



chicago jewish historical society

CHICAGO JEWISH HISTORY

Reflections and Remembrances



"Refugees," undated, by David Bekker, from the collection of Rachel Perkal. Read more inside about a recent Bekker exhibit at the Koehnline Museum of Art.



Coming Up! **Sunday, May 17, 2 PM**

Historian, journalist, and
CJHS member Matt
Nickerson presents:

*Flag of Our Fathers:
The Story of Chicago's
Jewish Pioneer, Abraham
Kohn, and His Lost Flag*

Temple Beth Israel
3601 Dempster Street,
Skokie

Details inside.



Members Only: **Save the Date!** **Sunday, June 14, 12 PM**

Enjoy a free, exclusive tour
of KOVAL Distillery, an all-
kosher manufacturer of
whiskey, gin, and liqueur.

Tour is limited to 30—so
sign up soon!

KOVAL
5121 Ravenswood Avenue,
Chicago

Details inside.

CO-PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



Dr. Rachelle Gold

What is resilience? Can it confer the ability to survive extreme adversity?

My friend Sam asked for my professional opinion, since I am a clinical psychologist. He had attended a commemoration of International Holocaust Remembrance Day—designated as January 27, the day in 1945 when Soviet troops arrived to liberate Auschwitz—and had read Howard Reich's recent book, "The Art of Inventing Hope: Intimate Conversations with Elie Wiesel." Sam was pondering the idea that resilience, in the form of hopefulness or other traits, had enabled some people to survive the Holocaust and that a lack of it may have cost others their lives. This was not merely an academic question for Sam, who had lost many relatives in the Holocaust.

A great deal of research has considered this question from historical, psychological, religious, and other perspectives, and there is no unconditional or single answer. Regarding concentration camp victims, I told Sam that I couldn't comment on the notion of a defenseless individual's resilience in the face of near-certain murder. Also, though research on groups of Holocaust survivors has produced important and useful findings, I advised caution in applying them to particular individuals.

Though I was unable to give Sam a direct answer, his inquiry led me to think about Jewish resilience in difficult but less extraordinary circumstances. I believe we can gain from recognizing and appreciating the role of resilience in the Jewish people as a whole, and, specifically, in our lives as Jewish Chicagoans.

The American Psychological Association defines resilience as "the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress" Furthermore, "being resilient does not mean that a person doesn't experience difficulty or distress ... people commonly demonstrate resilience ... (it) is not a trait that people either have or do not have ... (it) can be learned and developed."

When we look at Chicago Jewish history, we see countless examples of these qualities of resilience in our community's responses to major challenges. I have chosen three examples to share with you.

The Great Chicago Fire of 1871 (started October 8, Simchat Torah eve). The Jewish community, concentrated in the downtown area where the fire raged, was devastated. Residences, synagogues, businesses, and public institutions were destroyed. Immediately, B'nai B'rith and the United Hebrew Relief Association began relief efforts, and Jewish business leaders pitched in. Along with the resilient city of Chicago, the Jewish community's recovery and rebuilding were rapid. The community had to recover again when a second fire in 1874 affected the Jewish communities on the Near West and Near South Sides. (See "President's Column" by Walter Roth in *CJH*, Fall 1996).

The Chicago Hebrew Institute's setback. Julius Rosenwald donated the funds to enable the Chicago Hebrew Institute (CHI), chartered in 1903, to move from rented space to its own building at Taylor and Lytle Streets. This emerging predecessor of the Jewish Community Centers (JCCs) suffered a calamity when a fire destroyed the building just two years later. With Rosenwald's contributions, the CHI rebuilt in 1912 and expanded. In 1922, the CHI was renamed the Jewish People's Institute (JPI); in 1927, the magnificent building at 3500 West Douglas Boulevard was completed. The JPI flourished as a seminal institution and was succeeded by the JCCs, newly renamed in 1946, in other neighborhoods where Jews settled.

Attack on Jews in West Rogers Park. On Friday night, July 2, 1999, a white supremacist shot and injured a number of Jews walking home from synagogue. The attacker's racist rampage continued and claimed victims in other communities. (See "The Fourth of July Weekend, 1999: Remembering a Tragedy" by Karen Kaplan in *CJHS*, Spring 2019.) Jewish residents were grieving and outraged, but they were not defeated. Today, West Rogers Park is a thriving Jewish community, as depicted in filmmaker Beverly Siegel's documentary, "Driving West Rogers Park: Chicago's Once and Future Jewish Neighborhood." The film debuted at the CJHS 40th Anniversary celebration in December 2017.



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Chicago Jewish History

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CO-PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

I hope these examples inspire you to notice the adaptive efforts, from everyday to heroic, that have sustained and strengthened our Jewish community.

I will close by drawing your attention to one more example of resilience: *Chicago Jewish History's* transition to a new editor, Robert Nagler Miller. This is his first issue as *CJH* editor. We wish him, and the Society, success and longevity.

