, I laughed! He stopped and commented, "Mr. Kessler, you may disagree now but *if* you pass my course, you learn that I am correct." My *chutzpah* lead me to respond, "No, Dr. Marcus, I hope to prove you wrong one day." And, I did; but, that will come in a later article.

During this course, Dr. Marcus permitted me to write a restricted paper on the restricted records in the American Jewish Archives on the split of Temple Beth Israel. That work is not longer restricted, but it was at that time. The experience taught me that the history of the Texas Jewish experience needed to be preserved.

Following my ordination in 1972, I became the Hillel Director at UT Austin, and remained there until the summer of 1975. During that time, I attempted to gather the original records of the Austin foundation that was established in 1926; one of the earliest in the United States. To my chagrin, I discovered that most of the records had not been preserved and as many of the early founders had died, not much information was available. Another experience of disappointment in an effort to record the Texas Jewish experience.

In 1975, I put my desires for the recording of Texas Jewish history on a back burner thinking it would never come to fruition.

## Part II

In 1976, Temple B'nai Israel of Galveston selected me as their Rabbi. Perhaps a cute aside is appropriate here for it clearly relates to Texas Jewish history. In preparation for my interview I did some reading about Rabbi Henry Cohen, who served B'nai Israel for 64 years, from 1888 to

*continued on page 5*



1952. Amongst the materials, I found a copy of the wedding announcement for Dr. Cohen who married Ms. Mollie of Galveston in 1889.

At the interview, one of the members of the committee asked, in a roundabout way, why I was still single. I replied that I was not gay, though I had nothing against gays; I was not a confirmed bachelor; and I did not hate women. However, if they hired me, my mother would be ecstatic. At that point I pulled out a photocopy of the newspaper article from 1889 announcing Rabbi Cohen's marriage and read the beginning to them. "A fatal matrimonial malady befalls all single clergy who come to Temple B'nai Israel."

I assured them it was true that each Rabbi who had come to B'nai Israel as a bachelor had found a wife in the first year and had married within that year. Rabbi Silverman did so and went on to become the senior rabbi of Temple Emanu El in New York. And, Rabbi Cohen met Miss Mollie during his first year and married her. So I told the committee that if they selected me, my mother would feel more confident of my potential for getting married. After all, the Temple had a perfect batting record.

Within my first year, I met Shelley Nussenblatt, a BOI, and we were married within that year.

During my first years in Galveston, I found numerous opportunities to comment on the need to preserve the history of Texas Jews. Fortunately I was in a community that took it's own history very seriously. After all, Galveston is the oldest extant Jewish community in Texas and B'nai Israel is the oldest Reform congregation in the State. Moreover, Henry Cohen, at the time, had served B'nai Israel longer than any Rabbi had ever served a congregation in the United States.

After listening to my *k'vetching*

for several years, Harris L. Kempner cornered me one day at lunch and asked what would need to happen to rectify the situation. I suggested to him that a statewide meeting of folk interested in the project would be a good start; and, if we could bring Dr. Marcus for the weekend to teach us what to do, it would be wonderful. No sooner had I finished speaking than Harris pulled out a checkbook and wrote a check for \$3,000 to cover the costs for such a meeting.

Within a couple of weeks, I sent a public letter to the anglo-Jewish newspapers in the State and to the major commercial newspapers calling upon my fellow Jewish Texans to gather for a meeting to begin a formal process of preserving the Texas Jewish experience. And so from that check and that letter came the first meeting of the Texas Jewish Historical Society in San Antonio on January 26, 1980. Dr. Marcus was our guest speaker and our teacher for the weekend. The assembled 120 folk divided into committees and the initial documents of the Society, along with a name, were put together.

During that weekend, Rabbi Marcus gave out four major warnings at various times that he assured us would either keep the organization going or would be our sure undoing. From his remarks, we came to decisions in each of these areas and these guidelines have generally been sacrosanct in the operating of the Texas Jewish Historical Society. To this day, those ideas are still salient, as they have kept the Society in good shape, with a vibrant membership and a strong financial posture.

The first message that Dr. Marcus offered was that *we should not have perpetual officers*. Many moribund regional historical groups have just depended upon the same folk to run the society and keep it going. The trouble is that it never generates any new leadership and turns off a lot of folk. So,

after two years, I chose not to seek another term as president and I have encouraged my successors to do the same. As a result, we have been blessed with some wonderful leadership and we will be in the future.

The second message of Dr. Marcus was that *we should never own a building*. They only drained funds and never made money. Let someone else establish a museum or archives, and pay for it, and we should give them our stuff to display and keep. We don't need the stuff anyhow. It's only a problem to keep it up. And if there is to be a museum, let some other group deal with it. More over it keeps us out of competition for materials that some folk will want to fight over.

The third message was that *we should never have a professional staff*. Rely instead upon volunteers. A staff means an office and expenses that will ultimately break the group. There was no regional historical association extant that had such expenses. Even the American Jewish Historical Association suffered the negative consequences.

The fourth message was that *we should never lend the Society's name to publish a book for an author unless that author has a commercial publisher who has already agreed to publish the book*. Doing so puts us in the position of judging the work of one of our own and is guaranteed to create disharmony. In as much as we have learned that even the implementing of this policy has caused hard feelings, how much the more so it would be if we failed to adhere to this policy.

It is gratifying to look back on twenty-one years of a successful regional historical society. We have clearly made a significant impact in the recording of the Texas Jewish experience. Moreover, most of the institutions in Texas that display information on state history have used our

*continued on page 9*

# Chapter 1, Modernity in Mind

By Hollace Weiner

Excerpted from *Beth-El Congregation Centennial: Fort Worth, 1902-2002*

Now and then. To contrast the congregation's present with its past is to travel back in time, back to the future. One hundred years ago, Fort Worth's Beth-El Congregation began with modernity in mind. Instead, it has moved toward the trappings of tradition, albeit with contemporary twists.

When Beth-El was chartered in 1902, its 43 founders sought to move in a new direction, to "worship on the reform plan," to embrace a modern twentieth-century style of worship minus tradition, minus yarmulkes, prayer shawls, and the mumbo jumbo of unintelligible Hebrew. These modern thinkers dis-



carded "superstitious" customs such as getting married under a *chuppah* or smashing a glass at a wedding. They rejected praying and swaying and *davening* at one's own pace. They

disdained parading around the sanctuary with the Torah scrolls aloft. To "worship on the reform plan" meant decorum. It implied a Protestant model of worship with congregants responding in English and listening to an organ and a choir rather than chanting in an ancient tongue. It meant replacing the shofar with a trumpet. Worshipping "on the reform plan" entailed reading from a prayer book that made no mention of Zion. To these con-

*continued on page 7*



Hundreds of these books have been sold to both members and non-members of Beth-El. This history of the Jews in Fort Worth has been given wide acclaim by all who have read it as a masterpiece of research into the lives of the Jews who helped build the area. The Southern Jewish Historical Society generously supported this work with a \$1,500 grant. The Texas Jewish Historical Society also granted \$500.

*Beth-El's beautiful Centennial book, a 108-page history written by author and Beth-El member Hollace Weiner with wonderful vintage photographs, celebrates Beth-El Congregation's 100th birthday.*

*To receive the book by mail, send \$35 plus \$7.50 for postage (total \$42.50) to:*

**Beth-El Congregation  
4900 Briarhaven Road  
Fort Worth, TX 76109**

If you have any questions, please call Beth-El at 817-332-7141

gregants, America was their Promised Land, and Fort Worth was where they had staked their claim.

Beth-El Congregation's 43 charter members were not newcomers to America nor to the region. Indeed, four of them were native Texans. (One of them, attorney Max K. Mayer, 35, was the first Jew born in Fort Worth; two of them, the Gernsbacher broth-



ers, Aaron, 17, and Jake, 20, had been born in Weatherford, and another charter member, furniture and casket dealer Mose Rosenthal, 34, hailed from the Central Texas town of Greenville.) Another seven of the founders were born and reared elsewhere in Dixie, mainly in and around Memphis and New Orleans. At least fourteen of the charter congregants were foreign born—thirteen from German-speaking regions. Although originally from Europe, they had left the Continent in their youth and lived and worked in the United States most of their lives. America was home. Three of the Temple founders had fought in the Civil War—one for the Confederacy (Phillip W. Greenwall) and two for the Union (Simon Gabert and Joseph Mayer). Three were native Midwesterners—the Mayer brothers from Indiana and Theodore Mack, the city's first Jewish lawyer, who was

from Cincinnati. Most of the founders had done business together, played cards together, or fraternized and socialized with one another in Fort Worth for the previous two decades.

Why, then, in the autumn of 1902, did they coalesce into a congregation? Why not thirty years earlier, like Reform Jews in nearby Dallas, or five years before like the Jews at Gainesville's United Hebrew Congregation sixty miles away?

Why hadn't they created a Reform congregation a decade earlier in 1892 when a group of Orthodox Jews, mostly immigrants with Polish and Russian accents, had formed a local congregation called Ahavath Sholom, Hebrew for "love of peace?" Why hadn't these 43 men joined that Fort Worth congregation? One of them had joined: Louis Weltman, the grandson of a rabbi. Why hadn't the others? Because Ahavath Sholom's organizers had formed a shul, a traditional congregation modeled after institutions left behind in the shtetls of Eastern Europe. A shul was an uncomfortable space for most of Fort Worth's native-born and naturalized American Jews, particularly those with German backgrounds. They were too assimilated into the Texas mainstream to feel at ease in an institution where women sat in the balcony, prayers were chanted in Hebrew, and board minutes were written in Yiddish. At Ahavath Sholom, the prayer book, a siddur, was read from right to left and was used twice daily for the morning and evening minyan. The 43 Jewish men who preferred to worship according to "the reform plan" wanted a more American institution. Religion to them was of secondary or tertiary importance. Worship was reserved for the High Holy Days and perhaps a Sabbath or two.

Yet these Reform Jews, the 43 founders of Beth-El Congregation,

were well acquainted with their co-religionists who worshiped at Ahavath Sholom. The entire Jewish community shared a cemetery, Emanuel Hebrew Rest. Located on South Main Street two miles beyond the railroad depot, the cemetery was on an acre of land given "to the Israelites of the city" in 1879 by civic leader John Peter Smith. By 1881, a cluster of Jewish men had formed a burial society, but it was short-lived. The cemetery was left largely untended until 1896, when a group of women, led by widowed matriarch Babette Carb, reorganized the Emanuel Hebrew Association.

The entire Jewish community also staged annual Purim celebrations—festive masquerade balls to which the public and the press were invited. Mayor B. B. Paddock attended the 1896 Purim Ball, indicating the pres-

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tige of the party as well as the Jewish community's early involvement in the fabric of the town.

B'nai B'rith, the Jewish fraternal lodge, was also written up in the local newspapers and supported by a cross section of the Jewish community. The first B'nai B'rith lodge, launched in 1876, the year the railroad reached Fort Worth, raised money for yellow fever victims elsewhere in the South. But the lodge disintegrated when the city's fortunes plummeted in the 1880s. Another B'nai B'rith lodge, this one launched in 1901, again drew from a cross section of the Jewish

*continued on page 14*



# Leeson Family History

by Rosanne Leeson

The identification of the "first Jewish resident" of any major city invariably leads to conflict and debate. This is because, depending on one's point of view, there are at least four distinct meanings of the term. There can be (1) a transient who stayed for a few nights but never had intentions of establishing a residence, (2) a person who became a resident, staying for some uncertain period, but then moved on, (3) a person who, for whatever reason, hid or abandoned his Jewishness and, therefore, perhaps, should not be considered as an applicable candidate, or (4) a permanent resident, namely an individual who came and remained in the city until his or her death. In the case of Houston, the first permanent Jewish resident of that city appears to have been

(dler). In 1812, when Napoleonic law mandated that Jews take hereditary family names, Abraham chose "Richter," the German and Dutch word for "judge," his decision motivated by the fact that there were 11 other men named Abraham Levy residing in the city of Amsterdam at that time.

By 1814, the Levy/Richter family left Amsterdam for London, residing there for four years, and reassuming the family name of Levy. Lewis, by then almost 20, married Mary A. Levy whose family was also from the Netherlands, though she was born in London. In early 1818, the family of Abraham Levy, along with Lewis and his now-pregnant wife, Mary, moved to the United States where, in Boston, they would have their first of 20 children, Abraham Gustavus Levy, my

cause it contains the only Jewish military burial ground in the United States. Until the establishment of the state of Israel, it was the world's only uniquely Jewish military burial ground since the days of Bar Kochba.

By 1831, Lewis and his family were living in New Orleans where he was active in Shanarai Chesset, the first Jewish house of worship in that city. By 1840, the family left for Houston and the new Republic of Texas. His interest in that city appears to have been aroused by conversations with his younger brother, Dr. Moses A. Levy (a.k.a. Albert M. Levy), the first Surgeon General of the Army of the Republic of Texas, and subsequently a physician on a Texas navy warship of the line. (Following the war of Texas' independence, Moses Levy practiced medicine in Matagorda and is buried in the cemetery of that city.)

