

The Texas Jewish Historical Society Magazine



November 2021

The Ku Klux Klan and the Jews of Texas

by Vickie Vogel

With the explosion of white supremacy groups and ideology in the past four years, the role of the Ku Klux Klan and its effect on Texas Jews is worth examining. Evidence suggests the KKK was primarily concerned with race, although ideology included Catholics and Jews among the ranks of the undesirable. Jews were an enemy, according to Imperial Wizard Bill Wilkinson, because they “spend vast sums of money to mongrelize the white race.”¹ The Jewish response was often to ignore provocations, unless they went too far. Many Jewish leaders saw the Klan as “basically a foolish and immature organization, a group of buffoons who created a tempest in a teapot.”²

First appearing in the 1860s as a response to the Civil War, the Klan introduced violence and intimidation during the Reconstruction era. It was suppressed through federal intervention in the early 1870s but revived around 1915 and flourished in the 1920s, reaching an estimated peak membership of 3-6,000,000. The third manifestation appeared after 1950 as the civil rights movement gained momentum,³ but membership in 2021 is estimated at around 3,000 by the Anti-Defamation League.⁴ Our archives contain a large file of original documents, including an application form for membership, copies of speeches, newspaper ads, ADL fact sheets, Southern Poverty Law Center Klanwatch newsletters, and more.⁵

Elected officials who fought the Klan include Lyndon Johnson’s father, Samuel Ealy Johnson Jr., who served in the Texas legislature. He battled the Klan fearlessly at a time when such a stand required great courage. His example against racism and antisemitism helped shaped the future president’s outlook.⁶ Judge Charles Brachfield’s stand

Meet Your Friends --- Ku Klux Klan Day

Wednesday, Oct. 24

STATE FAIR OF TEXAS

Dallas, Texas

PUBLIC INVITED

To witness initiation of the largest class in the history of Klandom.

Spectacular Fire Works—display historical of the Klan.

Inspired addresses by speakers of international reputation.

Massed Band Concert by the famous Ku Klux Klan Bands.

Competitive drills by the Ku Klux Klan and Women of the Ku Klux Klan Drill Teams.

The largest Drum and Bugle Corps in the world.

Reception and decoration of the Original Klansmen of the sixties.

You and your friends are invited to attend this day the most wonderful day of your life.

YESTERDAY
TODAY AND
FOREVER



against the Klan no doubt hampered his campaign for statewide office.⁷

Jewish liberal Democrat A. R. “Babe” Schwartz served in the Texas Legislature from 1955-1981 representing Galveston. The Ku Klux Klan once sent each legislator an honorary membership card. Schwartz took to the Texas House floor to vigorously denounce the organization, pointing out that you can’t be an honorable member of a dishonorable organization.⁸

Many prominent rabbis also fought against the Klan. Local legend in Galveston recounts that Rabbi Henry Cohen and his close friend, Father James Kirwin of the Catholic diocese, stopped the Klan from marching on the island by blocking the causeway bridge.⁹

Between 1920 and 1925, numerous officials in Dallas were said to be members or have Klan sympathies, including a mayor, a police chief, a district attorney, and

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Content

Quarterly Magazine

The Texas Jewish Historical Society Magazine is published four times annually. Stories about Texas Jewish history, oral histories, and requests for assistance with research are welcome, as are photographs and historical documents. We recommend that you provide photocopies of all documents and photographs. Please provide color photocopies or scans at 300 dpi or greater in gif, tif, or jpg format, and send electronically to editor@txjhs.org or by mail to Texas Jewish Historical Society, P. O. Box 10193, Austin, Texas. Be sure to include your name and contact information.

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

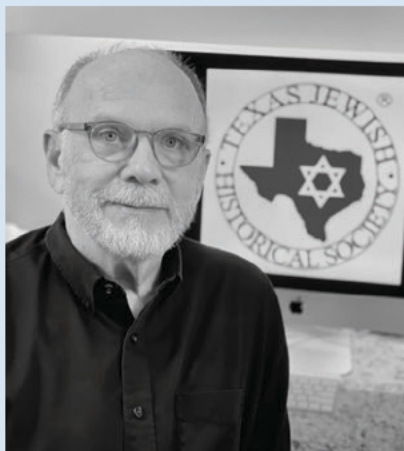
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Save the Date
Sunday, January
16, 2022

TJHS Zoom Board Meeting

**The deadline for
the February 2022
TJHS Magazine is
Friday, January 7.**

Message from the President



In 1980, Dr. Jacob R. Marcus, Professor of American Jewish History at Hebrew Union

College - Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio, was invited to speak at the first gathering of what was to become the Texas Jewish Historical Society. At this gathering, "Dr. Marcus set out four warnings that assured us would either keep the organization going or would be our undoing," as summarized by Rabbi Jimmy Kessler, TJHS founder and first president, in a 2003 retrospective of TJHS.

Those four warnings were:


1. Do not have perpetual officers.
2. Never own a building.
3. Never have a professional staff.
4. Never lend the Society's name

to publish a book for an author unless that author has a commercial publisher who has already agreed to publish the book.

For the past 40 years, TJHS has followed these recommendations, with the partial exception of point #3. Dr. Marcus could not have predicted all the changes in future years that would require professional help. Today, TJHS does have three part-time, paid contract workers: an administrative assistant who handles mail and banking, a graphics editor who designs and lays out the quarterly *TJHS Magazine*, and a bookkeeper who helps prepare quarterly financial reports and annual budgets.

Less than two years ago, TJHS instituted Zoom meetings, an email system, and an upgraded website containing a burial database of over 45,000 entries (requiring continual updating). In the near future, TJHS will provide its members with online registration and payments, as well as newer modes of electronic outreach. To facilitate and manage these TJHS opportunities in the years ahead, professional assistance will be required.

Volunteerism by members, however, will continue to be the hallmark of TJHS success. TJHS has many devoted members who have given their time freely for many years. Most TJHS committees, like Awards and Grants, require hours of committed time over the year to review nominations for the respective programs. The Historic Cemetery Designations Committee requires days of research and visits to county courthouses and cemeteries. The Speakers Bureau requires time for preparation of presentations and either traveling to events or appearing virtually on Zoom. The Meetings Committee requires weeks of preparation of programs, travel logistics, hotel bookings, and more, four times a year. The *TJHS Magazine* Editor works obtaining interesting stories and articles all year-round. And the Board of Trustees serves as volunteers. The contributions of these members are not taken for granted. Everyone's free time is valuable.

The TJHS door is open for new volunteers from among its membership. If you would like to know more about volunteering for TJHS, please write to president@txjhs.org. 


We Need Your Stories!

The Texas Jewish Historical Society would like to print your story if you or your family immigrated to the United States from the former Soviet Union, South Africa, India, or other countries. We have received many stories—and still want to include them—from families who immigrated during the earlier part of the twentieth century, but realize that our beautiful Texas history is much more than those stories. Help us tell the rest of the story and contact editor@txjhs.org if you will include your family's history in the *TJHS Magazine*. 



Row 1—John Campbell, Davie Lou Solka, Susan Novick, Susan & Bob Lewis, Sheldon Lippman
 Row 2—Sally Drayer, Vickie Vogel, Ben & Barbara Rosenberg, Mel Eichelbaum, Joyce Davidoff
 Row 3—Marc Wormser, Rusty Milstein, Sonny & Sharon Gerber, Davie Lou Solka, Kathy Kravitz
 Row 4—Betty Weiner, Joan Linares, Barbara Green Stone, Jan & Charles Hart, Gayle Cannon

Notes from the Board Meeting, October 24, 2021

- Sally Drayer, Archivist/Historian announced that she is making a trip to the Briscoe to give them archival materials. She will be joined by a few other TJHS members to meet with Evan Hocker and look at the Galveston Scroll that is located there.
- Davie Lou Solka announced that although the Briscoe is still closed to the public, reservations may be made for the reading room for research. Only four people at a time will be admitted. Plans are underway for TJHS to share an intern for the Spring semester with the Briscoe. The intern will work on digitizing some of our material. A suggested list will be given to the Center from TJHS.
- Total membership is now 512.
- October 30-31, 2021 will be a Webinar hosted by TJHS and the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society. The theme for the week-end will be “The Galveston Movement” with TJHS members participating. The movie by TJHS members Allen and Cynthia Mondell will be shown and discussed with the filmmakers.
- A Bylaw Committee was appointed to update the Bylaws.
- Davie Lou Solka announced that the next issue of *The TJHS Magazine* (note new title) will be out the end of November or first of December. Subtle changes have been made throughout the *Magazine*.
- Rusty Milstein would like help with the Cemetery Database. Kathy Kravitz continues to work on integrating tombstone photos with the listings.
- John Campbell announced that there have been over 1,000 hits on our website for this quarter. 

