

Texas Jewish Historical Society

Preserving Jewish Heritage in Texas
Established 1980



A Quarterly Publication of the Texas Jewish Historical Society

Summer 2004



25TH ANNIVERSARY ANNUAL GATHERING A RESOUNDING SUCCESS!

A Message From President Marvin Rich

My Friends:

Again, I'd like to thank you for placing your confidence in me to serve as your President of the Texas Jewish Historical Society. I will try to live up to my predecessors' accomplishments and your expectations.



Charles Hart receives the Past President's pin from newly elected President Marvin Rich

The Silver Anniversary Annual Gathering held April 30 through May 2, 2004 in San Antonio was a resounding success. Enjoy this issue of the TJHS News Magazine, which contains photos and reprints of some of the presentations made during this fabulous and memorable weekend. If you were unable to attend the Annual Gathering, we hope this gives you a taste of the San Antonio weekend. Many thanks, once more, to the Planning Committee, who worked so hard to make the 25th Annual Gathering so informative and fun!

The first announcement, which I am proud to make, is that we have an agreement of terms and a contract between the TJHS and the University Press of New England, on behalf of Brandeis University Press. This was completed by direct conversation between Phyllis Deutsch and myself, with the advice and assistance of TJHS Past President and Counselor, Lonnie Schooler. Lonnie explained that he could not attend our Sunday Board meeting because of turbulent weather in Houston, but he insisted on working out the agreement because of his experience with our previous publishing.

(President's Message cont. page 3)

IN THIS ISSUE...

| <u>ARTICLES</u> | <u>PAGE</u> |
|---|-------------|
| 25TH ANNIVERSARY ANNUAL GATHERING | |
| Silver Anniversary Wrap-up <i>TJHS President Marvin Rich</i> | Cover |
| Message from Past President <i>Charles B. Hart</i> | 5 |
| Some Silver Anniversary Highlights | 6 |
| Rabbi Henry Cohen of Galveston: Man, Myth & History <i>Grandson Rabbi Henry Cohen</i> | 8 |
| The Uniqueness of Texas Jews <i>Samuel M. Stahl, Rabbi Emeritus Temple Beth El - San Antonio</i> | 13 |
| Newly Elected Officers & Board, Bylaws Amendments | 26 |
| Silver Anniversary in Pictures | 14-15 |
| SYLVIA WOLENS TEXAS WRITING COMPETITION WINNING ESSAYS | |
| A Divine Collaboration <i>David Hirsch Hoffman, FAIA</i> | 20 |
| The Mensch Who Played Santa <i>Joseph Billy Pfeffer</i> | 23 |
| Two Guests At Lunch <i>Ralph S. Marks</i> | 25 |
| ARTICLES & COLUMNS | |
| 125 Years Temple Rodef Sholom <i>Ima Joy Gandler</i> | 4 |
| Pursuing Iser <i>Melody Amsel</i> | 19 |
| Honorable Menschen <i>Dorothy Harelick</i> | 18 |
| TJHS Notes <i>Selma Mantel</i> | 2 |

Book A Free Exhibit For Your Event By Jack Gerrick



The Texas Jewish Historical Society
presents

Howdy, Y'All
The Texas Jewish Experience

Jews throughout the United States are preparing to celebrate the 350th anniversary of Jews coming to America, and the TJHS has two exhibits for organizations who would like to celebrate with some Texas Jewish history.

In cooperation with the Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio, the TJHS produced and offers, at no charge, a series of old photographs, stories and a look into the earliest beginnings of Texas Jewish history. The traveling exhibits are on museum-quality reproduction foam board and include 25 large photos with descriptive literature. The exhibits can be displayed on easels or hung on a wall. They are packed in waterproof boxes that can be shipped and returned to the Society using prepaid freight. TJHS prepays the exhibit to the point the showing.

Contact Jack Gerrick at Texbed@aol.com or 817-927-8765.

New TJHS Membership Brochure Available For Your Organization

Who do you know who would enjoy membership in the Texas Jewish Historical Society? Now you can use a new, updated brochure to introduce them to our terrific organization. We are happy to send brochures on your behalf to people you know, or directly to you for display in your synagogue or other appropriate organization. Simply send your request along with the name and address of the people or organizations to whom you would like the brochures sent to Membership Chair Elaine Albin, 1893 Bay Shore Dr., Rockport, TX 78382, phone 361-729-6487 or email: e_g_k@hotmail.com.

Member News

By Selma Mantel, Corresponding Secretary

We all join in extending our heartfelt sympathy to the following TJHS members and their families:

- Chris Adler, on the passing of her mother, Bess Nance
- Dr. Melvin Cohen, on the passing of his mother, Betty
- Harold Hoffman, on the passing of his wife, Gloria
- Shirley Hoppenstein, on the passing of her husband, Archie
- Rusty and Mitzi Milstein on the passing of his mother, Ada
- Mitzi and Rusty Milstein, on the passing of her father, Howard Shapiro, age 89
- Edward Tann, on the passing of his wife, Rosabelle
- David and Vickie Vogel on the passing of their mother, Caroline

Get well wishes to Roy Elsner, Louis Pink, & Libbie Stool.

Thank you for your gifts to the Texas Jewish Historical Society's Endowment Fund:

- Jewish Federation of Waco & Central Texas
- Dr. & Mrs. Stanley Hersh
- Bernice & Joel Breslau in honor of Frances Kallison's birthday

TEXAS JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY MAGAZINE

is a quarterly publication of the Texas Jewish Historical Society, P. O. Box 10193 • Austin, Texas • 78766

Newsletter Editor/Design.....Susan Elsner Furman

Assistant Editor.....Davie Lou Solka

Photo Contributors.....Susan Elsner Furman,

Barry Green, Helen Wilk

Proofreaders.....Susan Elsner Furman, Davie Lou Solka

Printer.....Rabbit Reproductions, Dallas

We appreciate your articles and photos. Please send only color photocopies of photographs and documents (even of black & white photos). Please do not risk sending your originals. Make sure to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you would like your documents returned (returns can not be guaranteed).

Send copies of articles, information and photographs to: Davie Lou Solka, davielou@solka.net or mail to 501 Bermuda Place, Corpus Christi, TX, 78411, phone 361-852-5815.

We welcome your ideas and suggestions. Please send them to Susan@ElsnerFurman.com or mail to 6215 Berthoud Pass, Dallas, TX 75252.

Honor Loved Ones with Texas Jewish Historical Society Donor Cards

Honor a loved one or friend with a gift to the Texas Jewish Historical Society's Endowment Fund. Upon receipt of your gift, the TJHS will respond with an acknowledgment. Thank you to those who have made donations to the Endowment Fund. To make a contribution, please mail your donation, along with the full name of the individual(s) being honored, the type of honor (congratulations and occasion, memorial, etc.), and the donor's (your) name(s). Send your gift and information to the Texas Jewish Historical Society, P.O. Box 10193, Austin, Texas, 78766-0193.

TEXAS JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Gratefully acknowledges your gift to its
Endowment Fund

\$ _____

In _____

Of _____

An acknowledgment has been sent to the party you specified.

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

(President's Message, cont. from cover)

We clarified a couple of misunderstandings, added some provisions – which we learned through past experience – and reached an agreement. Both our co-editors, Rabbi Ken Roseman and Hollis Weiner are satisfied with the outcome and are proceeding to fulfill their duties of promoting the symposium and gathering article contributions for editing.

I had the opportunity to visit both the Thompson Conference Center at The University of Texas at Austin and the Doubletree Hotel, where next year's Annual Gathering will be held. The Thompson Center is wonderful! The facilities are excellent and the staff is professional. We will have on-site catering and convenient, free parking. We should look forward to enjoying Austin next April when the Mountain Laurels are blooming. Our hotel is excellent, and is located off of I-35, just three exits north of the Conference Center. Our Friday Board Meeting will be held in a spacious meeting room.

I hope that each of you will continue to collect and share your family histories with all our members. Please encourage your children to participate. If necessary, pay their dues for a year and let them receive the Texas Jewish Historical Society Newsletter. We must keep our newer generations

aware of our wonderful history as Texas Jews.

I am pleased to tell you that TJHS Vice President Beverly (L. B.) Beck Trachtenberg used her expertise and experience to obtain rooms and meeting space for the July 10, 2004 Board Meeting at the Courtyard by Marriott in Houston, 3131 West Loop, located across the West Loop from the Houston Galleria. Those who requested the meeting be held near attractive shopping had their wish granted! (We try to keep our shoppers happy!) Saturday's Dutch-treat dinner was in nearby Bayou City Seafood Restaurant.

Thank you again for allowing me to be your President. As I told those who attended the Silver Anniversary Annual Gathering in San Antonio, I will ask for your advice and help keep TJHS an active and important part of our Texas Jewish communities.

Please share your ideas and suggestions for programming and/or activities with me.

All My Best to Y'all,



Marvin Rich
President

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY FIVE YEARS TEMPLE RODEF SHOLOM – WACO, TEXAS

by Ima Joy Gandler, Chairperson
125th Anniversary Committee Celebration

Temple Rodef Sholom, a Reform congregation, is the oldest Jewish congregation in Waco, Texas. In January, 1879, during a meeting of the Eureka Lodge, International Order of B'nai B'rith, it was resolved to organize a formal congregation and build a synagogue. Temple Rodef Sholom began with forty founding families and was chartered under the state of Texas on April 28, 1879. Rudolph Lessing was the first President.

The dedication of the first building at 924 Washington took place on August 10, 1881. In 1882, Rev. Mr. M. May assumed the pulpit as the Congregation's first Rabbi. The first Confirmation Service was held in the Spring of 1893, with Rabbi E. M. Myers.

Rabbi I. Warsaw convinced the congregation that the building was inadequate and a second one was built on the original site in 1910.

Rabbi Wolfe Machs was Rabbi from 1919-1952. Louey Migel was honored in 1922 for 25 years of service to the congregation, 16 of which he served as President (1906-1922). Other honored guests were Past Presidents Sol Hirschberg, Charles L. Sanger, A.S. Sanger, Charter Members A.S. Haber, A. Cohen and L.I. Efron. Mr. Efron became honorary Vice President for life.

Rabbi Amiel Wohl was installed as Rabbi in October, 1957, and he began

the Waco Federation of Temple Youth the following year. Carl Sachs was the first President of the Youth Group.

Under the leadership of Rabbi Wohl, President Elihugh Levy and Philip Sanger, plans for a new building moved forward. A Building Committee was formed with the following members: Philip Sanger, Mrs. Simon Florsheim, Abbye L. Freed, Jr., Jake Gandler, Charles M. Harris, Mrs. Monte Lawrence and Harry A. Wood, Sr. Finance Committee members were Elihugh Levy, Monte Lawrence and Nate Chodorow. A new building, located at 1717 North New Road, opened its doors on September 1, 1961. Harry A. Wood, Jr. was President of the Congregation and Mrs. Harvey Zigel was Sisterhood President.