The details of the arrival of Lewis Levy and family in Houston were later related by a daughter Ceclia Levy Gilbert. She spoke of the family's trip to Galveston followed by a two-day journey via packet boat up Buffalo Bayou to the landing in Houston, a city then described as a settlement of log houses, with only one business block.

The family's first home was just such a house at the corner of Congress and Main. In addition to being a merchant, Lewis was also a dealer in land grant certificates. By 1843 he had purchased a tract from Sam Houston, a Masonic brother and frequent visitor to his home. This land was the beginning of his homestead, called "Oak Grove." In a February 24, 1854 advertisement placed in the Houston *Telegraph*, he described his home and property in the following way:

*Continued on page 8*



my great-great-grandfather, Lewis A. Levy. He and his family arrived in 1840 and he lived in the city until his death in 1861. A considerable number of his descendants still reside in Texas today, including a number in Houston.

Lewis A. Levy was born in Amsterdam in August 1799, the first of eight children of Abraham ben Levie ben Dan, and Rachel Sarah Cornelia bat Bernard Pakker (the ped-



great-grandfather.

By October, 1818, the entire family had settled in Richmond, Virginia where Lewis and Mary remained for several years before leaving the area for New Orleans and later Texas. The patriarch father, Abraham, and his wife Rachel, along with several of their adult children now lie buried in Richmond's old Jewish cemetery, a place made especially noteworthy be-



“The property consists of a 30 acre lot, all enclosed cedar posts and picard fens. [sic] The house is 80 feet front by 45 feet deep all ceiled [sic] inside, with galleries all around. For a healthy and pleasant location it can not be surpassed by any in the vicinity, as a ten-year residence had amply tested.”

Just how Lewis A. Levy felt about the life in the United States, and Texas in particular, can be seen in article that he wrote in May 1850 for the journal, *The Asmonean*. This was one of several journals that had begun to service the growing American Jewish community, which, by that time, stretched from coast to coast. This edited excerpt from his letter was motivated by the difficulties then being experienced by the forced relocation of Polish Jews to the Pale of Settlement of Russian Poland, and the payments demanded of the Hungarian Jewish community by the Austrian government for the expenses incurred in the Austro-Hungarian War, both events being widely reported in the press.

“In our own state, thousands of acres of land can be bought, within the settled portions of the state for the small sum of 25¢ to \$1 an acre; good arable, fertile land, where a man can make his living to his liking, and more independent than the autocrat of Russia or the Emperor of Austria themselves. Indeed, I would not exchange my ... lot, with the house on it, and the garden around it, which I possess near the city of Houston for all the thrones and hereditary dominions of both those noted persons...”

In June 1844, Lewis A. Levy purchased a plot of land from Obedience Smith on what is today West Dallas Street. It was to become the first Jewish cemetery in the State of



Texas. By 1855 there were a sufficient number of Jews in Houston for a Hebrew Benevolent Association to be formed. Levy became the President of this organization, and the Secretary was his oldest son, Abraham Gustavus Levy, noted earlier as having been born in Boston following immigration to the United States.

Levy was also instrumental in the founding of Beth Israel Congregation in 1859, the first Jewish congregation in Texas. In Jacob De Cordova's small booklet of 1858, "Texas, her resources and her public men," a document designed to attract settlers to Texas, he refers to Lewis A. Levy as the founder of Houston's first Hebrew Benevolent Association, and leader of the Jewish community in Houston. It was only his untimely death in January 1861,

just as the community there began a period of substantial growth, that placed knowledge of Levy's contributions to the Jewish community of Houston into a dark recess.

Of the 20 children of Lewis and Mary, we have, thus far, found traces of only nine. The first census



of Texas, taken in 1850, reveals the names of five. They are sons Jacob (b. 1831, New Orleans) and Isaac, (b. 1842, Houston), and daughters Cecilia (b. 1834, New Orleans), Elizabeth (b. 1837, New Orleans), and Julia (b. 1840, Philadelphia).

The other four children about whom we have information include my great-grandfather, Abraham Gustavus Levy, who received his medical degree while the family was still resident in New Orleans and lived only a short time in Houston. He buried his first wife (Sarah Joachimssen) there in the West Dallas Street cemetery and moved to New York City, which explains how I got to be in the "Yankee" branch of the family. A second child, Rachel Cornelia Levy, was married in Houston in 1848 to Samuel Isaacs, and also became a resident of

*continued on page 14*

*Kessler, continued from page 5*

materials. The listings in the Handbook of Texas, the display in the Institute of Texas, a display in the new Bullock museum and one book are not bad for a group with no perpetual officers, no permanent staff or officers, and no building of our own.

And if that weren't enough over which to say *dayyeimu*, we have over 1000 folk involved with the Society, in no small credit to Fay Brachman. And, we have an incredible quarterly, thanks to the incredible efforts of Buddy Freed, which rivals any historical society's publication.

So, fellow members, that's where we came from, to the best of my recollection. Hopefully the next twenty plus years will be just as successful and over which we readily wish to say "Blessed are you Eternal who has kept us alive, sustained us and permitted us to come to this very happy occasion."

# A Revolution Against All Odds

By Somala Muhammed

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In the darkest hours of the Holocaust, when all hope was lost and few had the chance to survive, several hundred poorly armed, militarily-inexperienced Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto rose in rebellion against the might of Nazi power. For four weeks these ordinary Jews staged a relentless revolution against the Nazis, held off over 2000 German fighters, and demonstrated their great yearning for freedom and dignity. With hand-made Molotov cocktails, little ammunition, and only weeks of preparation, these Jews of the ghetto, most of whom were teens from the Jewish Fighting Organization, executed the first planned revolt of the Holocaust, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. An unprecedented reaction to the horror of Nazi rule, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising revolutionized the plight of European Jews and raised their spirits by sparking a series of subsequent revolts, delaying the extermination of thousands of Jews, and reforming the image of Jews from passive, subservient people to true heroes. Yitzhak Zuckerman, a founder of the Jewish Fighting Organization and a leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Revolution, commented upon the historic reaction:

[There is no] need to analyze the Uprising in military terms. This was a war of less than a thousand against a mighty army... this isn't a subject for study in military school... If there's a school to study the *human spirit*, there it should be a major subject. The really important things were inherent in the force shown by the Jewish youths, after years of degradations, to rise up against their destroyers, and determine what

death they should choose, "Treblinka or Uprising." I don't know if there's a standard to measure *that*.<sup>1</sup>

Once a thriving metropolis, Warsaw was the largest center of European Jewish life. It was the capital of Poland and the heart of Jewish culture. During the 1930s, Warsaw housed the largest Jewish population in Europe and the second-largest worldwide.<sup>2</sup> Just before World War II, over 375,000 Jews lived in Warsaw. At this time, anti-Semitism intensified in Europe. Following the Great Depression, Jews were viewed by other Europeans as scapegoats for economic problems and by Hitler as undeserving of life.

On September 1, 1939, Hitler's Germany invaded Poland, leaving Warsaw in a state of complete chaos. Between the Nazi invasion and November 1940, about 90,000 Jews were relocated into an isolated section of Warsaw, the "Seuchensperregebiet" or ghetto. Poles living within the area moved out. By November 15, 1940, approximately 450,000 Jews lived inside the Ghetto—200,000 per square mile; the following day, the Germans closed the Ghetto to the outside world.<sup>3</sup> Walls and barbed wire enclosed the area and grew in size daily until the so-called "infected area" was sealed shut. Inside, living conditions were inhospitable. Newspapers, radios, telephones, and any other avenues of communication were forbidden; food, clothing, shelter, and education were denied; and a Star of David across the arm or chest became mandatory.<sup>4</sup> Jews were ruthlessly beaten, mistreated, and murdered without the slightest cause. In addition, any act of defiance against the

Germans was punishable by instant death, and the unwritten law of collective responsibility was universally applied. Overpowering hunger and ubiquitous poverty increased each day within the Jewish slums. Abraham Lewent, an inhabitant of the Warsaw Ghetto, described conditions in the area:

People were laying on the streets and dying, little children went around begging, and everyday you walked out in the morning, you saw somebody laying dead, covered with newspapers or with any kind of blanket they found... And every day, thousands and thousands died just from malnutrition because the Germans didn't give anything for the people in the ghetto to eat.<sup>5</sup>

To establish some semblance of order, the Germans created the Judenrat, or Jewish Council, in 1940. Led by Adam Czierniakow, the Warsaw Judenrat gave civilians the illusion of a normal life. Normal life, however, never existed in the Warsaw Ghetto. In 1941 Germans reduced food intake for Jews to 336 calories daily; that year in Warsaw alone 44,630 Jews died of starvation or disease.<sup>6</sup>

In short time German maltreatment of Jews across Europe passed from occasional acts of violence to sadistic exterminations. News of Nazi persecution reached the Warsaw Ghetto through three men who were to be gassed in Chelmno, Poland, but had miraculously escaped to Warsaw. The men informed the Ghetto that between November and December 1940, approximately 80,000 Jews from Po-

*continued on page 11*

land and several hundred from Bessarabia, Ukraine, had died in Chelmno gas chambers. The Ghetto could not believe these stories. Most viewed these murders and subsequent ones not as part of an organized policy of exterminating the Jewish people, but as acts of misbehavior on the part of Germans.<sup>7</sup> Organized youth movements, however, accepted the Chelmno stories and acted with extensive propaganda activities to warn the population of imminent danger. In January 1942 these organizations met to discuss a united reaction against Nazi persecution. Two groups, Hashomer and Hechalutz, suggested a plan for a joint battle organization. This organization did not arise until months later. On July 28, 1942, representatives from pioneering youth movements, such as Hashomer Hatzair, Dror, and Akiva, established the Jewish Fighting Organization (*Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa*, or ZOB).<sup>8</sup> Leaders of the group included Yitzhak Zuckerman, Joseph Kaplan, and Emmanuel Ringelblum. Upon formation of the party, the men of the ZOB had no weapons, no experience, and no plan of action. Their sole aim early on was to gather weapons, warn others, and increase the resistance effort. Weapons were obtained through covert operations, and detailed intentions of the Germans' "resettlement" were promulgated through a ZOB manifesto in which members urged fellow Jews to resist:

Jewish Masses! The hour is close. You must be ready to resist. Do not go to your slaughter as sheep. Not even one Jew is to go to the train. Those who cannot resist actively should display passive resistance. That is, they should hide. Our slogan should be: We should all be ready to die as human beings.<sup>9</sup>

After deportations began in September 1942, Mordecai Anielewicz,

who had been organizing resistance in southwest Poland and Russia, returned to the Warsaw Ghetto and became commander of the ZOB. Shortly afterward other political groups, such as the Bund and Zionist groups, joined the Fighting Organization. The coalition received its first clandestine transport of weapons in December and then arranged demonstrations in the streets of the Warsaw Ghetto for January 22, 1943.<sup>10</sup> But on January 18 the Germans surprised the Ghetto with an assault. Upon invasion, the Nazis, armed with semiautomatic guns and ample ammunition, anticipated a simple, smooth expulsion; instead, they encountered revolutionary opposition. Four barricaded battle groups reacted to the Nazis with armed resistance; Anielewicz led one group, and Zuckerman led another. Over fifty Nazis were killed in the revolt, and after four days of fighting they withdrew.<sup>11</sup> For the first time Jews had reacted to Nazi oppression and had frustrated German plans. For the first time, Jews were not submissive to the Nazis. For the first time, there was hope for revolution.

The January revolt began a revolution in the lives of Jews and a psychological reformation in the hearts of Jews. The Ghetto population began to believe that what happened in January was proof that by reacting with resistance, it was possible to force the Germans to desist from their plans, and that as long as resistance continued in Warsaw, it might spread across Poland and cause a state of insecurity.<sup>12</sup> After January the Jewish Fighting Organization became the Ghetto's leader. Members began to appear in the streets of the Ghetto daily, freeing those being led to deportations, fighting for food, and rousing the Jewish population. Newfound pride and a change in morale intensified within the Ghetto, enabling ZOB leaders to obtain more ammunition and the confidence

needed to continue resistance. Fifty large pistols and fifty hand grenades were donated to the ZOB by the Polish Home Army Command.<sup>13</sup> Five hundred fighters were divided into twenty-two fighting units. Cellars were dug, bunkers prepared, and tunnels completed. Propaganda activities increased, and the entire Ghetto banded together for a revolution against the Nazi terror machine.