Terrell State Hospital Jewish Cemetery

by Jane Manaster

At last count there were close to two hundred Jewish cemeteries in Texas with details of individual burials recorded on the Texas Jewish Historical Society website data base. Let me add one cemetery missed from the list, and although harboring fewer than a dozen burials it is no less important. The Terrell State Hospital, standing 30 miles east of Dallas, has the only Jewish cemetery in a Texas State Hospital. In keeping with Jewish custom, it is privately fenced within the hospital's far larger Wildwood Cemetery. The first Jewish burial was recorded in December 1890, five years after the North Texas Lunatic Asylum, (renamed the Texas State Hospital in 1925) opened a mile northeast of the town in 1885 on a 672.5 acre site purchased with funds appropriated by the 18th Texas Legislature. An additional 561 acres were leased to serve as pasture and cropland for the production of food for the patients. The hospital provided care for the 'chronic incurable insane' to relieve the crowded psychiatric facility in Austin, the original Texas State Hospital.

The demand for an easily accessible location in North Texas and Terrell, close to Dallas and served by the railroad, already had a small Jewish population involved as volunteers and donors, likely providing a measure of comfort to the patients' relatives.

I visited the cemetery on what was surely the hottest, sunniest day this year. The volunteer services coordinator took me to the area reserved for Jewish burials, not far from the larger area under a large tree once reserved for patients of color. We drove from the building complex past the two original 19th century landmarks, a water tower and a small, graceful



Regina Feilschmidt stone.

fountain. The path took us through woods alongside a stream, and out into the blinding sunshine. The Jewish section is tended carefully, cast in a variety of stones, showing no sign of neglect.

The names on the grass-fringed edges of the gravestones, though in good repair, were partially obscured. Perhaps naively, neither of us brought gloves and were challenged by millions of ants defending their territory. They stung!

Who were these men and women whose last days were spent hospitalized in the small town, and who were



Lucille Brin Rosenzweig stone.

laid to rest in such a serene spot? Visually most evident, the marker in the northwest corner commemorates Lucille Brin Rosenzweig (1915-2009), born in Chicago, and who was surely related, closely or distantly, to the Brin family that laid down roots in the town. Brothers Philip and Harris Brin, Polish immigrants who arrived in Terrell as peddlers, opened a successful store within a year, built large, adjacent Victorian houses, erected an opera house that later became a theater, and is today a bookstore. The street where the hospital stands bears the family name. Lucille, one of the first volunteers at the hospital, married Don Rosenzweig who predeceased her in 1989. Together they ran Don's Shoe Shop for 30 years. Their

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Listing of burials in Terrell Cemetery

L. Barnhart—died 12-12-1907
M. Cohen - died 12-15-1890 (first burial)
Regina Balback Feilschmidt -born 1876; died 2-3-1921
Goldberg—born 1881; died 12-6-1907
S. Libowitz—born 1896; died 7-13-1931
J.. Mendelstrom - died 11-15-1906
Lucille Brin Rosenzweig—born 6-6-1915; died 11-29-2009
M. Schwartz—born 1889; died 1-24-1917

Friendly Competitors

by Lanie Tobin Hill

Growing up Jewish in the small West Texas oilfield town of Crane, Texas could be challenging. Just a pinpoint on the Texas map, Crane was comprised of around 3,600 people, depending on the price of West Texas crude oil. But growing up there was also a time filled with pleasant memories. The Passur/Tobin families and the Leaman families bonded in Crane and have remained lifelong friends. We were indeed “friendly competitors.”

Leaman’s Department store stood on the same block as their competing dry goods store, T&P Clothiers. They were only a few stores down from each other on the same block on Gaston Street. The elders of both families had come to Crane to follow the oil boom in the 1920s and 30s.

The T&P Clothiers, which stood for Tobin and Passur, was owned and operated by Helen and Bob Tobin and Charles and Bernice Passur. Helen and Charles were siblings and had come to Crane with their parents, Birdie and Nathan Passur and sister, Evelyn, in 1926. Helen and Bob had two daughters, Lanie and Susan. Charlie and Bernice Passur joyfully attended every event in which their nieces participated.

The Leaman family, owners of Leaman’s Department store, was comprised of Harry and Lisa Leaman, and their sons, Max and his wife Gus who had two children, Bobbye and Rick. Max met and married Gus Sobel, who followed in her sister Sarah Sobel Rabicoff’s footsteps and settled in an oilfield town. The other Leaman brother was Izzy and his wife Leah. Izzy met Leah in Dallas and brought her to Crane. Leah and Izzy had one daughter, Diana, who was the eldest of all the children.



Leah, Izzy, Diana Leaman - Galvez Hotel, Galveston, 1976.

Although the families might have been considered an oddity in the little town, they were accepted by the small Protestant community and both their businesses thrived.

The two families thrived also. Leah and Izzy built a house right next door to the Tobins. Diana, as a teen-

ager, had a pink bedroom with a red carpet that was furnished with white French Provincial furniture. There was also a built-in doll case full of beautiful Madame Alexander dolls. All of the kids were in awe of Diana because she was beautiful and popu-

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lar and we got tours of her bedroom and thought it was the living end!

Meanwhile, Leah Leaman and Helen Tobin talked on the phone with each other for hours even though they lived only a few feet apart. Izzy and Bob played golf together every Sunday—their only day off from the retail business. Bob and Helen and Leah and Izzy made buying trips together to the Dallas Apparel Mart to buy merchandise for their respective stores. The stores had an agreement not to duplicate the same brands, and all the salesmen knew not to sell these two buyers the same thing.

Growing up Jewish in a small town like Crane may not seem easy but our mothers were especially significant in helping us keep our Jewish identity.

Diana Leaman was the first to attend Sunday School at Temple Beth El in Odessa. Every Sunday, her mother made the sixty-four-mile round trip with Diana in tow. She was confirmed there. Lanie and Susan Tobin and Bobbye and Ricky Leaman



Max, Rick, and Gus Leaman at Rick's Bar Mitzvah, 1965, Temple Beth El, Odessa.

were taken to Sunday School every Sunday in a carpool to Odessa which was driven by either Gus or Helen, depending on whose turn it was. The

kids usually had such fun riding to Odessa and back. We played games and sang songs on the way to Temple Beth El and usually slept on the way home after a nice meal at a restaurant in Odessa after Sunday School.

Every year there was a Purim talent contest at Sunday School and Ricky, Bobbye Lanie and Susan dressed up in cowboy attire. Ricky's mom drew a mustache on his face. He must have been all of nine or ten. He looked adorable! We called ourselves "The Crane County Cornballs." We each played an instrument and played a song that usually won the contest every year.

Our mothers, Helen and Gus, ran the Sunday School at Temple Beth El in Odessa for years. They acted as principals and provided the music by playing the piano for assemblies. There was a rather large enrollment in the Sunday School then. Because of their involvement in the Sunday

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Passur and Tobin families, 1962. Back: Charles Toubin, Bernice Passur, Lanie Tobin Hill, Nathan Passur, Evelyn Passur, Helen Tobin, Bob Tobin. Front: Paul Stern, Birdie Passur, Susan Tobin Chisum.



Reunion of Crane residents, July 4, 2021. Standing: Natalie Hill, Lanie Tobin Hill, Rick Leaman, Susan Tobin Shisum. Seated: Gary Edmiston, Diana Leaman Edmiston, Bobby Leaman Harwell.

school, our mothers made sure we never missed. We all had stacks of perfect attendance awards on our shelves. The awards were gold and had a large Star of David at the top! As I got older, these trips were harder for us to make, as we kids wanted to be riding around in Crane with our friends on Sunday. But it was because of our mother's insistence in attending Sunday School that we never lost our Jewish identity. We feel gratitude for our mothers who made this journey to the synagogue in Odessa for years! Gus Leaman also taught Hebrew in the Sunday School and in later years became an English teacher at Crane High School.

