

MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY



Young pilot Rudolph Newman, in 1948, with one of the first airplanes of the new state of Israel.



Repairing the World; Honoring Walter Field; Petoskey 100th; School Superintendents; Fresh Air Camp 95th; Drachler Book

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EDITOR
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR
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MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY

אשר ישאלון בניכם מחר את אבותם...יהושע ד:כא

When your children shall ask their parents in time to come...

Joshua 4:21

Volume 37

1997

Elul 5757

The Journal of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan

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Repairing the World — After the Night

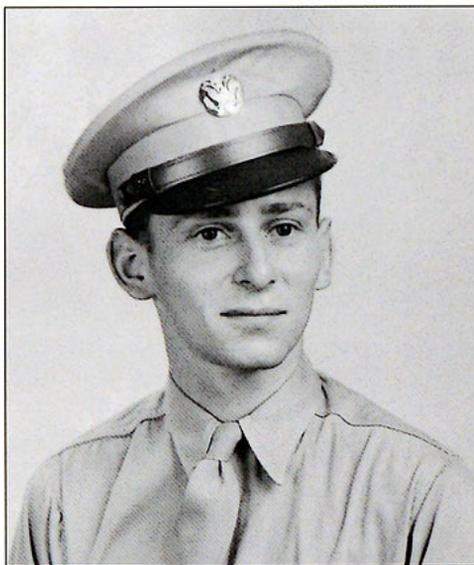
by Shirlee Rose Iden

After Liberation — The Rescue: Marvin Breskin

A few years ago, William Breskin, son of Marvin and Marian Breskin, stopped at Bad Ishel, Austria, a famous ski resort. In the closing days of World War II, his father had helped to form a Displaced Persons camp there for Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. Expecting a dose of nostalgia and a review of the past he had heard about all his life, William encountered stubborn denial. "My son was told there never was a camp there nor any concentration camps in the area," Marvin Breskin said.

For Breskin, memories of helping to organize the camp, of the people that passed through, and of the survivors' efforts to obtain surrendered arms for the beleaguered Jews fighting to establish a Jewish state are stark reality.

"In April 1945, with the European war in its final days, I ended up in Salzburg, Austria," he said. "I had already interviewed a number of surrendering German soldiers in Czechoslovakia, so it was known that I spoke German. In Salzburg I was asked if I would like to help a group of Jewish displaced persons form a camp for Jews liberated from a number of concentration camps. I said I would be glad to do that. Someone had to help these people."



Marvin Breskin

Bad Ishel was the designated site and the Joint Distribution Committee agreed to back the project. The Austrians had abandoned the Golden Cross Hotel and it became Camp 406 Golden Cross for 443 survivors. "I was the Camp Commander, made available for this job by the American Army. I was a corporal then," Breskin said, "but those refugees thought I could do anything." Founders of the camp were Polish and German Jews, with just a few from Hungary.

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"I had to get things to set up a camp, so I went to Bad Ishel, met with the mayor and told him I represented the American occupation forces. I was very successful and got cooking utensils and many other things. Right before the war ended I even got sewing machines."

Breskin said when he had interviewed surrendering Germans in Czechoslovakia, they would give up weapons, piles of Mausers, other pistols, and such. Breskin told how a Haganah member visited Camp 406 Golden Cross. He spoke about how if there would ever be a state of Israel, it would have to defend itself. "He wanted arms, he wanted burp guns. The idea was for camp members to barter or buy guns, like chocolate for guns," Breskin said. So camp members would get surrendered weapons, send them to Gratz, Austria, and from there they would be shipped to Palestine.

Years later Breskin found out by happenstance that the American helping to administer the DP camp in Gratz where the guns were shipped was Detroitier and fellow attorney Sheldon Lutz. "Our camp received packages of food from UNRRA. The survivors used the large boxes to pack the weapons."

Breskin said the displaced persons at the Bad Ishel camp wanted to help the Jewish cause. "When they came to camp they would advertise to see if their families had survived. After three or four months, if they got no response, they would go to Palestine. We helped some of the campers make it to Palestine by getting them to the French zone where passage to Palestine was possible."

"After a while, the members of the camp became more sophisticated and put the guns in cosmoline, a lubricant, before sending them to Gratz. There was a regular supply line of guns, a river of surrendered German guns."

"But after a while, the lieutenant to whom I reported took me aside and said to me 'I believe it would be best if you went home now.' So I made an immediate departure."

Thus in the winter of 1946 Breskin went home and back to Ohio State University, where he met his soon-to-be wife Marian. He found it hard to adjust to the carefree college atmosphere after his heart-rending experiences in Europe. It was difficult to forget the survivors he had known who had such terrible memories to live with.

The survivors, however, had not forgotten him. They had been meeting in a committee to make by hand a plaque in appreciation of their Camp Commander, Marvin Breskin. Unaware of his hasty departure, they arranged to have it delivered by another returning member of the American Army to Breskin himself back in the United States. This unique trophy remains as one of Breskin's most treasured possessions.



Trophy from survivors

A half century later, Breskin and his wife are trying to re-contact the people of the camp wherever they are now in the world, and to reconstruct the story of those crucial days. The Breskins want their four children and their grandchildren to know this story so that in the future they will continue "always to help the Jewish people." They

are holding mini-reunions with those responding to ads Breskin is placing in current survivor newsletters, and also are researching for pertinent documents in archives at YIVO in New York and in the Holocaust museums in West Bloomfield and Washington, D.C. A vital link in Jewish history is thus coming alive.

Bringing Gifts of Song to Survivors: Emma Lazaroff Schaver

Emma Lazaroff Schaver was a member of the first cultural mission to Europe sponsored by the World Jewish Congress and UNRWA, a UN agency. She traveled from camp to camp in the American zone in Germany presenting concerts of Yiddish and Hebrew songs to the survivors — reviving their Jewish soul. “When I saw the condition of the people, I volunteered to stay longer.” Mrs. Schaver remained in post war Europe for six months because “I felt I had something to do there.”

“I was stunned by the attitude and will to live of those people. Men and women who had lost their husbands, wives, and children went on to remarry and start new lives,” she said. “That’s the Jewish people, determined to go on, to build again.”

She said the Jewish camps had schools, taught trades, and trained machinists, carpenters, barbers and more. “There was action, energy, and a beehive of activity. It was an amazing experience.”

Even earlier, when the first group of survivors of the concentration camps had been allowed into the United States immediately after World War II, Emma Schaver went to Camp Oswego in upstate New York to sing for the refugees. She said the priorities were first to save them and sustain them and next to give them something for the soul. “That was something I could do,” she said.



Emma Lazaroff Schaver

Born in Russia, she came to this country at the age of 18 months in 1906. She and her mother arrived in Boston and went immediately to Rochester, New York. “After about four or five years, with a few stops along the way, we settled in New York City’s Jewish ghetto of Brownsville.”

Emma was the eldest of seven children, but found that being the first was “not ever a burden.”

The immigrant family struggled to make it. “Father was a nice man, but not aggressive,” she said. “My mother was a noble lady with great inner pride. She was a special person and I never felt poor. Together they gave me something tremendous.”

By 1914 when the First World War broke out, the family had moved to Detroit where Emma attended

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Northern High School the first year it opened. "I have always considered myself a Detroiter."

She recalls dancing in the streets in 1917 when the British government issued the Balfour Declaration calling for creation of a homeland for the Jewish people in what was then Palestine. Emma declares she was a Zionist in her mother's womb, that she cannot remember ever not being one. "My father was a labor Zionist and that was the path I followed."

Emma always sang, she says. "I usually say that it was not special, it was simply breathing out and breathing in. But my whole consciousness was singing."

After graduating from Northern, she held different jobs so she could help the household. She studied at the Detroit Conservatory of Music and at age 16, she traveled to New York City to live with relatives and to study at the Juilliard School of Music. Later she sang with several opera companies, and with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, the Israel Symphony Orchestra, Kol Zion L'gola Symphony and the Haifa Symphony. She sang concerts in Europe, North and South America and in Israel and has two record albums to her credit.

In 1924 she married Morris Schaver who had been a regular visitor in the Lazaroff home for several years and was a favorite of her mother.

"I knew him a long time before we married. We would walk down Michigan Avenue together," she recalled. The marriage spanned more than 30 years until Morris Schaver's death. Childless, the couple reached out to Isaac who became their son and remains close to his mother.

Emma Schaver never stopped living her commitment to supporting the state of Israel and the Jewish community of the world. Her first tour of the land that would become Israel was in 1932. During the trip she delighted in the winding streets of Jerusalem, the busy port of Jaffa and the singing and dancing on the kibbutzim. She wrote to her family: "You have no idea the feeling to be in your own home."

"I was through and through a labor Zionist," she said, "And I met many of Israel's greats. I met Golda in the '30s when she came to Detroit as Shaliach for Pioneer Women. I knew Ben Gurion, Ben Tzvi, Shazar and more. That was my circle."

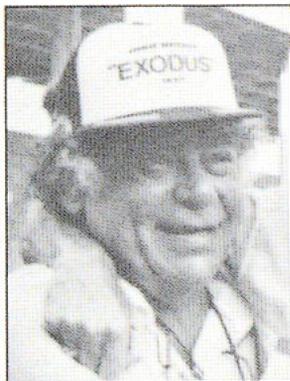
A noted philanthropist in this community, in Israel and in others, Emma Schaver has supported cultural and educational causes for which she has received many citations and honors. She is the recipient of the Leonard N. Simons History Award of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan. As she says: "I've tried to do the best for people."

Emma Lazaroff Schaver believes that she has been the recipient of two precious gifts, her Jewish heritage and her talent as a singer. For all her 91 years, she has made an effort to share both.

"As a child, I felt sorry for anyone who wasn't Jewish," she said, explaining that every facet of Jewish culture was valued by her parents and by herself. The traditions of Judaism have been her standard and guide.

On The Exodus: Harry Weinsaft

Half a century ago, a "Boblo" boat called the *Exodus* brought 4,500 desperate refugees out of Europe toward the land that would become the state of Israel. Though the *Exodus* failed in its mission to bring a cargo of Nazi concentration camp survivors through the British blockade of Palestine, the attempt was a spark that ignited public opinion about the refugee situation.



Harry Weinsaft

Historians record the Holocaust and the birth of Israel as two central events of the 20th century. Area resident, Harry Weinsaft, who was personally involved in both, must be counted as one who has shared the "action and passion of his time." Weinsaft is both a Holocaust victim driven from his native Austria and a volunteer blockade runner who defied the British to help save the remnants of his people. He was the security officer on the ship *Exodus*, playing a heroic role in the *Exodus* drama, which became the subject of a blockbuster novel and film that were instrumental in shaping the American perception of the Jewish State.

Prior to his retirement Weinsaft ran art auctions in churches, temples and club houses in Oakland County communities. He was the owner of a fine art gallery in the Kingsley Inn. A decade ago, preparing to attend a reunion of the crew of *Exodus*, Weinsaft reflected: "Since the world did not help us in World War II and after, we had to help ourselves. We broke every law to get our people home and would do it again." He recalled how the British intercepted the *Exodus* on July 17, 1947 short of mission accomplished. "In a sense the *Exodus* is an Israeli *Mayflower*," he said. "It was an aged hulk, well past its prime, originally an American excursion steamer called the *President Garfield* which had been sold for scrap in 1946."

An agent of the Haganah, the underground force of the Jewish liberation fighters, learned of the ship and paid \$40,000 for what Weinsaft called a "Boblo boat." The *Exodus* was the largest of the many blockade runners of the illegal immigration network to Palestine. "Jews had arrived in Palestine in great numbers until the early 1930s when the doors were closed," said Weinsaft. "During the war Jewish people desperately needed to leave Europe, but immigration was closed. The U.S. had a strict policy, and Canada also; and the British had long since issued their 'white paper' blocking Jewish immigration to Palestine."