After January tensions between the Jews and Germans escalated. Finally, after months of uneasiness, Nazi leader Heinrich Himmler announced that the Warsaw Ghetto was to be liquidated regardless of cost, time, or troops. The day scheduled for annihilation was April 20, 1943, the day of Passover. Led by General Jürgén Stroop, 2000 SS (*Schutzstaffel*) soldiers were sent to Warsaw prior to this day. At 2:00 A.M. on April 19, occupation forces encircled the Ghetto and prepared for battle.<sup>14</sup> Within minutes all combat units of the ZOB were at their stations, also prepared. Hours later, Stroop's forces entered the Ghetto expecting to catch the Jews off guard. To their surprise, the fiercely determined Jews opened fire and showered the Germans with a hail of bullets, hand-grenades, and bombs. The Germans tried to retreat but were trapped by insurgents. After several unsuccessful retreats, the Germans called in more tanks. The first tank was burned down by the ZOB; the others were not brought near them. At the corner of the Mila and Zamenhof streets, the Bund, Hashomer, and Dror fighting groups killed every single German. Fighter Haim Fryer described the revolution:

I fired on the confused and embarrassed Germans with my Mauser. I could see them in all their helplessness and loss of control. The air was full of their wails and shouts. Many tried to

continued on page 12



run, but everything was barred and death was pursuing them. In the noise, the fluster, and cries of the wounded, we heard the astonished outcry of one of the Germans: *The Jews have arms!* The battle lasted for about half an hour. The Germans withdrew, and there were many corpses and wounded in the streets.<sup>15</sup>

Simultaneously, Jews in other parts of the Ghetto reacted to the Nazi invasion. In the Muranowski Square, a second tank was burned; there, once again, not a single German remained alive. On the first day of the revolution, the Warsaw Ghetto freedom-fighters succeeded in killing 300 of their enemy. The Germans had entered the Ghetto on April 19, 1943, expecting to stay for three days, to deport the remaining Jews, and to transfer 16,000 Jewish workers to labor camps.<sup>16</sup> They stayed for nearly a month, fighting the valiant Jews. Daily, an average of 2054 German soldiers and thirty-six officers were involved. Their weaponry included 1174 rifles, 135 submachine guns, sixty-nine light machine guns, thirteen heavy guns, a cannon, a flamethrower, and three armored cars. Their opposition numbered between 700 and 750 half-starved, freedom-hungry combatants with limited ammunition. In total, the resistance groups had 2000 homemade Molotov cocktails, ten rifles, and one or two submachine guns that they had stolen from the Germans.<sup>17</sup>

After four weeks of strong defense, the Warsaw Ghetto Revolution gradually dissolved. Germans, after being forced to abandon all ordinary fighting methods, resorted to burning the entire area. The Jews' strength and valor could not endure the torched buildings and streets. Still, they refused to forsake revolution and gathered in the central ghetto to con-

tinue their intrepid reaction. Eventually, the omnipotent flames accomplished what the Germans could not do by arms, and thousands of Jews perished. On May 8, 1943, the Germans located the ZOB headquarters at 18 Mila Street and destroyed it. A week later, they set fire to the main Warsaw Ghetto synagogue, marking the end of the Ghetto's destruction. Inhabitants remaining in the Ghetto were rounded up and deported to concentration camps, specifically, Treblinka. However, not all the Jews were caught. After the Uprising, over 20,000 Jews remained in hiding. Another 15,000 successfully escaped the Ghetto through sewers and managed to live through the end of the war.<sup>18</sup> Instead of preparing for more armed conflicts, the ZOB shifted its efforts to a rescue operation for the surviving Jews.

Putting down the Jewish reaction in the Ghetto required four weeks of inexorable fighting from the Germans.<sup>19</sup> While they were able to destroy the Warsaw Ghetto, they were unable to destroy the memory of the revolution in the Warsaw Ghetto. Throughout 1943 news of the Warsaw Ghetto Revolution spread, and with it spread the spirit of resistance. A change in the morale of Jews in Europe and the rest of the Free World became more and more evident. For the first time in the Holocaust, other ghettos and Nazi-controlled countries became convinced that if Warsaw could resist, they could, too. Thus, armed revolts inspired by the legendary Warsaw Revolution sprang up throughout Europe and threatened German resolve.

One such armed revolt inspired by the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising occurred at the Treblinka death camp after the first transport of Jews rounded up after the Uprising arrived there in May 1943. The Warsaw Jews brought news of the Warsaw's revolution, inciting Treblinka prisoners to

resistance.<sup>20</sup> Despite overwhelming odds, a reaction to Nazi subjugation formed. In a planned revolt, inmate resistance groups decided to seize weapons from the SS, take control of the camp, destroy it, and free the prisoners inside. Fearing news of the revolt would spread to SS sergeants, the prisoners at Treblinka staged a premature revolt on August 2, 1943. Prisoners blew up gasoline-storage tanks and torched parts of the camp. In the Treblinka revolt, 200 Germans were killed, and amidst the chaos, 750 of the 850 prisoners escaped to freedom.<sup>21</sup>

On October 14, 1943, an uprising at Sobibor began after news of Warsaw Ghetto Revolution penetrated the death camp. During the revolt, fighters from Warsaw's ZOB participated alongside Sobibor prisoners. They hid inside storehouses and waited for the SS to come and exchange their coats and boots. When the Germans arrived, prisoners attacked with knives and stole weapons and ammunition from them. Eleven high-ranking SS officers and thirty-eight German and Ukrainian guards were killed, and 300 Jews initially escaped to freedom. More importantly, Himmler ordered the Sobibor camp closed and destroyed lest the world discover what the Germans had been doing there; thus, thousands of lives were saved.<sup>22</sup> Inspired by the Warsaw Ghetto Revolution, the Sobibor uprising was the biggest and most successful revolt in all of the Nazi camps.

During the darkest, coldest, loneliest hours of the Holocaust, a revolution against all odds occurred and altered history forever. Inspired by a great yearning for freedom and dignity and executed by inexperienced fighters, the revolution of the Warsaw Ghetto was a turning point of the Holocaust. In the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the few reacted to the many, the untrained to the skilled, the innocent

*continued on page 13*



# Ben Rubin

*From Ahavath Shalom (Fort Worth) Bulletin*

In last month's Family Connections, we featured the history of Ben Rubin's family and its various connections to the Shul. Towards the end of Ben's story, we mentioned his younger brother Harry Rubin. This time around we'll focus on Harry's side of the family and its own connections to the Shul.

Harry Rubin was born in 1910. He was the younger son of Oscar and Sara

*Revolution, continued from page 12*

to the wicked. In the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, for the first time in history, the Jew reacted to the Nazi. Armed with a remarkable strength of will and tremendous reserves of courage, the undaunted Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto staged a historic revolution conceived on a moral plane—a revolution not in defense of lives or homes or cities, but a revolution in defense of the future of an entire race of people. The reaction and revolution of the Warsaw Ghetto, for the first time in history, reformed the stereotyped image of Jews from one of passive victims to one of courageous heroes; in addition, it gave Jews throughout Europe hope for life and resistance and allowed tens of thousands of them to escape Nazi extermination.

<sup>1</sup> Deborah Bachrach, *The Holocaust Library: The Resistance* (San Diego, Calif.: Lucent Books, Inc., 1998).

<sup>2</sup> George Feldman, *Understanding the Holocaust* (Detroit: UXL, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> Janusz Korczak, *The Ghetto Years* (Israel: Ghetto Fighters' House, 1983); *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, s.v. "Warsaw Ghetto Uprising."

<sup>4</sup> Chiam Aron Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chiam A. Kaplan* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Abraham Lewin, *A Cup of Tears: A Diary of the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

<sup>6</sup> Charles Roland, *Courage Under*

Rubin. When Harry first began working full-time, he made his living as a butcher at Carshon's Delicatessen. Several years later, while in his early 20s, in the midst of the Great Depression, Harry and a partner, Max Walensky, opened up a used auto parts business they called, American Auto Salvage. Harry and Max worked as partners for close to six years before Max sold out

to Harry, so he could return to help out in his own family's business.

American Auto Salvage thrived in the years leading up to World War II, but when Harry was to enter the military, he sold the business. However, when he failed his Army physical and received a deferment, he immediately took back the auto salvage business he

*continued on page 24*

*Siege: Disease, Starvation, and Death in the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> Dir. Jolanta Dylewska, *Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising According to Marek Edelman* (Facets Multimedia, 1994); Vladka Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall* (Tel Aviv: Beit Lohamei Haettaot, 1972).

<sup>8</sup> Yitzhak Zuckerman, "The Creation of the Jewish Fighting Organization in the Warsaw Ghetto," <http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/Holocaust/zob.html> [Accessed 2002].

<sup>9</sup> Jewish Fighting Organization to the Warsaw Ghetto Inhabitants, Jan. 1943, letter.

<sup>10</sup> Yitzhak Zuckerman, *A Surplus of Memory: Chronicle of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> Marek Edelman, "The Ghetto Fights" in *The Warsaw Ghetto: The 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Uprising* (May 1990), 17-39.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Rozett to Somala Muhammed, Dec. 30, 2001, interview.

<sup>13</sup> Dir. Willy Lindwer, *The Lonely Struggle* (Ergo Media Inc., 1994).

<sup>14</sup> Dan Karzman, *The Bravest Battle: The 28 Days of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (New York: Putnam, 1976).

<sup>15</sup> Israel Gutman, *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994).

<sup>16</sup> "The Ghetto in Flames," *The*

*Literature of Destruction: Jewish Responses to Catastrophe* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 454-459; Hanna Krall, *Shielding the Flame: An Intimate Conversation With Dr. Marek Edelman, the Last Surviving Leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1986).

<sup>17</sup> Zivia Lubetkin, *In the Days of Destruction and Revolt* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishing, 1981); Miron Bialoszewski, *A Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising* (Michigan: Ardis, 1977).

<sup>18</sup> Elaine Landau, *The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (New York: Macmillan, 1992).

<sup>19</sup> Jurgèn Stroop, *The Stroop Report: The Jewish Quarter of Warsaw Is No More* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979).

<sup>20</sup> Richard Glazer and Roslyn Theobald, *Trap With a Green Fence: Survival in Treblinka* (Northwestern University Press, 1995).

<sup>21</sup> "Jewish Resistance to the Nazi Genocide," <http://www.us.israel.org/jsource/Holocaust/grobres.html> [Accessed 2002].

<sup>22</sup> Tomas Toivi Blatt, *Sobibor: The Forgotten Revolt - A Survivor's Report* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1995); Herbert Durks, *Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust* (New York: Irvington Publishers, 1983).

New York City. A third, Hannah Levy was married in Houston to Henry Wiener, in what may have been the first Jewish wedding ceremony in Houston. Wiener was an active businessman, and later became President of the Beth Israel Congregation founded by his father-in-law. Hannah is buried near her father in the West Dallas Street Cemetery. The final child of the nine was named Bernard Levy, but we have no information about him, he being mentioned in his father's will as being missing. Of the other 11 children, we have no information. It is likely that many of them died in infancy or early childhood.

Elizabeth Levy, mentioned earlier in connection with the Texas census of 1850, was married to Samuel Lewis and lived in Bastrop. Among her descendants was Audrey Levy Given of El Paso, whose husband, Herbert, has been an active member of the Texas Jewish Historical Society. Julia Levy, also mentioned earlier, married Alex Simon, another early Texas settler, and they both moved to Brenham in the 1860's where a descendant, Matthews Rubenstein, lived until his death last year. The Simon theater of that city is named after Alex.

Of the other two mentioned sons, Jacob and Isaac, no information is available about Jacob. Of Isaac, I have been in contact with the family but they prefer their privacy and supplied me with limited information. I am aware of some limited number of descendants.

*Both-El Centennial, continued from page 7*

population, and this chapter lasted. The cemetery, the Purim balls, and the broad representation in B'nai B'rith show that Jews worked and partied together and had a presence in the town. Fort Worth's early Reform Jews may not have been prone to pray, but they did not hide their Jewish identity.

Not that a few stalwarts had not

The mother of these 20 children, Mary Levy, outlived her husband Lewis by many years and was cared for by Julia in Brenham in her declining days. At her death in 1888, she was buried in the Simon family plot of the Prairie Lea Cemetery in Brenham, Bnai Abraham section.

On February 19, 1989 a large gathering of descendants met in Brenham where the Daughters of the Republic of Texas placed historical markers on the graves of both Mary A. Levy and her daughter, Julia Levy Simon. On May 20, 1990 a similar ceremony was held for Lewis A. Levy and his daughter, Hannah Levy Wiener at the West Dallas Street Cemetery in Houston.

In a letter in my possession, written on May 21, 1860, by Henry Wiener to his brother-in-law, Alex Simon, he states — speaking about his and Wiener's father-in-law — that the "old gentleman had a very severe attack but is getting better. G-d only knows what the result will be...." A scant nine months later, on February 18, 1861, Lewis A. Levy passed away.

His obituary notice, appearing in the Houston *Weekly Telegraph* on February 19, 1861, said:

"The death of Lewis A. Levy a few days since in this city, brought a feeling of sorrow to all the people. He was one of the oldest citizens. He was universally known, and beloved by all

for the good qualities of his heart. His life was that of one who knew no guilt.

"Mr. Levy was native of Amsterdam, Holland. For many years he was a citizen of Richmond, VA, and of New Orleans, LA. the last twenty-five years of his life [sic] was spent in this city. He leaves a widow and a large family of grownup children to mourn his death.

"Peacefully at the age of 62 [sic] he was gathered to his fathers, and his memory is green in the affection of those who remain. He has gone to enjoy that rest he so patiently waited for. His thoughts were at all times in com-



munion with his G-d. Requiescat in Pace."

To the best of my knowledge, until the recent death of Audrey Levy Given of El Paso, mentioned earlier as descending from Elizabeth Levy Lewis, she and I were the only two Jewish members of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. With her death, I remain the only one.

services would subject one to ridicule."