We Regret

Chicago Jewish History deeply regrets the omission in its Fall 2019 Annual Book Issue edition of two books co-authored by Society member Charlotte Adelman. We include them here:

THE MIDWESTERN NATIVE GARDEN: Native Alternatives to Nonnative Flowers and Plants, an Illustrated Guide. By Charlotte Adelman and Bernard L. Schwartz. Ohio University Press/Swallow Press, 2011. 272 pages. Paper.

PRAIRIE DIRECTORY OF NORTH AMERICA: U.S. & Canada. By Charlotte Adelman and Bernard L. Schwartz. Lawndale Enterprises, 2002. The first-ever guide for visits to the prairie, an ecosystem unique to North America. Fifty pages are devoted to Illinois. 352 pages. Paper.

Adelman also has authored many publications on legal matters.

Coming Aboard: Robert Nagler Miller

With the Winter 2020 issue of *Chicago Jewish History*, Robert Nagler Miller is delighted to assume the post of Editor, Designer, and Publicist at the Chicago Jewish Historical Society.

Robert gratefully acknowledges his predecessor, Beverly Chubat, who graciously introduced readers to him in the last issue.

In this issue, Robert would like to follow suit and pay tribute to Bev, who has brought a wealth of knowledge about Chicago Jewish history to both the publication and the Society, along with considerable design and editorial skills. She will be a tough act to follow.

Robert looks forward to working with all members of the Society to maintain and enhance the vibrancy of our 43-year-old organization, and he is interested in hearing from all of you with news, feedback, and story ideas. Please feel free to contact him at Robertnaglermiller@gmail.com or at 323-793-1293.



Nu? Who's New? Dr. Marshall Fields

Welcome New Members of the Society

Dr. Linda Camras &
Dr. Jerome Seidenfeld
Chicago, IL

Patricia Engerhard
Evanston, IL

Julianne Feldmar
Chicago, IL

Dr. Marshall & Heidi Fields
Asheville, NC

Bonnie Gilman
Chicago, IL

Beth Gottesman
Skokie, IL

Eudice Greenfield
Skokie, IL

Grant & Kim Jacobson
Plainfield, IL

Marcia Kulinsky
Chicago, IL

Sharron Pierce
Chicago, IL

Turi Ryder & Scott Adams
Chicago, IL

Shelly Shapiro
Skokie, IL

Starting in this issue of *CJH*, we are pleased to introduce readers to some of our Society's newest members.

We kick off this feature with Dr. Marshall Fields, a retired family practitioner, who spent his earliest years on Chicago's South Side neighborhoods of Hyde Park and South Shore before moving with his family to Lincolnwood, the primarily Jewish northern suburb that abuts the city's West Rogers Park neighborhood.

A member of the first graduating class of Niles West High School, Dr. Fields, 74, is an alumnus of the University of Chicago and the Medical College of Wisconsin. Before practicing family medicine for decades in Madison, Wisconsin, Dr. Fields cared for Navajo Nation patients in Shiprock, New Mexico, where he worked for the Indian Health Service.

For the past 10 years, he has lived with his wife, Heidi, in Asheville, North Carolina. They are the proud parents of four and grandparents of seven.

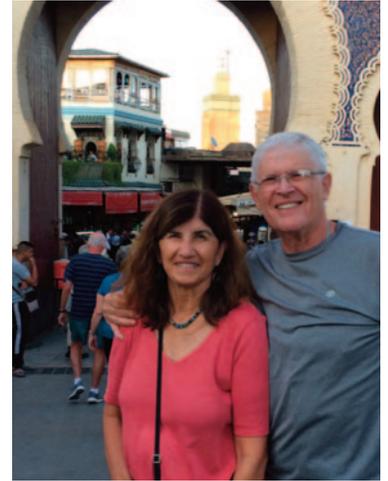
CJH: You became interested in the Chicago Jewish Historical Society after reading a back issue of *CJH* that contained an article mentioning your grandfather, an impresario, who managed the careers of some famous cantors and opera singers, is that right?

MF: I was reading an article on Richard Tucker in the Summer 2014 issue. It brought back some wonderful memories. My grandfather, Joseph Hyman, managed Tucker's cantorial performances for many years. Tucker was a friend of my parents—my mother's, in particular—and knew me from childhood. I attended many of his synagogue performances and concerts.

I remember Tucker singing at the Park Synagogue's High Holiday services, which took place in a hotel ballroom and, later, in the synagogue's sanctuary. Tucker presented a concert in 1967 or 1968 in Milwaukee, when I was a student there, and he invited me to visit in his dressing room as he prepared for his performance. His energy and smile were contagious. The last times that I saw him were at my grandparents' funerals on Peterson Avenue. He always considered them to be dear friends.

CJH: But Richard Tucker was hardly the only notable Jewish opera star whose career your grandfather managed.

MF: Yes, Jan Peerce was another. I recall going down to Miami Beach with my family for Passover, and Peerce would be singing at the Seder. My grandfather placed cantors for engagements throughout the United States and Canada. Pierre Pinchik and Yossele Rosenblatt were the other famous



Dr. Marshall Fields and his wife, Heidi.

cantors I remember. In Chicago, the remarkable Lind family of cantors were friends and, I believe, clients of my grandfather's cantorial business, which was known as the Chicago Concert Bureau from the 1920s.