The Leamans and Tobin/Passur family brought a certain "flavor" to the town of Crane. Birdie Passur, the grandmother, made delicious food in her kitchen. Her special pastry was a strudel which she called *gebecks* from the old country, and was to die for. The grocery boys who delivered her groceries said they loved all the


smells wafting from her kitchen. She and Nathan spoke Yiddish when they didn't want anyone to know what they were saying.

Harry and Lisa Leaman were also the mainstays of the Leaman family and helped run the department store. They also spoke Yiddish in their store.

Both businesses closed on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The families also had joint Seders. Once Leah and Izzy gave a Seder and the food had to be brought in from Dallas. There was nowhere to obtain Passover food in West Texas then.

The two Jewish families in Crane were the best of friends. Though there were many happy times to remember, there were some unhappy times too. Diana Leaman and Lanie Tobin, who were the oldest, never experienced antisemitism. However, Rick Leaman and Susan Tobin did. They both were humiliated in front of their whole class by their Algebra teacher, who said they should have to

go to school on the Easter Holidays and Christmas holidays, since they got off for the Jewish holidays. There was a subtle undercurrent of antisemitism in Crane which we tried to ignore. But it was there.


On the whole, the two families fared well in Crane. Both had thriving businesses, and were able to practice their religion, with their children going on to be educated successful adults. Our parents and grandparents were truly "friendly competitors" who respected each other completely and were glad to have another Jewish family in Crane. The memory of growing up there is special and will stay in our hearts. 

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children and grandchildren settled in different cities and states, some even making their home overseas.

Each of the markers shows the date the patient passed, a few revealing also the birthdate. In 1907, smallpox was prevalent, sweeping through the hospital. L. Barnhart and ? Goldberg were buried in December of that year. Did they succumb to the epidemic?

Covid has shut the door on answers to certain mysteries. Regina Balback, (1876-1921) was born in Vienna, married to Leopold (Lieb) Feildschmidt, and was remembered by her five children. A second marker, dedicated to 'Our Beloved Mother,' identifies her as Regina Feildschmidt.

Today's family members will have answers to these and other questions; perhaps some remain interested in their Texas origins. 

The Galveston Movement

The Laves Family: From Kishinev, Moldavia to Fort Worth, Texas

by Davie Lou Solka

In 1907, European Jews began coming to the United States via Galveston, Texas. They were routed from locations along the East Coast to relieve crowding in overpopulated cities and prevent a public wave of antisemitism, which could lead to immigration restrictions. This immigration continued until 1914 and became known as the Galveston Movement. If your family came through Galveston during that time, send your Galveston Movement story to editor@txjhs.org.

Growing up, many of my sixteen cousins, my brother and I were told by our parents that my mother's family had immigrated from Kiev, Russia. It was not until many years later when I began interviewing some of the remaining aunts and uncles that I discovered that the family had actually come from Kishinev, the capital of Russian Bessarabia, to immigrate to the United States. Ben Zion and Leah (Moses) Lazeroitch had married in 1897 in Kremenchug and moved to Kishinev from Kremenchug early in their marriage so Ben could open a tailor shop. In 1918, after Ben and Leah had left Kishinev, the Union of Bessarabia with Romania was proclaimed by the legislative body of the Moldavian Democratic Republic.

Ben and Leah's Ketubah states that Ben's parents were Yehuday Lieb Halevi and Chai Yenta. Leah's par-

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Back: Mitchell, David, Abe, Dora, Harry/Buckshot, Sarah, Louis. Front: Sam, Ben, Rebecca, Leah, Harry/Izzy. Photo taken in Fort Worth.



Boys wearing Military school uniforms in Kishinev. Back: Mitchell, Sam, Harry/Izzy, Sarah. Sitting: Louis, Abe, Harry/Buckshot, Leah, David, Ben holding Dora.

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ents were Pesach Moses and Rebecca. Leah's passport says that in 1914 her name was Leia Leiserovitch. The name was changed at some point because Ben was told that Laves was more Americanized than Lazerovitch. Today some members of the family pronounce the name Lav-es, and others, Laves—we call it the Northern and Southern version.

Ben Zion's older brother, who was ten years older, had a tailor shop in Kishinev, but Ben wanted his own business. His workmanship was superior to that of his older brother. They both had shops near the town square with Ben being known as the "younger one." His tailoring was noticed by an officer in the Czar's army, and when questioned about the work of the tailor, and told it was the work of Ben Zion Lazerovitch, the officer immediately came to the shop for a fitting. Although Ben was not allowed to touch the officer, he could "eye" an individual and make the suit to fit. He became well known and was awarded a special medal that was placed outside his shop proclaiming to all that he was an official tailor for the Tzar's Army. Mitchell Laves recalled that he would serve wine to the soldiers waiting to be measured.

Ben Zion and Leah were well liked and had a good social life in Kishinev. They hosted many dinners in the large dining room in their spacious apartment, with three maids and a cook helping. They had a box seat at the opera. Kishinev, according to Mitchell Laves, was a "nice town," but no one liked the Jews. There were a few synagogues and electric street cars. Some people owned automobiles, but there were mostly horse and buggies. Two of Ben's best friends were the head of the local bank, and the priest at the Orthodox Cathedral. Life was good and their seven sons, Louis, Harry "Izzy," Sam, Mitchell,

Abe, Harry "Buckshot," and David attended a boys' military school, and all of the children had many kinds of lessons—dance, piano, violin, Hebrew and religious lessons.

Ben began to hear about mistreatment of the Jews in surrounding area, and thought that it could not happen in Kishinev. However, on April 6-9, 1903, the famous "Kishinev Pogrom" happened. Ben, his shop, and many of his friends, were spared, and he still felt fairly comfortable. However, several years later in October, 1905, his friends, the banker and the priest, came to him and told him that more pogroms were coming and he needed to leave with his family. He still protested, but they persisted, and helped him purchase tickets, and obtain visas. Ben sold his tailor business and he and his two older sons, Louis and Harry "Izzy," left Kishinev in 1910 to travel to the United States. They traveled by train and buggy to Bremen, Germany, where they sailed to embark in Galveston, Texas. They were met by Leah's brother, Wolf (Velvel) Moses.

They went to Fort Worth, Texas, and Ben opened a tailor shop which eventually became a men's clothing store. In 1913, he, Louis and Harry "Izzy" had worked hard, and saved enough money to go back and get Leah, the other five boys, plus Sarah and Dora (their tenth child, Rebecca, was born in the United States.) They took the same route to Bremen, and sailed to Galveston, where they were met in Galveston by Leah's other brother, Marcus Moses, and then on to Fort Worth. Mitchell remembers that Dora was sick and they spent a lot of time in the doctor's office. Sam said he carried the almost two-year-old Dora off the boat and held her tightly because she had been sick on the voyage, and they were afraid immigration would not let her and/or

them in. However, they all passed, and traveled by train to Fort Worth. Leah had brought her Sabbath candlesticks, her brass Samovar, and a pestle and mortar that her grandchildren and some of her great-grandchildren have in their homes today.

The store was on Main Street near the depot and Mitchell Laves said that Louis and Izzy did not work in the store, but went to work for someone else. Mitchell, who was ten or eleven when they arrived, was placed in the first grade when he and Sam went to school. Mitchell was tested several times, and finally settled in the third grade. The boys spoke Russian and Yiddish, and everyone else spoke English.

When Mitchell was seventeen, he was the only one available to work in the store. One morning after he opened the store, a black Pullman conductor said, "Why are you opening so late?" Mitchell said, "What do you mean?" The conductor said, "We have a train that gets here at 5:00 every morning from West Texas, and the oil field workers are looking for clothes. If you want to sell merchandise, you need to be open for them." So, the next morning, Mitchell got up at 4:00 a.m. and opened the store. Before he knew it, he had a store full of customers and took in about \$400 that morning. When Ben came in and saw that the inventory was down, he said "What happened? Did someone break in?" Mitchell told Ben that he couldn't sleep, so he came to the store, opened it, and sold all the missing merchandise. When Ben saw all the money, they began to open for the 5:00 AM train.

The family lived in a small house at 819 Cherry Street (1913—Rebecca born here.) Other places the Laves lived were 423 Wheeler (1921), 403 S. Adams (1930-1932 - Dora and

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Ben Laves

Rebecca married here), 423 College Street (1946-1949) and 3609 Dryden Road (1949-1971). The family was naturalized November 17, 1921, in Judge Wilson's Northern District Federal Court, Fort Worth, TX, with the certificate issued to Ben Laves.