In 1964, Mordecai Podet became Rabbi, and served for 25 years. He is the author of *PIONEER JEWS OF WACO*, and is now Rabbi Emeritus.

Temple Rodef Sholom celebrated its Centennial Year with a dinner on April 7, 1979. Rabbi Alexander M. Schnidler, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, was the guest speaker. President of the Temple was A.J. "Joe" Schechter and Mrs. Frank Levy was Sisterhood President.

The 125th Anniversary of the Congregation was celebrated May 7-8, 2004. Shabbat evening services began with Past President Howard

Cohen blowing the Shofar. Rabbi Norman Kleinman, Program Director, Union for Reform Judaism was the Guest Speaker. The processional into the sanctuary included Rabbi Kleinman; Rabbi Lawrence Jackofsky, Regional Director Southwest Council, Union for Reform Judaism; Rabbi Emeritus Mordecai Podet; Rabbi Seth Stander Temple Rodef Sholom President Herb Silverberg, and Vice-President Ellen Burke. The Shabbat candle were kindled by Anniversary Celebration Chairperson Ima Joy Gandler. Kiddish was led by Leonard Gorin, the eldest male Temple member.

Waco Mayor Linda Ethridge presented a proclamation from the City of Waco. A dinner was held Saturday, May 8 with an original production written by Ellen Burke. Roberta Rosen, Herb Silverberg and Lauren Wessinger titled "From Generation to Generation." The "Talented Temple Thespians" cast included Betty and Benjy Baue, Marty Englander, Martha Ginsburg, Laurel Goldenberg, Marcie and D. Jim Olmsted, Cindy and Harry A. Wood II, and Lauren Wessinger. TJHS members in the cast include Jane and Daniel Bounds, Ellen and Terry Burke, Jan Hart, Maurice Labens, Herb Silverberg and Harvey Zigel. Everyone attending received a printed booklet that included a list of the Officers of the Congregation and Sisterhood.

(Rodef Sholom, cont. page

FROM YOUR OUTGOING PREZ CHARLES B. HART

Presented at the 25th Annual Gathering,
May 2, 2004 – San Antonio, Texas



Now is the time for all good things to come to a close. After two years of being your president, I can truthfully say it has been a pleasure, even though there have been some bumps in the road.

I want to thank the Board of Directors, whose members have done a great job keeping this organization moving forward and reaching many goals. Special thanks to Treasurer Ben Pfeffer, who has the dubious job of keeping track of our finances, and to Ben Rosenberg for reviewing our taxes. Next, thanks to the many TJHS past presidents who have kept me on track. Some with whom I have been in contact for various reasons include Fay Brachman, Jack Gerrick, Rabbi Jimmy Kessler, Barbara Rosenberg, Lonnie Schooler, Don Teter and Helen Wilk. Finally, thanks to my wife, Jan, for being there when I needed help with making a decision, proof-reading documents and writing speeches (such as this one). Some of the major decisions and strides we have made the past couple of years include:

- We have a second traveling exhibit. Jack Gerrick can provide details on how to obtain this (see p. 2).
- We have a new person, Mrs. Kimberly Deitz, who picks up the mail from our TJHS Austin P.O. Box.
- We have a new Newsletter Editor, Mrs. Susan Elsner Furman, and a new Assistant Editor, Davie Lou Solka, who receives all articles for review.

- With Mrs. Furman's assistance, the Society developed a new Membership Brochure & Application. Please feel free to request and use the brochure for recruiting purposes.
- We have a new Membership Chair, Elaine Albin, who has graciously accepted this responsibility.
- Long-time Membership Chair, Fay Brachman, asked to step down after many years of excellent service. We did prevail on having Leon Brachman continue to keep the membership records updated on his computer, as he has done for so many years.
- For a long time, the Society has discussed a new book on Texas Jewry. With legal advice and support from former TJHS President Lonnie Schooler and then-Vice President (now president), Marvin Rich, the Society made major strides in contracting Rabbi Kenneth Roseman and Hollace Weiner to co-edit a Symposium Book Project. The Symposium will be held next spring at the 26th Annual Gathering in Austin.
- The TJHS began negotiations with Brandeis University Press (recently completed), for the actual printing and publishing of the Book Project.
- The new bi-annual Membership Directory is being prepared and will be mailed later this summer.

Congratulations to President Marvin Rich and his new Board of Directors for 2004-2005. Thank you again for the privilege of serving you for the past two years.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Charles B. Hart".

(Rodef Sholom, cont. from page 4)

Also listed were the oldest family names still in the Congregation. These were Bruck, Desenberg-Scharff, Efron, Ginsburg, Gorin, Kestner, Lipsitz, Naman, Sachs, Sanger, Schwartz, Snaman and Wood.

Temple Rodef Sholom has applied for a Historical Marker from the State of Texas. Copies of the May 7, 2004 Shabbat evening services program and the 125th Anniversary Booklet will be placed in the Texas Jewish Historical Society Records at the Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

◆ TJHS

SOME HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SILVER ANNIVERSARY ANNUAL GATHERING

April 30 – May 2, 2004

By Susan Elsner Furman

More than 150 people attended the Texas Jewish Historical Society's 25th Anniversary Annual Gathering in San Antonio, April 30 through May 2, 2004. The Planning Committee worked tirelessly to make the event the best yet! The committee included



The Jewish exhibit at the Institute of Texan Cultures

Local Chairman Max Stool, Co-Chairs Bernice Mazer and Glenda Alter, and committee members Janet Alyn, Clay Epstein, Horthy and Walter Fein, Hattie Lee Gleichenhaus, Frances



Institute of Texan Cultures



Event Chairs Max Stool, Bernice Mazer and Glenda Alter

Goodman, Eileen Krandel, Casey and Ira Lieberman, Greg Meyer, Eileen Raffkind, Herschel Scheiness and Helen Wilk.

The three-day event began on Friday, April 30th with Author Docia Schultz Williams presenting a fascinating tour of



Institute of Texan Cultures

the host hotel, the historic Menger Hotel, which opened across the

street from the Alamo in 1859, just 23 years after the fall of the Alamo. Ms. Schultz Williams related many colorful and intriguing events including the landmark facility's connection with the Jewish community.

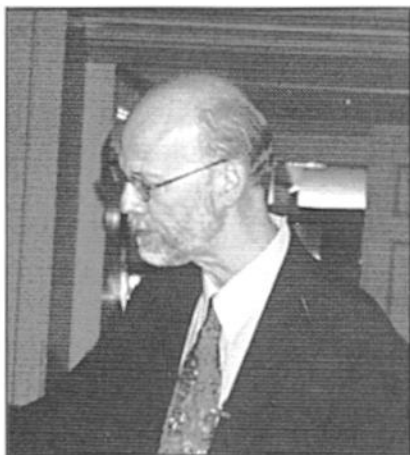
TJHS members and Institute of Texan Cultures (ITC) Docents Walter Fein and Hannah Margolis



(Top) Docia Schultz Williams presents tour of the Menger

led a tour of the 50,000 square-foot ITC, which features an exhibit describing every ethnic group that participated in the development of Texas, including the Jewish community's contributions.

Other presenters included Professor Char Miller, Chairman of the History Department and Interim Director of Urban Studies at Trinity University and a 2002 Piper Professor Award recipient for excellence in teaching and service to higher education in Texas. Professor Miller is editor o



Professor Char Miller



Sliding walls of shelves house thousands of books in the Mazal Library

On the Border: An Environmental History of San Antonio, and The Atlas of U. S. and Canadian Environmental History. His latest book, *Deep in the Heart of San Antonio*, is to be published this fall.

San Antonio Public Library's Adult Collection Development Librarian, Lenore Karp provided a presentation on the early Jewish newspapers of San Antonio. Local residents Harold and Esther (Scharlack) Vexler presented a talk about their parents and San Antonio's early 20th Century Jewish history. Prominent San Antonio attorney, and a founder and partner in Oppenheimer, Blend, Harrison & Tate, Inc., Jesse Oppenheimer spoke to the group about his family history.

Born in San Antonio, the Oppenheimer family has been in ranching and merchandising, and operated a unique private bank, D&A Oppenheimer. He also is a founder and trustee of the Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Foundation.



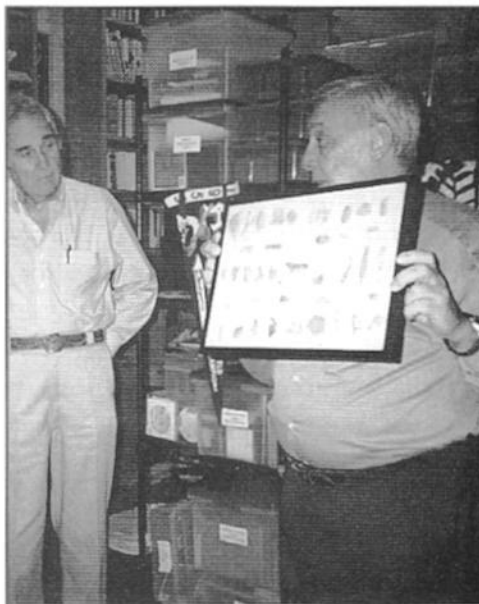
Harry Mazal shows TJHS members a book on the Holocaust

Another highlight of the 25th Annual Gathering weekend was a tour of the privately funded Mazal Library, an incredible resource for historians, researchers, students and the public. The multi-level facility is located in the beautiful home of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Mazal. Founder and developer, Harry Mazal presented a tour of the library, which features rows of moveable floor-to-ceiling shelves filled with a vast and growing collection of more than 20,000 books, microfilm rolls and pamphlets related to the Holocaust, anti-Semitism, racism and bigotry, as well as 70,000



Touring the vast private Mazal Library

original documents used in the Nuremberg Trials.



"These are my soldiers," says Mazal. "In Auschwitz-Birkenau, they ground up the bones of Holocaust victims and used them to make paths through the town."

KEYNOTE ADDRESS, SILVER ANNIVERSARY ANNUAL GATHERING, SATURDAY, MAY 1, 2004

"MY GRANDFATHER, RABBI HENRY COHEN OF GALVESTON: MAN, MYTH AND HISTORY"

Presented by Rabbi Henry Cohen, Rabbi Emeritus Beth David Reform Congregation, Gladwyne, Pennsylvania

Editors Note: Rabbi Henry Cohen is working on a biography of his grandfather and he needs your help. If you or someone you know had experiences or interactions with Rabbi Henry Cohen of Galveston, including the receipt of letters or documents please share them with his grandson. You may email information about your experiences to Hedna@aol.com or write to him at 1001 City Ave., EC-606, Wynnewood, PA, 19096. Your help is greatly appreciated.