CJH: How did your grandfather, who was your mother's father, get started in this business?

MF: He and my grandmother were from a shtetl outside of Kiev. He started working in this country as a baker. He came to Chicago after living in Glasgow, Scotland, for a few years. In the early 1920s, he began organizing concerts by Jewish singers and placing cantors in synagogues. As a child, I would occasionally accompany him when he went on business to synagogues. He would communicate with the cantors and synagogues in Yiddish and English. He did this his entire life—from his 20s until his mid 80s. He never became wealthy, but he was wealthy in friends.

CJH: One of your grandfather's close friends was the late Danny Newman, the longtime head of press and public relations at Lyric Opera Chicago. That relationship helped your own social life, didn't it?

MF: Yes, I would call Danny Newman's secretary and say, "I'm Joseph Hyman's grandson. Do you have any tickets for this evening's performance?" I could take my date to the opera for nothing and sit in box seats. It was pretty incredible and a great privilege.

"When I was a kid and my mother would shop at the State Street Marshall Field's store, she'd deposit me in the toy department. I'd tell them that I was Marshall Fields and that I could play with any of the toys."



Marshall Fields's maternal grandparents, Chicagoans Joseph and Ida Hyman. Mr. Hyman managed the careers of many cantors and opera singers, including Richard Tucker's.

CJH: Your grandfather wasn't the only family member with a passion for music. Would you explain?

MF: My father, Lester Fields, owned a series of furniture stores on and near Roosevelt Road, and later he became a manufacturer of residential interior lighting and wall decor. He met my mother, Bessie, at a Hadassah meeting his sister and mother were hosting in their home. He played multiple instruments: the violin, mandolin, balalaika, Hammond organ, and piano, all of which were in our living room. He easily played my French horn that I couldn't get to make a sound, and he claimed to have played the tuba. My mother had a beautiful voice complemented by training in classical music and opera. My father would sit at the organ, my mother at the piano, and they would enjoy musical evenings with other musically talented friends, which my dad would record in stereo.



Opera singer Richard Tucker (second from right), is flanked by his wife and his manager, Joseph Hyman, at a fundraiser at a synagogue.

remember the sounds and smells of the congregation. We knew the services were nearing the end when our mom and Grandma Ida left their seats in the balcony to go home and prepare dinner.

CJH: We would be remiss if we didn't ask about the origins of your name—the same as a beloved yet now-defunct Chicago institution. Marshall Field's was one of the few major department stores in the United States that was not founded by Jews, so clearly there's no familial relationship with the retailer. Please explain.

MF: It depends whom you ask. My mother said I was named after an uncle whose Hebrew name was Meyer. But my father thought that it'd be an interesting name to have and that girls would want to talk with me. As for Fields, my father's family and his younger brother changed their surname six weeks before I was born. The family name had been Goldfinger. There was still a lot of anti-Semitism at the end of World War II.

CJH: Did you have fun with your name?

MF: When I was a kid and my mother would shop at the State Street Marshall Field's store, she'd deposit me in the toy department. I'd tell them that I was Marshall Fields and that I could play with any of the toys. And, yes, girls, women, and men did, and still do, want to know if I am "the" Marshall Fields.

CJH: Did you get into the musical act as a child?

MF: I used to sing in the choirs at school and at our synagogues, Agudath Achim South Shore on Yates Avenue and Congregation Shaare Tikvah on North Kimball Avenue. My wife is not impressed with my vocal skills.

When we were preteens, my brother and I had to know our "stuff" during the High Holidays. We would walk into the middle of Congregation K.I.N.S. (Knesses Israel Nusach Sfard) on South Independence Boulevard and step up onto an elevated cantor's platform. We would sit with Grandpa Joe on a back bench facing the bimah and the back of Cantor Pinchik with his choir members on either side of the stand holding their music. I can



The Hyman-Fields mishpacha, gathered for Passover in 1950s, including Marshall Fields (right, front).

Two Chicago Jews of Valor Remembered at November 24 Program

Two Jewish men with strong ties to Chicago, as well as strong moral rectitude, were given their due this past November 24, when the CJHS hosted a talk on the late Windy City journalist Ben Hecht, a program that was presented in memory of the Society's President Emeritus Walter Roth, who died in January 2019.

The afternoon event at Beth Emet Synagogue in Evanston drew almost 200 people, including two dozen Roth family members. They were as interested in learning more about Hecht, who ultimately became one of Hollywood's most prolific and well-paid screenwriters, as they were in paying homage to Roth, a Chicago attorney, early CJHS leader, 22-year Society President, and author of several notable books about Chicago Jewish history, including "Everyday Heroic Lives: Portraits from Chicago's Jewish Past," "Looking Backward: True Stories from Chicago's Jewish Past," and "Avengers and Defenders."