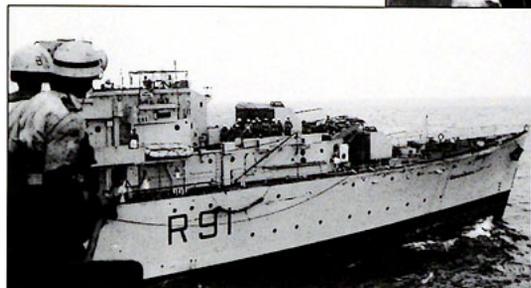
Harry Weinsaft was born in Vienna, Austria where he went to school with Teddy Kollek, who became the Mayor of Jerusalem. His father was a textile dealer with a lovely home, a flourishing business, and a handle on the good life. "My parents were both born in Austria and never felt discrimination. We went to Italy and the Alps to vacation and ski. We were living in the country of Mozart, fine wines and Strauss waltzes," he said. "But in 1938 the Nazis came and the question for Jews became: Where will we go? How will we save our lives?"

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Left: After the "Night," survivors boarding the *Exodus* for Palestine.

Right: En route to Palestine — a homeland at last!



Above: British warship preparing to board the *Exodus*.

Right: After the seizure by the British, still no place to go.



all photos from Harry Weinsaft

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The Weinsaft home was seized and all Jewish bank accounts were sealed. "A tremendous hatred from the populace welled up into an avalanche of anti-Semitism," he said. "I was a young student and never had thought I would become a second or third class citizen. My dad told me about Hitler, but he thought nothing would happen in Austria. But soon the Austrian flag was torn down and replaced with the swastika and my country was annexed to Germany. The Nazis incited riots and we were thrown out of our home. My father thought he had a relative in the middle of America so we looked at a map, found Kansas City and set out to find a Weinsaft."

Dressed in a leather hunting jacket and boots, Weinsaft and his father went to the American Embassy where they found more than 1,000 people lined up to get into the "telephone room." "A U.S. marine who spoke German asked me what we were looking for and I told him. He told me he was from Kansas City himself and brought back the Kansas City phone book. We found Jack Weinsaft." The year was 1938 and Weinsaft, age 16, was about to experience a great change in his life.

"A lady who taught English wrote a letter for my father to Jack Weinsaft that said: 'Save my son'. We sent the letter by air mail to our relatives at 3716 Benton Boulevard. And we received an answer." Jack Weinsaft would send papers. The American arranged for a visa and an affidavit that said the youth would not be a burden in America. "My visa was signed by Sen. Harry S. Truman." The S.S. *Bremen*, a German ship carrying a number of Olympic athletes, carried Weinsaft to America. "Jesse Owens, the great track star, told me in German that now I was free."

America and his relatives were good to Weinsaft. He served in the U.S. Army as a ski instructor assigned to a ski and mule outfit. After training with the 10th Mountain Division, he landed in Naples and fought all the way up Italy. The former refugee worked in Europe after the war for U.S. intelligence and the Joint Distribution Committee. Realizing the horror that had gone on in the camps and the suffering in the ghettos, he felt compelled to help get survivors into Palestine and to do his part to make the birth of the state of Israel a reality.

*Editor's note: This story is based on interviews of Harry Weinsaft by Mrs. Iden for the Southfield Eccentric newspaper almost a decade ago as he prepared to attend a reunion of surviving members of the *Exodus* crew in Israel.

Pilot for a New State: Rudy Newman

When the friends of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) recently honored a number of heroes who fought for Israel in the 1948 war, Rudy Newman was among them. If you ask Newman what it was that led him to volunteer and risk his life for the new Jewish nation, he responds: "Zionism, no. Adventure, yes."

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"We overseas volunteers for Israel are called 'Machalniks,'" he said. Newman counts fighting for Israel as one of the most important experiences of his life and "Machalnik" as one of his proudest titles. It was because of his zest for adventure and a desire to fly that his post-World War II action happened at all.

Born in the Detroit neighborhood of Delray, he was a young teen when war came. "In 1943, when I was 16, I convinced my mother to sign papers stating that I was 17 so I could join the U.S. Navy," he said. "What I really wanted was to learn to fly, but I soon learned that you needed two years of college to get into flight school."

Newman went through the U.S. Navy's radio navigation program and completed his high school requirements. "So I had a diploma and my wings as a radio navigator. Then the Navy dropped the college requirement for flight school and I got to live my dream of flying."

"I was 17 years old when I shot down my first plane," he said. "I did a lot of soul searching. It is difficult to describe my feeling but I know it felt bad realizing I had just destroyed the hopes and dreams of another young man."

He was serving on the aircraft carrier *USS Lexington*, flying F6F Hellcats, and stayed with that ship until the war ended and he returned home.

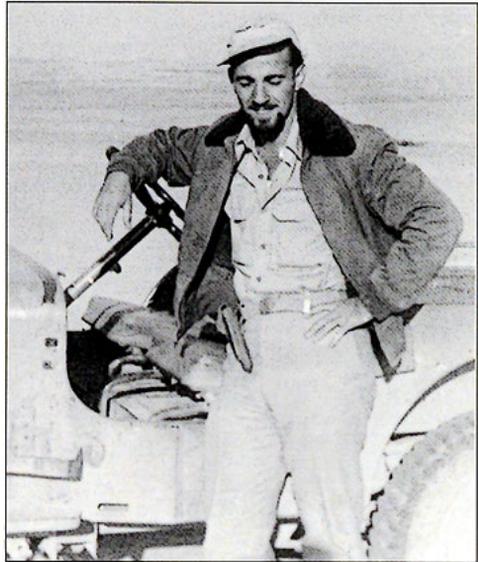
"I became a student at Michigan State College and then entered law school.

I used to go to Hillel House and in the spring of 1948 a rabbi approached me and told me that fliers were needed for Israel. One of my law professors, a lady, told me I should go to Palestine." His zest for adventure still active, Newman traveled to the Middle East and arrived at Zde Dov Airport where the Israeli air forces were headquartered in June 1948.

Once he was assigned to Mexico to fly a plane back, and the Mexican government renege and would not release the plane. Another time he traveled to Florida from where he flew a B-17 to Czechoslovakia where the base for daily shipping of arms to Israel was located.

Newman took part in organizing the first flight school in Israel. "I taught Motte Hod who became an important general in the 1967 war. There were some world renowned people among the American volunteers for Israel," he said. "In all there were about 3,000, with 400 to 500 air force."

Newman met his wife, Hannah (Ann), in July 1948 and married her the next year. He flew for El Al airlines for a time, and then in 1952 came home to the states with a



Rudy Newman

wife and sabra son. But he never returned to his law studies, instead becoming an accountant and later, a mortgage banker.

Newman said he never talked about the period of his life as a “machalnik” thinking that his children, his family and others would not be interested. “Then about five years ago, I began to speak about those memories and experiences.”

Yet, on a west-facing wall in his home office is a poster-sized photograph of a young Rudy Newman standing next to a huge bomber. This plane was among the very first obtained by Israel to mount its fight for survival and legitimacy, a plane which got to the fledgling nation and was put to use because of the adventurous spirit and indomitable courage of Rudy Newman and the other “machalniks” like him.

Captain in the War for Independence: Jules Doneson

In the annals of history, August 25, 1944 is recorded as the day that Paris was liberated from the Nazis. For Jules Doneson, it was a day that changed the direction of his life.

“The Jews of Paris were re-dedicating the principal synagogogue of the city which had been boarded up for four years because of the war. I decided to attend the ceremony, and found a huge crowd and bedlam. Out of all the crush of people, the Chief Rabbi chose me, a Jewish American soldier to carry one of the five Torah scrolls, which fortunately had not been desecrated or torched by the Nazis. It was a very moving experience for me.”

“A French officer I met there got me interested in rescuing Jewish children from Catholic orphanages. I was still an officer in the U.S. Army but there were things I could do. I could provide food and transport for each time the raiders took Jewish kids. I never took part in the actual snatching, but the operations were carried out efficiently and secretly.”

Although raised with a sister and brother in a Jewish orphanage in Philadelphia, his birthplace, Doneson had a Jewish education and had become bar mitzvah. “I was very sensitive to things Jewish.”

Jules Doneson’s father was a poor man, struggling to make a living for himself and his children with the handicap of a seriously ill wife who was institutionalized. “I never



Jules Doneson

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knew my mother at all," Doneson said. "My dad simply could not cope with raising the three of us. So we went to the orphanage."

Recently Doneson completed and published a book about that first Jewish orphanage called Deeds of Love. The writing and research were difficult and it took two years to complete the project. "This book had to be written," he said.

Doneson enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1941, joining the 8th Infantry Division. He attended Infantry school in Fort Benning, Georgia, and in 1943 was commissioned a second lieutenant. During his service in the European theater of operations, he became company commander in the 28th Infantry Division.

By 1944, he was in Paris where the re-awakening of his Jewishness took place. When the war ended he studied for six months at the Sorbonne and then returned to Philadelphia. "In October 1945, I took a 10-day leave to Palestine with a chaplain from Philadelphia. I saw everything there was to see. The people were very aware of the emptying of the concentration camps and the mission to bring refugees to Palestine. But the British were very strict and immigration was closed to Jews."

In March 1946, Doneson was asked to undertake a secret mission to Palestine which he was told was of the utmost importance. The Mossad, the secret Jewish intelligence agency, entrusted him with delivering a sensitive message, believing he did not look Jewish or have a name which had Jewish connotations. The journey was long, by train and finally donkey. He knew he risked his life should he be discovered. But he finished his task safely.

Although he did not define himself as a "gung-ho Zionist and you can't fake it," he felt an intense need to help his people and returned to Israel in May 1948 just after the Declaration of Independence.

He was assigned to a Hebrew speaking unit, the 71st Battalion of the Seventh Infantry, after graduating from Officers' Training School in Acre. Doneson's unit took part in the conquest of the Galilee.

In Israel, Doneson was Captain Yochanon Danon. In May 1949, after fifteen months of active service, he was discharged and went to Kibbutz Ein Gev for six months where he worked in the banana fields. Israel was then in turmoil over the difficult task of absorption of hundreds of thousands of new immigrants, the first of a number of mass aliyot.

During his stay at Ein Gev, Daniel Frisch, head of the Zionist Organization of America, visited and offered Doneson a job with ZOA in the United States. "Given a choice of Los Angeles or Detroit, I chose Detroit. I was thirty years old and alone, but I was accustomed to being on my own," he said.

"I found a room on Calvert and Linwood, and began my job which included public relations, fund raising and a little bit of a lot of things. The girls in the ZOA office said I should be visible. When a speaker was scheduled at Congregation Shaarey Zedek, they encouraged me to go, saying 'You'll meet girls.'"

Doneson met Ann Saulson and she turned out to be "the girl." "I took her phone number and that was it."

Convinced that returning GI's would make the travel business a promising one, Doneson was determined to start a travel agency. In time he became a premier travel agent in the Detroit metro area. From their two daughters, they have reaped the dividend of grandchildren and presently are enjoying retirement. Doneson enjoys a special bond with Israel where he and Ann have visited "14 or 15 times."

"Never for a minute have I ever regretted my service to Israel," he said, "Only that I didn't go earlier."

This is Shirlee Rose Iden's second major contribution to Michigan Jewish History. A former editor of the Southfield Eccentric Newspaper, she not only has received numerous awards as a journalist, but has taught history at MCCC and OCC.