It's wonderful to be back in San Antonio, to renew old friendships, to reminisce about my months in 1955, as chaplain at Fort Sam, where I learned how to kosher dishes and utensils for a Pesa-dik mess hall. (I'd tell you how but I only have 30 minutes.) As you know, I have family roots here: Beth-El's former rabbi, my Uncle Eph and Aunt Ruth had one son, David Frisch (olav hasholom) who was like a big brother to me. This Tuesday in Austin, David's son, Henry Frisch and I will be meeting with the librarian at the Barker library to try to arrange for my grandfather's papers to be duplicated and sent to the American Jewish Archives where rabbinic students and scholars should find them useful. This brings me to my topic: Henry Cohen: Man, Myth and History. I grew up in Houston, but on weekends we went to Galveston where I enjoyed being with my grandparents and listening to amazing stories about the legendary rabbi. Psychologically, it was as

though I had two grandfathers named Henry Cohen. There was "Grandpa Cohen" - we never called him Zedi because the only Yiddish I knew was Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen, as sung by the Andrew Sisters. Grandpa Cohen enjoyed saying to me such silliness as "ellipticalasiatical pantry curious nervouiscordial." Grandpa Cohen belted out from Gilbert and Sullivan's HMS Pinafore: "For he is an Englishman, for 'e 'imself 'ath said it . . ." Grandpa Cohen would annoy Grandma by singing British dance hall ditties considered R-rated by Victorian standards: e.g., "Go away, naughty boy..." Grandpa Cohen smoked cigars until the ashes fell and burned holes in his black suit, further annoying Grandma. Grandpa Cohen also made sure the family memorized moralistic or clever poems that he would tape to the bathroom wall. For 65 years I have been unable to get out of my head: "We had a little tea party this afternoon at three; 'twas very small, three guests in all, just I, myself and me." (I can't even recall the plot of last week's movie.)

Grandpa Cohen liked lyrics and, on occasion, liquor. After returning from his morning rounds (listed on his stiff white cuff), he would belt down a shot of scotch and perhaps recall how he had provided a case of scotch for the great Scottish Vaudevillian, Harry Lauder, whenever he would perform in Galveston singing "I Love a Lassie," or for the home crowd, "The Dixie Girls Are Good Enough for Me." That was the Grandpa Cohen who,

when I returned from my third year at HUC asked almost plaintively, "What could I teach at the College?" I answered: "Maybe you could teach the students how to be rabbis." Grandpa Cohen was a natural. By that I mean he was the same on the pulpit as off, no deep sonorous tones. Who you saw and heard was who he was.

That was Grandpa: a playful, earthy, life-loving, unpretentious mensch, a very human being. Then in my psyche alongside Grandpa, the mensch, was Rabbi Cohen, super-mensch! Not "Grandpa" but Rabbi Cohen was the almost mythic hero of many stories I loved hearing as a child. There were stories of South Africa, where because he so quickly learned the click dialects of the Zulus, he became an interpreter for the British Army. (He would show on his head the scar from the wound he received when he was hit over the head by a Zulu with the butt of a gun.) More impressive were stories of how he would intervene with those in power on behalf of those in need. The most famous of those stories concerns the stowaway Lemchuk, who was about to be sent back from Galveston to Russia where he would surely be executed. Rabbi Cohen was not able to persuade the local port authorities in Galveston to let him stay, so he went to Washington and eventually saw President Taft. The President said: "Sorry, I can't help you, but it's wonderful how you Jews do so much to help each other."

(Rabbi Cohen, cont. page 9)

(Rabbi Cohen, cont. from page 8)

Rabbi Cohen exclaimed: "This man is not a Jew. He's a Greek-Catholic." President Taft was stunned: "You came all the way from Galveston for a man not of your faith?" Rabbi Cohen: "He's a human being."

The President issued an order: "Release Lemchuk in the custody of Rabbi Cohen." This was but one of several stories told of Rabbi Cohen that demonstrated the power of one small but mighty man to move mountains.

There was the case of a juvenile who was flogged in a state institution. Rabbi Cohen knew the boy would be better off with his parents, so he went to the judge to ask for his release. The judge refused. The Rabbi locked the door to the judge's office, and lectured him. "Remember how many times we picked you up out of the gutter, of all people you should give that boy a second chance!" The judge released the boy into the custody of the Rabbi. You'll find more such amazing stories in my parents' biography, *The Man Who Stayed in Texas* (which I'm trying to have republished, G-d and McGraw-Hill willing).

My cousin, David Frisch was extremely skeptical of the veracity of these stories. To him they were tall tales, the tallest being that of Taft and the Stowaway. Unlike David, who was ten years my senior, I believed with complete faith every detail of all the stories. David became a physicist. I became a rabbi. Perhaps the truth lies

somewhere in between David's skepticism and my unquestioning faith. Perhaps we come closer to the truth when we examine the historical record. I was encouraged to go on such a search by Rabbi Stanley Dreyfus, one of my grandfather's successors in Galveston and my Liturgy Professor at HUC.

Dr. Dreyfus was upset that most of today's rabbis know nothing about Henry Cohen of Texas. And they should know. We all, including rabbis, need moral models. So off I went on my search for the history behind the man and the myth.

This was not the first time I had done research into Henry Cohen's life and rabbinate. In 1986, I had read through his papers at the University of Texas. I was impressed by an article which indicated that in 1930, Stephen Wise, Rabbi of the Free Synagogue of New York and founder of the Jewish Institute of Religion, was asked to name those he considered to be the ten "foremost religious leaders" in the country. Wise named nine Christian clergymen and Rabbi Henry Cohen of Galveston, Texas. Last summer I found the article in the New York Times. The headline reads: "10 Leaders of Church Listed by Rabbi Wise . . . one Negro among them." (That one Jew was among them did not impress the headline writer.)

Why did Wise choose Henry Cohen? That's what Charlie Joseph, a Jewish journalist from Pittsburgh, wanted to know. (I found Joseph's correspondence with Wise in the



Rabbi Cohen presents the keynote address at Saturdays banquet

Wise Papers at the American Jewish Historical Society in New York.)

Wise replied to Joseph: "One man in the rabbinate had come to have a fine religious or spiritual influence in a large section of the country." Wise wrote that he had urged Rabbi Cohen to become Chaplain at Large to the Jewish Inmates of Public Institutions of New York, but he declined "because of his sense of duty to the people of Galveston and the life of the state of Texas."

Wise, arguably the foremost orator in the rabbinate, concluded, "Oratory is so often a cheap and easy thing, life is always so difficult and stern a thing. Henry Cohen is a soul who touches and kindles souls."

But how did Henry Cohen become a soul who touches other souls? A very brief flash-back into his life before Texas: Born April 7, 1863 in London to a poor tinsmith, David Cohen and his pious wife, Josephine, Henry was sent to Jews Hospital, a boarding school subsidized by wealthy Jews for the children of their less fortunate co-religionists. At the age

(Rabbi Cohen, cont. page 10)

of fifteen, Henry worked for the Board of Guardians, distributing bread tickets to the poor and earning enough to attend Jews College at night. There he was immersed in Jewish studies and, after his South African adventure, was given the title of "Minister," which authorized him to perform all Jewish clerical duties (including that of mohel and shochet) except rendering decisions in Jewish law. For that one must have rabbinic semicha, and such ordinations were not given in England until 1903. After graduating from Jews College in 1883, Henry was sent to the colonies - specifically, Kingston, Jamaica, where he became the minister of the Amalgamated Congregation of Israelites. (Amalgamated meant Ashkenazic and Sephardic.)

When I visited the synagogue that he dedicated, I saw evidence of the antagonism that drove him to America: two eternal lights - one for the Sephardim, one for the Ashkenazim!

It was in Woodville, Mississippi, that Henry gradually became transformed into a Reform rabbi. After three years in Woodville (1885-1888), he was invited to become the rabbi in Galveston, Texas, a thriving port, population 22,000, including about 175 Jewish families. There he remained as the active rabbi for 62 years (perhaps a record for years of service in one synagogue) before he retired in 1950, at the age of 87.

Before 1900, Henry was to marry Mollie Levy, have two children, Ruth

and Harry, and to write more than twenty articles or pamphlets, and edit one book, Talmudic Sayings. Among the topics were the history of the Jews of Texas and, after the Dreyfus Case and pogroms in Russia, "National Loyalty, a Jewish Characteristic." His scholarly pursuits came to an abrupt end on September 8, 1900, the day one-fourth of the population of Galveston - 7,500 men, women and children - drowned in a catastrophic storm. As a member of the Central Relief Committee, Rabbi Cohen played a significant role in reconstructing the morale of the citizens of Galveston. It was after the storm that Rabbi Cohen became the Rabbi of all Galvestonians.

I shall assume you know about the Galveston Movement, which channeled Jews from Russia and Poland to Galveston, from where they would be transported to towns in the Midwest and Southwest where their skills were needed. That's when Henry Cohen blended the role of rabbi and social worker, warmly greeting the immigrants in Yiddish and then helping them find locales where they could be gainfully employed. To some historians this movement was a failure because only 10,000 of the two million Jewish immigrants came through Galveston before the Movement was disbanded in 1914. But Rabbi Cohen did not measure success by numbers. For him the significance lay in the souls, the individual human beings who were able to start life anew, from Keokuk, Iowa to Hannibal, Missouri.

It was during this period that the Taft-Lemchuk story came to be told. I was determined to settle that argument between my cousin David and me once and for all, so I went to the Library of Congress in Washington, to the Taft papers, to get the facts, ma'am, just the facts. Unfortunately the papers did not include a daily appointment book during Taft's presidential years. But I did find some interesting correspondence between Taft and Rabbi Cohen. The Rabbi sent a letter of congratulations to Pres. and Mrs. Taft on their 25th wedding anniversary. (That's the only time to my knowledge Rabbi Cohen ever sent a mazel tov on any President's wedding anniversary.)

More significant, the President's half-brother, Charles, on whom the President depended for advice and financial support, was accused of profiting from a land grab in Alaska because of insider information. The President was viewed by some as benefiting from the transaction. Taft was so stung by this attack on his reputation that on June 17, 1911, he wrote to (guess who?) Rabbi Cohen that he was not involved in any way with the transaction. Rabbi Cohen responded to the President's personal secretary that he recognized immediately that the accusation in the local paper was "a canard." He concluded: "We have always felt that the high standard of integrity manifested by Mr. Taft warrants our thorough confidence in his personal unassailability." (Thanks to Rabbi

(Rabbi Cohen, cont. page 11)

Jimmy Kessler for finding the article in the Galveston Daily News that shed light on this incident.)

I found it quite interesting that the President of the U.S. would write the Rabbi of Galveston defending his own integrity, and that the Rabbi would assure the President that he never doubted his moral character.

This suggests to me that there had to be a connection between the two men. This exchange for me is circumstantial evidence that a humane President Taft could very well have facilitated what today we would call political asylum for a Russian refugee - though I have my doubts about the details of the story.