The program's main presenter was University of Hawaii Professor of Communications Dr. Julien Gorbach, author of the recently published "The Notorious Ben Hecht: Iconic Writer and Militant Zionist." The New York Times last year described his book as "insightful ... with a surprising amount of fresh material on Hecht's activism." Gorbach focused on Hecht's surprising transition as an indifferent, secular Jew and "avowedly apolitical" personage into a figure who "embraced Jewish politics."

As Gorbach argued, the critical turning point for Hecht, perhaps best known for his play "The Front Page," was the rise of the Nazis in Europe. In the early 1940s, Hecht created a pageant, "We Will Never Die," which served as a heartfelt public plea to save Europe's Jews, and he became active in the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People.

Through his connections in Hollywood and in journalism circles, Gorbach said, Hecht "shattered the American media silence" about the Holocaust. "He took on the liberals of his day because they were asleep at the switch."

"I never met anyone who lived life as much as Wally ... He loved intellectual discussion and debate."

Dr. Ed Mazur

Following World War II, Hecht supported the Irgun, the insurgent Zionist paramilitary organization that at times resorted to violence to work toward the creation of the State of Israel. Gorbach noted that Hecht ultimately "turned his back on Israel" after David Ben-Gurion, Israel's primary founder and first prime minister, ordered the bombing of an Irgun ship.

Prior to Gorbach's talk, CJHS Board of Directors member and former President Dr. Ed Mazur paid tribute to his Society peer, Walter Roth, who served as Society President from 1988 to 2010.

"History, next to his wife, Chaya, and his children, was his passion," Mazur said. "I never met anyone who lived life as much as Wally ... He loved intellectual discussion and debate."



Ari Roth, recalling his father, the late Walter Roth. Photo by Karen Kaplan



Judy Roth (left) and Miriam Raider-Roth also lovingly remember their father. Photo by Karen Kaplan

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A Second Look at One of Jewish Chicago's Great Artists: David Bekker

One of Chicago's preeminent Jewish artists during the first half of the 20th century, David Bekker (1897 – 1956) was known for his paintings, stained-glass designs, etchings, woodcuts, linocuts, and illustrations that depicted Jewish cultural and religious life—in the lost world of the shtetl, as well as life in the New World—and touched on the social and political issues that were swirling about him in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, including the Spanish Civil War, the Great Depression, and the plight of the poor and working class.

As former *CJH* Editor Bev Chubat noted in a Spring 2010 article about the Vilna-born Bekker, who received his professional training at Jerusalem's Bezalel Academy of Art, the artist "was an integral member of several Chicago artists' organizations," such as the American Jewish Artists Club, and became a fixture at Café Royale on Roosevelt Road, a popular West Side venue "for Chicago's Jewish artists, writers, philosophers, and kibbitzers, most of them Yiddish-speaking," who would argue and debate over heavy, Eastern European-inspired meals.

The legacy of Bekker, who came to Chicago between the late 1920s and early 1930s, can still be felt in and around Chicago—in the stained glass windows he designed at Temple Sholom and Anshe Emet Synagogue in the city's Lakeview neighborhood, as well as in the many murals he worked on while he participated in the Works Progress Administration, or WPA, which put many unemployed and underemployed artists to work during the Great Depression.

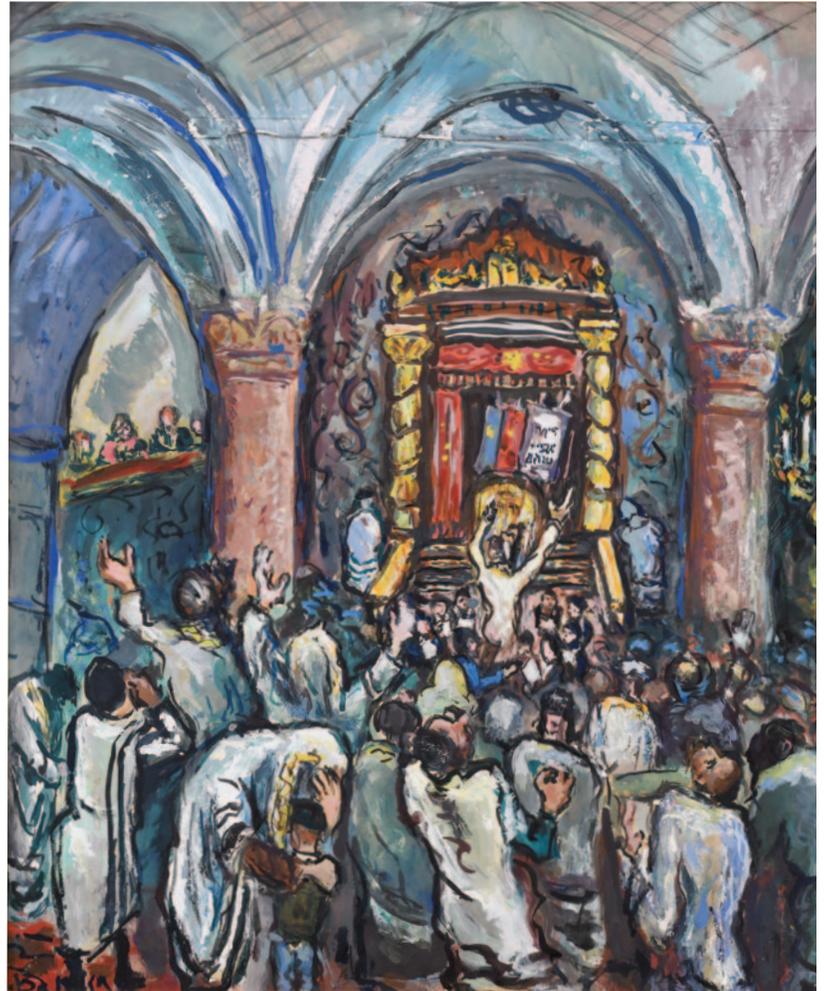
Bekker's work has also been exhibited at the world-renowned Art Institute of Chicago, most recently as part of the 2013 group show "They Seek a City: Chicago and the Art of Migration, 1910-1950."