The rest of Fort Worth was not too keen on religion either. By the close of the 19th century, this city of 26,000 residents, including 600 Jews, had but 15 churches. There were far more saloons, gambling dens, and brothels.

Founded in 1849 as a frontier

*continued on page 20*

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# Isaac Zinn

*By Sig Forman*

My grandfather on my mother's side was not a practical man. Which may come out sounding like a compliment or like a curse depending on who's talking. Even his children were divided on the issue and showed it progressively in their own lives. As for me, my enjoyment comes from anecdotes that swarm around his memory like tenement bees around an over-crowded hive.

First let me say that I make no claim for the uniqueness of my grandfather. To tell the truth I have no idea how rare or commonplace he was. But to avoid hurting the feelings of those whose grandfathers may have matched mine exactly point by point, or seem to, I'll assume he was one of a type whom we were fortunate enough to have fished out of the pickle barrel. Because I think we all must agree, without reference to practicality or impracticality, that there aren't many men like Reb Itzhak still coming down the pike from the automated assembly plants for cloning the instant everyday things of twentieth century life.

Yom Kippur is fast approaching and Reb Itzhak has only covered half his produce route, sometimes sitting, sometimes walking beside his horse, calling his wares with more than a trace of embarrassment at possibly interrupting someone else's valuable thoughts. But his family must also live. So he calls his wares, but as quietly as he can.

Naturally today, when he is in a hurry, everyone wants to talk. And unlike most storeowners whose customers come to them, he has customers waiting. Some of these who will not eat a piece of fruit without his endorsement. And his tomatoes....in short he can't simply shut down for the rest of the day and go home. Or he

thinks he can't, which is the same thing.

One thing he thinks he can do to speed up matters is to shorten the conversations. But he is wrong. It would require a sort of rudeness, at least rudeness in his view that lay out-side the bounds of his behavior. It is a fantasy he nurtures when he contemplates abbreviating his talks with his customers. His only hope is his horse that, sensing urgency in the air, picks up his gait to near double time without his owner's urging.

Sitting in the wagon, Reb Itzhak is already chanting in the bottom of his throat that afternoon's service. He will lead the chanting today but he isn't rehearsing. Like most Jewish males, by repetition he has memorized without trying, most of the well-worn prayers. At the same time Reb Itzhak is concentrating so intently on the sins he's committed during the past year (a work of fiction that would hardly rate best seller status) that if not for faithful Tsar Nicholas and his knowledge of the route, they might have wandered all the way across town without grandfather even noticing. It was a family joke that only his clumsiness at picking up produce kept the horse from taking over the business altogether.

Considering the treatment of the Jews under the Tsars, it may seem a gratuitous insult to the horse so loved by the whole family, to have named him Tsar Nicholas. But the truth is that when Itzhak first acquired the animal, his name was chosen as a democratic jibe at the Russian nobility, and later when the horse and he had become inseparable friends, it was too late, Tsar Nicholas refusing to respond to any other name.

Coming to Central Avenue, that marked the boundary between his ju-

risdiction and that of Reb Lazar, Tsar Nicholas made *the* turn toward home without Reb Itzhak noticing, he was that en-grossed in his silent prayers. Suddenly the quiet was interrupted by the sound of running feet behind them. "Wait, Itzhak, wait." It was Reb Shmuel the tailor in screaming pursuit, a new gray suit flying behind him on a hanger like a thick woolen kite needing more string for ascension. Reb Itzhak reined Tsar Nicholas to a stop, which today could be maintained only by a stream of reassuring words from was master. "Tsar Nicholas, are you crazy? Do you think I've forgotten it's Yom Kippur Eve? Be still and behave like a horse."

"How are you, Reb Shmuel?" Reb Itzhak fidgeted. The answer was a shrug of the shoulders, and a mournful "why complain? And your family?" "The same thank God. So where are you running? Do you need some nice oranges? An apple maybe?" The tailor waved his burden under Reb Itzhak's nose, which elicited only a blank look.

"Reb Itzhak, don't you remember? It's your new suit for the high holy days. Your wife made the last payment this very morning, and I promised her I would give it to you to carry home on the wagon. I've been watching for you through my window all afternoon I shouldn't miss you. It would be some joke for you to have to wear your old suit tonight while your new one (God preserve us) hung uselessly in my shop. Thank goodness I saw you, or we both would have heard from your good wife."

Accepting the suit from its maker, grandfather held it out for a thorough but quick inspection. "Very pretty," he commented, smiling broadly, which set off a similar smile on Reb Shmuel's face. "I'll be the best

*continued on page 16*



dressed Jew in America this evening". "Wear it in good health," the tailor still smiled examining the garment with the sort of pride God must have felt in Adam's progress before the banishment.

Meanwhile, Tsar Nicholas is tugging at the reins and his master can barely hold him in place. "What can I do with this animal?" Reb Itzhak laments. "But he's right. We mustn't delay getting home or we'll (God forbid) be late for services. If you'll excuse me, Reb Shmuel, we'll see you in synagogue." *Go,* "the tailor answers, "but don't worry. God will bring you there on time."

But Shmuel's assurances fall on skeptical ears. Tsar Nicholas' fidgeting has made Itzhak nervous and he would like to hurry home to get dressed. Yet it is not for nothing that Reb Itzhak has been elected gabbai of the synagogue year after year. He has the perfect qualifications for tending to tedious or unpleasant details of congregational or personal business—"Somebody has to do it," is his constant motto. He would rather miss Yom Kippur services altogether than to deprive one of his customers of the turnips or apples she was planning for the post Yom Kippur meal or tomorrow's lunch should she be a Christian. Of course part of his attitude stemmed from his personal relationship with God, who had so many duties of his own that the world might be in unimaginable chaos if not for the rabbis and gabbais who helped in the small ways they were able.

Everyone knew that God had promised to forgive man's transgressions against Him, but sins against one's fellows was something else. Thus Reb Itzhak's order of priorities. And of course in such matters as wearing a new suit or an old one to synagogue, even as the cantor before the whole congregation, God and he had shared many a laugh. What sort of

God did some of these people believe in? A God for the well—dressed and the well—fed, who judged them by the cut of their trousers or the length of their dresses?

And yet even his own Sarah judged God's reactions by her own. And what could a man do? It was for her sake he would be wearing a new suit during the high holy days, and for her sake that he now really began to hurry. But thank God for her down to earth practicality without which they might still be suffering in Europe and not on the verge of becoming American citizens (another of her successful campaigns). If they should arrive late, she would be mortified before her friends — "the gabbai can't miss a few sales of bananas to be on time at synagogue?" For her part, she cared nothing for his being the gabbai or her the gabbai's wife (so she assured herself waiting for him to arrive), but she knew how much the job meant to him and how much doing it well on top of that. A gabbai is after all a special person in the congregation and he should look like one. That was why she bullied him into accepting her chicken sales money to help pay for the new suit he needed so badly. She pictured how grand he would look in his banker's suit, as Reb Shmuel had called it, walking down the aisle on the men's side of the synagogue, while she peeked at him over her prayer book, thinking proudly, "that's my husband." And then though she wasn't a superstitious person, she added "kinhora" (without an evil eye) just to be on the safe side.

Meanwhile, the gabbai followed his usual homeward way, stopping on summons to let his produce be examined and bought if the housewife approved the quality and price. There are certain pleasantries which must be observed; the state of health of each member of each family was important to the entire community and not to be routinely inquired about and routinely

dismissed without true joy or sympathy, whichever fit. And good fortune such as a new job or the opening of a business of one's own also required recognition. And so it went, slowly, too slowly for both horse and peddler, the latter's breathing turned shallow in anticipation of his homecoming, and mad dash to get ready.

They were in the home stretch now only two blocks from Sarah and the children, sitting primly in the parlor to keep them clean. One of the boys already had filled the trough of Tsar Nicholas with feed and a special holiday treat as well.

Then all at once, a tall black man (almost exactly Grandpa's height but thinner with more pronounced muscles) stepped out from behind an oleander bush. Tsar Nicholas and Reb Itzhak were both startled, the horse whinnying but grandpa showing no sign of fear. Touching the brim of his hat, he greeted the stranger with a cheerful "good evening."

"Good evening to you, rabbi," the black responded. And then evidently having mistaken the nature of Itzhak's merchandise, he pathetically asked, "Do you have any old wore out clothes on your wagon you could spare? These rags are all I got between the weather and me. Ah couldn't pay you nothin' cos Ah ain't got no job an no hopes of one long as I look like a bum."

Reb Itzhak examined the raggedy man and found no exaggeration in his self-description. He wore what barely resembled pants and shirt; both were in absolute shreds, his dark body showing through in embarrassing places. He was in great need of clothes that would cover him warmly and decently, and his plight set off at once an enormous frustration in Itzhak. If he only were a buyer and seller of old clothes, he could have let the man have whatever would fit him. But as it was...

*continued on page 17*



He shrugged apologetically at the Negro, explaining that he sold produce and nothing else. As he talked he filled a large bag with vegetables and fruit that he handed to the man with his blessings. "Thank you sir, this sure be a help to my insides which ain't had no food today and barely the day before."

"I wish I could help more," Reb Itzhak sighed.

"You helping me plenty," he held out his bag. "Thank you again sir." And he turned and started walking back in the direction from which they had come.

Grandpa gently slapped the reins and they proceeded almost to the house, with him thinking strange outlandish thoughts as they went, Reb Itzhak reaching over occasionally to touch his splendid new suit that lay folded neatly on the seat beside him.

Suddenly he spoke aloud to himself. "Why do I decide so quickly without prayerful thinking that there is no way for me to help this poor black man? When the truth is that God has put into my hands, along with the problem, the solution as well. Yet I am so selfish and set in my ways I refuse to see, when obviously it is no accident he and I came together this Yom Kippur eve. Thank you, Lord for giving me extra opportunities for mitzvot." Tsar Nicholas whinnied as if in reply. Itzhak turned him around and they trotted rapidly away from the family home.

"You," Reb Itzhak shouted. "You there, wait!"

The black man looked bewildered and frightened as well. "Ah didn't take nothin' ah wasn't given," he protested.

"I know, I know. Please remain calm. We came after you to beg your forgiveness. It completely slipped my mind that indeed I did have something whole and warm to cover your body." And grandpa lifted up the new gray suit and tried to place it into the hands

of the dark stranger.

"What?" the poor man was horrified. "Ah can't take that suit. It's brand new. I'll bet it's never been worn. I ain't never wore such clothes."

"But I have another suit," grandpa exclaimed. And how many suits does one man need? He can wear only one at a time. As for being brand new, after a suit is worn one time it is no longer considered new, so that only one wearing sets this suit apart from my other. Now think how silly it is to raise such a fuss over a single wearing." And Grandpa decisively pushed his holy days dark grey gabba suit into the black man's arms reciting a silent prayer for its newness and for the good fortune of its first wearer.

Arriving home, Reb Itzhak and Tsar Nicholas were met at the gate by the two sons of the family who walked the horse back to its stall to be brushed and fed. Itzhak entered the house, heading straight for the parlor where he'd visualized the family waiting impatiently. His four daughters ran to meet their father with kisses and hugs and holy day greetings. Grandma Sara also kissed him, noticing an unusual evasiveness in his eyes. With barely enough time to get ready, unnecessary conversations were best saved for later. "Put on your new suit quickly and let your family admire you before the rest of the world gets its chance," she beseeched.

"Which suit?" he asked softly feigning dumbness or innocence, or a combination of both.

"Which suit indeed," grandma was getting angry. "Do you have so many suits we must number them or give them names?"

"I had thought I might just wear the old suit tonight." Silence. "Didn't Shmuel catch you? Wasn't the suit finished properly? Did you leave it for further sewing?"

"Yes, yes and no. I simply thought..."

Not for nothing had Grandma

Sara been married twenty years to Grandpa Itzhak. She could tell something drastic had happened to the new holy day suit paid for with the proceeds from the sales of chickens she'd raised during the year. Though precisely how drastic she would never have guessed. One bad sign... while there was much talk of the new suit, there was no new suit in sight.

"Itzhak, tell me, where is the suit?"

Redfaced at the discomfort he was causing her but bolstered by the approval he felt from God, he answered. "I gave it to a poor black man who was dressed in the most pathetic rags I've ever seen. First I gave him some produce and let him go, but that wasn't what he needed and I knew it. So I chased him down and practically had to force him to take the suit."

Despite herself, thinking of how handsome she'd expected him to look in his new suit, grandma began to cry.

Grandpa patted her on the back. "Sara, please try to understand. How could I have made it through Yom Kippur thinking of that poor man with his body exposed to the weather as well as the taunting looks and painful jokes of the cruel. How could I have stood this evening and honestly prayed to my creator?"

Grandma sobbed quietly a little longer, and then she dried her eyes and turned back to Itzhak. She still was trying to make sense out of what seemed a senseless situation.

"All right", she said, in a voice held in so tightly it barely could be heard. "I guess I can sympathize with the black man's need for clothes and with your wanting to provide some for him, Itzhak (and here there was a catch in her voice that almost started her crying again) Why did it have to be the new suit? Couldn't you have brought him home and given him your old suit instead?"