A colleague has suggested that my obsession with "the facts" is unwarranted.

The deeper meaning of the story is the truth of a rabbi who would take extraordinary measures to help a fellow human being, whatever his/her faith.

This "truth" does not depend upon the Taft connection. The Cohen papers at the University of Texas provide other examples. In 1930, Rabbi William Braude, a younger contemporary, wrote of another instance when Rabbi Cohen had gone far out of his way for someone in need. At one time Galveston had been a stopover point in a brisk white slave traffic. Rabbi Cohen found one unfortunate woman who had been forced into prostitution. He could find no place for her to live safely. So he put her up in his own home, not

as a maid or a servant but as a respected boarder. She lived there for six months despite the protests of several shocked congregants.

In his papers at the University of Texas, I also read of how Rabbi Cohen successfully intervened on behalf of a Roman Catholic woman, an illegal immigrant from Poland, who was threatened with deportation even though she had married an American. A Turkish Jew had been unjustly incarcerated in a mental hospital. Rabbi Cohen facilitated his release in the care of the Jewish community of El Paso. In 1915, he helped a Jewish corporal get out of the army, so he could marry a girl he had made pregnant and support the baby.

When Henry Cohen visited hospitals, he brought comfort and a smile to everyone, whatever one's faith. He was often quoted as saying, "There's no such thing as Episcopalian scarlet fever, Catholic arthritis, or Jewish mumps."

My personal memory is of him going up the stairs of the Orphan's Home carrying large cartons and shouting, "Ice cream!"

By 1916, Rabbi Cohen had become a role model for the American Reform Rabbi. That was the year he spoke to the graduating class of Hebrew Union College and expressed hope that some would be content to remain in smaller cities, where they would be more likely to have an impact on the entire community than they would in large urban areas.

In 1921, Rabbi Cohen was asked by Carl Pritz, of the board of HUC, if he would allow his name to be submitted as candidate for the presidency of the College. The Rabbi replied that he appreciated the honor, but he declined because "among other reasons, I have not the adequate scholarship to be the successor of Dr. Kohler." The supermensch knew his limits.

By 1922, in his address to the CCAI he attached more importance to the rabbi's role as social critic: ". . . where a political or economic situation becomes a moral issue, the pulpit must thunder forth . . . the temple should permit the greatest latitude to its rabbi, it should be 'free to the discussion of all sociological questions, whether running counter to preconceived opinions or not."

I wonder what political or economic situations he would have considered moral issues today. For Henry Cohen, from 1917 to 1930, the moral issue that moved him to action was that of prison reform in Texas. In 1917, as chairman of a state committee on the aftercare of prisoners, he wrote: "What chance has a pardoned or released prisoner? He leaves the walls feeling disgraced and dishonored. The state gives him often-times only a second-hand suit of clothes, prison-made shoes that every detective can discern a block away, a ticket to the city or town from which he was convicted, and the munificent sum of \$5! How in the name of heaven can he start life all

(Rabbi Cohen, cont. page 12)

over again?" Rabbi Cohen became an unofficial counselor for ex-convicts. They would report to him weekly. After one year, the man was expected to be on his own. The Rabbi had a remarkable success rate, but was not satisfied.

The entire prison system had to be fundamentally changed. During the 1920's, Rabbi Cohen led the battle for separation of kinds of prisoners (first offenders, long-termers, mentally ill) and, above all, rehabilitation. The details have been recorded elsewhere. Once significant progress had been made, the Rabbi resigned from the state board but remained active working with released prisoners by serving on the county parole board.

There are aspects of Henry Cohen's rabbinate that have not been discussed elsewhere. His papers in Austin reveal that he was a precursor of the peace movement and feminism. Each Armistice Day he would compose or quote a poem that condemned the use of arms. He opposed the introduction of ROTC in Galveston's Ball High School. In his letter of protest he wrote: "Boys in their early teens...should be taught the values of peace achievements rather than the glories of war."

On Armistice Day, 1936, he issued a plea for "peace education" and predicted that "it is for the women of the world to teach the nations to live on friendly sympathetic terms . . . or cease to exist at all." I recall that in his 80's (!) he still carried with him a copy of Tennyson's "Locksley Hall." He would recite with fervor: "For I

dipped into the future, far as human eye could see. Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be... 'til the war-drum throbbed no longer, and the battle-flags were furled. In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world."

Henry Cohen did support the war against Hitler. He would take me along to services at Camp Wallace where he would remind the soldiers of the words of Oliver Cromwell: "Trust in G-d, but keep your powder dry!" However, after the War, I was with him at a Rotary Club meeting at which Dr. James Conant described the potential benefits and dangers of atomic energy. After the program, Rabbi Cohen, all of five foot one, stood toe to toe with the Professor who towered well over six feet and quoted Rashi's comment about the bee; "I want neither your honey nor your sting."

While Henry Cohen became a Reform Rabbi as the Classical Reform movement of Wise and Einhorn was taking shape, he did not fit neatly into any ideology. He did accept the fundamental principles of Classical Reform: belief in progressive revelation, in adhering to those traditions that "elevate and sanctify our lives," in the mission of Israel being a light to the nations. Still, in his personal life, he remained "Biblical kosher" (no pork or shellfish), though he did not object when his family ate crab gumbo.

At our Seder he chanted the Orthodox Haggadah (all of it!). After

Shabbat eve dinner, he would chant the traditional Birkat Hamazon (what we called it, "benching"). He made sure that I became a Bar Mitzvah even though such ceremonies were very rare in Reform temples in 1940. He did depart from tradition by having me learn not the parasha of the week (Noah), but the Ten Commandments. I guess he figured that I may never read from the Torah again, so at least I would have learned the Hebrew Decalogue.

The greatest tragedy in his life, the death of his daughter, Ruth, at the age of 44, a victim of Hodgkin's disease, led him to return (perhaps) to the Orthodox faith in t'hiyat ha-maytim (the (bodily) resurrection of the dead). In a 1940 eulogy, six years after his daughter's death, he referred to her and said: "There is a time when we were not, and then we are, and in there is a power to call people into life, surely there must be that same power which causes them to live on in any sphere which the Creator wishes. So I think that in God's own time and in His own way, we shall be brought together again."

Henry Cohen was an unconventional non-Zionist member of the Jewish Agency. He favored Jewish settlement in Palestine and he collected funds for Hov'vei Tzion (Lovers of Zion). In 1945, he wrote to his friend, Judge Hutcheson, then the chairman of the American delegation of the Anglo-American Commission on Palestine, urging abrogation of the British White Paper.

(Rabbi Cohen, cont. page 13)

and allowing "unlimited immigration to Palestine for those who wish to settle there." He told me of his fear that the Arabs would never accept a Jewish state in the Middle-East. Once Israel was established, he became a firm supporter. He did join the anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism. However, Henry Cohen was not known for his advocacy of any particular ideology. For the people of Texas and the rabbis of his generation he transcended ideology because of how far he would go, how much he would do to help a single soul, and because of his pioneering efforts at what today is called *tikkun olam*, "repairing the world."

I began by speaking of two Henry

Cohens: my Grandpa, very human, natural, playful, down-to-earth, and Henry Cohen, hero of legend and myth. I believe the connection between the two is found in the historical record. This record tells of the great impact that a single individual may have on other lives and even social institutions.

(I recognize that in today's bureaucratic culture it's much more difficult for one person to have a great impact, but as a community bound by the covenant of justice we can still make a difference.) As for those marvelous Rabbi Cohen stories, sure some may be a bit exaggerated, but then what are legends but the tributes paid by generations to those men and women

whom they most admire, and we do need our moral models.

Stephen Wise was right. His was a soul that touched and kindled other souls. To the degree to which those souls that he kindled touched and kindled other souls and they, other Henry Cohen lives on through the generations, just as surely as effects become causes. As Wordsworth wrote: "Enough, if something from our hands have power. To live, an act, and serve the future hour; and in us as toward the silent tomb we go through love and hope and faith transcendent dower; we feel that we are greater than we know. Henry Cohen of Texas was greater than he knew. But we know.

◆ TJH

THE UNIQUENESS OF TEXAS JEWS

Presented by Rabbi Samuel M. Stahl, Emeritus Rabbi of Congregation Temple Beth-El, San Antonio, Texas
Texas Jewish Historical Society 25th Annual Gathering, Friday Evening – April 30, 2004 – San Antonio, Texas

We warmly welcome those who are attending the 25th Annual convention of the Texas Jewish Historical Society to Temple Beth-El and want you to know how thrilled we are to have you with us. Tonight, I want to focus my remarks on the uniqueness of Texas Jews.

Not far from here stands the impressive edifice, known as the Institute of Texan Cultures. I note that many of our conventioners visited there this afternoon. In the Institute, there are hosts of exhibits honoring almost 30 different nationality and cultural communities that have enriched the great state of Texas.

Among them are the Germans, the Italians, the Czechs, the Lebanese, the Japanese, the Greeks, and the Jews. But at this point, I need to pose this critical question: Why are the Jews included? We don't find any other religious groups at the Institute of Texan Cultures. There is no Protestant exhibit. There is no Catholic exhibit. There is no Muslim exhibit. There is no Buddhist exhibit. The Jews seem to be the only religious group highlighted at the Institute.

Obviously, there is a lot of confusion about what and who Jews really are. Perhaps the reason is that Jews cannot be neatly pigeonholed into any one category. Are we part of a

race, a nationality, or a religion? It seems almost impossible to define us. Some have erroneously called Jews a race.

In fact, we once described ourselves as a race. In the older version of the Hanukkah hymn, "Maoz Tzur - Rock of Ages," the third stanza begins "Children of the martyred race." The present versions fortunately have been altered to begin "Children of the Maccabees." The most notorious example of declaring Jews a race was Hitler. Hitler was obsessed with creating a master Aryan race. He denigrated Jews as a subhuman race, a race that had to be totally exterminated.