It was this Art Institute show, in fact, that served as a catalyst for the one-person show of Bekker's work at Oakton Community College's Koehnline Museum of Art, which just closed in late January 2020.

After coming upon the Bekker paintings at "Migration," Chicago Jewish Historical Society member Jerry Wexler approached Koehnline's Israeli-American curator, Dr. Nathan Harpaz, about mounting an exhibition devoted to the artist's works.

Wexler, a prolific Bekker collector, had been introduced to the artist's work as a child, when "my family decided I was getting an insufficient education" and hired "an extraordinary tutor of the old school," Ezra Perkal, to school him in the finer things of life, such as art, music, and literature, Wexler said.

The Belmont Harbor apartment of Perkal and his wife, Eve, both Holocaust survivors, was filled with art, including works by Bekker, Wexler



"Neilah" (Yom Kippur), from the collection of Ezra and Eve Perkal

recalled. As Perkal played Mussorgorsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition," he asked his budding scholar to "walk around the apartment, look at the pictures, and relate them to the music," Wexler recounted.

That was all that it took for Wexler to become a Bekker aficionado. When he was furnishing his first college apartment at Northwestern University, he said, he picked up a Bekker painting for a "modest sum." Since then, he and his wife, Dr. Joyce Wexler, an English professor at Loyola University Chicago, have continued to amass a sizeable Bekker collection.

Harpaz, the Koehnline curator, took kindly to Wexler's suggestion to organize a show, which ultimately resulted in "From Sorrow to Triumphant Joy: The Art of David Bekker." The two enlisted the help of Chubat, whose late uncle, Isaac Kuzminsky, a dentist by profession, knew Bekker from their evenings together at Café Royale and was himself a subject of the artist's work. They were also ably assisted by Ezra Perkal's widow, Eve, along with Bekker's children Dvora Aviezer and Alex Bekker.

Aviezer, who flew in from Israel with her husband, Bar-Ilan University professor Nathan Aviezer, as well as her niece, art historian Ronit Bekker Blankovsky, to attend the opening of the show, which included dozens of her father's paintings, drawings, sketches, and woodcuts, said that she was appreciative of efforts "to keep my father's legacy in the limelight."



"Talmud Lesson," from the collection of Ezra and Eve Perkal



Dvora Aviezer, daughter of the artist, holds up one her father's works. With her (from left) are husband Dr. Nathan Aviezer and Society members and David Bekker collectors Jerry and Dr. Joyce Wexler. Photo courtesy of Dvora Aviezer

For Harpaz, who wrote an extensive catalogue accompanying the Koehnline exhibit, the show was an opportunity to re-engage with the works of a major talent deserving of continued attention. As he wrote in the catalogue, Bekker's "consciousness of social justice issues, such as anti-Semitism, war and refugees, immigration, and the significance of working class lives, present throughout his oeuvre, is still relevant."

Jewish Geography: A Daughter Recalls Her Father's Pathway Through Chicago

KAREN KAPLAN

Memories are like layers of paint on an old house. The top coat is fresh and bright, but the more deeply you scratch, the more faded and cracked the colors become. The vividness that remains is eventually lost under the weight of newly added layers.

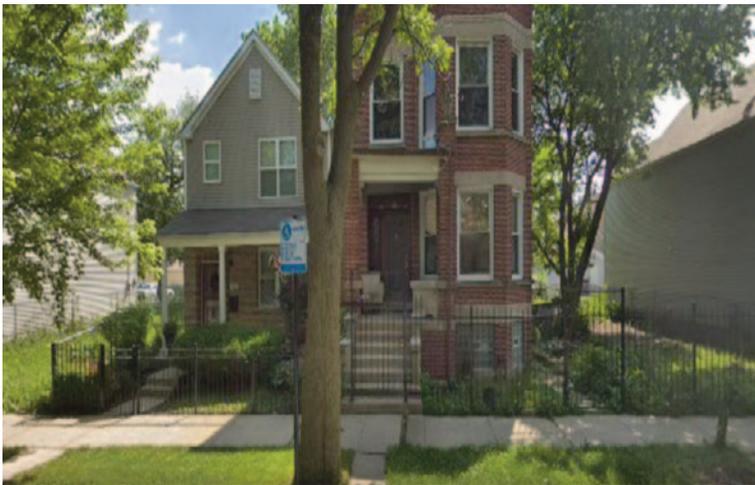
Back in the 1980s, my sister, Diane Korsower, had the foresight to record conversations with my father, Abraham (Abe) Korsower, now of blessed memory. His life provides a "geographical biography" of Jewish Chicago, and many readers will recognize the journey of their own families in his story.