Grandpa's face now blazed a

*continued on page 18*

# History

*Galveston Daily News*,  
Tuesday, 4 March 1884, page 1, column 6

Bar Mitzvah - Rockdale, Mar. 3 - The bar mitzvah celebration of their son Henry Kaiser was the occasion of an entertainment at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Kaiser, yesterday, at which the best people of the city were assembled. The feast was, in point of abundance and excellence, one of the finest ever spread at a private residence in Rockdale. Master Henry, in an admirable address, acquitted himself nobly, and received the hearty plaudits of all. Among the visiting guests were Mr. and Mrs. Bernheim of Round Rock and Mr. and Mrs. Jackson of Austin. Champagne flowed in abundance and it was a late hour when the last of the guests departed. Mr. Kaiser is one of our leading merchants and the ovation tendered by the large assemblage on this occasion was a fitting tribute to an enterprising citizen.

*Zinn, continued from page 17*

bright crimson, and he looked at his shoes as if hunting there for an answer. "Well you see," he stammered, "after we let him go, I began to think of the miracle that he should have approached my wagon this Yom Kippur Eve, the one day in the year—no the one day in my whole life—when I should be carrying a suit of clothes and it was clothes he needed so badly—and it was obvious he would fit into them perfectly. All those thoughts were rushing through my head as we raced on fearing we might have lost him, thinking how terrible I would have felt then. But we did find him and it was so moving and so perfect a situation, truly a story written by God's own hand, I became so excited by good fortune, Sara, that unfortunately I gave no thought at all to the possibility of handing him any suit of clothes but the one that lay beside me."

Now Grandma had finished crying. She was too angry and exasperated to cry. She felt more like screaming but that was inappropriate for the holy days and in the children's pres-

ence besides.

"Come children," she ushered them through the door "let us go to pray for the return of your father's sanity." Amidst much a giggling and tittering, the six children tramped ahead of their parents on the walk to the synagogue.

Under her breath, Grandma Sara said, I don't understand you, Itzhak. If I live to be a hundred, I'll never understand you "

Grinning at her like a 10 year old schoolboy caught sneaking under the

edge of the circus tent, Itzhak said, "Of course you understand me. You always have and even if we live to be 200, you always will. You're my wife."

## The Wolens Family



April, 1937 in Corsicana

1. K. Wolens
2. Daisy Silverberg (Mr. K.'s daughter)
3. Rochelle Pitlock (Jack Wolens' daughter)
4. Harry Pitlock (her husband)
5. Nate Wolens (K's brotehr, managed Waxachaie store)
6. Jack Wolens (K's brother, managed Palestine store)
7. Norman Sider (K's nephew)
8. Max Wolens (K's oldest son)
9. Helen Wolens (Nate's wife)
10. Ann Wolens (Jack's wife)
11. Katie Maremont (K's sister)
12. Florence Wolens (Max's wife)
13. Ida Wolens (K's wife)
14. Herbert Silverberg (Daisy's son)
15. Maxel Silverberg (Daisy's son)

With a resounding traditional sigh of a depth that takes decades to develop, poor grandma resignedly agreed, "Yes, God help me. I am your wife. How could it be otherwise?"

# Oral history brings life to immigrant experience

By Todd Glasscock

original date of publication was September 8, 2002 in the Temple Daily Telegram

She says it's much warmer in Texas than it was in Russia.

For Annie Novit, the heat won't be so bad. She's in America with her family, specifically in turn-of-the-century Galveston, with her husband.

Her husband was on the ship from Russia for 21 days and came into port hungry. He had sampled a fruit he had never seen before, long and yellow, sort of bitter when he first tasted it. The others who had been there longer, pointed at him, called him a green-horn. He had not peeled the banana.

He found the fruit delicious, enough to start peddling them, a way to earn money for his wife Annie.

This is just a sampling of history and heritage Jan Hart brings to performances of her one-woman show, portraying her grandmother, Annie, known as Hanna the Immigrant, who immigrated from Russia to Galveston in the early 1900s. Mrs. Hart's show is listed in the Texas Commission on the Arts roster for 2003-2005.

She joins a distinguished group of Texas poets, musicians and other artists on the roster and is listed in the Commission's yearbook that is distributed to schools and other community organizations across the state. Organizations contract with the Commission for programs and the cost of the program is shared between the two parties.

As Hanna the Immigrant, she dresses in early 20th century costume, and in a heavy Russian accent, tells the story of Russian-Jewish immigrants to Texas as a way to get across the story of immigrants to America. She portrays her grandmother's life in Russia and her immigration to America. She reminds her audience that every American family was an immigrant family at one time. Some

just came earlier than others.

Other presentations that she does are Finding Your Roots on gathering information about families to turn into a story and Modern Russia, a slideshow and video of recent travels in Russia with discussion of recent political and economic changes.

She has performed all over the state and across the nation, including New York, California, Florida and Kansas.

Before Mrs. Hart's grandmother died, she made two evenings worth of audiotape detailing her life.

From those audiotapes, Mrs. Hart wanted to write a history for her family. She thought she would just type out notes from the audiotape and shape it into a story. But once she did some research at the Texas Seaport Museum in Galveston, the family history became more involved.

At the museum, she discovered the ship's manifest that her family had arrived on. The museum has a database in which manifests can be searched.

"I wanted to round out the stories as much as I could," she said.

She wrote a manuscript, had copies bound, and gave them to family members. She also circulated the manuscript to publishers, one of which took interest in the story. The publisher liked the idea of a story of immigration to Galveston; what they saw was the potential for a children's book and Mrs. Hart set out to write one.

Her imagination began to work and she reshaped her family history into the book *Hanna the Immigrant*. Two other books followed, tracing the adventures of her mother Minnie Siegel, *The Many Adventures of Minnie* and *More Adventures of Minnie*.

"Some things I had to imagine about my grandmother," she said. "I created a world for her."

Gathering the stories helped her appreciate her grandmother's life better, she said. "We don't always appreciate the stories our grandmothers tell."

From the books, the idea for a one-woman performance germinated. She had been in theater performances before, including "Fiddler On the Roof," and before long, she had her grandmother down and started visiting schools, both public and private. Since then, her audiences have ranged in age from kindergartners to nursing home residents.

She has also given workshops on oral history.

Then she interviewed her mother to get more details about her family. This became a great moment of discovery.

"I got to know her a lot better," she said. "You find out things that form a better understanding when you have conversations (with family)."

She encourages people to interview and record family because it develops a very intimate portrait of loved ones.

"It surprised me that I didn't know everything (about my mother)," she said.

Mrs. Hart's family immigrated from Russia in the early 20th century. Her grandmother was born in 1886 in Slavan, Russia, and was married in Russia.

In the early 20th century, about 10,000 Jews immigrated to Galveston, most encouraged to come to Texas under the Galveston Plan, developed by the Jewish Immigrant Information Bureau. The plan came about to shift im-

*continued on page 20*



migrant entry from the Northeast to the Gulf Coast and redirecting more settlement to the middle of the county. Pivotal to the establishment of the bureau and its honorary secretary was Henry Cohen, rabbi of Temple B'nai Israel in Galveston, the oldest Reform Jewish congregation in Texas.

While immigrants came to America for various reasons, Jewish immigrants from Russia at the turn-of-the-century came because of the oppression by the Czarist government. Czar Nicholas II, in one of many efforts to suppress revolutionaries during the Russian Revolution of 1905, encouraged anti-Semitic pogroms. The world in which Annie grew up, then, was chaotic with revolution, unrest and oppression.

As Hanna, Mrs. Hart does a skit in which she acts as Hanna and talks about why the family immigrated to Texas. Afterward, she reveals to her audience who she is and holds a question and answer session.

"I also encourage (children) to read and to write," she said.

She makes the performance fun, getting up and dancing and telling funny stories.

"I try to make that period come alive," she said.

Students, she said, do not often realize how different a world without computers, television, DVDs and VCRs was.

And yet, she said, people generally had the same ambitions as they do now: to be good people and make good lives.

From the banana cart her grandfather pushed, came, once the family had moved to Dublin, west of Fort Worth, a produce market and then a grocery and dry goods business. The family business developed a good life and stayed in the family from 1911 to 1960.

But there was more than material success. What developed from Galveston to Dublin and now to

Temple, Red Oak and outward into the rest of the nation was a faith shared with a community.

Mrs. Hart recalls holding services with family in Dublin on High Holidays and members of the Jewish community in the area meeting together. Her family has a Torah scroll that has been in Texas since 1911. It has had a traveling life since 1964.

She has played Hanna for 12 years. In that time, she has learned a great deal more about her family's history and the history of immigration in general. But the journey has also been personal.

Along with everything else, she has learned more about herself, living for a few moments in the life of her grandmother. It has even deepened her understanding of being a grandmother herself.

"The longer I play it, the more I'm becoming my grandmother," she said. "I enjoy telling my grandmother's stories and mom's stories. All families have stories to tell."

military post, Fort Worth was a less-than-respectable town during its first five decades. It was best known for Hell's Half Acre, the blocks of bars and bawdy houses that harbored outlaws like Butch Cassidy. The Acre had first flourished during the Chisholm Trail days of the 1870s when Fort Worth touted itself as the last watering stop south of Indian Territory. As the cattle-driving era came to an end in the 1880s, Fort Worth's image (and its nickname) as "Cowtown" remained, luring the restless while deterring families in search of refinement.

"In Jewish circles, . . . such was the reputation of Fort Worth throughout the State of Texas . . . the mere mention of the name . . . would suggest the abandonment of all hope for the Jews of that City," local historian

Flora Schiff wrote. Others concurred: Charles Wessolowsky, a journalist and B'nai B'rith regional representative who visited the city in 1879, criticized the "lack of zeal among [Jewish] parents, who [were] not very much disposed to take great interest in the education of their children in . . . moral and religious teaching." His reference was to a Sabbath School, begun earlier that year with the blessing of a visiting Galveston rabbi, Abraham Blum. Three women, working with self-appointed principal Joseph Mayer, had begun teaching Judaism to 32 Jewish children, but the endeavor soon fizzled.

In 1900 there was another effort to launch a Jewish religious school. This time, Miss Sarah Carb, principal of the North Fort Worth Kindergarten School, served as superintendent.

Fifty pupils enrolled. The school proved to be the stimulus for further organizing. An article in the *American Israelite*, datelined Fort Worth, reported that "a movement is on foot in Jewish circles here . . . to discuss ways and means . . . to organize a congregation under the American or Reformed ritual." The *American Israelite* reported that Sarah Carb's brother, Isidore Carb, had called a meeting in his Houston Street office to organize a synagogue. Working in concert with him were David Brown, an ice manufacturer with three daughters, and Herman Brann, a liquor store retailer with a teen-age son. Again, attempts to launch a Reform temple faltered. So did the religious school. Still another effort was announced 11 months later in the *Southwest Jewish*

continued on page 27



# Texas Jewish Historical Society 2002-2004

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## TJHS Member is Former Rangerette

by Seymour Van Os

Francene (Davis) Van Os is a Jewish girl from Kilgore, Texas. We have a wonderful marriage in its 55th year. As a 17-year-old college student, Francene was a member of the famous Kilgore College Rangerettes. The Rangerettes were and still are a top rated drill team that performs at college football games and other places all over the globe, representing Texas

and the United States. Francene received a B.A. Degree from U.T. Austin. I am 79 and am a retired Professor of Oil & Gas Technology at Tyler Jr. College.

Always active in Jewish affairs, Francene has served as president of her local Sisterhood at Beth Sholom of Kilgore, Texas and also as president of the Tyler Chapter of Hadassah. Currently, Francene is serving as president of Sisterhood at Congregation Beth El of Tyler, Texas, where she and I are members. Francene and I have two sons and five grandchildren. Our older son, David, is an independent labor lawyer, our younger son, Louis, is a computer executive.



Francene at 17 in 1942 with other Rangerettes



Rangerettes Forever's reunion. Francene is on the far right holding the cowboy hat. She is 75 years old in this picture.

The former Kilgore College Rangerettes still meet once a year as Kilgore College alumni group, that call themselves "Rangerettes Forever." In 1999, the Rangerettes Forever met as a group, wearing their windbreaker Rangerettes marching uniforms. They marched as a group in the Cotton Bowl Parade.

# Revamped Weismans rekindles memories

by Rebecca Hopkins

original date of publication was September 28, 2002 in the Marshall News Messenger

The opening of the Weisman Center Friday was almost like a family reunion.

People exchanged stories, liberally gave hugs and talked about old times. Only very few of them were actually related. But they had in common fond memories of shopping in the downtown department store that was known throughout East Texas for its service and merchandise. While they exchanged descriptions of the fine goods, their memories usually had very little to do with buying things.

"Mr. Hirsch Sr. always said we were one big family and we really are," said Honey Best, who worked there for Joe Hirsch during the Christmas season from 1958 to 1972.

She said she was the first one to the open house Friday designed to premiere the \$1.5 million renovation of the 100-plus-year-old building.

"I couldn't wait to be here," she said.

Soon some 200 sets of feet of Marshallites, government officials and former Weisman Center employees walked on the wooden floor that had been hidden for years.

"I always knew these floors could be pretty," Ms. Best said.