(Rabbi Stahl, cont. page 16)

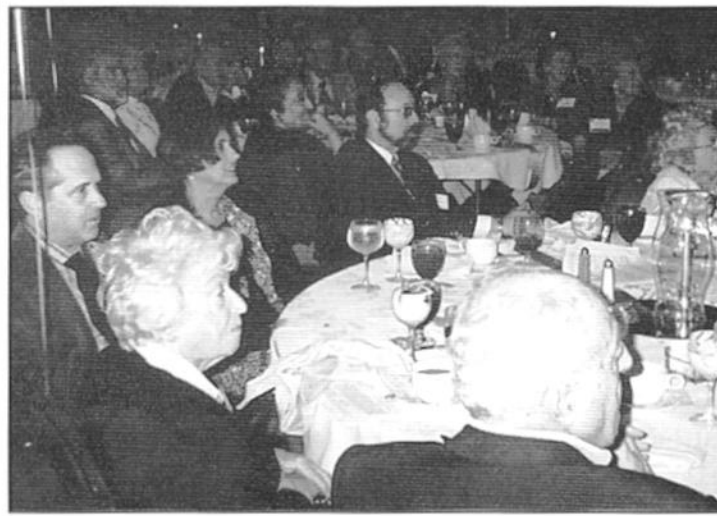
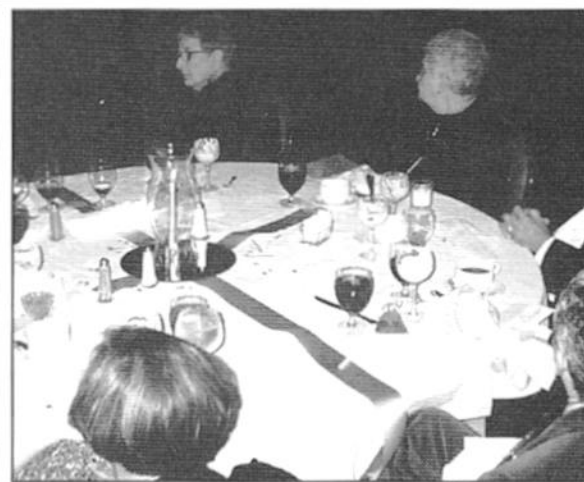
THE TEXAS JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S SILVER



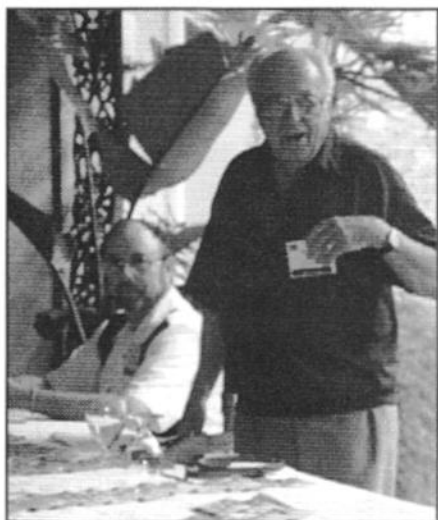
Rabbi Henry Cohen visits with guests at Saturday's Banquet



Leon and Fay Brachman, Max Stool and Rabbi Samuel Stahl at Saturday's Silver Anniversary Annual Gathering Banquet



ANNIVERSARY ANNUAL GATHERING WEEKEND IN PICTURES



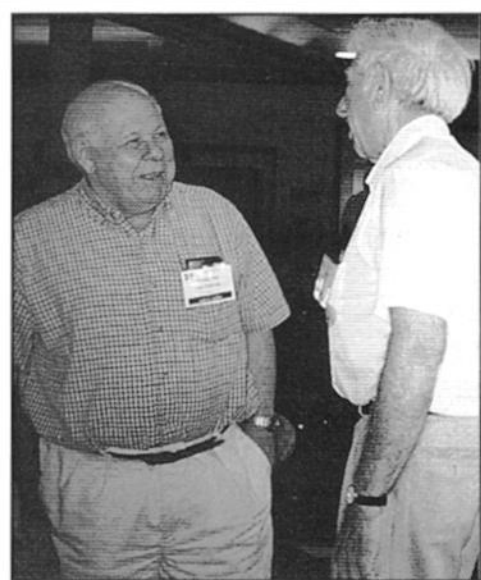
Herschel Sheiness and Walter Fein
at Registration



Schmoozing in the Hospitality Room



Guests watch & listen with interest to Harry Mazal's presentation
at the Mazal Library



Enjoying a
Saturday lunch
of San
Antonio's
signature
Mexican food
at Aldaco's
Restaurant

But Jews are emphatically not a race. In fact, Jews are represented in all the major races. When I was an Army chaplain in Korea, a few Koreans who were Jewish were in my congregation. Most of them were Buddhist or Confusionists at birth, but converted to Judaism later in life. Orientals, who are Jews, live in other Asian countries as well. We even have Asian Jews in our Temple. James Woo, a Chinese-American and a Temple member, was recently featured on the front cover of REFORM JUDAISM.

There are also myriads of Black Jews around the world. About 25,000 of them have lived in Israel for the past two decades. These Black Jews escaped from the squalor and persecution of Ethiopia, where they had practiced Judaism for centuries. So I hope that I have established the fact that Jews are not a race. There are Jews with skin coloring of different shades: white, yellow, brown and black.

We are also not a nationality. Indeed, Jews are citizens of almost every country of the world. There is hardly a nation anywhere without at least one Jew. We have English Jews, French Jews, Italian Jews, Argentinean Jews, Australian Jews, and Canadian Jews.

If we are not part of a race or a nationality, are we then a religion? Are we the counterparts of Catholics and Protestants? The answer is both yes and no. Jews are a religious community but much more. The late Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan crafted the most accurate definition of Jews I

have ever encountered. He was one of America's towering Jewish religious leaders of the last century. Kaplan most perceptively described Jews as a "people with an evolving religious civilization."

Indeed, we are a people who embrace not simply a religion. We do much more than that. We are some religion-plus. We claim a vast religious civilization. We have a Jewish language (Yiddish), which is not strictly religious. We have distinctive foods, like bagels, lox and gefilte fish, which are not religious. We have other characteristics, which are best classified as ethnic. That is probably the reason that we are featured in the Institute of Texan Cultures, and Protestants and Catholics are not.

Now that we have established who the Jews are, let us turn to the question of who Texas Jews are. What is our nature? What traits make us unique? When I visit family and friends up north and tell them that I live in Texas, their instantaneous response is: "Gee, I didn't know that there were any Jews down there." We actually have been here a long time.

I am not speaking about a certain group of Texans in the Hispanic community, who may have Jewish ancestors. They claim to be descended from the Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492 and ultimately landed in the New World. They may practice one or two Jewish customs, like lighting two candles late Friday afternoon to prepare for the Jewish Sabbath. They are not

even aware of why they are doing so, since they have been Roman Catholics for centuries. To them lighting candles on Friday afternoon is merely a family tradition, passed down from generation to generation.

Rather I am speaking about Jews who came to Texas from Germany, beginning in the 1850's, followed in the 1880's by Jews from Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia and other lands of Eastern Europe. From time to time, someone will claim that Jews died at the Alamo. However our Temple member, Frances Kallison, who is the acknowledged authority on the history of the Jews of San Antonio, emphatically insists that no Jews died at the Alamo. She has marshalled impressive evidence to prove it. And don't ever mess with Frances Kallison.

The majority of Texas Jews live in five metropolitan areas: Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth, San Antonio, Austin and El Paso. In most of these places, the Jewish numbers are stable or growing. In smaller communities with few exceptions, they are severely declining.

In places like Galveston, Beaumont and Corsicana, synagogues once flourished. Now their memberships are shrinking. In fact, not too long ago, Wharton finally closed its synagogue.

It once had swelled to 100 family members. Now it has become a historical relic. The reason is that in these smaller Texas cities, Jewish merchants made up a large part of synagogue memberships.

(Rabbi Stahl, cont. page 17)

Eventually, they retired and either sold or closed their stores. For the most part, their children elected not to go into the family business, but chose other vocations and moved away.

Jews are a tiny minority in Texas. In the United States, there are about 6,000,000 Jews. About a quarter of them live in the Greater New York area. In Texas, there are only about 120,000 Jews. Thus, we Jews make up less than 1% of the total number of Texans. In spite of the fact that our numbers are small in this state, we love it here.

Texas is a state to which Jews come but rarely leave. Jewish children who grow up in Texas hardly ever want to spend the rest of their lives in another state. Upon reaching adulthood, they may choose not to return to the city in Texas they were raised. Yet they will usually take up residence in another city in Texas.

Severe Northern winters have also caused more and more Jewish "snowbirds" to move to Texas, and within a short time they, too, have fallen in love with it.

Most Texas Rabbis also love it here. Texas is distinguished for its rabbinical longevity. For example, here at Temple Beth-El, Rabbi Barry Block, my successor, is only the fourth Senior Rabbi of the congregation in over 80 years. Rabbi Henry Cohen, my predecessor in Galveston, served Temple B'nai Israel there for 62 years. This was one of the longest tenures of any Rabbi in the United States.

Throughout Texas, Rabbis of the different denominations, within Judaism generally enjoy harmonious relations. My dear friend in San Antonio is Rabbi Arnold Scheinberg. He has been with San Antonio's Orthodox congregation, Rodfei Sholom, for almost 35 years. He honored me two years ago by speaking at my testimonial dinner when I retired. Such respect and collegiality among Rabbis of different branches of Judaism is not found in most other states.

In the interfaith sphere, Jewish-Christian relations have also been exemplary throughout Texas. Let me focus on San Antonio alone. All of us are the beneficiaries of the labors of the interfaith clergy triumvirate of Rabbi David Jacobson (my predecessor), Episcopal Bishop Everett Jones, and Roman Catholic Archbishop Robert Lucey.

As a united religious voice, they frequently spoke out boldly and courageously on the pressing moral issues of their day. Working in concert, these three towering religious figures succeeded in dismantling racial segregation here in the 1960's. Remarkably, they did so without igniting any riots and protests. Even today, such interfaith harmony flourishes. For two years, Christ Episcopal Church graciously offered its facilities to Temple Beth-El for worship services and educational programs while the Temple was undergoing a massive renovation.

The Temple and First Presbyterian Church, for several consecutive

years, sponsored Mitzvah Day. During this all-day program, members of both congregations worked side-by-side to provide humanitarian outreach to the needy in our city. Such amity and goodwill between Christians and Jews can also be found elsewhere in Texas.

Let me now return to my prior question: How should we describe the hybrid known as a Jewish Texan? There is an adage that Jews are like everyone else - only more so. Most Jewish Texans have fully absorbed the ethos and culture of their surroundings. Some speak with the Texas drawl. In fact, they have coined an idiom merging both Texas and Jewish languages: It is "Shalom, y'all!"

Even their recreational tastes are conditioned by Texas values. Jews, like the Halffs, have been some of the foremost ranchers of the state. They are among its most avid football fans. Additionally, even though hunting is not traditionally a Jewish pursuit, Jewish Texans are among the most enthusiastic hunters.

Throughout Texas, Jews have been well integrated into their wider community. Hardly any city in Texas has an exclusively Jewish neighborhood. Jews in Texas live side by side with their non-Jewish neighbors. Indeed, Texas Jews have fully participated in the civic life of their communities. In San Antonio alone, Jews like Jack Kaufman, of blessed memory, and Bob Ross have sat on our City Council. At least four Jewish mayors have led Galveston. Annette Strauss served as

(Rabbi Stahl, cont. page 18)

mayor of Dallas and its current mayor, Laura Miller, is also Jewish.

Anti-Semitism has not been as pronounced in Texas as in other places. It is unfortunately painfully true that years ago, Jews were not welcome in certain exclusive Texas country clubs, corporate executive suites, and law firms. However, today such subtle prejudice is practically non-existent. With few examples, Jews can live anywhere, join anywhere and work anywhere in the state.