The Voyage

The fourth of seven children, Abe was born in Lvov, Poland (now Ukraine), in 1913 to Joseph and Sophie Korsower. With dreams of a better life, Joseph, a tailor, came to Chicago in 1923, where his sister Bluma lived. Already an American citizen, Bluma provided the pathway to citizenship to Joseph and his family. While living with Bluma, Joseph opened a tailor shop on 43rd Street on Chicago's South Side, saving for six years to bring over the rest of his family.

In the summer of 1929, Abe, four of his siblings, and his mother, Sophie, attempted to come to Chicago and join Joseph. Due to an eye condition, Sophie was turned back in Warsaw. Bravely, she sent her children onward. A sixth child, Reuben, came here in 1939, right before Germany invaded Poland. Sophie and Maurice, her oldest son, never left Europe and perished in the Shoah. (Their exact fates are not known, and attempts to locate them after the war proved unsuccessful, but virtually all the Jews in Lvov were killed—either in the Lvov Ghetto itself, or in the Belzec or Janowska concentration camps that were located near Lvov.)

Abe and his siblings set sail from Le Havre, France, as steerage passengers on the recently built ship *Ile de France*. All my father carried with him on this voyage were his sharp intelligence and his passion for soccer. He stepped onto Ellis Island and into his new life as an American on July 23, 1929, just 10 days after his 16th birthday.



The first American home of the author's late father: 1527 South Lawndale Avenue, Chicago.

North Lawndale

Abe's first home was at 1527 South Lawndale Avenue. Not many years before, Golda Meir, before moving to Israel, lived only two blocks away at 1306 South Lawndale while she worked at the Douglas Park Library. Since the 1910s, Eastern European Jewish immigrants, gradually gaining footholds in the middle class, were leaving the Jewish ghetto of the Near West Side and moving to North Lawndale. Some built two-flats and apartment buildings in the neighborhood, while others, like my family, rented there. By 1930, the area was almost 70 percent Jewish.

After his arrival, Abe attended public school at the Theodore Herzl School at 3711 West Douglas Boulevard. Designed by architect Arthur F. Hussander, it opened on September 1, 1915. Named after the father of modern Zionism, the school's name reflected the Jewish demographics of the area. The population grew so

quickly that an addition was built in 1922. The Herzl school serves the Lawndale community to this day.

Within three months of his arrival in July, the stock market crashed, ushering in the Great Depression. Joseph was unable to support his family. The older children, including Abe, went out to work, and the two youngest, Esther, 7, and Yetta, age 8, were sent to the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home.

Jewish-based orphanages were by no means a rarity at that time. The first Jewish orphanage in the city was the Chicago Home for Jewish Orphans. Founded by the Reform German-Jewish community in 1894, it put less emphasis on traditional Jewish customs, such as kashrut and Shabbat observance, and more emphasis on the Americanization of the children.

Later, with the arrival of more Eastern European Jews, who wanted to maintain the traditional observances of Judaism, the need for another orphanage grew. Mr. Marks Nathan, from the Orthodox community, bequeathed \$15,000 to establish an orphanage whose bylaws included the provision that it operate "in accordance with the Orthodox Jewish rites," as author Natlie Burda noted in her 2006 Illinois Wesleyan University article, "Orthodoxy as a Means of Becoming Good Jewish Americans: Two Jewish Orphanages in Chicago." The Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home opened in 1906, quickly outgrew its original location, and moved to 1550 South Albany Avenue, where my aunts were sent to live.

In 1937, the Chicago Home for Jewish Orphans merged with the Marks Nathan Home and the Jewish Home Finding Society to become the Jewish Children's Bureau, providing a range of services. The Marks Nathan Home operated until 1948. The Bureau became part of Jewish Child and Family Services in 2006.



A postcard depicting the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home, where two of the author's aunts grew up during the Great Depression.



The Theodore Herzl School, which Abe Korsower attended.

Abe got the best severance pay ever: He met and married the boss's daughter.

Abe left Herzl School after only a few months to work at Silverstein's Deli. It was one of the premier delis located on Roosevelt Road. In the words of Irving Cutler, author, Chicago history expert, and a founder of the Chicago Jewish History Society, "... there was Silverstein's, which was big enough to have weddings in the back." Interviewed for the November 6, 2017, Chicago Tribune article, "What Happened to the Big Jewish Delis in Chicago," he continued, "It was a popular place, and in front you often had outdoor political orators: socialists, Zionists, communists and atheists. They'd get up on their soapbox and give their spiel. A crowd would gather, and there'd be hecklers; sometimes fights would break out. It was a lively area."