In the renovation that was financed by mainly state and federal grants, the ceilings were uncovered, wood was restored and the outside metal facade was removed. Vendors, who are mainly members of a retail cooperative, showcased their various goods. They hope to be part of the catalyst for an invigorated downtown.

"Weisman's was the Who's Who in Marshall for so many years," said Martha Josey, legendary barrel racer, who is selling Western wear and gift items in the Weisman Center.

"I miss shopping here. I already

see things I want to buy here. I'm excited about the town getting into all different kinds of tourism. It's going to be good for Marshall."

The city, which now owns the building, set up the center in a cooperative that will collectively sell their goods in a department store style. It's already attracted pottery companies, artists, a jeweler, and antique dealers to join.

But the new set-up doesn't fool some of the shoppers of the original Weisman Center.

"This was the men's department," said Flo Jasper, as she stood in the new coffee/sandwich shop Central Perks. "The jewelry was on the other side. It was the finest you could buy anywhere. When you come, even though it's different now, you still remember where everything was when it closed up."

The department store closed in 1989 in the midst of an economic decline in downtown Marshall. But it had been opening in the building on North Washington Street since 1898. Syracuse native Joe Weisman moved to Marshall in 1866, first locating his business on the north side of the downtown square. But in 1898 with an expanding business, Weisman engaged an architect to design the two-story building with mezzanine, which surrounds the first floor, at its present location. Weisman died in 1918, and his son-in-law and former stock boy, Joe Hirsch, took over management of the store.

Hirsch, a civic leader who spent a number of years as a member on the Marshall school board, left the store to his sons Martin and Joe and his daughters Francis and Mary upon his death in the late 1960s.

Martin Hirsch died in 1968, and his younger brother Joe managed

Weisman's until the early 1980s, when it was sold to Joe Weinberg.

In 1994, the owners gave it to the city, which reopened it in 1997 for a retail cooperative. Two years ago, the city was awarded almost \$1.5 million in grants and only spent about \$5,000 in city money on the building, said Assistant City Manager Janet Cook. The entire project came in about \$75,000 under budget. It was constructed by Stone Construction and designed by Joe Boucher of Sinclair and Wright, she said.

"It's just a thrill," Ms. Cook said.

"It was hard a few years ago to imagine that this day would ever come," City Manager Frank Johnson told the crowd.

Congressman Max Sandlin, D-Marshall, traveled to Marshall for the event. Almost two years ago, he also visited Marshall to announce the grant that many hoped then would turn around a depressed downtown.

"This has come full circle," Sandlin said before the ribbon cutting. "This grand old building and the business in it once was the anchor of downtown. Now it's a vital part of the business community."

Developers Steve Carlile and Jerry Cargill also visited the center for the opening. Meanwhile, next door, Carlile's employees worked on the buildings he's renovating. Cargill, who also bought some downtown buildings and is considering purchasing the Hotel Marshall, said that the city's investment in the Weisman Center showed him sincerity from the community about improving downtown.

"I was intrigued by the fact that the city made this kind of commitment," Carlile said. "You start to have a reason

Continued on page 25

# The Magic of Camp Fannin at Tyler

by Barry Green

Tyler's Maurine and Evelyn Muntz, sisters-in-law for over 50 years, are childhood friends who met their husbands as a result of World War II. They first met as young girls, when Evelyn's parents, the Gertz from Kilgore, would bring her along during their trip to Tyler, the "big" city. They both chose to go to UT Austin where they became sorority sisters. Hold that thought for it becomes important later in the story.

Now, let's go back to those days. In 1943 when Camp Fannin was opened, the Tyler community, including the combined Tyler Jewish community, was very active in the Camp's social life. Rabbi Wessel, long time Rabbi at Congregation Beth El, would provide services for Jewish soldiers occasionally on Sundays. In addition, there would be dances and parties for these Jewish soldiers also scheduled for Sunday afternoons. The combined Tyler Jewish community would then invite the same soldiers to attend Sunday dinner. So it was with soldier, Bob Muntz. It was in July, 1943, at the very first dance that Maurine met Bob. The Genecov family, Maurine's parents, invited Bob for Sunday dinner. Keep in mind that Maurine was only 15 when she met Bob who was all of 20. Times were very different from today, allowing the time for their relationship to blossom.

They kept meeting during Bob's three-month stay at Camp Fannin. At this time he was given his transfer by the Army. The transfer was to Mississippi State to study engineering. Bob was transferred from Mississippi State to European theater, in the infantry, returning in 1946.

After his discharge, Bob attended University of Toledo in his home state of Ohio, and completed his Bachelor's degree in Chemistry. Following this achievement, and to get closer to

Maurine, Bob went to UT Austin for his graduate studies. At the same time Maurine and Evelyn, became sorority sisters at UT Austin, strengthening the relationship established years before.

Maurine and her parents, the Genecovs, went to Toledo to meet the Muntz family, in the latter part of December, 1946. In early 1947, Maurine's family had set up plans for a June 1st wedding, with an engagement party at their home. While Mitzie, Bob's sister, was in Tyler for the engagement party, the Genecovs took her around Texas. In Houston she met dermatologist, Dr. Manuel Bloom. They fell in love and married at the home of Maurine's parents in Tyler, two days after the marriage of Maurine and Bob. Brother Hascall was best man at both ceremonies.

At this point, two of the three Muntz children were married, with one living in Tyler, the other living in Houston. At the time of the wedding, Hascall was completing his medical residency in Indiana.

You remember I told you to hold your thoughts about the sorority sisters. As a sorority sister, Evelyn was a guest at the first wedding and it was here that she met Hascall Muntz. Returning to Indiana to complete his residency, Hascall continued to correspond and called Evelyn regularly following the 1947 weddings of Maurine and Bob, and Mitzie and Manny. When Hascall would call Evelyn, he would always play the record, "How Much Longer Must I Wait, Kate?" Evelyn finally gave in and they married in 1948. Evelyn's nickname became "Katy" to her family and close friends.

After retirement, the Muntz parents, decided to join their children in Texas, moving down in 1947, to Houston, living near Mitzie and her husband, Manny.

Maurine and Bob were directly and indirectly responsible for four families choosing to live in Texas. Maurine and Bob Muntz had four children and four grandchildren. Evelyn and Hascall had five children and eight grandchildren. Mitzie and Manny Bloom had three children and four grandchildren. As you can see from the early part of the story, the elder Muntzs who moved down later, had three children. They had 12 grandchildren and 16 great grandchildren.

Bob Muntz became the right hand of Aleck Genecov, his father-in-law, and working partner in Roosth and Genecov. Hascall had a very successful medical practice in Tyler and a series of unusual personal hobbies. These included anything in the outdoors, collecting weeds, and especially searching for a poisonous plant called Poke Salad, which had to be cooked just right to be edible. Manny Bloom remained a very successful dermatologist in Houston.

Maurine and Evelyn continue to reside in Tyler, and remain friends and sorority sisters. When Bob Muntz passed away on June 29, 1978, his family honored him by having UT Tyler name its library the Robert R. Muntz Library. In addition, the Tyler Public Library named its reading room for him. A Texas family with Texas traditions, thanks to the magic of Camp Fannin at Tyler.

## 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.



# Welcome New Members!

## November 2, 2002 - February 1, 2003

**Byers, Joan A.**

11344-D Park Central Place  
Dallas, TX 75230

**Friedlander, Paula**

5110 San Felipe #252  
Houston, TX 77056

**Hart, David W. & Ashley (Weycer)**

2701 N.W. 23rd Blvd #D-31  
Gainesville, FL 32605

**Herman, Dr. Robert A.**

5310 Paisley Lane  
Houston, TX 77096

**Holt, Robert G. and Jo Ann**

(Nickoll)  
P. O. Box 7130  
Amarillo, TX 79114

**Jewish H.S. of Memphis &**

## 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:

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3720 Autumn Drive  
Fort Worth, TX 76109  
phone: 817-924-9207  
e-mail:  
leonhb@flash.net

**MidSouth**

6603 Bramble Cove  
Memphis, TN 38119

**Kaplan Foundation, Deanne & Arnold**

3020 Fairfield Drive  
Allentown, PA 18103

**Leff, David M.**

7827 Oakington Drive  
Houston, TX 77071

**Lipper, Myra Jean**

5746 Rutherglen  
Houston, TX 77096

**Osborne, Rebecca**

12802 Modena Trail  
Austin, TX 78729

**Portnoy, Leona**

415 Thigpen  
Tyler, TX 75703

**Roberson III, Major and Mrs.**

John W.(Trey) (Debbie Hart)  
12303 Beartrap  
Austin, TX 78729

**Roosth, Sam and Regina (Barns)**

*Rubin, continued from page 13.*

had sold prior to his enlisting. Since then, American Auto Salvage has remained in the hands of the Rubin family, even to the present day.

In the 1930s, shortly after Harry opened American Auto Salvage, he married Elizabeth Zeff. Elizabeth's family had been in the dry goods business first in Waco, and then in Waxahachie. For as long as they were married, Elizabeth worked in the business along side of Harry. She kept the books and wrote the checks.

Elizabeth also had two sisters. Dorothy and Adelene. Dorothy, who worked in Washington D.C. during World War II, met and married Nat Imber. In turn, the Imbers settled in Fort Worth, where

**424 Rose Circle**

Tyler, TX 75701

**Schulman, Al and Esther  
(Rosenthal)**

5555 Del Monte #907  
Houston, TX 77056

**Stone, Don**

3601 Turtle Creek Dr. #404  
Dallas, TX 75219

**Tobias, Barry and Janet  
(Clairfield)**

4423 Osby  
Houston, TX 77096

**Veeder, Sandra**

5920 Oakerest Drive  
Dallas, TX 75248

**Weimer, Dr. and Mrs. Michael B.  
(Kathy Hart)**

614 Yorkshire Drive  
College Station, TX 77845

**Wolf, David and Karen**

15 Azalea Trail Lane  
Bellaire, TX 77401

they raised their three children, Karen, Marlene and Steve. For the past 50+ years, Dorothy and Nat have been active members of our congregation. Their son Steve and daughter-in-law Jill are also members of the Shul.

Adelene, who was married to Nat Myers for over 50 years until his passing a few months ago, also has been active in the Shul. In fact, Adelene has for the past few years, assisted Fay Brachman with maintaining the Shul's Archives. In the late 1940s, Nat opened up his own dry goods store in the Riverside section of Fort Worth. This business eventually grew into a chain of successful dry goods stores under the name

*continued on page 31*

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*Weisman, continued from page 22*

for people spend time downtown."

But the downtown economy aside, "it's knock-out gorgeous," said Marilyn Lee, herself probably called knock-out gorgeous as a fashion model for Weisman's in the 1960s. She said she hopes that the renovation provides a return to the quality that Weisman's used to represent in Marshall.

But the Weisman Center was never just about selling goods, said Ms. Best.

"I remember one day there was ice and snow," she said. "Mr. Hirsch wouldn't let us out for lunch. He said he would send a delivery man to pick up brown pigs."

A customer called and asked if Weisman's was making deliveries on that day. She had an emergency. Her husband's pants needed mending and she needed a spool of thread. Hirsch agreed to send a delivery man for the request, in spite of the weather.

"He actually delivered it," Ms. Best said.

For Rilla Woodruff, also a Weisman's employee, she fell in love with Weisman's but not with a pair of shoes. Soon after she started work in 1949, she met her husband, Louis.

"One day my husband came

through and pounded up the stairs to go to the office," she said. "He took my breath away."

They continued to have encounters in and around Weisman's until they went on their first date at the Paramount Theater, which is in need of renovation and no longer used as a theater. The couple just had their

52nd wedding anniversary.

So, how does she feel about the revamping of this building?

"They couldn't have done anything that could have thrilled me any more," she said.

But don't stop with Weisman's.

"Now just do the Paramount Theater," she said.

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# Additional History of the Harelik Family

*Contributed by Dr. Seymour and Martha Pomerantz*

My father arrived in Hamilton at the age of 14 in 1913 with his parents, Mordecai and Bailey Harelik (Garelik in Russian spelling). Haskell and Morris Harelik had come earlier with their sister, Annie Novit, whose husband, Wolf Haskell Novit, had arrived on the Galveston Movement's second ship in 1907, bringing immigrants to Texas. Bernard Marienbach's book, *Galveston, Ellis Island of the West*, displays a photograph of my "Uncle Velvel" (W.H.'s Yiddish name, by which we referred to him) who had established himself as a banana peddler and merchant by then and sent for his wife and little daughter, Fanny, in 1909. They came with her two younger brothers, as I mentioned above. My parents' arrival hasn't actually been chronicled formally anywhere, so my account will be a first start on telling about them.