Shirlee Iden

Michigan "Machalniks" Overseas Volunteers

Stanley Andrews, Captain, Israel Air Force
Alex Glanz, Israel Air Force
Eddie Chinsky, Master Sergeant, Israel Air Force
Jules Doneson, Captain, Israel Army Infantry
Sherrel Gordon, Israel Air Force
Ben Fingerroot, Israel Air Force
Dave Fink, Sergeant Major, Israel Air Force
Rudolph J. Newman, Captain, Israel Air Force
Harry Weinsaft, *Exodus* crew member
Leo Majzels, Second Lieutenant, Israel Air Force
Dr. Eugene Plous, Major, Israel Medical Corps
James Kane, Israel Air Force
Alexander Nemoff, Hatikvah Crewmember

Whereabouts Unknown:

James Boyd, Air Force
Jack Branston
David Boxer (Deceased), Army
Charles Crudginton (Deceased), Israel Air Force
Harold Duboff (Deceased), Israel Air Force
Jack Ebringer, Combat Photographer
James Fitzhenny, Air Force
Sol Friedman
Moshe Heman, Machal Recruiter
Herbert Hordes, Army
Hank Kaplan
Roberts Leeds, Paratroop Instructor
Peggy Leeds, Parachute Rigger
Edward Nelson
David Saferstein
Yehuda Solter, Israel Air Force
Edward Styrak, Air Transport Command

Walter Field

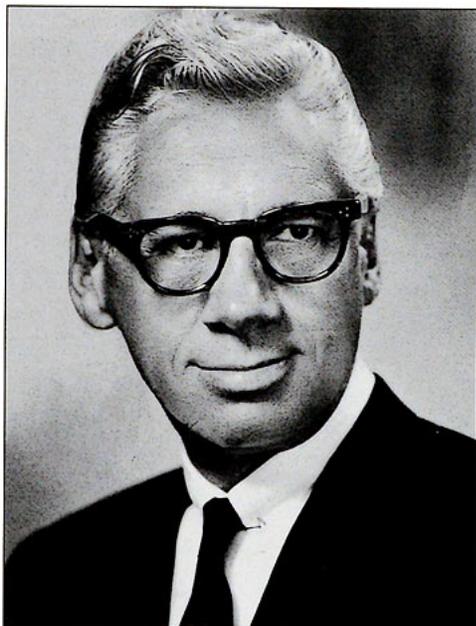
The Nonagerian

@<http://www.dorledor.org>



by Dr. Bernard Goldman

The young Walter Field of 20 years ago — he was only in his 70s — when asked how to succeed in business, replied, “Running a business only requires common sense.” An unassuming practical man, his life reads like a Horatio Alger story: the penniless immigrant youngster who pulls himself up by his bootstraps to become an influential, respected citizen; an industrialist devoted to his family, dedicated to the spiritual and cultural health of his community, and committed to proclaiming the merits of Jewish accomplishments on the world scene. But this brief note is not intended as biography or eulogy — both of which he has earned and often has received. Rather, it is an appreciation of that elusive human quality, quite uncommon, that we call common sense. It runs through everything to which Field has put his hand and mind in his 96 years. Today, he brings it to cyberspace.



Walter Field

Field does not see the Jewish past as prologue. For him, the culture and beliefs of Jewry over the millennia are more than just history, an oft-told story largely impertinent to the future. Rather, the past and its heroes are ever present, forming a living integument that continues to bind and shape its people. The impor-

tance of that understanding is too easily lost in the everyday complexity of modern society, and a vital force that gives direction and meaning is squandered.

To this problem in Jewish life, Walter Field has bent his energy, using his common sense approach, seasoned with a delightful display of creativity. He wanted to tell, to remind all of the rich cultural inheritance bequeathed to us; but how to do it? He had no public forum, no lectern or pulpit; his vocation has been trade, commerce, achieving the possible by practical means rather than theoretical posturing. He wanted to get the message across simply and directly, with the widest circulation, and in as palatable a form as he could contrive. That, of course, is simply good business, common sense.

Publisher of Books

He turned to writing books and phrasing his beliefs in poetic form. If the pace of modern living was too fast for us to sit at table with the bible and the history of the Jews, he would publish tempting appetizers that would bring us to those larger feasts. He developed a common sense plan that he shaped in his book A People's Epic: Highlights of Jewish History in Verse (1963). He composed his work in rhyming three-line stanzas, a scheme of symbolic value for Field but equally important in following the ancient bards' use of rhyme to captivate their audiences and as a mnemonic device. This later day epic bard recounts how, in early America,

Jews became soldiers, guides and mappers,
Southern planters and Northern trappers,
Policemen, firemen, farmers and sappers.

The distinguished biblical scholar, Harry Orlinsky, gave one of the early drafts of the book to his children. He recalls their reaction when they read it: "they loved it!" Capturing the interest and imagination of young people in the heroic, and sometimes tragic, Jewish role in American culture continues to dominate Field's considerable talent.

Common sense has dictated that he employ an ever-widening circle of dissemination. An experienced businessman, he knows of course that a campaign of action requires first an organization, which he and his wife Lea founded and now chairs with another entrepreneur, Harold Berry: the Commission for the Dissemination of Jewish History. Berry describes Field as "a hands-on one man dynamo...whose strength is in his focus." The Commission began running a newspaper column carrying thumbnail sketches of Jews who have achieved beyond the common, such as the Nobel Laureates Isidor Rabi, Gertrude Elion, and Murray Gell-Mann (the latter physicist honored for the standard theory of the sub-nuclear particle which he named the 'quark,' a word coined by James Joyce in Finnegan's Wake).

Website in Cyberspace

Usually when youthful activists are moving on into their 60s and 70s they leave the more demanding fields of engagement in favor of rest, relaxation, moving on to putting greens and elder hostels. Their 80s generally become a time for consolidation

and reflection. Experimentation, tackling new ideas, exploiting the cutting edge of technology? Those challenges they leave to the grandchildren — and to one restive nonagenarian. Walter Field moved into cyberspace with a Web Site (<http://www.dorledor.org>) to chronicle the deeds of Jewish Nobel Prize Laureates. There, as Marvin Cherrin, one of his admirers, writes, “Walter has gotten the message of Jewish contributions to all humankind out onto the internet, a place where he believes today’s youthful minds are being most effectively challenged and influenced...A youthful 96-year old, he is probably the world’s most senior electronic publisher.”

But of course Walter Field would take advantage of the electronic age; it’s only common sense!

Dr. Goldman is the Director Emeritus of the Wayne State Press. The histories, Congregation Shaarey Zedek 1862-1982 and The Jews of Detroit, were published during his tenure. He continues as a stalwart member of the Editorial Board of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan.

TRANSMITTING DEMOCRACY:

JEWISH SUPERINTENDENTS OF MICHIGAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by Sol Drachler

In the more than 500 school districts in Michigan, where many Jews have had careers in public education, a few have indeed achieved distinction in the notable position of superintendent. This article first focuses on Dr. Norman Drachler who served as superintendent of Detroit Public Schools during the 1960s and now in his eighty-fifth year is being honored as author of the Jewish Reference Book of the Year, Bibliography of Jewish Education in the United States.¹

In addition, while acknowledging that there may be even more Jewish superintendents in the state whom we would like to learn about for the historical record, this article recognizes three other notable educators who have served as school superintendents in Michigan: Dr. Elliot Burns of the Armada School District; Dr. Samuel Flam of Berkley; and Dr. Seymour Gretchko of West Bloomfield. With each of these four administrators it is interesting to note the influence of his Jewish heritage, with its emphasis on education, on the stewardship of the school district he has served.

Occurring in the frequently recited passage from Deuteronomy V, 7, “Thou shall teach them diligently unto thy children,” the Jewish focus on education is well recognized. In addition, American commitments to education, the foundation for a democratic society, are historically well documented. For example, in the early colony of

Massachusetts, the law of 1642 became the first law in the English-speaking world to order that children should be taught to read. Michigan was only the fifth state in the Union and the very first in the west to adopt free public education in 1871. Further, the 1963 revised Michigan constitution states that "Schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged." Thus, Jewish superintendents and educators have been strengthened in their purpose both by their Jewish and their American traditions.

Dr. Norman Drachler Detroit Public Schools, 1966-1971.



Norman Drachler was born in Russia in 1912 and brought to Detroit as a youngster. Influenced by his father who was a Jewish educator, Dr. Drachler began teaching in the Detroit Public Schools in 1937. Two decades later, in 1957-58, Dr. Drachler was chosen as the director of research for the high visibility Citizens Committee studying school needs, headed by George Romney, a future governor. Recognized as a problem solver, Dr. Drachler was appointed as superintendent of the Detroit schools in the summer of 1966 — a time of great change and growing unrest for Detroit and its schools, unrest which indeed erupted in the civil disturbances of 1967.

"Both Mayor Cavanagh and Dr. Drachler had taken office with the determination to chart new courses and build a new future for the city," according to Robert Conot in *American Odyssey*,² a unique history analyzing Detroit and its urban problems. Additional excerpts from Conot's book, quoted here, provide a cogent assessment of Dr. Drachler's tenure as Detroit superintendent:

"Drachler decided the ability to read was the 'sine qua non' for success in school. Dr. Drachler, therefore, redirected money from 'cultural enrichment' toward a reading program."

"No superintendent of the Detroit schools — and few anywhere in the United States — had ever been confronted with the difficulties that faced the short, slow-speaking, pipe-smoking Dr. Drachler. Student walkouts and demonstrations at the Public Schools Center were common. In the state legislature, Black legislators were pushing a bill to divide the city's schools into sixteen separate districts. Voters in white sections of the city defeated one attempt after another to raise the school tax rate."

"Thus beleaguered, Dr. Drachler proceeded on an uncharted course between change and revolution. The percentage of Blacks on the instructional staff was increased from five percent in 1950 to forty percent in 1970. Dr. Drachler elevated

Negroes to two of the seven deputy superintendent positions. He doubled the number of Negro administrators to 384 by the 1968-1969 school year.”

“Dr. Drachler gained support for a compromise plan of decentralization. To fragment the system into numerous districts with widely varying tax bases would be uneconomic and self-defeating. He supported a reorganization that would provide neighborhood control of the schools within an ‘umbrella’ administrative structure.”

“Dr. Drachler had taken office in 1966 with the goal of increasing quality education for Blacks, reducing segregation and preventing the further flight of whites. He had upgraded Negro personnel. He had backed decentralization of the district. Dr. Drachler had campaigned for tax increases, but he had failed. The citizens of Detroit were clearly unwilling to raise their property tax rate. Then, in November 1969 the citizens elected the most conservative school board in fifteen years.”

“At the end of the 1970-1971 school year, Drachler announced his retirement, and took the leadership post of the Institute of Educational Leadership in Washington, D.C., funded by the Ford Foundation.” He is currently retired and living in California, where he authored his newly published mega-reference book.

As superintendent of Detroit Public Schools during the sixties, Dr. Drachler has been recognized in the press and by the community for his ability to be innovative during a time of great change and for his profound commitment to teaching and to Detroit’s teachers. He is still remembered by his colleagues for his use, in 1967, of Judaic sources in his calming talks to striking teachers. Seeking inspiration in his own heritage, he truly has been a significant leader in the history of Detroit schools.

Dr. Elliot Burns **Armada School District, 1986-1997**



During Dr. Burns’ eleven-year tenure as Superintendent, the Armada school district experienced about a fifteen percent growth in the school population. In support of this growth, Dr. Burns oversaw many bond issues, including one for a new elementary school. Under his direction, the district implemented programs in Special Education, Latchkey/Child Care, art, music and physical education. This was truly a time of change in Armada, a school district located in north Macomb County in the Thumb area of Michigan.

Dr. Burns credits his parents and his upbringing in synagogue and Hebrew school programs for his basic values and his commitment to community service. Dr. Burns added, “In Armada, my Jewishness and our kosher home evoked and contributed to the community’s sense of my dedication to education and character building.”