With ten children, life was interesting. According to R.D. Moses, a cousin, the once-a-month family dinners were bedlam! Many stories were told about life in the Laves' household. Ben had two ways—his way and his way, according to grandson, Benard. He was very strict with his three daughters, but loving. When they sat down to dinner, he would not allow the meal to begin until Leah sat down, and then made sure that she did not have to get up again to serve. One of the children did the serving—and as Benard said, "She was the Queen and he never let anyone forget it." Benard remembered the homemade ice cream that they made—he had to sit on the ice cream maker while someone turned it—"and it was very bumpy and cold!" The family also made their own wine for all the holidays and Shabbat. The girls would



Leah Laves

wash the bottles and help cork the beverages. One Passover, the weather became warm and the wine that was being prepared became too hot and the lids all popped off spraying wine everywhere.

In addition to the holidays, the girls would clean the house and help with kitchen chores. As Sarah remembered, Leah had her "beat the hell out of my arms to make a sponge cake." There were lots of pots and pans and dishes and even Mitchell admitted that the while the girls were washing dishes, the boys did nothing. Traditional Shabbat dinners were held every week and everyone had to be there. As everyone married, and moved to different cities, lunches on Sunday became the norm, because everyone drove to Fort Worth to see Ben and Leah and the rest of the family. Since they were all in the retail business (most in jewelry), Sunday was the only day they were closed. All of the brothers and sisters cared for each other and got along very well. They helped each other when necessary and never had a fight.

Ben was chauvinistic in his treat-

ment of women and made everyone, including the boys, "toe the line." Sarah said that as the first girl born after seven sons she didn't get along with her father because she thought the girls should be treated like the boys. Her birth made him rethink the treatment of his children, but he did continue his European way of thinking regarding women. The brothers had the same attitude, but as they got older and married, that changed.

The family walked to synagogue services and sat on a bench reserved for them. Leah and Ben would sit down and then as many who could would squeeze in on the bench. The rest sat nearby and the grandchildren played outside with the other children.

Leah was sweet, calm, gentle, warm, and loving. She loved having children around and would gather them together and play with them. Everyone respected her and her seven daughters-in-law all spoke very highly of "Mother Laves." She ran a strict kosher home, and she and Ben were a good-looking couple—he was tall, young looking and had a handsome moustache. She was short and petite when they married, but after ten children and the passing years, she became stouter, but still beautiful.

The store on Main Street continued to do well, and Harry/Izzy was working in Chicago because he "wanted to see the world." He finally came home and with some of the other brothers, helped in the store. They were doing so well, they decided to open more stores. The last store they opened was near the Westbrook Hotel in Fort Worth, selling high-end men's clothes. This made a total of four stores, all named "Ben Laves." In 1921, the stock market fell, and along with everything else, they lost the stores—first, the high-end store,

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and then the others. However, they kept the one near the depot. Izzy and Mitchell were in that store, and everyone else went out on their own.

Mitchell took some of the merchandise and opened a store in Decatur, Texas. He was there about four years, and then bought a store in Mexia, Texas. After a while, business slowed down and he told Ben he was going to Dallas. He opened a store on Pecan Street with the name of Laves Pawn Shop.

Louis was working in a high-end men's shop selling ladies shoes when he married Lillian Goldstein. They started their own store in Fort Worth, but then went to Sanger, Texas. Business was not that good in Sanger, so they moved to Austin, when Lil's sister, Edna Novy, told them of the opportunities there. They opened a pawn shop on East Sixth Street, also named Laves Bros. Their children are Benard (Cecile Perry) (both deceased) and Harold Pacey (Myra Efron) Laves.

In the meantime, Izzy and Sam had opened a store with space for cleaning and pressing men's clothes. Mitchell had some jewelry and cases, and asked if they could work together. They put the cleaning and pressing equipment in the back and the jewelry cases in the front and named the store Laves Bros., with Izzy, Sam, and Mitchell as the owners. Izzy married Ann Selikoff and Sam married Gertrude Persky, and they stayed in business together until they died. They were well known for their "bar" in the back and many friends came to share a drink and commiserate about the topics of the day. Izzy and Ann's children are Lee (Joann Gasper) Laves (both deceased) and Gloria (Larry) Haberman. (Larry is deceased). Sam and Gertie's children are Jack (Sondra Leva) Laves and Lana (Stan) Latman.

Mitchell left Laves Bros. in Fort Worth when he married Rose Reichman. Her brother, Sam, asked Mitchell to join him in buying small stores that were going out of business, with the first one in Hillsboro, Texas. They then opened stores in Seguin and McKinney, Texas. Mitchell and Rose's daughter is Shirley (Jack) Pollock. (Jack is deceased.)

Abe was working for Gordon's, a men's store in Fort Worth, when he married Grace Luskey.

They moved to Tyler with some money that Grace had, and opened a pawn/jewelry store. Their children are Dorothy (Lee) Wolchansky (Lee is deceased) and Bruce (Beverly Pactor) Laves.

Harry/Buckshot was drafted into the Army during World War II, and when he came home, he married Florence Levy in Wichita Falls. They lived in Austin, and were in the pawn shop on Sixth Street with Louis and Lil. For a while, Buckshot ran McKinnon's Jewelry Store on Congress, but when the family decided to close that store, Buckshot and Florence decided to buy Rialto Jewelry Store from Florence's father in Alice and move there. They ran Rialto Jewelry until they both died. Their daughter is Rosalyn (John Kahn) Laves.

After graduating from the University of Texas in Austin with a degree in electrical engineering, David moved to New York and lived for a year with Harry/Buckshot there. (Family lore says Buckshot was there to "chaperone" David.) David met and married Libby Held, and opened Quad Machinery in Maywood, NJ, where he and Libby became very active in their community. Their children are Michael (Debbie Gross) and Ben (Mary Sorrentio) Laves.

Sarah eloped with Isidore Sack and they moved to Coleman, Texas, to run a dry goods store. They lived

there about fifteen months, and then moved to Greenville, thinking business would be better there. They lived in Greenville about four years, and then moved to Tyler, where they opened a pawn shop with Abe just before World War II began. In addition to the pawn shop they bought another store, Schiff Jewelry Store, which they owned until 1982 when Abe died, and Sarah and Isidore moved to Fort Worth. Their children are Pauline (Leonard) Carp (both deceased) and Ruthie (David) Greenberg.

Dora married Eddie Ettelman. He had concession stands in many places around Fort Worth, including the Colonial Country Club, but decided to take an offer from Sam Tannenbaum to run a store in Greenville, Texas. After a couple of years working for Sam Tannenbaum, Eddie and Dora opened a pawn shop, which did very well with the Majors Army Airforce Base nearby. In November, 1944, a fire destroyed the block where their store, Ettelman's, was located and all of the businesses on the block were gone. They took that opportunity to move to Kilgore, Texas, which had more Jewish families than Greenville. They opened a jewelry store, which evolved into a discontinued china and crystal business. (See article about Ettelman's Discontinued China and Crystal business in *TJHS News Magazine* August, 2008.) Their children are Raymond (Polly Kins) Ettelman, who are both deceased, and Davie Lou (Jack) Solka.

Rebecca married Mitchel Victor, who also served in World War II. She lived with Ben and Leah while he was away, and after Ben died in 1942, Leah continued to live with Becky and Mitchel. They also worked at Laves' Bros in Fort Worth until Mitchel left to go to work for Zale's Jewelry. Their children are Ellen (Mark) Diamond (Mark deceased) and Bonnie

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In Memoriam



FORREST GARB, TJHS member, died April 10, 2021 in Dallas. He is survived by his wife, Joyce and children David Garb, Kara Grant, Joyce's children Pam (Bill) Behrens, John (Michelle) Payton, former wife, Jan Blair, seven grandchildren and their spouses, five great-grandchildren, and friend of 75 years, Hal Lowes.



ARTHUR GURWITZ, TJHS member, died April 30, 2021, in San Antonio. He is survived by son, Jonathan (Rachel) and two grandchildren.



DR. NEIL ROSS GURWITZ, former TJHS Board Member, died in Bastrop September 24, 2021. He is survived by his wife, Betty, and children, Anita (Leslie) Feigenbaum (former TJHS Board Member); Karen (David) Kahan; Elliott (Emily) Gurwitz and six grandchildren.