Today, Jewish Texans are very much at home in Texas and look forward to a bright future here. So we must ask the question: Why, in the Sanctuary of Temple Beth-El, for example, do we display three flags: United States, Texas and Israel? Such a pattern is common in almost all Texas Synagogues. Why is the flag of Israel among them? We Texas Jews believe that the United States is our country. We vote in its elections, we serve in its military, and we express our political allegiance to it. However, we also have another tie, and that is to the State of Israel. Our bond with Israel is primarily

historical, cultural and religious. It is not political.

Yet, at one time, it would have been inconceivable to post an Israeli flag in this sanctuary. Some Texas Jews did not always feel a bond with Israel. Until the Six-Day War in 1967, anti-Zionism was a factor in several Texas Jewish communities.

The American Council for Judaism had a strong presence in Texas. Its members believed that American Jews are Jews by religion alone and owe their loyalty only to the United States. American Jews, in their view, should have no ties to any other nation, like Israel. Since 1967, the American Council has lost its influence and credibility. We Texas Jews now see no contradiction between our attachment to Israel and our allegiance to the United States.

Let me suggest an analogy. We can love both our spouses and our children equally. But we love each differently. Loving one does not diminish our love for the other.

Let me emphasize that loving Israel does not mean that we uncritically

accept everything Israel does. Some Texas Jews may disagree with some of Israel's government policies and actions. Yet, we all agree that we must labor zealously and tirelessly to ensure that Israel will survive, thrive and flourish, as an independent sovereign Jewish state. That is why we Texas Jews enthusiastically give our time, energy and resources to defend Israel and enable it to survive and thrive.

We join advocacy groups. We write op-ed pieces and letters to the editor. We contribute generously of our material resources so that Israel will always be safe and secure.

So here we are, we Texas Jews, small in numbers but intense in commitment. We are loyal to the United States. We are supportive of Israel. And we are proud of Texas. We try to blend the best of Texas values with the loftiest wisdom of our Jewish heritage. I thank G-d that I have been blessed to live and serve in Texas for 35 years. Though not born in Texas, I personally call it my home and I look forward to remaining here for many years to come. ♦ TJH

Honorable Menschen

By Dorothy Harelik

Mazel Tov to **Minnie Siegel**, Dallas, who celebrated her 90th birthday on May 9, 2004. Minnie's children are **Joel (Siegel) Hart & Charles Hart**.

Barry and Fay Green became grandparents (again). Their son and daughter-in-law, **Jonathan and Rachel Green** of Tuscon, Arizona, had a baby boy, Gabriel Eliazar on Friday, April 30, the first day of the Annual Gathering.

Mark Harelik is in the musical *Light in the Piazza* due at the Lincoln Center in February 2005. Mark is the son of TJHS members **Dorothy and Milton Harelik**, and is the author of "The Immigrant," which was presented at the Annual Gathering in Corpus Christi. Mark will be in New York this October.

Do you have news to share? "Honorable Menschen" features tid-bits about members their families' births, marriages, accomplishments, graduations, degrees earned, get-well wishes, condolences, announcements and more. Please email information for "Honorable Menschen" to Dorothy Harelik at dkharelik@htcomp.net or mail to 602 South E Street, Hamilton, Texas, 76531, phone: 254-386-3538.

Pursuing Iser

By Melody Amsel

Reprinted with permission from AVOTAYNU, The International Review of Jewish Genealogy, Vol. XIX, No. 4, Winter 2003

Years ago, I was shown a photo of a cousin, Iser Amsel, whom I had never met. When I asked about him, I was told three things – that he came from Austro-Hungary, that he had supported his father Moshe Ber, and that he had lost his daughter in tragic circumstances. And, turning the photo over, I saw that “Corsicana, Texas” had been noted on the back. The story of Iser’s daughter haunted me. Deciding to try my luck, I keyed in “Corsicana” on the JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry site¹, and found that three Amsels were buried there: Celia, Pauline, and Jake. Jake, not Iser? I reasoned that Iser was probably Jake’s Hebrew name.

Through the JewishGen Discussion Group, I reached the secretary of the Corsicana Hebrew Cemetery Association, who kindly offered to check if Jake’s Hebrew name appears on his gravestone. It does not. Neither does it appear in the Corsicana funeral home records, but other details do. Jake Amsel was born in January 1870 in Austro-Hungary, married Celia Levy in 1898, and was a 32nd degree Mason and a Shriner. The records also noted that his daughter Pauline had been murdered in Durant, Oklahoma on November 11, 1914. Although I could not verify that Iser and Jake were indeed one and the same person, many details matched. Like Iser, Jake had been born in Austro-Hungary.

Iser’s daughter, like Jake’s daughter Pauline, died young and was buried

in Texas. I had a feeling that this was my man. I also had a feeling that if Pauline were murdered, her death would make the local newspapers. And I was right. Not only did her murder cover the front page of The Durant (Oklahoma) Weekly News, but it was also featured in a number of other county newspapers. Indeed, some followed the story for months, as posses pursued – but never found – the perpetrator. On November 12, the day after the murder, The Bokchito (Oklahoma) News² screamed, “Miss Amsel Murdered by



Jake & Celia Amsel

an Unknown Man,” and went on to describe “The most horrible murder ever committed in the history of this county when young Miss Pauline Amsel was slain in her bed...by some unknown wretch...” On that day too, according to records of the Holmes Furniture Store of Durant, Jake purchased a casket for \$175.³ The next day, The Durant Weekly

News described Pauline’s death “at the hands of an unknown assailant who cut her throat, almost severing her head from her body.”⁴

These newspaper articles yielded additional details about Jake Amsel, too. The Corsicana funeral service was conducted by a rabbi from Dallas, Texas, possibly the nearest Jewish community. All the local businesses closed during the service, out of respect for Jake, who was also a merchant. And Pauline’s entire student body followed the funeral procession. Interment took place in Corsicana, Texas, where Jake’s wife had family. A month later, Jake sold his store, and the couple left town for Colorado Springs, Colorado, never to return.

Jake, Iser...this left me no peace. So I tried another approach. I searched for records of Iser’s father, Moshe Ber Amsel, in the 1869 Hungarian Census. And sure enough, I found him under Zemplén County⁵, where I knew my family had once lived. Going by birth dates, only his youngest son could have possibly been Iser – but his name was Szruly. The records stated that Szruly was born in 1869 and Jake was born in 1870, but the discrepancy between them could be explained away by either choice or chance. The names remained the real puzzle.

I was fairly sure that Szruly was Iser was Jake, but how could I prove it? Again, JewishGen came to the rescue. I entered Iser into the Hungarian (Pursuing Iser, cont. page 20)

SYLVIA WOLENS JEWISH HERITAGE WRITING COMPETITION WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The 2nd Annual Sylvia Wolens Jewish Heritage Texas Writing Competition received a number of wonderful entries. Open to amateurs and professionals of all ages, the competition was developed as a way to pass along reflections of the past to the generations of tomorrow. Congratulations to the winners whose essays are included on the following pages:

1st (\$500) – David Hirsch Hoffman, FAIA, *Divine Collaboration*; 2nd (\$250) – Joseph Billy Pfeffer, *The Mensch Who Played Santa*; 3rd (\$100) – Ralph S. Marks, *Two Guests at Lunch*.

The competition is sponsored by TJHS member Jerry Wolens of Boca Raton, Florida in honor of his wife, Sylvia. Judging is based on originality and content. All entries will be included in the TJHS archives at the University of Texas at Austin.

(Pursuing Iser, cont. from page 19)

Given Names Database⁶, and learned that Iser is the Yiddish equivalent of the local secular nickname, Sizruly. Furthermore, Iser and Sizruly both are nicknames for Yisroel, which is Israel. I took a deep breath and took it one step further. In the Bible, Jacob adopts the name Israel. Iser (Israel), who came from a very religious family reversed it. He adopted the name Jake (Jacob). If all this is true, perhaps Jake decided to be a real American with a real American name.

Author's Note: Do you remember the Amsels? I am collecting any materials relating to their lives, melodya@bezeqint.net or mail to: 34-4 Chut HaShani St., 98501, Maaleh Adumim, Israel. Phone 011-972-2-5354423.

Melody Amsel is a member of the Israel Genealogy Society, and has researched her Amsel family for 20 years. AVOTANU recently published her book, "Between Galicia and Hungary: The Jews of Stropkov."

¹<http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery/JOWBR>, database of names and other identifying information from Jewish cemeteries and burial records worldwide, compilation of two databases: database of burial records linked to a database of information about each particular cemetery.

²*The Bokchito News*, Nov. 12, 1914, 1., col. 1.

³*List of Caskets Sold, Holmes Furniture Store*, entry #334, Nov. 12, 1914. Most caskets cost between \$7-\$100, but Pauline's also included the cost of shipping her body by rail to Corsican Texas for burial.

⁴*The Durant Weekly News*, Nov. 1, 1914, p.1, col 1-2.

⁵*1869 Hungarian Census, Bela*, p. 11. *Latter Day Saints Reel #722.711*

⁶<http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/GivenNames/search.htm> Given Names Databases (European to Foreign Search).

◆ TJH

A Divine Collaboration

By David Hirsch Hoffman, FAIA

First Place – 2004 Sylvia Wolens Jewish Heritage Texas Writing Competition

Throughout history, human inspiration in many forms has manifested great things upon which our civilization has been built. Inspired vision captivates our intellect and moves us forward to greater heights of awareness. Inspired design produces buildings of pure function with integrity of form in which we find sustenance. Inspired art yields objects of beauty that invoke our wonderment and ignite our emotions. Individually, each inspiration can be a subtle influence on our lives. Collectively, they can have a

powerful effect on generations.

In the early 1920's, the thoughts and talents of three inspired individuals combined to produce a magnificent and enduring house of worship in Beaumont, Texas. They were Rabbi Samuel Rosinger, architect Albert S. Gottlieb and artist Ze'ev Raban. And together, in the creation of Beaumont's Temple Emanuel, these gifted men comprised a divine collaboration.

The Temple Emanuel congregation in Beaumont, which grew out of an 1887 minyan, was

actually formed in 1895 and originally consisted of fifty members. With the influx of people due to the discovery of deep oil at nearby Spindletop and the resultant boomtown economy, the congregation grew and the members soon sought their own edifice. Their first temple structure was dedicated in December of 1900 and was a handsome frame structure with gothic window intersecting barrel vaults and two onion domes flanking a Palladian entry. Rabbi Rosinger, then thirty-three years old, joined the congregation in 1910 after

(Divine Collab., cont. page 2)

responding to an advertisement, which listed their search priority for "a good lecturer who can make himself agreeable with either Orthodox or Reform Congregation. In other words, we want a MIXER." Their unanimous selection of Rosinger proved to be a wise one as he successfully administered to Temple Emanuel for over fifty years.