When the older sons heard about the movement to help Jews leave the Pale of Settlement in Eastern Europe, according to a story told to me by my uncle Haskell Harelik, their parents sold their little house in Parichi, Belarus [then called "Byelorussia"]. They sold it to the "richest man" in town, who then rented it back to them so that they could give the money to their sons for their passage to America. Both boys, ages about 17 and 19, began to work. Haskell went into banana peddling and Morris worked for someone as a tailor's helper in Fort Worth. Uncle Morris told me an amusing—maybe apochryphal—story about how the two of them worked for two years, saving from their tiny incomes enough to send their Papa \$35. My grandfather, Mordecai—"Mottel," a melamed [cheder Hebrew teacher in the shtetl] immediately retired! Morris told me that never in his life had my Zayde had so much money at one time! My

Bubbe Bailey was the actual matriarch-income provider. She peddled notions, baked goods and whiskey to the peasants in barter for grain and vegetables which her two older sons gathered at a certain central spot where she brought them during her miles of walking to collect and trade with the farmers. Her own story deserves a place in some Jewish history and maybe someday I'll have the courage to try to bring some of her stories as she told them to me to the record. She was a courageous lady and one whom I and everyone admired and loved.

My father, David Harelik, began his American education at the old East Ward School in Hamilton. His first teacher, Mrs. Maggie Scoggins, actually was still teaching when all of the Harelik children (including my sister, Sarah, and I) went to school in the 30s! David had completed the sixth grade by the time the first world war began, and he had to quit school because his father, Mottel, died during the worldwide influenza epidemic in 1918. David took over the management of his father's small grocery store on the square in Hamilton. He was about 18 when that happened, or perhaps somewhat older than this since political realities in Russia didn't always inspire the families to tell actual birthdates. There was a real fear of conscription of Jewish boys into the Russian armies and families would lose their children entirely, both as sons and also as Jews.

David was always fond of Hamilton, having made many friends there growing up. He was basically a small town boy. His youthful ambition had been to become a band leader. He played several musical instruments as a boy—violin, saxophone and accordion. He gave up that ambition when his responsibilities as a businessman

intervened in his life. He and his mother continued the business and after his marriage to my mother, Bertha Lipson (nee Brocha Lifshitz in Parichi) in 1926, she joined them in operating the business. It evolved into a clothing store by the time they married. The "shadchan" (matchmaker) for them was the same person who officiated at the ceremony in Hamilton in Bailey Harelik's home. My mother's family had remained in Russia. She alone came via an "underground railway" through the closed borders between Russia and Poland during the Russian Revolution. She arrived in Canada in May of 1922 to stay with her uncle Mattus Lipson's family in Totonto. Unhappy there, and very homesick, she crossed over the bridge to the American side of Niagara Falls, aided by a boyfriend of her cousin. From there, she took a train to Chicago to stay with another uncle's family, Joseph Lehman (who had changed the name from Lifshitz to a "more American" one.)

The gentleman who matched her with my father, Rev. Chaim Bernstein, had been Mom's brothers' tutor in Parichi. He had come to America, first to the squalid New York life, then to join his nephew, W.H. Novit, as a peddler of bananas! He eventually lived in Fort Worth and is buried there in Hebrew Rest Cemetery. He and my mother shared a family connection that requires some kind of genealogical diagram to describe. I'll just say that we have a "family connection" to the Hoffman families in Houston (Maurice and Virginia), in Dallas (Harold and the late Leo), and their children.

My mother had always been "in business." Her father was a capmaker in Parichi, as was her mother's family. At the age of 8 years, Mom had a

*continued on page 27*



small kiosk across the town square from her father's kiosk where they "competed" with each other for sales as well as for several not as pleasant competitors for the customers. I wrote two small stories that appeared in the "History of Hamilton County" that was published by the Hamilton County Historical Commission in 1979. The account about my mother, she told me later, was not exactly accurate as I had put the event described into the wrong town, however, she was absolutely thrilled to have a story about her in a handsome book! I still don't know the correct location, but it was enough for me that I could bring a big smile to my mother's face. She had lived a very sad life knowing that almost her whole family had lost their lives cruelly when the German Armies invaded Russia in 1942. In about 1972, she was able to receive a letter

from her sole surviving sister, Sonia Gertzman, who had managed to run with her children, Manya and Zhome to Kuybeshev, near the Volga River, and save herself. The son was in the army and lost his life fighting in the battle of Berlin before the war's end in 1945. The sisters corresponded for a few years until the sister's death. I have lost contact with my cousin since she didn't dare give my mother her address. This was during the terrible Stalinist period in the USSR.

My parents operated David Harelik's Dry Goods Store on the south side of the square in Hamilton until the early 1960's. They retired and moved to Dallas and lived near Dad's sister, Annie, and brother, Morris, who also lived there by then. Mother lived in the Byers Center apartments at the end of her life. She died in 1981 at the age of 86. My father passed away at Golden Acres the

following year. May their memories be a blessing for all of us. They gave my sister and me a strong sense of our Jewishness and set the pattern for us for living honest lives with strong family feeling.

Sarah, my sister, married Sid Levenstein, a Canadian, in 1950. Seymour, a Houstonian, and I married in Waco on August 30, 1953. We have 4 married children, three of whom live in Israel. Those three have gifted us with—"bli ayin hara"—so far—14 grandchildren, 8 boys and 6 girls. Our son in the U.S. and his wife are puppeteers and just moved back to the East coast from California where she received her Master's degree in screenwriting. They're settling down in Tarrytown, New York, where they will return to their work entertaining in schools, community centers, and at private parties.

*Sentiment*, which reported that Fort Worth's "Jewish Sunday School" had been "reorganized." This time the faculty consisted of three women and three men. The movement to establish a Reform Sabbath school and temple met with repeated failure, yet each time, the effort gained adherents.

In the early autumn of 1902, the unaffiliated Jews tried once again to charter a Reform temple. This time their efforts proved enduring. Why? The timing was propitious. Until then, Fort Worth had been content to be little more than a rowdy town west of cosmopolitan Dallas. The town relished its reputation as rugged and wide open, a cowtown with a mercurial past and an uncertain financial future. Now, in the summer of 1902, economic optimism stirred within the city. Business leaders and city commissioners had persuaded Swift and Armour, two giant Chicago meat-packing companies, as well as two smaller processing firms, to invest \$10

million in regional plants. These packing-houses would create thousands of jobs and transform Fort Worth from a "rest stop" on the cattle trail into a regional economic capital, a magnet for retailers, bankers, and spin-off industries. The city was coming of age. Fort Worth had moved well beyond frontier status and was courting respectability. Institutions began changing and stabilizing. As the city climbed toward its next phase of development, so, too, did the Reform Jewish community with the creation of Beth-El Congregation.

Twenty years before, most of Beth-El's future congregants had scoffed at the notion of a synagogue. Fort Worth was still a backwater town then, a lawless county seat where drunken cowboys fired random shots into the air. As the city embraced big business and respectability, religious institutions became more esteemed. Already in 1900, the Chamber of Commerce boasted that three new

churches were under construction, a fact that might have been ignored or overlooked a decade before.

Moreover, as did most western cities, Fort Worth welcomed different churches and denominations. Diverse houses of worship were proof of the pluralism and democracy that America embodied. For Jews of that era, Reform temples nationwide were not only "a bond to Judaism" but also "portals to America." Modeled after Protestant churches—with an English-language service and a spiritual leader dressed in a frock coat—Reform Jewish congregations seemed to parallel typical American religious institutions. The history of Beth-El Congregation is intertwined with the history of Fort Worth. When Fort Worth's Reform Jews finally chartered a congregation in the fall of 1902, their endeavor was indicative of a stable community seeking growth, prosperity, and respectability.

# Jewish Contribution to Marshall, Texas

By Brendan Wyman

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Marshall is a small city with a rich and interesting history. There seem to be two histories, however. One is the well known history where one finds names like Whetstone, Starr, and Ginocchio. Then there is the lesser known, but probably just as important, history of Marshall's growth that includes names such as Dopplemeyer, Weisman, and Hochwald. This is the history of the Jewish families who came to Marshall, built homes, raised families, established businesses, participated in civic and fraternal organizations, and helped change Marshall from a small frontier town into a thriving community.

The early Jewish settlers in Marshall were part of a larger movement of Jews who emigrated to the United States from central and eastern Europe in the 1840s and 1850s because of the religious persecution, political unrest, and economic turmoil that they faced there. Pogroms, which were organized massacres of helpless Jews accused of and punished for crimes that they did not commit, and military conscription were common in these countries. Jewish families left their homes in search of a better life in a country where they perceived there was unlimited opportunity.<sup>1</sup>

Many chose to settle in Texas rather than in the big cities of the East, because they felt these cities were being overrun with Jewish immigrants.<sup>2</sup> Texas was thought to be the ideal place to start a business and become self-employed, and the Jews were willing to open businesses that no one else wanted to start. To them, a good business was one that required little start-up capital and few skills. Actually, most of the Jews were proficient in languages and numbers; they were

willing to work hard, and they had contacts with support networks where they could get help. They had yiddische kep ("Jesus saves, but Moses invests"). Anyone with a horse and wagon could make a living by hauling freight, peddling fruits or vegetables, or picking up unwanted items and refurbishing them for resale. There were also skilled workers among the immigrants, including watchmakers, tailors, and shoemakers.<sup>3</sup>

The Jews who came to Texas before the 1880s came mainly from German principalities, the Low Countries, and France. Many came to Texas through the Gulf ports; others came by riverboat to places like Jefferson. Once they arrived in East Texas, they tended to follow the rail lines to the interior. For this reason, names that appear first in Jefferson later appear in Marshall, and still later show up in Sherman and Abilene.<sup>4</sup> In the Harrison County census of 1850, Meyer and Daniel Dopplemeyer were the only Jews listed. They established the first Jewish business in Marshall—a confectionary. Daniel baked gingerbread in a shed and made candy in an open kettle. Daniel served with the Confederate Army during the Civil War while Meyer ran the business. Daniel and Meyer (also called M. L.) had been brought to the United States by their sister, Mary Dopplemeyer Weisman. Using money that she had won in a lottery, in the 1840s Mary had left Germany for the United States, where she married Meyer Weisman. Mary and Meyer Weisman later moved to Syracuse, New York. The Weismans had seven children, six of who eventually settled in Marshall.<sup>5</sup>

Isaac Wolf, also of Syracuse, was another early Jewish settler in

Marshall.

A brother-in-law of Daniel and M. L. Dopplemeyer, Isaac moved to Marshall in the 1850s for health reasons. He became connected with the cotton brokerage business. Soon other members of his family also moved to Marshall. Joe Weisman, a nephew of the Dopplemeyer brothers, was encouraged to join them. In 1866 he and his uncle Daniel Dopplemeyer established one of the first department stores in East Texas. In 1874 Joe sent for his brother Jacob, who lived in Syracuse. An article in the *Syracuse Journal* at the time stated, "[q]uite a colony of Syracusans have settled in Texas and all are meeting with splendid success."<sup>6</sup>

M. L. Dopplemeyer operated the Alhambra Hotel in Jefferson during the 1870s. Beginning in the early 1900s he began importing bananas, which were a great novelty, for his customers. On one occasion, he sponsored a banana festival. After several doctors assured him that overeating bananas would cause no harm, M. L. let the children eat as many as they wanted. Some of the children ate as many as fifteen or twenty bananas, apparently with no ill effects.<sup>7</sup> Amelia Dopplemeyer, daughter of M. L. Dopplemeyer and his wife, Rosalee, lived in Marshall, Jefferson, and finally Sherman. She made and sold a concoction called "Rescue Liniment," which was said to be good for man or beast and was used to heal cuts, burns, and rheumatism. She wrote these directions for its use:

Must be thoroughly shaken before each application. Use no bandage. Clean wound, if necessary, with the Liniment. Apply three times a day for one week, afterwards, twice a day; if

*continued on page 29*

wound is too deep use a syringe. For Screw Worms apply more freely. Wounded animals must be kept out of the pasture night and morning to prevent dew poisoning. For rheumatism rub well every night; a most excellent remedy. Made exclusively by Mrs. Amelia Dopplemeyer.<sup>8</sup>

While Joe Weisman was establishing his very successful store, his wife, Lena Young Weisman, was practicing the art of homeopathic healing from her home.