An early photograph of the Jewish People's Institute, a forerunner to today's JCCs.

For recreation, there was the new Jewish People's Institute on Douglas Boulevard. Built in 1927, it was the forerunner to the today's JCCs. It had a swimming pool, gymnasium, and rooftop deck and offered all sorts of activities for the local community.

A quick learner and hard worker, Abe was lured away from Silverstein's to work at a short-lived deli owned by my maternal grandfather, Louis Garber. The deli, whose name is long forgotten, didn't survive the Depression, but Abe got the best severance pay ever: He met and married the boss's daughter, my mother, Tina Garber, in 1939.

Soccer

Abe's love for soccer began in Lvov, and it shaped his life in Chicago. As waves of immigrants arrived, ethnic soccer teams were formed to provide

sport and social interactions. The National Soccer League (Chicago) was formed in 1919, and it exists to this day. Abe was active on every level in the League and went on to be a professional soccer reporter for all the major Chicago newspapers, including the Chicago Tribune.

Teams, reflecting their players' heritages, included "Hakoah Center," the all-Jewish Chicago team. Hakoah, meaning "the strength" in Hebrew, was an oft-used name of Jewish soccer teams around the world. In 1926, 18,000 fans watched Hakoah of Vienna play Chicago's Sparta Team at Comiskey Park. In 1951, Hakoah Israel came to Chicago and played the local team Spartans, and Abe was co-director of this event. Records show Chicago's Hakoah Center team won the NSL Chicago League championship in 1944. Because of his soccer connections, Abe made friends from all over the world. They were bound together by a shared love of the game.

Lakeview

By the time my sister and I were born, World War II was over, and my parents were living in East Lakeview on Chicago's North Side. The highrises along the lakefront and the homes and apartments east of Broadway housed a substantial Jewish population. Three of Chicago's oldest synagogues, representing each of the major denominations, were located there, within walking distance of each other. They all remain to this day.

The Orthodox Anshe Sholom began with the merger of the Ohave Sholom Mariampol and Anshe Kalvarier shuls in 1892. The Conservative Anshe Emet, also one of Chicago's oldest synagogues, was established in 1873.

Our family attended the Reform Temple Sholom, founded in 1867. Our rabbi, Louis Binstock, was a model of the progressive Reform movement of the 1950s and 60s. Under his leadership, traditional Friday night Shabbat services were changed to Sunday morning, a choir and other musical accompaniment became part of the services, and men no longer wore kippot and tallitot during prayer. Rabbi Binstock was devoted to social ideals and progress, including racial equality. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke at the Temple synagogue to an overflow crowd on "The Future of Integration" on October 24, 1964. One of Rabbi Binstock's more enduring quotes is no less valuable today than 70 years ago: "When all is said and done, [material] success without happiness is the worst kind of failure."

My sister and I attended the Nettlehorst School on Broadway, just north of Belmont Avenue, in the 1950s and 60s. Most of our teachers were Jewish, as were many of our classmates. We continued on to nearby Lakeview High School, where Jewish students excelled academically and participated enthusiastically in extracurricular activities.

West Rogers Park

They say what goes around comes around, and Abe and Tina must have felt that way when they made their final move to West Rogers Park in 1970. As Abe walked through the neighborhood, he was confronted with many of the same institutions that greeted him when he first arrived in Chicago 40 years earlier. The Jews of prewar Lawndale had moved on, most to the North Side, and they had brought their shuls and businesses with them. Congregation Anshe Motele had moved from Lawndale to California Avenue in 1956. And Fluky's, Abe's favorite hotdog joint, had moved to West Rogers Park from Roosevelt Road. It had been down the block from Silverstein's Deli, where Abe had worked all those years ago. The JCC on Touhy Avenue was the new incarnation of the Jewish People's Institute (JPI) that had provided Lawndale's Jews with recreation and cultural activities.

And what became of Abe's siblings and father? Four of the siblings stayed in Chicago and environs, opting to live in the predominantly Jewish communities of Albany Park, West Rogers Park, and Highland Park, while one went to California and the other to Hawaii. Joseph, their father, remarried, and moved his small tailor shop to Fullerton Avenue on the city's Northwest Side. All of them married, raised families, and, to varying extents, lived the "American Dream" their parents wished for them.

Gratitude to our forebears is a major theme of Judaism. Our daily Amidah prayer begins with a recognition of the spiritual and physical journeys of our common ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and Sarah, Rachel, and Rebecca. Each of us today owes a similar recognition and debt of gratitude for the long, difficult journeys our more recent ancestors made for our betterment.



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., at Chicago's Temple Shalom, in 1964.