RUTH HEIDENHEIMER, former TJHS board member, died February 5, 2021, in Plano. She lived in Cisco and Abilene. She was preceded in death by her husband and former TJHS Board Member, Winston Heidenheimer. She is survived by her son, Mark (Kathy) Heidenheimer, and two grandchildren.

YETTA LESHIN, former TJHS board member, died October 23, 2021, in Corpus Christi. She is survived by her sons, Richard (Pam), Steve (Laura), Dr. Len (Bobbie) Leshin, seven grandchildren and their spouses, and seven great-grandchildren.



MARTHA SCHARLACK RABINOWITZ, TJHS member, died August 23, 2021 in San Antonio. She is survived by her husband, Bernard Rabinowitz; her children, Paula Rabinowitz, Caryn (Philip) Rabinowitz Landes, and David (Michele) Rabinowitz, nine grandchildren and their spouses, and seven great-grandchildren.



HAROLD SILBERBERG, TJHS member, died March 15, 2021, in Austin. He is survived by his children, Jay (Langdon) Silberberg, John (Missy Morgan) Silberberg, Celia (Barry Jucha) Silberberg, Harriett (Alan) Schwartz, five grandchildren, and eleven great-grandchildren.


May their memories be a blessing.

Laves, continued from page 12

(deceased) (Bruce) Victor-Fried.

Ben and Leah's children were successful in their own communities, and held various positions of leadership in their congregations and their local non-Jewish communities. They had eighteen grandchildren, and as of today (2021) their descendants include thirty-nine great-grandchildren, fifty-nine great-great-grandchildren, and six (with another on the way) great-great-great-grandchildren.

Ben Zion died December 21, 1942, and Leah died June 16, 1955. Both are buried in Ahavath Sholom Hebrew Cemetery in Fort Worth, along with many of their children and their spouses.

As the family has grown, so have the many simchas in the family. Because of COVID, distance, and size of families, it is not always easy for everyone to be at the simchas. There have been a couple of reunions of the family, with the latest one held July, 2021, via Zoom. Many of the younger generation who attended had never met some of their cousins, and everyone was happy to be able to "Meet and Greet." All are looking forward to future reunions! 

If you need TJHS membership applications for an event, program, personal use, etc., please contact Rusty Milstein at hrmilstein@prodigy.net.

Meet Your Board

DEIDRA B. CIZON lives in Dallas with her husband, Gordon, who is also a T J H S Board Member. She is a native of Fort Worth and was a member of Beth El Congregation.



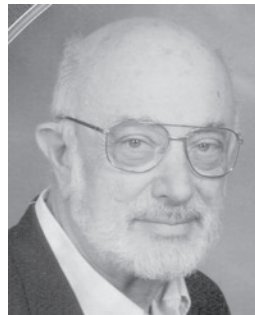
JOYCE WORMSER, Pearland, was born in Corpus Christi and is married to Marc, TJHS Membership Chairman. They have two sons and four grandchildren. She worked as Employee Relations Officer for one thousand employees at the Corpus Christi State School. In 2010 she and Marc moved to Pearland to be closer to their sons and their families.



MARC WORMSER, TJHS Past President, lives in Pearland and is an “Aggie at heart.” He has been a traveling sales rep for Levis, C.R. Gibson, gifts, and medical sales. He owned a recruiting firm and was active in scouting and Optimist Club. He and his wife, Joyce, travel whenever they can. He maintains the database for membership and dues.



JACK SOLKA was born in Mexico City and immigrated to Texas in 1945. He grew up in Corpus Christi. Jack



received a Bachelor’s degree in Architecture from Texas A & M College and a Masters in Architecture from Columbia University in New York City. He had his own architectural firm in Corpus Christi for over forty years. He is married to TJHS Past President and *The TJHS Magazine* editor, Davie Lou Solka. They have three sons and daughters-in-law and six grandchildren—two are married. He and Davie Lou relocated to Austin in 2007 to be closer to their family. In addition to his TJHS work, Jack has volunteered in construction management projects for non-profit organizations in Austin. He has been a member of Rotary since 1968, and continues this active role in Austin. He was involved in the moving of the Brenham Historic B’nai Abraham Synagogue to Austin from Brenham, Texas. Jack is a member of the Grant Committee.

KATHY CORNELISON KRAVITZ



grew up in Oklahoma City, but now lives in Austin. After graduating from the University of Oklahoma, she taught high school biology and geometry. She did graduate work in botany, then was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Colombia. She met her husband, Bruce, while working for AT&T/Western Electric as

a Statistical Quality Control Engineer. They moved to New Zealand, where she was the Quality Manager for Mitel Telecommunications NZ. Their son, Scott, was born there. In 1991, they moved to Austin, where she has worked a variety of jobs, including Assistant Librarian for AISD, and volunteering for numerous organizations. Kathy currently spends most of her days working on TJHS Cemetery Committee needs, although she continues to volunteer for other organizations and tries to find time to “play” in her garden, walk in nature and occasionally travel to new places.

MEL EICHELBAUM is a retired attorney and practiced law for over forty years. He is a published author, having published the book *The Legal Aid Lawyer*, in 2019.



He enjoys speaking to law schools and civic groups about his book and the significant civil rights and poverty law reform cases in which he was engaged. These events are described in his book. Mel is interested in history and photography. He is married to Marlene, also a TJHS Board Member.

MARLENE EICHELBAUM

is now retired after having served as a Paralegal/Office Manager in her husband, Mel’s, law practice for twenty-five years. Prior to that she taught middle school and high school



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Board, continued from page 14

math for eleven years. She is now involved with the National Council of Jewish Women, working with voter registration, cooking, baking, and of course, playing Mah Jongg. Marlene enjoys visiting old synagogues, and looks forward to the opportunity to do this with TJHS, and her husband, Mel, who is also a TJHS Board Member.

JOAN KATZ is from Houston, Texas, and is a Past President of a branch



of National Women's League and the Lions Club. She has been an AZA advisor, held many offices

in Beth Yeshurun Sisterhood and Hadassah. She is a life-time member of the Houston Livestock show and Fort Bend County Fair. Joan enjoys cooking. Joan attended the University of Oklahoma and the University of Houston. She is a member of Alpha Epsilon Phi sorority.

MARILYN LIPPMAN now lives in Dallas, but has connections to Fayette



County. She is the Treasurer of Temple Israel in Schulenberg and a Board Member

of the Jewish Cemetery in Hallettsville. Marilyn is employed with Ericsson, Inc. in Plano, as a Business Operations Manager. In her spare time, she enjoys hot yoga, hiking, and gardening—especially mowing lawns!

JIM BERNICK, Beach City, Texas



was born and raised in Los Angeles, and graduated from USC with a degree in history. He and his wife,

Pam, moved to Baytown forty years ago, and have been active members of Congregation Kneseth Israel. They raised their family, practiced medicine and participated in community organizations in Baytown.

LOUIS KATZ retired as vice president of



Wholesale Plumbing Supply and is now a real estate investor. Louis is past president of

Wholesale Distributors; member of the Texas Association of Fairs; Fort Bend County fair and Rodeo, Stafford; Missouri City Lions Club; life member of Hadassah; advisor to Loeb AZA; life member of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo; Treasurer of the Stafford Historical Society; and member of Congregation Beth Yeshurun. He is married to Joan, also a TJHS Board Member.

CYNTHIA ROOSTH WOLF was born in Galveston and grew up in Tyler. She graduated from Newcomb College with a BA in English, and received a Bachelor of Music from Lamar University in Beaumont, where she lives with her husband, Michael,



also a TJHS Board Member. She taught English and history at Randolph Air Force Base, and

English and Spanish at Central High School in Beaumont. She has been active in her community, and has served as President of Sisterhoods in Fort Smith, Arkansas and Beaumont. She has served on the board of Women of Reform Judaism at the District and National level, and is a board member of Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas, Symphony of Southeast Texas, and Temple Emanuel. Cynthia has three children and four grandchildren. She is Chair of the Awards Committee.

CINDY LINDAUER is a third generation Austinite. She graduated from



Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, with a degree in Special Education and

earned a Masters Education in Learning Disabilities from the University of Miami. She has two adult children, and has worked in the film industry as a studio teacher for thirty-one years. She enjoys researching her family's genealogy, travelling, and Mah Jongg. Currently, she is Sisterhood President at Congregation Agudas Achim in Austin, and belongs to a local genealogy group.