Dr. Burns has been motivated by one of Judaism's most valued traditions — "Tzedakah" (righteousness). He formed a Youth Advisory Council encompassing six school districts, in conjunction with the Four County Community Foundation, to teach youth the purpose of contributing funds and service to various community needs — in the areas of scholarships, health, recreation and senior citizens. Dr. Burns commented, "I implemented the Armada Education Foundation in order to strengthen the character building and good citizenship of students through real acts of Tzedakah."

Previous to his 1986 appointment as Superintendent, he was a teacher and school administrator, and then the Executive Director of Temple Beth El. He recently accepted the position as Executive Director of Congregation Beth Abraham Hillel Moses.

Recognized statewide by the Michigan Alliance for Arts Education, Dr. Burns was honored in 1992 with the State School Administrator of the Year Award. Clearly his dedication to students and legacy of leadership to the Armada community will be long remembered.

Dr. Samuel Flam **Berkley School District, 1980-1988**



As superintendent in the suburb of Berkley, Dr. Flam was also called on to respond to the changes of the '80s. "Dealing with change is etched in the Jewish psyche," Dr. Flam commented. "I was prepared to cope with issues of gender equity, racism and disabilities," said Flam, "since fairness and equity are deeply ingrained in Jewish life." Born in Enterprise, Alabama into the only Jewish family in the town of 3000, Flam's family brought him to Michigan at the age of two years.

Previous to Flam's eight-year tenure as Berkley's superintendent, he served a dozen years in leadership positions in that system and a dozen years before that as a teacher and administrator. His experience as a leader of youngsters dates back to his days in Detroit Habonim and his service as a head counselor in a New York camp. A year-long assignment, helping to assimilate into Israeli society recently-emigrated Moroccan youth who at the time spoke no Hebrew or English, further prepared him for the challenges of educational administration.

Dr. Flam credits his contacts with the Holocaust Memorial Center in West Bloomfield with heightening his pro-active posture in regard to the schools and separation of church and state. He further noted that "Jews are sensitized to church-state issues even as they reach out to gather the religious community's support."

Currently a consultant in the field of education and faculty member at the Wayne State University College of Education, Dr. Flam is the author of a timely new book, Public Schools/Private Enterprise: What You Should Know and Do About Privatization. His commitment to education continues to be the focus of his life — and the basis for his gift of service to his community.

Dr. Seymour Gretchko West Bloomfield Schools, 1983-present



As the current administrator of one of the largest and highest achieving school districts in the state, Dr. Gretchko acknowledges the influence of his Jewish background on his professional career. He says, "My reverence for learning is certainly rooted in Jewish tradition."

As superintendent of a district of diverse ethnic communities, he is committed to a tradition of fairness. Dr. Gretchko explained, "The West Bloomfield School District was the first in Michigan to adopt the ten 'American Values for American Schools.' They are posted in each school." As a member of the American Values institute during 1996, Dr. Gretchko was instrumental in creating this credo of values which has been endorsed throughout the state.

Gretchko began his career as a teacher in the Detroit Public Schools in 1952. Serving under Superintendent Drachler, who was his mentor, he was a region superintendent there for five years before assuming his current position in West Bloomfield. He has been a guest speaker on technology, the change process, religion in the schools, teaching values in the schools, and public school successes at the local and national levels.

Dr. Gretchko is a member of the National Advisory Task Force of School Superintendents and has served as President of the Oakland County Association of School Superintendents. Author of A Guide to Computer Literacy for Teachers and Students, he has been honored as Educator of the year by Phi Delta Kappa.

He is the only educator in West Bloomfield to have a school named after him in his own lifetime — the Seymour Gretchko Elementary School. It is fitting that his legacy of creative response to change and educational leadership will endure.

An Overview:

Each of these superintendents has demonstrated a propensity for research. They have pursued advanced education, securing Master and Doctoral degrees. Wayne State University and the University of Michigan were the major educational settings

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for them, as they had been for many Detroit and Michigan Jewish students in the twentieth century.

All four of them have exhibited sensitivity and toughness, recognizing that despite a barrage of criticism, the job had to get done. They demonstrated a readiness to use facts to "gain a friend rather than win an argument."

Each of these men sought to give back to their field and to their community. Universities sought out their talents to educate and supervise student teachers. They provided leadership to many community endeavors.

Each has been affiliated with a synagogue or Jewish group and has given significant service to the Jewish community. Dr. Drachler was Director of Education at Temple Beth El from 1951-1965 and had been a teacher in the Yiddish schools earlier. He also was a leader in the Jewish Federation and an early chairman of the Jewish Community Center's Book Fair.

Dr. Burns is a past president of Congregation Beth Achim, to which he and Mrs. Burns continued to commute from Armada. An Executive Director of Temple Beth El in the mid-eighties, he now has assumed that position at Beth Abraham Hillel Moses. Dr. Flam was affiliated with Temple Israel and active at the Agency for Jewish Education, while Dr. Gretchko was active at Temple Emanu-El and at the Jewish Federation.

Completing the Historical Record

The Jewish Historical Society would welcome information about other public school superintendents in the State of Michigan who are Jewish. Additions to the above list that have already come to our attention include the distinguished service of Dr. Lewis Schulman as Superintendent of the Farmington School District; Dr. Youssef Yomtoob, now a school superintendent in Illinois, who was Superintendent of the Willow Run District; and in the Oak Park School District, Dr. Sam Sniderman, Dr. Malcolm Katz and Dr. Leonard Demak. Each of them also has followed with honor the Jewish dictum of "teaching diligently to thy children." All of these superintendents by their vital leadership in education have helped to make Michigan a better place to live.

Footnote 1: See Seferim, reviewed by Rabbi Daniel Syme, this journal.

Footnote 2: Conot, Robert, *American Odyssey*, William Morrow and Co., 1974.

Sol Drachler is the retired executive vice-president of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit and Dr. Norman Drachler's brother.

Bernard B. Lasky:

A Vision for Recreation

by Alan D. Kandel & Joseph B. Colten



Bernard B. Lasky

Volunteerism, another form of philanthropy, is synonymous with Jewish tradition. For decades, members of the Detroit Jewish community have given and continue to give volunteer leadership to various civic bodies including the Detroit School Board, the Police Commission, the Common Council, the Library Board and the Recreation Commission. Bernard B. Lasky, who served his community for over forty years, was a distinguished member of this group of Jewish leaders.

More than sixty years ago, Bernard B. Lasky gave leadership and vision to advancing recreational opportunities for people in Detroit with special attention to the needs of the disabled. By 1935, the City of Detroit had dedicated the Bernard B. Lasky Recreation Center in northeast Detroit "as a tribute to his concern for youth."

Who was Bernard B. Lasky? Why is he so remembered for his many contributions to Detroit, and why is he so interested in the physical well-being of the adult and youth populations, especially the handicapped?

Bernard B. Lasky was born in Detroit in 1897 into a pioneer/philanthropic Jewish family. His father, Jacob B. Lasky, was a founder of the Hebrew Free Loan Association, over one hundred years ago. The names of his parents, who contributed over \$2,500, are on the honor roll of very early supporters of that forward-thinking agency.

In his article "One Hundred Years Ago: The Birth of the Hebrew Free Loan," Milton Marwil noted that in 1895 Jacob Lasky was a cigar maker. He later founded the Lasky Furniture Company with his son.

Bernard Lasky was injured in a fall when he was a child. His affliction may have been the stimulus for his devotion to expanding and upgrading Detroit's recreational facilities for all — including the physically challenged. Lasky was eager to see services developed in neglected areas of the city. In 1939 the Parks and Recreation Commission expanded the original Bernard B. Lasky Community Recreation Center and Playfield on Fenelon Street on the northeast side of Detroit. The complex, still

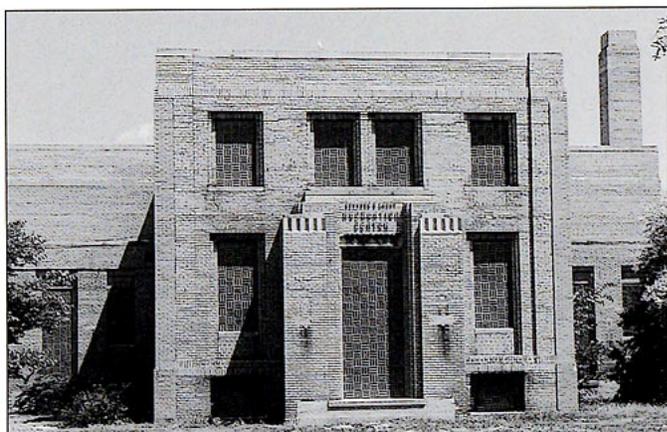
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in daily use, offers a wide array of social and recreational programs to Detroit's young people.

By 1940 Lasky was appointed to the first Detroit Commission of Parks and Recreation by Mayor Edward L. Jeffries. Over the next twenty-seven years he served as a member, vice-president and president of the commission under the succeeding administrations of Mayors Van Antwerp, Cobo, Miriani and Cavanagh.

The year 1949, a high point in Lasky's driving determination to impose high standards on the city's recreational services, was described in Lasky's Annual Report to Mayor Cobo as a record year for recreation. The budget reached \$4,852,900, with five thousand acres in use for recreation. Belle Isle, a one-thousand acre island park, was significantly enhanced

with a new band shell and a large new beach. Following a master plan developed in 1947 which allowed for growth in relation to population, Lasky noted that the 1947-1949 program included three new recreation centers, Detroit's first municipal lighted stadium and additional facilities for ice skating, tennis, golf, handball, and baseball. Special attention was devoted to densely populated areas such as the "intra-boulevard area" in which over one hundred thousand kids lived in crowded circumstances. All these projects made Detroit's recreational services "the equal of any in the nation."



Bernard B. Lasky Recreation Center in northeast Detroit

Before the terms "barrier free," "physically challenged," and "user friendly" came into wide use, Bernard Lasky was working to incorporate these concepts into Detroit's recreational plan. Lasky's hopes and dreams were fulfilled on August 23, 1967, when he presided over the groundbreaking ceremonies for the Center for the Handicapped on Lenox Avenue, the first center of this type in the U.S.A. The center still stands on a bluff overlooking the Detroit River in the Alfred Brush Ford Park. A former Nike defense site, the property was donated to the city of Detroit by the Ford-Brush Estate, and the Center was established with the help of the Kiwanis Unit of the Department of Parks and Recreation, long known for its support of programs for seniors and the handicapped. Twenty Kiwanis Clubs donated \$50,000 towards the \$160,000 center. A state-of-the-art facility, the center includes the services required by its specialized clientele: barrier-free and specially equipped bathrooms, a Braille library and space for

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wheelchair dancing. Since 1969 the Lenox Avenue Center has been meeting a wide variety of social needs.

Other honors came to Lasky during his lifetime. In 1973, he died in Arcadia, California. President Mel Ravitz, himself soon to retire from the Detroit Council after many years of service, led the unanimous adoption of a resolution in Lasky's memory. This memorial resolution saluted Bernard Lasky for his aggressive leadership that helped make Detroit a better place in which to live and to play.

Jewish Community Contributes to Detroit Recreation Center Renovation

In keeping with the interest of the Jewish community in the revitalization of Detroit, a joint committee of the Jewish Community Council and the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, known as the Detroit Initiative Task Force, has been teamed with several Michigan-based foundations to fund renovations at the Considine Recreation Center at Woodward and Holbrook in Detroit. This center was dedicated in 1939 as the Aaron DeRoy Jewish Community Center.

1. *Memorial Resolution, Detroit Common Council 1973.*
2. *Michigan Jewish History, Winter 1994.*



Alan Kandel (left) is a welcome second-time contributor to Michigan Jewish History and a valued member of the Editorial Committee. He is joined by second-generation native Detroiter Joseph Colten (right), an accountant and industrialist who has been actively involved in leadership in the Jewish community for many years.