Born in Hungary in 1877, Rosinger attended universities in several European cities ultimately receiving a degree in philosophy and German literature. He emigrated through New York in 1904 where he pursued a master's degree at Columbia University and was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1908. His first pulpit was in Toledo, Ohio where he served for two years before engaging with Temple Emanuel in Beaumont. From the outset, he was a strong presence.

As he later wrote, "I gave them to understand right then that they were engaging not a lackey, but a leader whose specialty was religion. And Judaism is not a petrified creed, but a way of life; its interpretation and application must be left to the rabbi's judgment."

At the urging of Rabbi Rosinger, when it was time to begin actual planning for the construction of a new temple to serve the growing congregation, a New York architect, Albert Gottlieb, was

selected for the commission. Gottlieb had authored several papers on synagogue design, had been published in *The American Hebrew* and made a presentation on the subject to the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1916. His main design premise was that houses of worship for the practice of Judaism should express a spirit unique to its faith and embody in its physical form and detailing those qualities which best represent the characteristics of the religion: "solemnity, dignity, grandeur, nobility and withal simplicity and clarity."

Prior to World War I, American synagogue design had developed a pattern of emulating the styles of the churches in their local environments. The synagogue building had in effect assimilated with Western culture to the extent that there were few outward design expressions to distinguish it. The oldest surviving synagogue in the United States, the Touro Synagogue (1763) in Newport, Rhode Island is a good example. It is simplistically Georgian in style and is patterned after a Colonial meetinghouse. In Charleston, South Carolina, the Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Synagogue (1843) was a Greek Revival structure utilizing, of all ironies, the Greek temple form.

During the last half of the 19th century, the predominant style for temples and synagogues was in the Moorish/Islamic tradition.

One of the most elaborate examples of this style is the Central Synagogue (1872) in New York City. Upon entering the 20th century, the styles were often mixed combining architectural elements from multiple origins.

The first Temple Emanuel in Beaumont (1901) is an example of such an amalgam. It incorporated twin onion domes in the Eastern Orthodox Catholic tradition, gothic windows from the medieval period and a classically inspired symmetrical entryway. It was architecture born of the Diaspora, which reflected the local culture of past experiences but it lacked Jewish expression.

While Gottlieb recognized that this design emulation was evidence of the remarkable adaptability of the Jewish people, he also strongly felt that a religion that had stayed true to fundamental principles and traditions for so many centuries should have more of an expression of its own timeless spirit. It was against this backdrop that Albert Gottlieb sought to change the direction of synagogue design. Rabbi Rosinger, himself a forward thinker, eagerly provided support and encouragement in enabling Gottlieb to apply his design theories to the plan for the new Temple Emanuel.

In a prelude to the actual design of the building itself, Rosinger and

(Divine Collab., cont. page 22)

Gottlieb confronted their first planning consideration. Gottlieb was concerned that the configuration of the property purchased for the new building was an obstacle to efficient design. He wrote "...it is next to impossible to plan a building in which the seats face the East and still have a good arrangement for the building, not only from an architectural standpoint but also from a practical one."

While Rabbi Rosinger believed in the traditional orientation of worshiping toward Jerusalem with the ark located on the east wall of the sanctuary, he deferred to higher authorities and suggested that the architect contact Dr. Cyrus Adler, president of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Rosinger's alma mater. This was a wise action on the part of the rabbi because, by deferring to others, he avoided a direct challenge to the preferences of the designer and consequently preserved a respectful and cooperative relationship between them. Adler, the administrator, referred the matter to Louis Ginzberg, the professor. Ginzberg was a highly respected author and professor of Talmud at the Seminary for over fifty years. He formulated a scholarly and concise but conclusive reply and referred to the "high antiquity" of the custom that originated in the Bible and is later reinforced by Talmudic interpretations and later Codes. The matter was then settled by the momentary but consequential

participation of yet another collaborator, Ginzburg, in the design of Temple Emanuel. Both Rosinger and Gottlieb accepted his interpretation and proceeded to plan for the detailed design of the building whose congregation would pray to the east in the traditional orientation.

Gottlieb sought to instill a Jewish identity in the design for his synagogue buildings. He rejected inappropriate and irrelevant architectural styles of the recent past and attempted to reinforce the religious character of his buildings through the use of architectural detailing. Even though Gottlieb's overall exterior design for Temple Emanuel incorporated a modified Byzantine Revival style, characterized by an octagonal dome topped by a cupola, massive planar brick walls and selectively placed stone detailing, he remained true to his design precepts. He incorporated the tablets of Moses and the Star of David in both copper and stone that give the building his intended identifiable Jewish expression. A biblical inscription in cut stone over the entryway furthers the religious identity.

Based on Gottlieb's precepts, the rabbi and the architect conceived that the great domed sanctuary would be planned around an awe-inspiring and magnificent design feature whose symbolism would embody Jewish experience and virtues. They mutually decided that the symmetry of the

octagonal sanctuary space would be dramatically reinforced by six massive leaded glass windows that would represent not only a high level of aesthetics but convey a rich sense of spirituality as well. To that end, they enlisted the talents of the third major collaborator in the design of Temple Emanuel, the artist Ze'ev Raban.

Born Wolf Rawicki in 1890 in Lodz, Poland, Raban made aliyah to Palestine in 1912. Prior to that time, he had received training in the decorative arts in several of the cultural centers in Europe including Munich, Brussels and Paris. He was a complex artist who was exposed to extensive aesthetic influences and had produced a wealth of artistic expressions in a wide variety of media. As a member of the Belazel School of Arts and Crafts, he dedicated himself to the renewal of Hebrew art in Palestine.

Much of his work was deliberately focused on strengthening the identity of an emerging Jewish state through the revival and artistic expression of Jewish symbolism. This emphasis was so consistent with the design goals of the Temple Emanuel undertaking and it must have been with the greatest of anticipation and expectation that the rabbi and the architect solicited the creative genius of the artist to join them in their pursuit.

(Divine Collab., cont. page 23)

(Divine Collab., cont. from page 22)

While the precise details of the interaction between the three dedicated men are unknown, the testament to their collaboration exists in the glorious statements in leaded glass that flank the central body of the sanctuary. The arched windows, each six feet wide by fifteen feet tall, are best described in the words of Rabbi Rosinger:

"It was with keen knowledge of Jewish history and pencil and brush handled with appreciation of the best in art that these windows came to be. Each window has a pronounced meaning. Centralized in each design is a single theme. Each panel is at once a delight to the eyes and a study, a liberal education in its particular phase of Bible history."

The principal figure in each of the windows is one of the six prophets: Jeremiah, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Moses and Ezekial. There is a wealth of other representation contained in the smaller detailing of the windows depicting biblical events and Jewish symbols. The second commandment reads "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness of anything that is in the heavens above, or that is in the earth beneath." This dictate has been widely interpreted throughout history to not necessarily forbid the integration of human and animal representation in synagogue decoration but rather was offered to prevent idolatry and the actual focus of worship on those symbols.

Examples of such decoration are plentiful and date back to the ancient past. It is clear that Rabbi Rosinger placed a high value on the aesthetic importance of the building's decoration when he sanctioned Gottlieb's design of the sanctuary being dominated by the windows and, with the solicitation of Raban's participation, committed to the highest level of artistic manifestation. The traditional representation of elements with the lack of abstraction, the richness of the colors, the visual depth created by the unique pattern of texture to the glass and the placement of the windows in the appropriately scaled room combine to create a powerful expression. It is one that genuinely supplicates the worshiper and effectively facilitates a prayerful environment.

Rabbi Rosinger had a very strong sense of the self-worth of the individual. In a sermon entitled "Man Can Become Godlike," he once wrote, "Man can rise to divine heights...Man is born fit to become the companion of G-d. He can rise to be the co-worker of the Creator." With divine guidance, the rabbi, the architect and the artist all collaborated to collectively seek this level of attainment. In doing so, they brought into existence a house of worship of national significance and international prominence that inspires Jewish faith and will continue to serve its lofty purpose for many generations.

◆ TJHS

THE MENSCH WHO PLAYED SANTA

By Joseph Billy Pfeffer

2nd Place, Sylvia Wolens Jewish
Heritage Texas Writing Competition

It was customary each Sunday morning for my brothers, Shannon and Harry Pfeffer, to pick me up at my house and drive to the Rice Hotel to have breakfast together. We would sit at the counter where we would discuss how the week went, how the kids were doing, how business was going. Occasionally, we would see the prominent Houston lawyer, Percy Forman. He had a special booth, and there was always a crowd around his table.

After breakfast, we'd leave together and go to the Fifth Ward. The Fifth Ward used to be a Jewish neighborhood with a Shul, but by that time it had become an inner-city, high-crime neighborhood. We had some properties there. Together we would go collecting rents. It was getting dangerous to go collecting alone. The people knew we had rent money on us, so the three of us went together. To keep everything in good repair, it was also necessary that we worked every Sunday fixing broken windows, torn screens, check for leaking water faucets, peeling paint, etc. Sunday was the only day we could spare from our full-time jobs to do this.

One Christmas morning, my wife received a phone call from my brother, Harry. He was sick. I was needed for a job he couldn't discuss over the telephone. Our older brother, Shannon, would pick me up.

(The Mensch, cont., page 24)

I protested - it was a day off, even for a Jewish boy - but to no avail. He said there was a problem, and I was needed. Within an hour, a car pulled up in my driveway. My nephew, Larry, was laughing as I approached the car. He swung the door open, and I could see inside a person dressed in a Santa Claus suit wearing a large red hat, a white beard, and patent leather boots. It was my big brother Shannon.

"What the hell are you doing?" I asked. He laughed and answered, "I've been playing Santa Claus for the last three years. Would you like to join us this year?" Hesitating, I smiled and replied, "Don't mind if I do."

I squeezed into the back seat of his station wagon. It was full of toys, boxes of candy, books, and other trinkets. As we took off, I thought to myself, this should be a new experience for a guy like me, a third-generation congregant at Beth Yeshuren. By the time we reached our destination - the Fifth Ward - my share of the candy bars was eaten. Larry's job was to take care of the toys, while I handed out the rest of the candy.

Our first stop was a small wood-frame house in the backyard of a larger home facing a dirt street. We climbed up two wooden steps onto the porch. Larry banged on the door. It slowly opened a crack. You could see the wary eyes of the tenant peaking out. Larry stepped aside, and there stood Santa, who started singing in a loud voice: "Ho! Ho! Ho!"

The door flung open, and the lady of the house started hollering for her kids to "come see Santa Claus." The children screamed with glee as Larry started handing out toys and while I offered candy.

Looking and listening to the household, I was moved and truly felt pleased that I had a chance to participate in delivering holiday joy. Each house we went to was a repeat: the expression on the children's faces, the glow in their eyes, and the tears from their parents.