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Guess This Member

Again, no one came forth with the name of this pretty lady—This is Joan Katz from Houston, and she has stumped most of you for a year! This cute picture was first published




in the September, 2020, issue of *The TJHS Magazine*. On to the next pretty lady.

This pretty lady is a relatively new Board Member, but has already made a name for herself in the work she is doing for TJHS. She stepped forward when a need was mentioned and is doing a great job.

Email your guess to editor@txjhs.org any time beginning Monday, November 29. Entries received before that date will not be considered. Family members and previous winners and their families are not eligible to participate. Good luck! If you'd like to try and stump the TJHS membership, please send your photo to editor@txjhs.org. 



CORRECTION TO ARTICLE ON ROSE BRILLING

In the September issue of *The TJHS Magazine*, the article on Rose Brillling stated that she made the arrangements for President Franklin D. Roosevelt to arrive on stage to nominate Alfred Smith as the June, 1928 Democratic nominee for President. It should have read "...arrangements for Franklin D. Roosevelt." Mr. Roosevelt had been Secretary of the Navy and a New York State Senator before being nominated for New York Governor in November, 1928, and President in 1932, and was powerful enough in national politics to be considered a leader who could get attention and support for Al Smith at that convention. Later, however, he and Al Smith became political adversaries. 

Mazel Tov

To **Jan and Charles Hart** upon the award presented to their daughter, Debbie Roberson, who was recognized #21 of the Top 100 Aggie owned companies for FY 2016-2020. The award was presented at the Hall of Champions at Kyle Field in College Station on October 23, 2021

TJHS on Facebook

TJHS on Facebook: Search *Texas Jewish Historical Society* on your device and "Like" us!



Please Note:

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

Texas Jewish Historical Society and New Mexico Jewish Historical Society Host Galveston Movement Webinar

by Sheldon Lippman



Dr. Bryan Stone spoke on his research who arrived on the Cassell, the first ship to land in Galveston in 1907.



Allen & Cynthia Salzman Mondell discussed the making of "West of Hester Street."

After two years of planning with one postponement in 2020 due to Covid and a conversion from an in-person conference to a Webinar, still due to Covid (2021), the joint effort by the Texas Jewish Historical Society and the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society finally had its successful presentation. "West of Hester Street: The Galveston Movement and Jewish Immigration to the Southwest" provided a virtual podium to scholars, filmmakers, and family members with strong links to the topic. More than 120 viewers linked onto the two-day Webinar, which included a Zoom breakout session at the end of both days that allowed for more informal Q&A and chat among the speakers and attendees.

The planning committee did their organizing work via Zoom over several months. The TJHS Committee members were Sheldon Lippman, President, Sally Drayer, Vickie Vogel, and Susan Zack Lewis. NMJHS committee members were Linda Goff, President, Harvey Buchalter, Bette Evans, Jeff Brown, and Joy Rosenberg.

The sessions on Saturday, October 30, 2021, included "West of Hester Street" film directors, Allen & Cynthia Salzman Mondell (Dallas) discussing the making of the film; "Descendants of the Galveston Immigrants," -Cousins Bette Evans (Santa Fe, New Mexico), Harry Harelik (Waco), Jan Hart (Temple), and David Hoffman (Evant). Rachel Cockerell (London, United Kingdom) was a special guest panelist.

The Sunday, October 31, 2021 sessions included "The Legacy of the Klein family in Las Cruces, New Mexico" Noel Pugach (Las Cruces, New Mexico); "Through Galveston into the Hinterland: The Galveston Movement Immigrants and the Communities They Entered," Bryan E. Stone (Corpus Christi, Texas); "The Meyers Brothers in Albuquerque and Amarillo: Jewish Siblings in two early 20th Century Southwest Communities," Naomi Sandweiss

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many members of the police and fire departments.¹⁰ Rabbi Levi Olan of Temple Emanu-El followed in Rabbi David Lefkowitz's footsteps not only in the temple's leadership, but also in the struggle against the Klan - Lefkowitz in the 1920s and Olan in the 1950s.¹¹ Lefkowitz attacked the Klan as anti-American. Partnering with George Dealey, publisher of the *Dallas Morning News*, their one-two punch seriously damaged the Klan in Dallas. The message to Dallas Jewry was that some form of assimilation was the key to survival, with Jews and non-Jews working together to fight discrimination.¹²

Rabbi Dr. Samuel Rosinger fought the Klan in Beaumont when it stymied his efforts to integrate the Jefferson County Tuberculosis Hospital. He formed an alliance with prominent Jewish and Catholic families to use religious harmony in the fight against the Klan's racism.¹³

Other rabbis tried to smooth over the turmoil caused by the Klan to minimize its importance. Rabbi George Fox of Fort Worth wrote in the *Jewish Monitor* that he found no

evidence supporting rumors of a boycott of Dallas department stores, and warned that repeating rumors could make things worse. He wrote, "Our own feeling in the matter is that the alleged prejudice against the Jews in these organizations is exaggerated and that we can only make matters worse by consistently dwelling upon the unfortunate intrusion into the calmness of American life, of racial and religious prejudices."¹⁴

Rabbi Lefkowitz agreed that this often could be true, writing, "My objection to fighting the Ku Klux Klan through the papers is that it gives this organization the publicity it wants and upon which it thrives. I believe that it can be more easily combatted by silence... We here in Dallas are taking the latter tack of silence..."¹⁵

The reluctance of Rabbi Fox to respond to the KKK stemmed from his knowledge of who they were. They were part of the local power structure and had welcomed him into the city's organizations. He relied on one-to-one conversations with them, rather than public denunciation. Ironically, when Fox left Fort Worth, his farewell luncheon was presided over by W. A. "Bill" Hanger, a former state senator and presumably the head of the Fort Worth Klan.

Others in the Fort Worth Jewish community felt the Klan's wrath. Sol Rosenthal, a wholesaler of meat to restaurants, had his cold-storage unit shut off one night. He opened his own meat plant outside the city limits.¹⁶

Lefkowitz, however, also publicly called for a protest meeting in 1922 against the firing of a Jewish city employee so the Klan-affiliated Mayor Sawnie R. Aldredge could install "one of their own" in the position. Aldredge quickly denied he was a Klan member.¹⁷

The *Dallas Dispatch*, an evening newspaper at the time, decided to

publicize the names of attendees at a Klan rally by tracing license plate numbers of cars. Jewish Louis Tobian had recently sold his car and the new owner was at the rally. The paper published Tobian's name as an attendee. He wrote a letter to the editor, clarifying that "the only clan to which he belonged was Dr. David Lefkowitz's, the rabbi of Temple Emanu-El."¹⁸

The Klan's presence was felt throughout Texas. Texas Jews often had unpleasant interactions with Klan members, and many of these stories are found in *The TJHS Magazine*.¹⁹ Yetta Wachstein Hochman lived in Goose Creek, an oil boomtown and a hotbed of Klan activity in the 1920s. Once when her husband was away on a buying trip, a group of drunken Klansmen were milling around her house, drawing closer and closer. Yetta grabbed an American flag in her left hand and a cast-iron skillet in her right and stepped outside to confront them. She told them, "I am an American...I have just as many rights as you have...and I have right [sic] to say who can be on my property. Now get the hell off my property or I'll go inside and get the shotgun." She took her skillet and hit the closest one on the head just as hard as she could and knocked him out. The group dispersed and left her property.²⁰

Marshall, Texas in 1921 was visited by a Ku Klux Klan organizer. The community made it clear he was not wanted and should leave as soon as he could pack his grip. A group of leading citizens, learning that the rules of the Klan prohibited the admission of Catholics and Jews, stated it was opposed to the introduction into Marshall of a body that would harm the healthy spirit of the community and create ill will among its citizens.²¹

In its heyday in the 1920s, the

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NON-KLANSMEN ATTENTION

One of the biggest naturalization ceremonies in the history of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan will be held in front of the Grand Stand at the State Fair of Texas, Wednesday night, October 24th.

This will be KLAN DAY at the Fair and it has been stated that a class of 10,000 candidates will be initiated that night. Many men have never been approached to become affiliated with this great organization, and to give you an opportunity to become a part of this big class, we are printing below a questionnaire.