Celebrities & Celebrations



Republican Party Honors Max Fisher

Paying tribute to Max Fisher in a way that will continue into the future, the National Republican Party has initiated the national-level "Max Fisher Dinner" always to be held in Detroit every

four years to honor a chosen outstanding Republican. By establishing this select dinner permanently in his name as an ongoing recognition of his dedication, the tribute stated: "Max Fisher remains the standard of public service by a citizen." What a fitting and lasting tribute to this most distinguished humanitarian and international leader.

Clinton Appoints Madeleine Berman

Madeleine Berman has been appointed to the "President's Committee On the Arts and Humanities." The "President's Committee" consists of seventeen members appointed by the President, as well as

members of the President's Cabinet and the heads of the other major cultural institutions in the country. Isaac Stern is one of the committee members. Charged with analyzing and reporting on the state of the arts and humanities in the U.S., the committee has published "Creative America." This significant study points out the dangers to the arts of the loss of government funding with the consequent dependence on private backing. It also raises the challenge of a special accomplishment for the millennium in keeping with the plans of other major nations, according to Berman.



Madeleine Berman, with President William "Bill" Clinton and her husband Mandell, "Bill"

Kathleen Straus Elected President State Board of Education



Kathleen Straus

NOVA TV Features Norma Goldman

Demonstrating her interpretation of what the awning over ancient Rome's Coliseum must have looked like, Prof. Norma Goldman was featured in a February 1997 BBC-produced NOVA television program.

According to Goldman, she both admires and abhors the Colosseum in Rome. She admires it for its grandiose architecture, but abhors it for the dreadful "games" that were performed in the center of the arena. It was a building built for death, the death of men and animals. While not shading the "games," in antiquity a giant sun-screen called a 'velarium' covered the audience. It was to study this amazing technological achievement that Goldman embarked upon her five-year research study of the Colosseum.

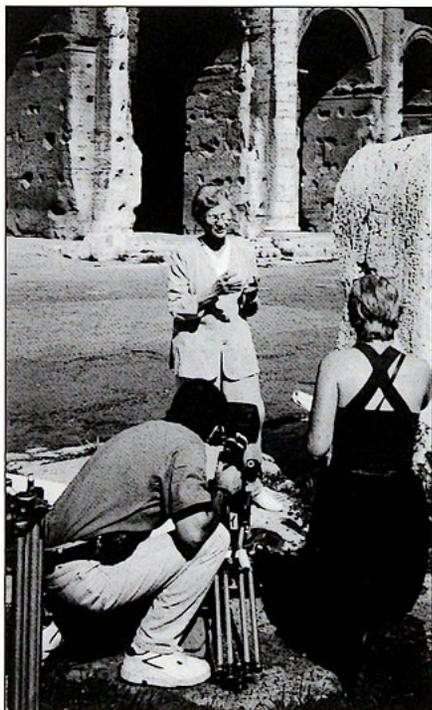
Since sailors were involved in working the awning's mechanism, her research even included studying the techniques of Roman sailors at the American Academy in Rome. No others had the expertise with rope and cloth to handle the 'vela,' the sails. The results of the study were published in Archaeology Magazine.

The BBC contacted Goldman and the other principal scholars to produce a documentary on the subject, and to try to actually put up the velarium. Since they could not experiment on the historic Roman monument itself, the BBC secured permission to modify a bullring in west-central Spain in order to try out the two main versions of the awning. Goldman appears trying out this experiment with the awning in the last of a five-part series entitled Colosseum: Secrets of Lost Empires, which was revised by NOVA and is now available through NOVA documentary films.

Goldman's role was expanded to include a segment on technology in Roman Merida, the Pompeii of Spain, where an entire ancient Roman city shows the skill of the ancient architects and engineers. The technology of the Pantheon and its domed concrete roof was explored. Goldman makes concrete on the beach at Pozzuoli on the Bay of Naples to demonstrate the unique qualities of this popular ancient construction material in the building of monuments and harbors, since this special concrete even sets under water.

Each summer Norma Goldman lectures at the American Academy in Rome on the Colosseum in the Colosseum, accompanied by her husband Dr. Bernard Goldman, art historian and retired Director of the Wayne University State Press.

The producer at NOVA reported that Colosseum got the highest rating of all the series, and plans are underway to do another series on the Roman Baths.



Goldman on location

Petoskey Congregation Celebrates 100th

From all across the country, hundreds of families with connections to Temple B'nai Israel in Petoskey gathered last summer to celebrate the gala 100th birthday of the Northern Michigan congregation.

Temple B'nai Israel was first organized in 1896 as the Hebrew Benevolent Association of Petoskey. The founders who signed the Articles of Incorporation on August 8, 1896 were: Albert M. Blumrosen, Adolph Dosie, Meyer I. Fryman, Max Glazer, Jacob Greenberg, Wolf H. Keidan, Alick Rosenthal, Moses Rosenthal, Samuel L. Rosenthal, John Rutenberg, Ben Welling, Herman H. Welling, and Harris Wilinsky.

Initially the congregation met in various Jewish homes, and later in a rented hall in Petoskey. The Association became incorporated as B'nai Israel in 1909. In 1911, a cemetery was purchased, as well as the current building from the Parr Memorial Baptist Church. On August 26, 1911, the Congregation gathered at the old rented hall and marched to their new home carrying all the Torahs and religious books and belongings. Ten years later, in 1921, a new set of twelve windows was installed and a new lower level or social hall.

Over the years, the Congregation changed from Orthodox to Conservative and then to Reform services, affiliating with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. In 1925, the Temple brought the first student rabbi from Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati - a policy which originated in Petoskey and which has continued for the summer months as well as for the High Holy Days.

Meetings, elections, parties, dinners and holiday gatherings helped to sustain the Temple through the years when often there were not enough finances to meet expenses, years when the Jewish population in Northern Michigan had diminished so that there were as few as ten member families. Now encompassing ninety Jewish families



Rabbi Richard C. Hertz (left), who in his student days at Hebrew Union College had served as a summer rabbi at Temple B'nai Israel, at the 1996 Centennial Celebration in Petoskey with Al and Harriet Colman, Bernard Cantor, and Leonore Jaffe of Harbor Springs (seated)

having homes all across Northern Michigan, as well as vacationers, Temple B'nai Israel has recently been renovated, incorporating many of the old memorial items. Services with the Rabbi are held every Friday evening during the summer, and once a month during the winter, and religious education for the children continues throughout the year.

The Jewish Historical Society of Michigan presented a plaque to the congregation at the celebration, paying tribute to its inspiring endurance and to its renewed vitality.

Fresh Air Society Celebrates 95th

Oral history of Abraham J. Levin, first male counselor in 1916

The following are excerpts from an oral history of Abraham J. Levin conducted in 1976 by Melba and Sidney Winer and transcribed in summary form by Miriam L. Friedman:

During the summers of 1916, 17, and 1918, I was the head male counselor and the only counselor for the boys at the Fresh Air Camp which was out Jefferson Avenue about four or five miles from Mt. Clemens on Lake St. Clair. I was nineteen years old, had just graduated from the 'Literary School' at the University of Michigan, and had been recommended by Fred Butzel to Blanche Hart, the very devoted superintendent of the United Jewish Charities.

I was "in charge" with no title, since the term "counselor" had not yet come into use. There were no other trained male counselors. I was the only official counselor for the boys. But I was helped by the older boys.

Gussie Brown was head of the camp - its director and 'matron.' She was in charge. Everyone was crazy about her. She was dearly loved by all. All the ladies who kept the camp going, including Gussie Brown, were volunteers.

The ladies had a 'chaperone system.' Two volunteers from the city would accompany the kids out on the 'interurban' - and then stay for a week or two to help with the girls - as sort of semi-counselors - their jurisdiction being with the girls only. All of these ladies had to work awfully hard. I had no such people appointed to help with the boys. I was the only one, although other kids helped.

A new bunch of about 100 kids came every two weeks. There were four two-week sessions during July and August. They came by interurban streetcar out Jefferson Avenue, which would take about an hour, or in cars driven by volunteers. The streetcar stopped right in front of the camp property. The kids were filled with great anticipation.

When they got to camp they were given a little talk before getting themselves adjusted. Once they felt more at home, there was quite a bit of hell-raising too. Among the boys — pillow fights and things of that sort. I'll never forget once I looked

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into the window where the kids slept and I thought that one of the mystic clouds of the Bible had gotten into the room. It was cloudy — with feathers!

The one rule the camp followed is that the children were there for a good time! And that they did have. It was all under the auspices of the United Jewish Charities and nobody paid. Generally speaking, the campers were sent out of the city to help solve the families' problems. The children were in the country — away from the city — next to the water. Literally for them it was a fresh air camp — a change of environment into the country — something true in their lives, to know and to talk about.

Their time was well-filled and never seemed to hang heavy. The camp tried to make the most of whatever they had. They did not have tents. The girls slept in the house and the boys slept in a large shed.

The time went fast from breakfast until 8:30 or nine at night. The girls, who wore middy blouses, did 'girly' things such as embroidery, crocheting, and the like and the boys played baseball and other boy games. In the main, the kids were pretty much able to take care of themselves when we didn't actually have a camp activity going on.

The kids were very carefully watched. They were never in any danger. There was never a single water incident while I was there. The main point is the kids got into the water. We had a large risky-looking raft that was absolutely safe — and a flat-bottomed rowboat. They would pile into the rowboat and I'd take them along the shoreline and head for the raft. While rowing I would tell them stories. We never got out of the shallow water. The boat was so flat and the water so shallow that you couldn't



Waterfront scene from Fresh Air Camp, Venice Beach, St. Clair Shores, circa 1918

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tip it over if you tried. Then there would always be another bunch waiting on land for their turn to go to the raft. In later years, I gave the camp a number of boats.

The female counselors and the older boys and I would cook up some hilarious 'stunts.' The kids loved it and could never get enough. Another activity was the Peanut Hunt. It was a wild mess — but the kids couldn't wait for it to happen.

I remember one of the men interested in the camp — Eugene Sloman. Every week he regularly would come and bring a barrel of broken cookies from the National Biscuit Company. The kids would line up for cookies and milk — and they emptied the barrel in no time flat. They loved the little party very much.

The one truly serious daily activity which everyone attended was the raising and lowering of the American flag. The blowing of the bugle for reveille, the pledging of allegiance, the blowing of taps at the lowering of the flag was something the children truly looked forward to and took very seriously. It was the only real discipline of their camp experience each day. Incidentally, though I had never before had a bugle in my hand, I was the assigned bugler.

The meals were Kosher. They had a regular cook. There was no medical staff on the grounds. As needed, Gussie Brown would take temperatures, and then a child would be taken to the doctor if necessary. We seldom had sickness. Dr. Ben Welling would come out often, and if there wasn't anything medical to do he would join in the kids' games. Harry Goldberg and Harry Z. Brown also came out often and would join in.

For the record, other people who were involved at this time that I can remember were Hortense Lilienfield, Miss Krolik, Elsa and Melanie Friedenberg who would bring the Girl Scouts, Anna Solomon from Oscoda, Florence and Jane Brown (sisters of Gussie Brown), Sadie Keidan who married Harry Z. Brown, Miss Fink who married Harry Goldberg, Florence Heizer, Edith Heavenrich, the Shiffman girls, Josephine Welt, Harry Gordon's sister — Mrs. Sloman, Maxine Rosenthal's mother, Hattie Gittleman, Sadie Hirschman, and of course Blanche Hart and Gussie Brown.

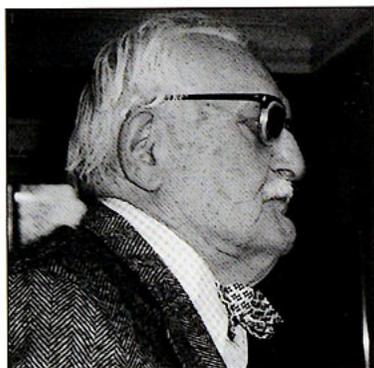
A man in the cleaning business made a disinfectant — a liquid hair cleaner with the most horrible smell I have ever smelled. Someone with rubber gloves would give each kid a good hair-washing — and a rinsing in water to "get rid of anything that might be present."