At our last stop, we had to park by the Union Pacific Railroad tracks. Larry got out of the car, and I heard him say, "Dad, there is a little boy walking down the tracks." Santa took one look and went into action. He grabbed his toy bag, slung it over his shoulder, then started toward the boy. The small child was pretending he was a tightrope walker. He was looking down at the track and watching how he placed his bare feet, one foot following the other, trying hard to balance himself so he wouldn't slip off the track. Santa moved slowly toward him. The little boy was so preoccupied with what he was doing, he did not look up.

When he was a few feet from the boy, Santa rang a small jingle bell attached to his belt. The child looked up and let out a scream: "Santa Claus! Oh, Santa Claus! You didn't forget me!" With outstretched arms, the child threw himself forward, hugging Santa with all his strength while crying tears of joy.

The man in the red suit put his large gloved hands under the arms of the child, lifted him high in the air, then brought him down and held him to his chest for a long moment. Not a word was said.

Standing only a few feet behind my brother, I turned my head to the side. Tears flowed freely down my cheeks. What a beautiful irony for my brother, a Jewish man, to bring such joy to a youngster on Christmas Day. What a strange place, the railroad tracks in the Fifth Ward, to demonstrate tolerance and kindness.

This story has lain dormant inside of me for over fifty years. My brother, Shannon, and his son, Larry, are gone. Yet I will never forget the day I spent with the Mensch who played Santa Claus.

Editor's Note: Joseph Billy Pfeffer wrote the following: "...I am 86 years old. This is just one of a million stories about our Jewish people. This is a reflection of the past generation. A true story about a man that took extra kind means to make people happy for a day - some for a lifetime...this very small act is true, it happened in a period of time when there was little tolerance for our fellow man. I have become a self-taught artist, story-writer, and poet. I have exhibited my Holocaust work at the Houston Holocaust Museum, and my painting called "Yom Hashoah" appeared on the front page of the *San Diego Jewish Heritage* newspaper. I just finished writing a 214-page novel called REVENGE. Most of my friends are gone. Stories are the only way to bring them back in my memories."

◆ TJHS

TWO GUESTS AT LUNCH

By Ralph S. Marks

3rd Place, Sylvia Wolens Jewish Heritage Texas Writing Competition

When the white-haired, short-statured man comes up to our table accompanied by an attractive blonde girl, we Jewish men at our weekly get-together in Houston presume both are Jewish. I am impressed with the beautiful blonde, about one-third the man's age. The young lady has a haughty look, as though she might be smelling something from our luncheon assortment of delicatessen foods which pleases her. Little did I, an old man, know that the two of them are about to help me recall part of my life, including before my confirmation in the Synagogue long years ago, in 1935, in Marshall, Texas.

Shocked that this writer is 81? I'm the youngest of our five or six person group, which meets almost weekly for lunch. By the way, each of our party is mentally alert, possibly with slight hearing or vision loss, but we throw ideas around and clearly recall Houston happenings of the last 50 years or so.

These two interlopers who are 56 and 20 respectively, introduce themselves and take me back, back in time in what the movies call a "flashback." Back to Marshall where it always seemed Spring and violets grew under grape arbors.

Our Synagogue in Marshall drew Jewish young people and their families from a periphery of about 30 miles from Kilgore, Longview and other small towns. For Purim, we

performed the story of Mordecai, Haman and Queen Esther in the annex of the Sanctuary. It was a large room, which featured a stage with curtains, and was easily converted into a theater if one used folding chairs. Annually the Temple held a Seder for the sixty-or-so families from Marshall and surrounding area towns.

I remember this one Passover when I was about 13, and was seated at the children's table along the side. The chair at the head of the long table was vacant. Into the room swept a lovely 12-year-old girl, wearing a purple cape and carrying a scepter. So help me, she even had a tiara diadem. She was absolutely Queen Esther. The young beauty took command of the table and introduced herself as Iris Futoransky. As Iris came to services nearly each weekend, she and I became friends - maybe more - childhood sweethearts.

A group of us would ride around in cars driven by adults. Now, by today's standards, Iris and I would not be considered sweethearts. There was never a kiss or real affection shown, just hanging out and listening to the original-thinking young lady talk and laugh. Everyone was drawn to Iris week after week in Marshall's Byzantine-style Temple. We would cruise the town's environs usually with several others - just "hanging out." When we were confirmed, those meetings dissolved and I lost track of Iris Futor (Futoransky was shortened).

Fast forward - past World War II and colleges and the twenty-year intervening period. When I came to Houston, I dabbled in theater. Iris (Futor) Siff, with a background of acting, organizing, directing USO tours and whatnot, was a well-known standout official of the Alley Theater. When Iris Siff and I would chance to meet in Houston on rare occasions, it was nostalgic, but gave credence to the "Can't Go Home Again" truism. She was focused on her family and very successful career. Shockingly, tragically, at the Alley Theater where Iris held office, she met a publicized, violent end to her life.

Now, we come to the present - 2004 - and our weekly get-togethers. The man mentioned in the beginning with the blonde 20-year-old walks up to our table, for he is an invited attendee to our meals. For the benefit of those of us who do not know him, the man affirms, "I am Joe Siff, and this is my daughter, Iris Siff." The young lady's resemblance to her late grandmother, also named Iris Siff, is evident. As they sit, I recount for Iris Futor Siff's son, Joe, and his daughter the incidents, which are outlined above. It takes me pleasantly back down the time tunnel they never knew, to how we once were. The meeting at brunch makes me, looking out from under white, thinning hair and from behind my age-slacked face, feel, so help me...young!

◆ TJHS

Voting at the Texas Jewish Historical Society 25th Annual Gathering April 30 - May 2, 2004

Congratulations to the newly elected 2004 - 2006 Officers & Board Members:

| <u>Office</u> | <u>Name</u> | <u>Home City</u> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| President | Marvin Rich | Houston |
| Vice President | Mitzi Milstein | Longview |
| Vice President | Beverly Beck Trachtenberg | Houston |
| Vice President | Jan Hart | Temple |
| Treasurer | Ben Pfeffer | Houston |
| Recording Secretary | Barbara Rosenberg | Sugar Land |
| Corresponding Secretary | Selma Mantel | Houston |
| Historian | Blanche Sheiness | Houston |
| Archivist | Ima Joy Gandler | Waco |
| Parliamentarian | Howard "Rusty" Milstein | Longview |



Elected May 2, 2003 to the Board for 2003 - 2005:

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Home City</u> | <u>Name</u> | <u>Home City</u> |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Elaine Albin | Rockport | Barbara Lack | Victoria |
| Leah Burstein | San Antonio | Annette Lackman | Arlington |
| Bernice Edelstein | Brownsville | Marvin Leshin | Corpus Christi |
| Barry Green | Tyler | Alan Livingston | Houston |
| Elaine Greenberg | Houston | Dr. Louis Pink | Houston |
| Dorothy Harelik | Hamilton | Ralph Robinowitz | Dallas |
| Ruth Heidenheimer | Cisco | Keith Rosen | Bellaire |
| Ed Katten | Waco | Merilee Weiner | Houston |
| Sherman Kusin | Austin | Sherry Zander | Dallas |

Elected to serve on the Board 2004-2006:

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Home City</u> | <u>Name</u> | <u>Home City</u> |
|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Norma Albert | McAllen | Mabel Masin | Houston |
| James Alexander | Dallas | Greg Meyer | San Antonio |
| David Bach | Abilene | Allen Mondell | Dallas |
| Roy Elsner | Odessa | Cynthia Mondell | Dallas |
| I. L. "Buddy" Freed | Austin | John Perel | Houston |
| Sandra Freed | Austin | Sheila Rosenfield | Austin |
| Noel Graubart | Houston | Leta Schoen | Houston |
| Lynn Greenberg | Houston | Davie Lou Solka | Corpus Christi |
| Karen Kaplan | Fort Worth | Max Stool | San Antonio |
| Gladys Leff | Dallas | Hollace Weiner | Fort Worth |

The Membership voted on the following Bylaws' amendments:

Article IX – The President is allowed to authorize an expenditure of up to \$500 without Board approval when it is not feasible to obtain Board approval in a timely manner and he/she deems the funding necessary.

Article IV, B., (f) – To the extent permitted by law, members of the Board of Trustees or any committee thereof may participate in a meeting of the Board or of such committee by means of conference telephone or similar communication equipment by means of which all persons participating in the meeting can hear each other; including, but not limited to an internet "chat room" that can be utilized so that board members can be totally involved with offering and receiving information; and additionally, that the president can use emailed responses in the pursuit of conducting Society business, and participation in a meeting pursuant to this section shall constitute presence at such a meeting. The President shall save a "hard copy" and/or forward, in total, to all Board of Trustees emailed responses so that the Secretary will have them for the Society minutes.

SHARE YOUR NEWS & HISTORY
DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: AUGUST 20, 2004

Do you have news to share? Have you recorded your oral history? Did you take photographs at a TJHS event? Preserve your stories, your memories, historical documents, photographs and more when you send them for inclusion in the Texas Jewish Historical Society News.

August 20, 2004 is the deadline to receive information for the Fall 2004 issue. Please send only color copies of your items to Assistant Editor, Davie Lou Solka, davielou@solka.net or mail to her at 501 Bermuda Place, Corpus Christi, TX, 78411, phone 361-852-5815.

Do not send originals. Color photocopies (even of black and white) work best. Do not risk sending originals, as the TJHS cannot guarantee their return.

We look forward to sharing your news and information with the Texas Jewish Historical Society.

**Visit the Texas Jewish
Historical Society website:
www.txjhs.org**



Attending services in Temple Beth-El, San Antonio, Friday, April 30, 2004.

Texas Jewish Historical Society Membership Form

☐ **YES!** My dues payment to the Texas Jewish Historical Society is enclosed. I have checked the appropriate categories below

I am a: ☐ **New Member** ☐ **Renewing Member**

☐ **\$ 36 - Annual Member**

☐ **\$ 50 - Supporting Member**

☐ **\$ 100 - Sponsor**

☐ **\$ 250 - Sustaining Member**

☐ **\$ 500 - Benefactor**

☐ **\$ 1,000 - Patron**

Name: _____

Spouse's Name: _____ Maiden Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Home Phone: () _____ Fax Number: () _____

Email Address: _____ Website if app. _____

Contributions to the **Texas Jewish Historical Society** are tax deductible within the limits of the law. Please clip and send this form with your check to **TJHS**, P.O. Box 10193, Austin, TX, 78766-0193.

Texas Jewish Historical Society

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Dallas TX
PERMIT NO. 3251

Permanent File
c/o Davie Lou Solka
501 BERMUDA PL
CORPUS CHRISTI TX 78411-2209



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

MAKE PLANS NOW

TO ATTEND

THE TEXAS JEWISH

HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S

26TH ANNUAL GATHERING

APRIL 10 - 11 - 12, 2005

AUSTIN, TEXAS