Fill this questionnaire out and mail it to George K. Butcher, P. O. Box 368, Dallas, Texas:

Name of Applicant.....

Residence address.....

Business address.....

Residence Phone..... Business Phone.....

Employed by.....

Church affiliation.....

Wife's church affiliation.....

Father's church affiliation.....

Mother's church affiliation.....

Age..... Height..... Weight.....

How long have you lived in this city?.....

In what city were you born?.....

Give below the names of five references who can vouch for your character, including the pastor of your church.

Pastor's name.....

Address.....

Reference.....

Address.....

Reference.....

Address.....

Reference.....

Address.....

Reference.....

Address.....

I, the undersigned, a native born, true and loyal citizen of the United States of America, being a white male, Gentile person of temperate habits, sound in mind and a believer in the tenets of the Christian religion, the maintenance of White Supremacy and the principles of a "pure Americanism," do most respectfully apply for membership in the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan through Klan No. 66 of Dallas, Realm of Texas.

(SIGNED).....

KKK, continued from page 18

Klan was active in Palestine and boasted over a thousand members. The Beth Israel congregation in the town had forty members. They left no reports of local Jews, who were to be found among Palestine's notable citizens, facing prejudice or discrimination.²²

The situation was similar in Corsicana, where Jews were accepted in spite of the Klan's strong influence. The local chapter had around 900 members and public rallies were not uncommon. They endorsed only businesses that were "100% American," which did not include the Jews. Nevertheless, customers based their shopping habits on price and quality, not the owner's religion.²³

The Klan rallied and paraded in Luling, too, but Reuben Jacobs, a prominent member of the Jewish community, had a reputation as a tough guy. The Klan avoided marching in front of his store. When Jacobs heard a Catholic friend of his was to be targeted, he put out the word that he would be there with his shotgun, and the Klan left his friend alone.²⁴

Apparently, many potential Klan members were unaware that the group's hatred extended to Jews. One story from Longview claims that a popular member of the community, Dan Gans, was the cause of the Longview chapter never being organized, when friends realized he would not be invited to join because he was Jewish.²⁵

In another incident, Edward Titche, head of Titche-Goettinger Department Store, was recruited by Klansmen telling him what the organization stood for and why it was important. Titche quietly explained that although he appreciated their interest and invitation, his membership was not possible as he was Jewish. The Klansmen beat a hasty retreat, saying it was too bad because Titche would

have made a wonderful leader in the organization.²⁶ Similarly, Hyman Asher Perlstein of Beaumont was startled to receive an invitation to join the Klan from an anonymous caller. Without explanation, he declined.²⁷ Fort Worth merchant Leon Gross was also invited to join.²⁸

In Gonzales, Ida Orinovsky described a Ku Klux Klan night parade in the 1920s that she had heard about. Thousands came to town from the surrounding area to watch the robed members marching or on horseback with their fiery cross. The Michelsons, local cafe owners, hired boys to sell their sandwiches on the street to the crowd.²⁹

Dallas was home to a lot of Klan activity. In 1921, almost a thousand marching Klansmen paraded through downtown Dallas singing "Onward Christian Soldiers." Their signs read "100 percent American," "All Native Born," "All Pure White," "White Supremacy," and "Our Little Girls Must Be Protected." It has been estimated that Dallas had some 13,000 KKK members, which may be the highest per capita figure in the United States. Retail stores owned by Jews were periodically boycotted.

In 1922, Philip Rothblum was taken from his Dallas home blindfolded. He was beaten and ordered to leave town.³⁰ A similar incident occurred in Fort Worth in July, 1927. A carload of Klansmen who wanted "no more Jews in Fort Worth" abducted Morris Strauss, a merchant, army veteran, and Russian-Jewish immigrant, as he was going to bed. They took him to a secluded spot and beat him with a rope and tree limb, and left him there in his pajamas. He had offended them by outselling his competitors in his plumbing supply business. A former city detective was charged. Tried before a Klan-affiliated judge, the trial ended with a hung jury.

In the 1920s, Fort Worth Sheriff Sterling Clark backed the Klan. In 1922, some 1800 hooded and robed Klansmen marched through town with banners inciting hatred for Catholics, Jews, and immigrants. Attorney Theodore Mack, among the city's founding Jewish pioneers, switched to appellate work because Fort Worth juries were often stacked with Klansmen.³¹

The highlight for the Klan occurred in 1923 when the State Fair of Texas declared a "Klan Day" at the Fair, indicating the depth to which the Klan was implanted in Dallas. There was even a Klan-sponsored city league baseball team.³²

At the same time, when the Klan announced it was investing in an institution for homeless children, the ceremony featured civic dignitaries on the platform including merchant, civic leader and philanthropist Alex Sanger, one of the Sanger brothers of department store fame. When Rabbi Lefkowitz was asked about this surprising appearance, he advised not to be too concerned about it. "It is bad enough, to be sure, but we mustn't let it reduce our own power by worrying us and making us sick. We need the best we have to fight it to a finish."³³

Jewish *Dallas Morning News* reporter John Rosenfield covered Klan picnics for the paper. Mayor Louis Blaylock, associated with the Klan, often visited the homes of prominent Jews. High-ranking Klansman Z. E. Marvin considered himself a good friend of Jewish Dallas banker Fred Florence.³⁴

In 1922, a call went out for an Anti-Klan Rally which more than 5000 people attended. A resolution was adopted to fight the Klan. Among those on the stage were Alex Sanger and Edward Titche, although they were not among the original twen-

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ty-five petitioners. The Dallas County Citizens League was formed as a result of the meeting, with the mission of getting the Klan to disband. The success of this effort was mixed, and the Klan continued to thrive.³⁵

Vernon, Texas did not have a KKK branch, but they did have the “White Citizens League,” which was very similar. It did not target the dry goods store of Joseph and Rebecca Foreman, the only Jewish family in town. The Foremans were respected members of the community.³⁶

In 1928, the Democratic National Convention was held in Houston. Alfred Smith was the presumptive presidential nominee, which brought out hundreds of Ku Klux Klan members in protest since he was Catholic. Beth Israel’s Rose Brilling and Rabbi Henry Barnston were prominently involved with the convention organization, with Barnston scheduled to deliver the opening or closing prayer. Klansmen would pass by his residence and wave, “Hi, Rabbi,” as the Rabbi knew many of them.³⁷

In Waco, the Ku Klux Klan did not arrive in the 19th century, but in 1921, a chapter was formed with some 937 men initiated in a packed building with over 200 turned away. They ordered Klansmen to only shop at Klan-owned stores and harass businesses belonging to Catholics and Jews. They placed a white card with black bars in the windows of authorized shops. By 1922, they boasted their own election ticket, with candidates for sheriff and county attorney. In 1923, some two thousand members paraded through town.

The Klan was still alive and well in Waco in the 1950s. Arnold Miller, an active member of the Jewish community, told an interviewer that they hosted an Israeli speaker in their home. The head of the KKK phoned and when Mrs. Miller answered, said,

“We’re gonna come see you tonight.” She handed the phone to Arnold who replied, “I know who you are, Horace. And you want to come here, you come right ahead. We’re ready for you.” He hung up and called the police, who responded, but the Klan did not show up.³⁸

According to Baylor Professor W. J. Kilgore, the Jewish congregation discussed what to do about threatening letters. They were told that it would probably result in more legal difficulties to stop it than the actual harm that was being done.³⁹

Unfortunately, not all Texas Jews were able to coexist in relative peace with the Klan. Baruch Mendel Sczupak was killed in one of Houston’s first hit-and-run incidents. Evidence pointed to the car having swerved off the road to hit the easily identifiable Orthodox man walking home from the synagogue. His children offered a reward, but no witnesses came forward. It was feared the police department was infiltrated with KKK members. One newspaper article about the incident was placed next to an advertisement for an upcoming Klan meeting, “Where a Spade is Called a Spade.” Another suspicious fact is the timing of the “accident” - on Easter night, 1924.⁴⁰

The Finger family, involved in farm land, furniture stores, and other businesses, also faced challenges due to their Jewish background, with family history telling of Sam Finger standing up to the Klan in an ongoing conflict.⁴¹

Although Klan spokesmen wrote antisemitic slurs in their weekly newspaper, there was no serious organized campaign against the Jewish community in Dallas. The most virulent document against the Jews came not from the Klan, but from former governor, James Ferguson. His daughter, Ouida Ferguson Nalle, summarized the Klan

view of the Jews: “The hooded night riders so terrorized the Jews in some parts of the state that for a time during the campaign [her mother’s campaign for governor] they gathered together and sat up all night fearing a pogrom.”⁴²