We did the best we could with what we had — with the facilities we had. And I am amazed that we got along as well as we did! During my day at camp, it became a little more definite as an organization.

During those years, back in the city of Detroit, my father, Rabbi Judah Levin, had the synagogue at Brush and Winder. The Jewish Charities had the Hannah Schloss Center on High Street (later Vernor Highway, and now where the Fisher Freeway is.) That was a very important place — a social center for kids. My brother Isadore and I took manual training and played basketball there. Schloss erected the place and Bernard Ginsberg, Golda Krolik's father, donated the addition on the building. The

Hannah Schloss Old Timers date to this building. The United Jewish Charities and Blanche Hart were in constant touch with the families around Hastings Street.

Later in the 1920s, when the camp was getting ready for a move, Board member Jesse Hirschman found a place in Brighton for a new location for Fresh Air Camp. I was deputized to go out there and see if it was swimmable. Hirschman picked me up at my law office and when we got to the place in Brighton, I put on my bathing suit and went in the water to test the bottom. I checked it out and pronounced it OK! So that is how they chose the place for the new Fresh Air Camp at Brighton. So you see, I was in touch with the camp for many years.



Abraham J. Levin

Abraham J. Levin — “AJ” — went on to Law School at the University of Michigan, where he roomed with Charles Goldstein and was a classmate of Irwin Cohn. He practiced law in the firm of Fred Butzel. In 1932, he and his wife Caroline purchased the historic Franklin Cider Mill and adjoining property in Franklin Village, where they raised their family of five children. The youngest son of Rabbi Judah Levin, his brothers were Dr. Nathan P. Levin, a mathematician and turn-of-the-century graduate of the Detroit College of Medicine who served as Chief of Public Health for the City of Los Angeles; Prof. Samuel M. Levin, one of the fourteen founding faculty of Wayne

State University in 1914; and Isadore Levin, of the same law firm of Butzel, Levin, and Winston. Throughout his life, Levin continued his interest in children and in the out-of-doors.

Sightings of an Immigrant:

Correspondence of a Member of the Kovler & Volyner Progressive Society

by Professor Jonathan Marwil

In early 1947 Alex Gerson of Detroit received a letter from his older brother in Moscow, Boris Gershenovich, wishing him a happy new year. The letter went on to chide Alex — “You, I think, inherited from our father a dislike for writing letters” — and to bring him up to date on family matters. There wasn’t much to tell. Their parents, three sisters, and assorted cousins were all dead, many of them victims of the war. Boris himself was past seventy, and although still active, preparing, as he put it, “for eternal life. So I decided to write you more often.”

SIGHTINGS OF AN IMMIGRANT

But no further letters came to the brother in America, not from Boris, his wife, or his children. Family lore says the Cold War stopped communications; perhaps Alex's "dislike" contributed. Nor, it seems, did anyone in Alex's family write to Boris in 1959 to tell him that his brother had died. If someone had, Boris might have learned how close his long separated and ostensibly Americanized brother had felt himself to be to his origins, to Kovel, the town on the Tura River in the Ukraine where he had been born and raised, and to his parents and siblings. Age had naturally enlarged and brightened Alex's memories of childhood. Yet the vividness of his recollections owed at least as much to circumstances, circumstances he shared with other immigrants. These are revealed in the small collection of papers he left behind at his death. Recently translated from Russian and Yiddish, they do not so much tell a story as offer occasional sightings of a man, and of the immigrant experience as a whole.

Born in 1884, Alex belonged to the wealthiest Jewish family in Kovel. Evidence of their affluence is seen in the tour that Alex and Boris, ten years his senior, made to America in 1898. After sailing second class across the ocean, the brothers spent several months traveling around the country. It is not likely that the trip inspired dreams of returning permanently, but the freedom of personal movement and commerce that Alex witnessed possibly left an impression on a young man already aware of the many laws and restrictions governing life — especially for Jews — in the Russian Empire.

A decade later (1908), Alex would become all too familiar with Russian bureaucracy. He would need a license to open a dyeing business in Kovel, and subsequently a passport to live in St. Petersburg and a notarized permission to buy goods there. We know of these inconveniences because the earliest of the papers left by Alex consist of official documents and letters to him by his business partners.

How prosperous Alex was as a trader is impossible to say, but not so prosperous as to keep him from emigrating in October 1910, when he again sailed to America, and again second class. But this time he was alone, and without his father's blessing. Family memory has his mother giving him his passage money, further evidence that his early business efforts were not very successful. He never saw his mother or father again, although in 1910 he surely imagined he would. At twenty-six there was time to do well, and time also to go back and mend relations.

We have glimpses of Alex's early years in America from a number of letters he received from his family and relatives back in Kovel, and from two letters he himself wrote, the only such letters to be found in the collection. He worked first in New York as a trader in tobacco, and then when the First World War cut off trade with Turkey he apparently branched out into millinery. Also during the war he moved to Detroit where he married Mishka (Mary) Henoch, a distant relative from Kovel. A letter he wrote (in English) to her in June 1916 from Chicago, where he had gone on business, speaks affectingly of both his love and his desire to do well:

My dear do not forget that I love you and this gives me ambition to look and try to better our conditions. Be a good girl take in all you can. Have good times as long as you can. If you are short in money please let me know by telegraph so I will send you at once. I miss you...but I must have patience and wait until I will get something good.

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*Hoping that [you] will be a good girl I remain your best friend for ever. Your husband.
Alex*

A year later finds Alex in the insurance business, which would henceforth be his occupation, and writing proudly of his wife and newborn son to his sister and her husband in Kovel:

I have a nice wife and son. You maybe remember my wife from Kovel, she is our relative. She is a pleasant person, an intelligent lady, good hostess and faithful wife.

The same letter carried his congratulations for a "free Russia" and hopes that the war would soon be over and peace "established forever, because a war like that must not be again." Similar congratulations are contained in a letter that his wife wrote to the Gershenovich family three days later.

How these two letters addressed to Kovel wound up among Alex's surviving papers is unclear. Were they not sent? Were they undeliverable? Were they somehow returned by the recipients at some later date? Whatever the answer, family letters in these years often remind Alex that he does not write often enough. At least not often enough for relatives anxious to hear of his situation and perhaps even more anxious to enlist his help. Here, for example, is a relative writing about a brother recently gone to America.

I don't have anything from him since his coming to America. I hope you took him from the ship... Please, dear Alexander, be for him a brother and friend now. He is so alone in a different country and among different people! Try, dear, to get any job for him. I will never forget what you do for my brother. He is for the first time away from home without relatives.

Requests for help increased once civil war engulfed Russia. What Alex was able, or willing, to do in such instances is not known. Legions of immigrants either assumed, or quickly discovered, that they would be regarded by those back home as the advance party that should assist those who came after.

Often they were also expected to help those who did not follow. Given his family's affluence, this would not have been true in Alex's case had not World War I, and then the fighting in the Ukraine during the Russian Civil War (1918-20) and the Russo-Polish War (1920), undermined the fortunes of the Gershenovich family. Writing in English to his brother in 1924, Boris reported "our loved parents look all-ready [sic] as old people. They endured during the war very much trouble." A note closer to those times (February 1920) from a relative living in Basel, Switzerland, underlines how bitter the troubles had been.

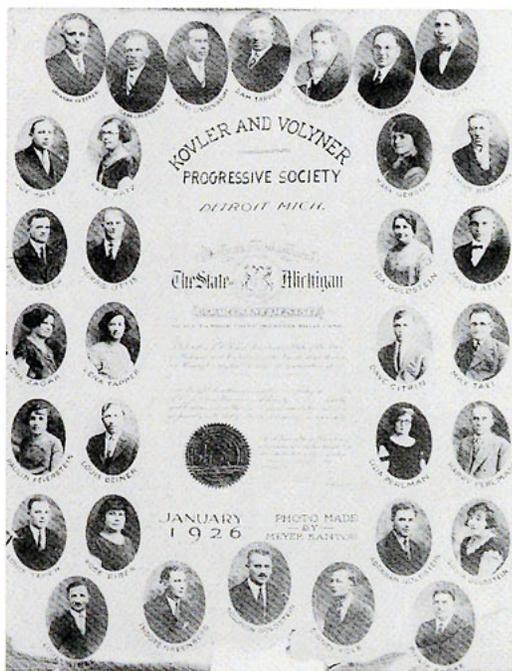
I am happy to answer your letter. And we are glad you are ready to help your family as you can; they need everything now. Please, try quickly to send several hundred dollars to them. You can send money right to Kovel to your father's address.

We may assume Alex responded in some fashion. And apparently in time the family fortunes recovered, for again according to family lore, Alex's mother wrote sometime in the early 1930s telling her son that the family was once more prosperous and urging him to think of returning to live in Kovel. Such a suggestion must have sprung from the knowledge, or suspicion, that Alex's insurance business was not doing well

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during the depression. But Mary Gerson, it is said, would not hear of such a plan. She had come to America as a young girl with her entire family so her ties to Kovel were fewer and weaker, and absent any sense of guilt. Moreover, she imagined a return to Kovel would lead to problems with her strong-willed mother-in-law.

How seriously tempted Alex was to return is not known, but his attachment to Kovel is symbolized by his membership in the Kovler and Volyner Progressive Society of Detroit. This group, made up of former residents of the town and surrounding region, was essentially a benevolent association that gave small sums of money to its own members who were in need or to organizations like the United Palestine Appeal Committee. It also occasionally took political stands, as in July 1927 when it adopted resolutions to protest pogroms in Rumania and to pay tribute to their victims. The minutes of one meeting are contained in a register that covers the group's biweekly meetings from July 1926 to June 1930, and curiously the register is among Alex's papers, though he was neither president nor secretary of the group during this period.



The Kovler & Volyner Progressive Society

What the register only hints at is how the society, like other immigrant societies, functioned as a forum for memory, as a means of staying in touch with a past and a place. Certainly it was that for Alex, who as the years went by is said to have experienced misgivings, even spasms of guilt, about leaving home against his father's wishes. After his father's death in 1929 these feelings may well have increased, and they were perhaps stirred again later by his mother's desire that he return. If so, Alex felt what many immigrants have who did not heed a parent's wishes. Although he was a well-settled, middle-aged man when his father died, there was still the memory of having done wrong in his father's eyes, and perhaps as he saw it now, in his own.

The next sighting Alex's papers provide is from the letters Boris wrote to him between 1945 and 1947. The first, dated February 26, 1945, reads as we might expect it to.

All our family were killed by the Germans. Only we two are left because we were not there [Kovel] in August 1942. From all our relations, which were several hundreds of people, no one is left. Kovel is one big pile of ashes now. I still cannot find out anything about mom, if she died

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a natural death or like the other victims. You, of course, know from the papers what the damned Germans did. I don't want to talk about that, it only irritates our wounds.

The Russians had occupied Kovel in September 1939. Since the town was only thirty miles from German-occupied Poland, it was quickly overrun when the Wehrmacht invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941. Alex presumably did already know what had happened to the town, but hearing of it from a family witness may have been more unsettling. And now, clearly, there was no going back to Kovel except in memory; the place and people he had known had been eradicated. Alex, like so many immigrant Jews, had lost his origins.