She took care of her family and neighbors and recorded the prescriptions of her patient on the bathroom wall of her residence.<sup>9</sup> She evidently was highly regarded for her healing skills, for one of her granddaughters recalled how people came to town in wagons on Saturdays and show up at her back porch to receive their prescriptions. One of her grandsons, Dr. Raymond Kay, was influenced by her work and became a physician himself.<sup>10</sup>

Joe Weisman's store prospered and became one of the leading department stores in Texas. One of his daughters, Valerie, married Joe Nathan Hirsch, who came to Marshall when he was fifteen years old and worked as a stock boy at Weisman's store. After working at Weisman's for several years, he opened a small dry goods store of his own. Some years after his marriage to Valerie, her father suffered a stroke, and Hirsch was asked to rejoin the firm. He became general manager of Weisman & Company after Joe Weisman's death in 1918. Joe Nathan Hirsch held this position for almost fifty years, and after his death, two of his sons managed the store. In 1974, after ninety-four years of single-family ownership, the store was sold.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1890s Morris Kariel moved from Germany to Marshall, where he worked as a salesman for Weisman's store. He later joined with another German-Jewish immigrant, Alexander

Marcus, in a clothing store partnership. Morris's son Louis recalled that his father came to America "accidentally," because the ticket to America that someone had sent was intended for his older brother Oskar. Oskar, however, chose not to make the move and Morris, who was fifteen years old at the time, came in his place. Louis Kariel also recalled that Oskar was eventually a victim of Hitler's Third Reich, as were several other members of the family.<sup>12</sup>

Louis was active in many civic and fraternal organizations, as well as being a lay leader in the Jewish religious community. He and his son, Louis Jr., became partners in downtown Marshall's Hub Shoe Store, which operated until 2001. Louis Sr.'s daughter-in-law, Audrey Daniels (Mrs. Louis Jr.) Kariel, was active in educational and historical presentations for many years. She led a campaign to bring public library service and post-vocational and technical training to Marshall. Mrs. Kariel received many awards for service in religious and civic endeavors.<sup>13</sup>

Lion Kahn and his brother Emanuel operated the Great Railway Supply Store. Their main customers were sharecroppers and the Texas & Pacific Railroad. During the Civil War, Lion served with the Union army and Emanuel served with the Confederacy. In 1877 the bachelor Lion brought Ike Hochwald to Marshall from the New Orleans Jewish Widows and Orphans Home as his ward. Ike worked with the Kahn brothers and inherited the business when Lion and Emanuel died. Lion's will stipulated that \$5,000 of his estate be used to establish a hospital. The Kahn Memorial Hospital, a forerunner of Marshall Regional Medical Center, was named for him.<sup>14</sup>

Ike Hochwald became a leader in the civic affairs of Marshall. He was a trustee of the school board, the person who introduced the Rotary Club and Boy Scouts to Marshall, president of the East Texas Baseball League, and

an activist in the Jewish religious community. He owned the first automot in Marshall, an electric car that lacked a reverse gear. Hochwald solved this problem by installing a revolving iron turntable next to his home, so that the car would always face forward.<sup>15</sup>

In later years, many other Jewish citizens contributed to the growth and welfare of Marshall. Jacob "Jake" Levy, for instance, made the rounds collecting money for the poor. He and his wife also made monthly contributions to the hospital drive that was underway. He said,

We are Jews and Gentiles,  
Catholics and Protestants,  
Democrats and Republicans,  
negroes and whites—as long as  
we are well and have money, but  
when sick and strapped, we are  
all one—just people—and as  
just people we are ready and  
willing to help every man or  
woman in distress.<sup>16</sup>

Joe Applebaum owned a junkyard, and during World War II traded defense bonds for scrap metal. Mr. Applebaum was born in Poland which was then occupied by the Nazis. During the war Joe said that Poland belonged to Germany now but that he was doing his part to take it away from them.<sup>17</sup>

Abraham Bliss, who spoke six languages, was born in Russia. Before moving to Marshall in the 1930s, he had operated a store in Fort Worth. He moved to Marshall because he preferred the reformed Jewish religious ceremonies practiced here to the more orthodox synagogue he attended in Fort Worth. One of his daughters married the son of Joe Applebaum.<sup>18</sup>

Abe Goldberg's father was a shoe repairman who moved his family to Marshall from New York City. Abe worked in a drugstore for years, and decided he wanted to be a druggist. He helped his sister to get her education. She then in turn helped him attend

continued on page



Vanderbilt University. He returned to Marshall with a pharmacy degree and opened the Economy Drugstore, which became a popular gathering place.<sup>19</sup>

Many other Jews settled in Marshall, where they worked to improve their own lot in life and to improve their adopted city. Names like Boom, Friedlander, Stein, Cohen, Landau, Dreyfus, Michelson, and Tolbolowsky appear in old records, especially of the Jewish synagogue, the center of Jewish life in Marshall.

There was no organized place of worship for the earliest Jewish settlers, but by 1868 a Hebrew Benevolent Society had formed. In 1873 a rabbi from Shreveport, who was fleeing the yellow fever epidemic, wrote that he had celebrated Rosh Hoshanah in Marshall in Bernstein's Hall.<sup>20</sup> By 1877 a Sunday school had been established and the meetings were held in various homes in the community. For some years there was no organized congregation, but services were held in the Odd Fellows Hall and conducted by the lay leaders of the Jewish community. In 1887 they formed a new congregation, Temple Moses Montefiore Adath Israel, and Rabbi Hyman Saft came from Indiana to serve as their rabbi.<sup>21</sup>

The Hebrew Ladies Aid Society was organized in 1892. Later they joined with several prominent Christian women to form Moses Montefiore Fair Association. The purpose of this group was to raise money to help build the temple, which was to be located on Burleson Street. The 7 February 1900 minutes of the Trustee meeting of the synagogue show that a contract to erect the temple was awarded to Sommeffeld & Emmons. The cost of constructing the temple was estimated at \$4,790, plus \$116 for windows with figured glass.<sup>22</sup> Following a parade, the Marshall Masonic Lodge conducted a cornerstone ceremony on 14 March 1900, and the for-

mal dedication of the building followed in August. This temple served as the center of Jewish religious, social, and cultural life for almost seventy-five years.<sup>23</sup>

The minutes of the congregation show that in 1909 they voted to purchase an organ for the temple. There was much discussion about the placement of the organ. It was finally decided to install it in the rear of the building, even though the huge organ, with its thirteen stops and 762 pipes, covered the beautiful stained glass windows. This organ was an important part of the services of the temple for many years. Ten years after the temple was disbanded, the organ was sold to St. Luke's in the Meadow Episcopal Church in Fort Worth, where it was renovated and revoiced so that it again was just as it was when it was first installed in the red brick temple in 1909.<sup>24</sup>

In the 1930s the congregation added an annex to the temple, which included a social hall, stage, kitchen, and rabbi's study. One of the methods used to raise money for the addition was the sale of tamales made by the members of the Temple Moses Montefiore Sederband. It has been said that they sold at least 200 dozen hot tamales, but they raised the money and the annex was built. The church continued to prosper for many years, and in the 1950s the buildings and contents were valued at almost \$70,000.<sup>25</sup>

The congregation had dwindled by the 1970s, and they were no longer able to support and maintain the temple. The congregation merged with the Temple Emanu-El of Longview.<sup>26</sup> The synagogue was demolished to make room for the Marshall Fire and Police Complex, just a few years before the fashion for historic preservation reached Marshall. After the removal of the organ, the few remaining members of the congregation were invited to take mementos from the building before it was leveled.<sup>27</sup>

Today, there is little in Marshall to remind one of the contributions of the early Jewish citizens except for a couple of street names, the Jewish cemetery, and some historical markers.<sup>28</sup> The descendants of these early families continue to support the civic evolution of Marshall. For instance, daughters of Mose Goldowsky, who came to Marshall in the early 1920s and changed his name to Gold, were instrumental in providing funds for the construction of the Marshall Public Library. An auditorium in the library is named in honor of their parents, Mose and Etta Gold. Another donation from Jewish descendants is at the Melchior-Reyes Museum of Art, where a room is named in honor of Dr. David Weisman Hirsch. There are presently few Jewish citizens residing in Marshall, but the contributions made by the early Jewish community to the economic, cultural, and civic development of the city remain as a legacy.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Stanley Ely, *In Jewish Texas: A Family Memoir* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University, 1998), xvii; "Settlement: Virtual Restoration of Small-Town Synagogues in Texas," <http://www.geocities.com/txsynvr/settlement.html> [Accessed 9 January, 2002].

<sup>20</sup> Ely, *In Jewish Texas*, xvii.

<sup>21</sup> "Business: Virtual Restoration of Small-Town Synagogues in Texas," <http://www.geocities.com/txsynvr/business.html> [Accessed 9 January, 2002].

<sup>22</sup> W. Phil Hewitt, *The Jewish Texan* (San Antonio: University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures, 1974), 174; "Settlement: Virtual Restoration of Small-Town Synagogues in Texas."

<sup>23</sup> Ruth Winegarten and Cathy Schechter, *Deep in the Heart: The Lives and Legends of Texas Jews* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1990), 44, 45.

<sup>24</sup> Audrey Daniels Kariel, "Marshall's Jewish Community," n.d.; Winegarten and Schechter, *Deep in the*

Heart, 44.

<sup>7</sup> Winegarten and Schechter, *Deep in the Heart*, 45.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Winegarten and Schechter, *Deep in the Heart*, 104.

<sup>9</sup> Carol Little, *Historical Markers* (Longview: Carol Little, 1984), n.p.

<sup>10</sup> Winegarten and Schechter, *Deep in the Heart*, 109.

<sup>11</sup> Juliet George, "Zachor," *Marshall News-Messenger*, 12 April 1979.

<sup>12</sup> Kariel, "Marshall's Jewish Community;" George, "Zachor," *Marshall News-Messenger*, 12 April 1979.

<sup>13</sup> Winegarten and Schechter, *Deep in the Heart*, 179.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> George, "Zachor," *Marshall News-Messenger*, 12 April 1979.

<sup>17</sup> Winegarten and Schechter, *Deep in the Heart*, 155.

<sup>18</sup> George, "Zachor," *Marshall News-Messenger*, 12 April 1979.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Students from Marshall High

School, "Sketches Drawn from Marshall and Vicinity, Past and Present," 1918; Winegarten and Schechter, *Deep in the Heart*, 68.

<sup>21</sup> "Cornerstone," *Evening Messenger*, 13 March 1900; Audrey Daniels Kariel, "The Jewish Story and History of Marshall, Texas," *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly*, 14 (Apr. 1982), 200.

<sup>22</sup> Winegarten and Schechter, *Deep in the Heart*, 68; Moses Montefiore Trustee Minute Book (Harrison County Historical Museum, Marshall, Texas).

<sup>23</sup> Kariel, "The Jewish Story and History of Marshall, Texas," 202; Jewish Texan Heritage Traveling Trunk, Marshall Independent School District, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Marshall News-Messenger*, 22 October 1972, p. 1-C.

<sup>25</sup> "Moses Montefiore Congregation, Marshall, Texas," <http://www.geocities.com/txsynvr/Marshall.html> [Accessed 9 January, 2002]; Winegarten and Schechter, *Deep in the Heart*, 127; Eric P. Littlejohn & Son, Insurance Proposal,

1950.

<sup>26</sup> "Leaving: Virtual Restoration of Small-Town Synagogues in Texas," <http://geocities.com/txsynvr/Leaving.html> [Accessed January, 2002]; *Marshall News-Messenger, Special Supplement*, 26 January 2002, p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> Winegarten and Schechter, *Deep in the Heart*, 179; "Moses Montefiore Congregation, Marshall, Texas;" Sara Bliss to author, 30 January 2002, interview. Ms. Bliss is a granddaughter of Abraham Bliss, mentioned earlier in this paper. She showed me several articles that are used in Jewish religious ceremonies and explained the use of each. She said that she is not considered by some to be Jewish because her mother was a Gentile. She does have in her possession some mementos that her family acquired when the temple was sold.

<sup>28</sup> Edward Plummer, *Historic Marshall Revisited* (Marshall: Edward W. Plummer, 1966), n.p.

<sup>29</sup> Kariel, "Marshall's Jewish Community," n.p.

of Myers Department Stores. At one point, Nat even employed his father-in-law, Meyer Zeff, who had relocated from Waxahatchie in the early 1940s and also was a member of the Shul. Adelene and Nat raised two children, Jan and Bill. Bill still remains a member of our congregation.

Harry and Elizabeth themselves had two sons: Bernard (Bubba) and Jack. Both Bubba and Jack have been lifetime members and have served the synagogue in various capacities throughout the years. Bubba, like his father, has worked along side of Dave Klimist on the Cemetery Committee. He also has served as the Chairperson of the Chevra Kadisha Committee. Jack has served on the Shul Board and on different committees, as well.

Bubba and his wife Elaine are the parents of two sons, Barry, who lives in

Fort Worth and now runs American Auto Salvage and Scott, who lives in Dallas. They are the grandparents of two boys and two girls. Jack, who's married to Marilyn, raised two daughters, Tracy and Rochelle. Tracy is an obstetrician-gynecologist living in Indianapolis and Rochelle is an attorney in Chicago. Jack and Marilyn have three grandchildren, including twin granddaughters.

When Bubba married Elaine (Schwartz), it was a marriage between two families within the congregation. Elaine's late parents, Bill and Dorothy Schwartz, were also Shul members. As it turned out, Elaine's two sisters, Suzi (Schwartz) Carter and Barbi (Schwartz) Eisenman, also married the sons of other Shul members too. Suzi married Mike Carter, the son of the late Fred and Becky Carter. Barbi married Stanley, the son of David and the late Beth

Eisenman. That makes the Carters and the Eisenmans related to the Rubins.

Finally, many of you may remember that Harry Rubin was a former president of the Shul and someone who definitely left his mark on the congregation. For well over 40 years, both he and Dave Klimist co-chaired the CAS Cemetery Committee. Throughout all those years, it was not unusual for Harry to stop in the middle of his day to run up to the cemetery to be sure everything was being handled correctly. Much of the pride we now take in the CAS Cemetery is due directly to the guiding hand of Harry Rubin. Moreover, in the past 60 years, three individuals have largely overseen the operation of our cemetery and two of those three have been Rubins: Harry and Bubba. We are most appreciative to them for their continuous service to the congregation.

# Texas Jewish Historical Society

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