Despite her colorful description, some historians say antisemitism as a policy of the Klan was not as significant an issue in Texas as it was in other states. Texas Klan members did not “openly advocate boycotting Jewish merchants” and no crosses were burned in front of synagogues. Any Klan resentment against Jews made little difference to the social standing of prominent Jewish families, or to their economic well-being.⁴³

In fact, the Klan newspaper, the *Texas 100% American*, which was published in Dallas, expressed ambivalence against the Jews. For example, the Klan did not approve of Catholic teachers or school board members, but did not object to Jews. If a Jew was elected to a school board, it was because “he has distinguished himself as a true friend of the cause of education.”⁴⁴ Other mention of Jews in the Klan newspaper were not so favorable. Ironically, the Jews were called “clannish.” A 1923 article cautioned Jews not to align themselves with Catholics and they would be left alone. A distinction was made between the international Jew and the Jew next door.⁴⁵ An example of this policy in action is the Klan boycott of the *Dallas Morning News*, falsely believing the newspaper was controlled by Catholics. There was, however, one letter demanding to know if any of the paper’s stock was owned by Jews. There is no evidence of losses by Jewish businesses in Dallas from boycotts.⁴⁶ Jewish men did, however, receive threatening phone calls from the Klan warning them not to date Christian women.⁴⁷

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The article by former governor James E. Ferguson, who had been impeached, was titled “The Cloven Foot of the Dallas Jew” and appeared in his own newspaper. He condemned “an unholy alliance between the Big Jews and the Big Ku Klux, whereby the Ku Klux are to get the big offices and the Big Jews are to get the big business...As between the Dallas Jews and the Dallas Ku Klux, I want to say that the Ku Klux is the better of the two...Me and my friends are getting damn tired of these Jews running to us and asking us to defend their liberties and then running to the Ku Klux to sell them dry goods.” At issue was Ferguson’s anger at Jewish businesses not advertising in his newspaper. They spent their advertising dollars in mainstream newspapers with a larger circulation. Rabbi Harry A. Merfeld, editor of the *Jewish Monitor*, called Ferguson irrational, his article a “long diatribe of vilification and abuse, with implacable hatred riding the storm of passion.”⁴⁸

The Ku Klux Klan has long been in decline as American society increasingly rejects what the Klan stands for. Contemporary white supremacists are inclined to think the Klan groups are outdated. There is competition from many other white supremacist movements, including prison gangs. The Klan no longer maintains stability in its organization.⁴⁹ Klan influence also faded when violent actions came to light, such as the beating of Fort Worth businessman Morris Strauss.⁵⁰

An interesting question to investigate is why the Klan, especially in the Deep South, was so relentlessly cruel and violent against African-American citizens while being somewhat ambivalent in its attitudes to the Jews, at least in Texas. Certainly there is evidence of violence and hostility toward Texas Jews, but not to the

degree and extent of its hate crimes based on race. Skin color made their victims more readily identifiable. Ignorance of Judaism and Jews made the intended victim harder to recognize, so Jews were sometimes mistakenly invited to join the Klan. Official ideology included race and religion (non-Christian and non-Protestant), but the religious distinctions were often lost on the Klan’s grassroots members.

In small-town Texas, there might be only one or a few Jewish families, which made them seem less of a threat to the status quo. Jews often stood up to attempted bullying from the Klan, which can be an effective response to bullies. For whatever reasons, the Klan saw Jews as different, but more like themselves than their African-American neighbors. In their muddled worldview, this apparently made a difference.

Endnotes

- ¹ Southern Poverty Law Center Klan-watch letter signed by Julian Bond, undated. Box 2F301(1979-1981), Texas Jewish Historical Society Collection, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.
- ² David Ritz, *The Jews Who Built Dallas*, November 2008. <https://www.dmagazine.com/publications/d-magazine/2008/november/the-jews-who-built-dallas/>
- ³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ku_Klux_Klan
- ⁴ <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/reports/state-of-the-kkk>
- ⁵ Box 2F301(1979-1981), Texas Jewish Historical Society Collection, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.
- ⁶ Was President Lyndon Baines Johnson a Righteous Gentile? *TJHS News Magazine*, Winter B 1992, p. 5, reprinted in November 2002, p. 9.
- ⁷ Vickie Vogel, Judge Charles Brachfield of Henderson, *TJHS News Magazine*, August, 2021, p. 14

- ⁸ Galveston, Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, <https://www.isjl.org/encyclopedia-of-southern-jewish-communities.html>, see *TJHS News Magazine*, December 2015, p. 9
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Ritz, op cit.
- ¹¹ Dallas, Encyclopedia, ibid. See *TJHS News Magazine*, March 2015, p. 13.
- ¹² Ritz, op cit.
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- ¹⁴ Rosalind Benjet, The Ku Klux Klan and the Jewish Community of Dallas, 1921-1923, printed in the *Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society*, Mark K. Bauman, editor, 2003, p. 29, https://www.jewishsouth.org/system/files/sjh_v._6_2003_benjet.pdf
- ¹⁵ Ibid, p.. 36.
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- ¹⁸ Ritz, op cit.
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- ²⁰ Marc E. Grossberg, Brave Soldier, *TJHS News Magazine*, July, 2012, p. 3.
- ²¹ Excerpt from *Texas Jewish Herald*, June 6, 1921, Houston. *TJHS News Magazine*, January 1999, p. 16.
- ²² Palestine, Encyclopedia op cit. See *TJHS News Magazine*, July 2012, p. 8.
- ²³ Corsicana, Encyclopedia op cit. See *TJHS News Magazine*, June 2013, p. 14.
- ²⁴ Luling, Encyclopedia op cit. See *TJHS News Magazine*, July 2016, p. 15.
- ²⁵ Kilgore/Longview, Encyclopedia op cit. See *TJHS News Magazine*, July 2013, p. 8.
- ²⁶ Ritz, op cit.
- ²⁷ Beverly Williams, From Blacksmith to Capitalist, *TJHS News Magazine*,

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Webinar, cont. from page 17

(Albuquerque, New Mexico); and "Synagogue Doors of Mexico & Mexican Jewish Influences," Haidee Joy (Tucson, Arizona).

An edited version of the Webinar is available on the (searchable) NMJHS YouTube site. 

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- May 2008, p. 15.
- ²⁸ Weiner, *Jewish Stars in Texas*, op cit. p. 141.
- ²⁹ Vickie Vogel, Fannie Orinovsky, *TJHS News Magazine*, May 2018, p. 11.
- ³⁰ Ritz, op cit.
- ³¹ Hollace Weiner, "KKK Skeletons: Tarrant's once-powerful Klan lurks in history's closet," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 25, 1990, p. 4, found in Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, Texas Jewish Historical Society Collection, Box 3A171-3, Communities Fort Worth-Grainessville.
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- ³⁴ Ibid.
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- ³⁸ Anabel Burke, *The Ku Klux Klan in Waco*, <https://wacohistory.org/items/show/200>.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Dede Fox, Searching for Emet (Truth), *TJHS News Magazine*, November 2013 p. 1.
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- ⁴³ Charles C. Alexander, *Crusade for Conformity: The Ku Klux Klan in Texas 1920-1930*, (Galveston, 1962, p. 7, and *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, (Lexington, 1965) p. 26.
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- ⁴⁶ Benjet, op cit. pp. 141-142.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 38.
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- ⁴⁹ <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/reports/state-of-the-kkk>.
- ⁵⁰ Weiner, op cit. 

Board, continued from page 15



VICKIE VOGEL, lives in Austin and is a past president of TJHS. She has visited all seven continents and all fifty states. She is a retired attorney who practiced primarily criminal law. Vickie is heavily involved in political activism. She enjoys travel, needlework, and reading, and chairs the TJHS Travel Committee.



PHYLLIS GERSON TURKEL is proud to be a "BOI"—born on the island of Galveston, but has lived in Houston for many years. She has been in retail and has even sold mattresses over the internet! She is now a program director at a retirement community, and says this is the best job she has ever had! Phyllis is a walker and has walked half marathons and marathons. She walked Phoenix Rock and Roll with her daughter in January, 2018. 



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