In his letter Boris was more interested in talking about what was important in "our current life," principally his two children. His son was an engineer, his daughter a linguist who had served at the front for much of the war, earning the Order of the Red Star. Boris himself was working as a bookbinder and occasionally writing poems. So, it turns out, was Alex, apparently for many years. And we learn from a letter of June 1946 that he had sent some to Boris who thought them "very valuable" and asked to see more. None of Alex's poetry has apparently survived so that it is impossible to know its substance or tone. But the making of poems, the most personal form of writing, is itself revealing. Alex was not a bookish man; he had not approved of his daughter going to college. But as our sightings of his life suggest, he had both motive and matter to speak his feelings. Even doggerel may come from deep within.

Alex died in 1959 and Mary in 1971. Their son and daughter are now grandparents with their own memories. These do not include Kovel or any other part of Eastern Europe. Like most children of immigrant Jews they have not been able to visit where their family came from or have not wanted to. At least until recently. For not long ago Alex's daughter received a phone call from a nephew of Boris's son. He told her that Boris's son and daughter were still alive, but that Boris had died in Moscow in 1965, by which time he had become a notable figure in the city's Jewish community. A subsequent meeting between Alex's children and their distant relative further reconnected this long divided family. Will the cousins themselves ever meet? We may hope so, but if not they have the haunting words penned by Boris almost a half century ago to guide them.

Don't forget that only we two are left from all our family. And all of us are easily counted on our fingers, and we are diffused all over the world. So only letters can help us to keep in touch and contact.

Dr. Jonathan Marwil is a member of the Department of History of the University of Michigan. A welcome first-time contributor to Michigan Jewish History, he is an author of books on both local and European history.

Cornerstone in River Rouge Reveals Congregation's Papers

The contents of the cornerstone of the River Rouge Jewish Congregation were preserved by the city's Mayor Gregory Joseph during demolition in 1996 of the Oak Street synagogue. Stephen Rosman, of the Jewish Historical Society, whose grandfather Morris Smargon was at one time president of the congregation, made contact with the mayor to arrange for preservation of the papers in our Jewish Community Archives.

One of these papers, that reflects the common experience of many Jewish communities getting started in small cities throughout Michigan, reads: "In the year of October 1929, a group of Jewish People organized an organization later known as the 'River Rouge Jewish Club.' This organization was for the purpose of promoting good fellowship and upholding the Jewish traditions.

Meetings were held at the homes of the different members — and then meeting rooms were secured and meetings were held at intervals of twice a month.

This organization started with the following men members and following officers: Mr. Jack Gill, President; Mr. Harry Golden, Vice President; Mr. Louis Eder, Secretary; Mr. Morris Smargon, Treasurer." Attached to this is a list of about twenty additional members, many of whose families are still living in Michigan.

The club's rooms were at 10507 West Jefferson Avenue, River Rouge, until 1938. During that time, the United Hebrew Schools had a branch there under the leadership of Mr. Panush. In 1938, they incorporated as the River Rouge Congregation, soon to build a synagogue on Oak Street.



River Rouge Congregation
on Oak Street, built 1938

High School History Day Contest Features Hero Raoul Wallenberg

Emily Filler, a sixteen-year-old high school student of Ovid, Michigan, was recognized on the state and national levels for her 1996 entry in the National History Day competition, which culminated with a display of her exhibit at the Smithsonian Institute. This summer she served as an interne at the Smithsonian and was recognized a second time for her entry: "Elie Wiesel: A Mission of Memory."

Raoul Wallenberg, a great hero to our people in Hungary in World War II, had been sent by his family in Sweden to study at the University of Michigan School of Architecture. There he became a classmate and friend of Sol King, a Detroit Jew who also graduated as an architect, and who eventually became the president of the firm of Albert Kahn, Inc. King was a dri-

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ving force for the Raoul Wallenberg Memorial at Fourth and Liberty Streets on the campus in Ann Arbor.

Michigan Jewish History encourages other students to participate in National History Day and salutes Emily Filler, who writes:

When I began looking for a subject for the history competition, Raoul Wallenberg was an unknown name to me. I bought my first book on him and was hooked.

My exhibit is divided into the three most important aspects of the life of Wallenberg, who was from Sweden. The first, the University of Michigan, details his experiences as a college student in the United States. Sol King, who studied with Wallenberg, says his "deeds during the war were totally in character with the warmly human, yet maturely wise, attitudes he exhibited while at the University."

The second panel shows Budapest, Hungary, where Raoul Wallenberg, a Christian, arrived after his graduation from University of Michigan and during World War II with a personal mission — to save as many Jews from the Nazis as humanly possible. This one man managed to save the lives of over 100,000 Hungarian Jews. In the midst of the horrors of the Holocaust, and the tendencies of so many to "look the other way" and ignore it, Wallenberg displayed extraordinary courage and self-confidence in standing up for a people.

The final panel of the exhibit portrays the Gulag — the Russian prison system, a shadowy hell of isolation and barbed wire. In January 1945, the Russians seized Wallenberg and shuffled him from prison to prison. He was never seen as a free man again. We have no pictures and little written documentation of Wallenberg in the Gulag. But many prisoners heard his voice and kept his memory alive. Much conflict has arisen over his death. Did he die in 1947, as the Russians said? Or was he alive decades afterward, as Gulag survivors excitedly reported as recently as the 1970s? We may never know.

The most moving materials were those that Wallenberg himself produced — his letters and papers obtained from the National Holocaust Museum. As I read about the Holocaust, I saw man at his most evil, but as I read about Raoul Wallenberg, I saw man at his very best.

Wallenberg took a stand not only in words but in actions. In a time when so many people should have come forth in defense of the Jews, he was one who chose to stand up. He was the difference between 100,000 Hungarian Jews being dead or alive. He is the one that should remind us all to "stand up" against evil. In the face of injustice, let us never be silent.



Emily Filler is prepared to present a program on Raoul Wallenberg to interested groups, including youth groups, and to explain how to participate in National History Day. She may be contacted at 117 East Oak Street, Ovid, MI 48866, phone (517) 834-2566.

In Memoriam



Morris Baker 1926-1996

A profound source of encouragement
to the Jewish Historical Society

Morrie Baker, architect, builder, leader and philanthropist, can best be described as a man who lived with a sense of mission. He set for himself the mission of renewing Jewish life in our time.

Morrie Baker was a man who chose life with determination and vigor. Born in Europe, he came to Detroit as an infant with his mother in 1929, his father having come earlier. He chose a life of responsibility, of creative accomplishment and devotion to his work. By his own efforts and self-discipline, he graduated from the University of Michigan School of Architecture and went on to become a significant architect and builder in the city of Windsor.

For Morrie, the cause of Israel redeemed was sacred like the Sabbath. He established a residence in Israel, made frequent visits, and was a leader of Zionism in America. On the National Board of CLAL, he also was strongly committed to the cause of Jewish pluralism.

Morrie had a great passion for learning. He was engaged in a journey of Jewish discovery. He supported and encouraged all those who shared with him the sheer delight of encountering the wisdom of the Jewish heritage. He understood the mission of the Jewish Historical Society and was a consistent, profound source of encouragement.

He had a clear vision of what Jewish life should be, of the priorities of our community: the centrality of the family, the role of education, the enhancement of Jewish learning, the primacy of the synagogue, the strength of Israeli's institutions. Morrie's dreams for Israel, for American Jewry, for humanity became his freely chosen obligations. By his carefully focused support, he made a difference. His support encouraged the Jewish Historical Society in its work. His "Shem Tov," his good name, is the final legacy that Morrie Baker bequeaths to all of us.

by Irwin Groner, Congregation Shaarey Zedek, rabbi, friend and confidant of Morrie Baker. Rabbi Groner has served as president of the Rabbinical Assembly of America.

In Memoriam



Gertrude Forman Edgar 1913-1996

A Devoted Friend of the Jewish
Historical Society

The Jewish Historical Society lost one of its staunchest friends and most cheerful workers with the untimely death of Gertrude Edgar. The void she left in our hearts can never be filled. Over a period of twenty years, with meticulous care and unflinching good cheer, she fulfilled many responsibilities. First intro-

duced to the Society by her husband, Irving, the last job held by this remarkable lady was vice-president.

In paying tribute to her, her friend Irving Panush said: "At age 83, Gertrude had yet another song to sing, another country to explore, another adventure to encounter — but these were not to be for her.

"Born in Komenetz-Podolsk, Old Russia, in 1913, she was one of six children. Their father emigrated to Canada in 1918, following the events of the Communist Revolution, and established himself with the family in Windsor. It is there that Gertrude met and eventually married her first husband, Louis Forman. Lou began working for Chrysler Corporation and soon became Chief Engineer for the aircraft propulsion program associated with World War II war production efforts. Gertrude and Lou had two sons, David and Tom, and were married for twenty-four years, until his sudden death."

"Later, Gertrude and Dr. Irving Edgar, himself the father of two sons, were married for nineteen years. She adopted the new family. She and Irving were intimately connected with the work of the Jewish Historical Society. Gertrude was more significantly active and giving at her age than many a younger person. In addition to her many communal responsibilities, she had recently exhibited her woven art jewelry at the Emerging Artists Show at the Janice Charach Epstein Gallery, where she enjoyed the title of the "Grandma Moses" of the group. Her energy was boundless, and she was full of stamina and dedication.

"May her memory be a blessing to all of us."

Seferim/Books

A Bibliography of Jewish Education in the United States

Compiled and Edited by Norman Drachler, Wayne State University Press in association with American Jewish Archives, 1996. \$29.95

Annotated bibliographies are not generally the stuff of which great literature is made. But most researchers are not Norman Drachler, one of Detroit's and America's preeminent educators of the 20th century.

In a remarkably ambitious project, Drachler has presented American Jewry the precious gift of a volume cataloguing the entire sweep and scope of Jewish education in America. This seminal work, which received the 1996 Reference Book Award from the Association of Jewish Libraries, makes primary sources accessible to scholar and researcher alike, thus opening up the possibility of qualitative research long since assumed as impossible. Now all the serious inquirer need do is acquire this seven hundred plus page volume and get down to business!

In the meticulous style and painstaking attention to detail that has always marked his every endeavor, Dr. Drachler lays out formative documents in school formation, curriculum development, pedagogy in all subjects, arts and culture, and educational theory in every age grouping and for each special needs area. Hebrew and Holocaust education is chronicled, as are evolving administrative techniques for the educator, librarian, and classroom instructor. References to articles in Michigan Jewish History are frequent. Investigators will now be able to trace the development of camps in America, the emergence of women's issues as key curricular foci, the growth of theology from a mandatory school offering to a profoundly sought spiritual rootedness in recent times.

In short, Norman Drachler has opened up Jewish education as a field of inquiry as valid and central as any Jewish realm of study. The absence of a large body of research in Jewish education has long been bemoaned as a serious shortcoming in the literature by those who see Jewish education as the key to Jewish continuity. Dr. Drachler's tireless efforts in compiling this volume will serve as a point of entry for those who truly are dedicated to the search.

A detailed index helps to make this bibliography a "must-own," a precious legacy from a master teacher to generations of disciples yet unborn.

Reviewed by Rabbi Daniel Syme.

Rabbi Syme, a Detroit native, served as Senior Vice-President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) before assuming the post of rabbi of Temple Beth El. Michigan Jewish History welcomes his return to our community.

The Puzzle of The 613 Commandments and Why Bother

by Philip J. Caplan, Jason Aronson Press, 1996

In choosing the title, The Puzzle of the 613 Commandments and Why Bother, Philip J. Caplan describes his approach to understanding what is a truly complicated subject. He not only tries to understand the "Taryag" commandments (as they are called from the Hebrew letters which add up to the value of 613), but clarifies the views of scholars who wrote about them.

Maimonides is the best known and his *Sefer Hamitzvot* divides the commandments into fourteen commandments. Nachmanides prefers to show why those who came before Maimonides were correct, and he often disagrees with the perspective Maimonides chooses.

Caplan deals with a wide selection of fascinating subjects as he cleverly unlocks and explains why we should both understand and practice the commandments. Clearly, it helps to be a creative mathematician in order to fathom the various and ingenious ways that one reached the number 613.

Those who read Professor Caplan's text will have a better idea of the structure of the 613 Commandments, and will certainly acknowledge the tremendous scholarly effort the author made in analyzing them. "Why bother" may not be the important question to ask, since, standing on its own merits, Caplan's scholarly treatise is truly impressive.

Reviewed by Rabbi David A. Nelson.

Rabbi Nelson is celebrating his 25th year with Congregation Beth Shalom, which, under his leadership, has re-dedicated its synagogue building and opened a new educational complex at its Oak Park location.

The Hundred Thousand Fools of God

by Theodore Levin. Indiana University Press, 1996. \$35

Ted Levin has spent more time going to more places in the Soviet Union and its successor states than any other researcher on music. This new book is a fascinating combination of travelogue, ethnography, and ethnomusicology, covering many regions of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, but also Queens, New York, where Levin followed up his work with interviews of emigre Bukharan Jewish musicians.

Levin's work is marked not just by scholarly concerns, but also by scrupulous attention to the stories and the voices of the musicians he has gotten to know so well. In this book, he allows them ample space as narrators, recounting tales of personal

change and social upheaval that he then relates to the musical examples on the accompanying "CD," firmly folded into the back of the book.

Readers of this journal would be most interested in Levin's long association with the Jews of Bukhara, the great old trade-route city and capital of local kingdoms until Russian conquest in the nineteenth century. In Bukhara, as in many other Muslim courts across the centuries, Jews were able to rise to considerable prominence in societies and moments that stressed a strict interpretation of Islamic doubts about the suitability of music. Indeed, Jews were not just performers, but also major creators of the styles we have come to recognize as "Middle Eastern classical music."

Levin's ties to these creative families and their account of life in pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-Soviet times, including the difficult passage to immigrant status in Queens, allow for a sympathetic and informative narrative that he has also documented on albums on the Smithsonian Folkways label. This is ethnomusicology at its best: human and musical.

Reviewed by Mark Slobin, Wesleyan University.

Professor Mark Slobin, a Detroitier by birth, is himself a distinguished specialist on the musicology of Central Asia and is the author of Tenement Songs: The Popular Music of the Jewish Immigrants.

Footnotes from the Editor

By Judith Levin Cantor



This issue of Michigan Jewish History is my seventh as editor. I originally promised five. My profound thanks to the awesome network of volunteer professionals who have made the publication of this special journal possible: the accomplished authors, photographers, researchers, and proof readers. I am grateful for the skill and keen intelligence of our new associate editor, Sid Simon. Our appreciation to Simons Michelson Zieve for our handsome cover and to the talented JHS Board member Steven Fishman of Goodwill Printing who makes this such a quality publication. I thank each of you from the bottom of my heart for your cheerful cooperation and invaluable hard work.

We have tried to make the journal fulfill the mission of the Jewish Historical Society to record and promote the proud story of the contributions of Michigan Jewish people to life in our home state as well as in America and even in the world at large. This story makes a splendid record, a record often unnoticed, and yet one that can strongly reinforce a pride in Jewish identity for ourselves and for our children and grandchildren. Indeed, this story can prove a strong link to Judaism for young people.

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With the exception of the Native American, everyone in America is an immigrant — and each of us here is a Michigian — whether our great great grandparents immigrated here, or whether we have arrived very recently. For each family, its particular immigrant story is one of adventure, pluck, maybe even romance. Each family should indeed search out and record and cherish — and share — its own individual story. Each of our stories is of interest and merit — and contributes another bright thread to the wonderful tapestry that makes up our people's chronicle.

We must learn, and we must convince our educators, that for our young people, Jewish history should include the proud and fascinating story of our people here — in America and even more locally, in Michigan. While we value all Jewish education, perhaps it is the individual, the family's experience, the local that will ultimately capture the imagination and the loyalty of the young person.

We have an opportunity now with the amazing new technology to write history afresh to include the individual's own story — to make software interactive. Think how appealing this could make Jewish history to our youth! Let us continue to explore those possibilities.

According to Detroit Jewry's pre-eminent local historian Dr. Sidney Bolkosky, author of "Harmony and Dissonance: Voices of Jewish Identity in Detroit, 1914-1967," all history is "revisionist" by nature. Each academically qualified historian takes it upon himself to focus and emphasize that which he considers significant. Bolkosky added that only by the gross and immoral denial of the fact of the Holocaust did the term "revisionist" fall into disfavor. So it seems that the time is now for us to publicize our proud local story to ourselves, our young people, and to the world.

Our Society, by its journal, programs, tours, exhibits and its cooperation with other groups works to fulfill this mission. This past year we not only cooperated in presenting programs with Cohn Haddow Studies, but helped to present the Michigan collection at the record-breaking "Becoming American Women" exhibit at the Detroit Historical Museum. The journal, which is a benefit of membership, is collected by libraries and universities around the world. All this work is worthy of our encouragement and support.

This issue of the journal dramatically illustrates the many and varied ways we can collect, preserve and promote our history. See how an oral history so wisely recorded by Melba and Sid Winer in 1976 preserves fresh and lively personal recollections of the earliest era of the Fresh Air Camp at the beginning of the century. My best editorial advice is for every family to engage in its own oral history — No community institution could accomplish this for us — and the results are irreplaceable treasures!

Old personal correspondence is the source of another "insightful" article about an immigrant family. The newly named Leonard N. Simons Jewish Community Archives, co-sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit and the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, located in the world class Reuther Library at Wayne State University and named after our beloved mentor, serves as our community's repository for our precious archives. That which we save is how we will be known to future researchers and scholars.

And while we must reach back to preserve our history, this issue features a man who is leaping into the technology of the future to record and disseminate that history. Our own nonagenarian Walter Field by his use of cyberspace is extending his reach into the 21st century — and we salute this wonderful friend for leading the way.

The past seven years as editor of the journal have been a wonderful ride for me. Interest in preserving and educating about our history is at an all-time high. Now, the new technology gives us the opportunity both to personalize history and to make it accessible worldwide. As it is said, "With knowledge, with understanding, and most of all with discernment," let us ride the wave.

Sixth Leonard N. Simons History Award presented to Dr. Leslie Hough and Dr. Philip Mason



Newly elected president Jim Grey; retiring president Judy Cantor; Stanley Winkelman, who presented the awards; Carol Roberts, event chair; Dr. Hough and Dr. Mason, June 1996

Mary Lou Simons Zieve recipient of 7th Historical Award — named after her late father, Leonard Simons



Mary Lou Zieve seated with Robert Aronson, left, executive vice-president of the Jewish Federation and David Page, who presented her with the award; Standing: Joan Braun, event chair, Jim Grey, president, June 1997

**Cantor Stephen Dubov,
presenting "An American
Jubilee," narrated by
Mariette Simon**



Cantor Stephen Dubov



**At the 1997
Annual Luncheon**

*Left: David Page and
Judge Walter Shapero*

Jewish Historical Society Annual Reports, 1995-1997

By James D. Grey, President

My own Michigan roots can be traced back to the founding families of Temple Beth El in 1850, and later to those of Shaarey Zedek and Temple Israel. I also have roots in Elk Rapids. Therefore, I have a great interest in the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan. However our group is open to anyone who joined our community even yesterday, for today they also are a part of our history.

I invite the "next generation" to become involved, as I envision continued growth of this wonderful group. Our programming will strive to reach out to all ages and to all of Michigan as we share the excitement of Michigan Jewish history.

A few highlights of the past year included:

Participation in the centennial celebration of the Petoskey congregation, Temple B'nai Israel, followed the next day by a trip to Fort Michilimackinac, home of Ezekiel Solomon, Michigan's first Jewish settler. A big hit attended by a throng of Northern Michigan "sunbirds."



JHS visits home of Ezekiel Solomon, at Fort Michilimackinac



Judy Mayer Schneider and John Mayer, grandchildren of Bernard Ginsburg — a co-partner in the Grabowsky Power Wagon Co., a thriving turn of the century truck manufacturer

A narrated bus tour by Judy Cantor on the "Jews of Michigan" and a visit to the Michigan Historical Museum in Lansing, with a particular Jewish emphasis — a highlight during the Fall color season.

A tour to the "Motor City" exhibit at The Detroit Historical Museum, led by Miriam Cohen.



At the GM display, Jennifer and Rachel Phillips, grandchildren of Meyer Prentis, who served as Treasurer of General Motors for over forty years



Left to right: Hy Dorfman, Ann Doneson, author Marty Glickman, event chair Doris Easton, Bob Benyas, and president Jim Grey at the 1996 Book Fair

Cooperation with programs of Book Fair, where we co-sponsored Marty Glickman speaking of his experiences in the Olympic Games in his book The Fastest Kid on the Block; with the Jewish Genealogy Society in "It's All Relative, Piecing Together Your Family History"; with the JCC for Irwin Cohen's "Detroit: I Remember It Well," with the Cohn-Haddow Center for Judaic Studies of Wayne State University with the presentations of Jenna Weissman Joselit and

MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY

then Prof. Stephen Whitfield; and with Metro Detroit Hillel and Hadassah, for whom Adele Staller led our notable bus tour of Jewish Detroit.

An afternoon at the Detroit Historical Museum's exhibit, "Becoming American Women" featuring the Michigan collection, chaired by Harriet Siden, and warmly host-



Prof. David Weinberg, Prof. Stephen Whitfield, and Pearl & George Zeltzer



At the "Becoming American Women" exhibit at The Detroit Historical Museum, Jim Grey, president; Harriet Siden, event chair; Dulcie Rosenfeld, D.H.S. co-chair; Judy Cantor, curator of the Michigan collection; and Sylvia Babcock, hostess of the event

ed by Sylvia Babcock and her daughter Nancy Grosfeld. A memorable event!

As you can see we have been busy. Many thanks are due all around for the success of such wonderful programming. Now by popular demand, two repeat performances are scheduled for this Fall: the bus tour of Jewish Detroit, and the tour of homes in the historic Boston Edison area. It is gratifying to report that our membership is growing, our finances are sound, and

the list of those joining the 21st Century Heritage Council Endowment, which guarantees our future into the new millennium, is growing. So we look forward to another productive year. Thank you all.



The Officers and Board of Directors, 1996

Seated left to right: Cindi Brody, Sarah Bell, Evy Budnitzky, Benno Levi, Ida Levine, Joseph Kramer, Jim Grey, president. Standing: Dr. Sidney Bolkosky, Stephen Rosman, Cynthia Mandelbaum, Suzanne Shifman, Sylvia Babcock, Judy Cantor, Bette Schein, Marilyn Natchez, Betty Pernick, Harriet Siden, Doris Easton, Adele Staller

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6600 West Maple Road
West Bloomfield, Michigan 48322
(810) 661-7606
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Please enroll me at the following level:

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Trustees, Chancellors, Deans, Fellows and Collectors become life members. The Heritage Council will continue to be listed in this journal, *Michigan Jewish History*, which circulates to libraries and universities around the world.

Name _____

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- Check enclosed for my gift of \$ _____
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- I am making a testamentary bequest to the Society in my will and will forward documentation.

The Society profoundly appreciates the support of the Heritage Council

Categories of membership in the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan:
\$25 Single; \$36 Family; \$15 Organizations; \$100 Corporate Annual; \$250 Life

Tribute cards will be sent on request for contributions received.

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN

6600 West Maple Road
West Bloomfield, Michigan
(248) 661-7606 • (248) 661-1000

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Membership, tributes, and endowments to the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, founded in 1959, support the collection, commemoration, and publication of the history of the Jews of Michigan. *Michigan Jewish History* is the oldest continuously published journal of local Jewish history in America. All members receive a copy of this journal and it will be forwarded to new members. For membership information, please contact the Jewish Historical Society.