CHICAGO TRIBUNE, MONDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1968

COURSE SELECTIONS			
AGE HIGH	A. P.	RUSS HARRIS	CONSENSUS
Kooky Kid Prince Reaper Glow-Star	*Marimick More Coins Kooky Kid	Glow-Star More Coins Count W'bler	Glow-Star Kooky Kid More Coins
C'me On F'kie Red Jess Back to Back	Back to Back Steeleyo C'me On F'kie	Back to Back Red Jess Crafty Bee	Red Jess Steeleyo Back to Back
Point of Glory Valkarian Dream Tyte	Paderoso Sallyhigh Point of Glory	Dream Tyte Point of Glory Valkarian	Point of Glory Valkarian Dream Tyte
Great Brother Bacchanal Allegiant	Great Brother Sir Trig Bacchanal	Bacchanal Flag of Fr'dm Uncle Walter	Great Brother Bacchanal Red Stockings
Bagual King Misty Princess Mans II	Bagual King Misty Princess Mans II	Misty Princess Sir Peel Silver Party	Bagual King Misty Princess Mans II
Needle Pearl Miss Deb'tante Silver Lu	Needle Pearl Hi'ri's Ev'n'g Kumari	*Miss Deb'tante Needle Pearl Kumari	Needle Pearl Miss Deb'tante Hi'ri's Ev'n'g
*Fragile Mem'ry Scotch n' Soda Chestnut Park	Tastito Scotch n' Soda Craig's Tune	*Fragile Mem'ry Craig's Tune Tastito	*Fragile Mem'ry Scotch n' Soda Chestnut Park

KICKERS BEAT EAGLES, 3 TO 1, GAIN 3d PLACE

BY ABE KORSOWER

The Kickers moved into third place in the Major division standings of the National Soccer league by beating the Eagles, 3 to 1, in Revere park yesterday.

Hans Wissmann opened the scoring for the Kickers in the 15th minute of play, with Eddie Binkowski knotting the game for the Eagles in the 27th minute. The 1 to 1 deadlock held for 40 minutes before the Kickers took the lead on a goal by Walter Ronge.

Laszlo Iring made it 3 to 1 seven minutes later on a ground shot from 15 yards out.

The victory gives the Kickers a season record of 6-2-2, good for 14 points.

The co-leading teams, Olympics and Schwaben, were not involved in league play yesterday, the Olympics being engaged in a Peel cup game against Necaxa in Hanson park.

A soccer maven and aficionado, Abe Korsower covered the sport for many Chicago papers, including the Tribune.

My father died in 1993; my mother, in 1997. They are buried in Memorial Park in Skokie. As in life, they are in the Jewish section, not far from other family members, surrounded by an international mix of neighbors.

Karen Kaplan, a CJHS Board of Directors member, is a regular Journal contributor.

CJHS members... YASHER KOACH!

*The Hebrew phrase means
"More Power to You."*

Longtime CJHS Board member and former President **Dr. Ed Mazur** delivered this past fall a one-hour talk, "Perspectives of Jewish Chicago: from the 1830s to Today," to an adult education class at the Bernard Horwich JCC.

This past October, more than 40 people—among them a number of former Chicagoans who have made *aliyah*—attended a Jerusalem screening of "Driving West Rogers Park: Chicago's Once and Future Jewish Neighborhood," a documentary produced by award-winning filmmaker and CJHS member **Beverly Siegel**, who was present to introduce the film.

The screening stoked memories and elicited gales of laughter, with footage, photos, and interviews evoking the "Golden Age" of Devon Avenue. The film, which documents formative events in the neighborhood's history, including the growth in recent years of West Rogers Park's Jewish population, premiered in December 2017 at the Society's 40th anniversary event that drew hundreds of guests.

CJHS Board member **Karen Kaplan** was interviewed by local NBC News affiliate this past December at a gathering at Skokie's Westfield Old Orchard shopping mall. The purpose of the gathering was twofold: to light the eighth Chanukah candle and to protest the rise in antisemitic acts throughout the United States.

CJHS members **David Matlow** and **Art Farber** took part in the fourth annual Herzl School Christmas Present Drive, which is organized by Lori Sagarin, director of congregational learning at Temple Beth Israel in Skokie. The drive for the school, located in Chicago's North Lawndale neighborhood, an area that once was overwhelmingly Jewish and is now predominantly African American, has received a spate of local and international media attention.

Usher in Summer With the CJHS



Ogden Nash wrote, "Candy is dandy, but liquor is quicker." Had he been Jewish, he might have written, "Liquor is quicker to make you *shikker*."

In the spirit—all puns intended—of good fun and good drink, the CJHS has organized a tour of the first distillery to have been established in Chicago since the middle of the 19th century.

Jewish-owned and -operated KOVAL Distillery, in the Andersonville neighborhood, is opening its doors to us this June for a tour of its facilities. See the inner workings of an all-kosher whiskey, gin, and liqueur business ... and enjoy the opportunity to imbibe. Free samples will be proffered to all those on the tour.

KOVAL, meaning "black sheep" in Yiddish, was founded by Robert and Sonat Birnecker. As noted on its website, "Sonat's great-grandfather earned Koval as his nickname when, at the ripe old age of 17, he surprised his family and emigrated from Vienna to Chicago in the early 1900s to start a business."

The tour is free and limited to 30 members. Sign up and get into the spirit of summer.

When: Sunday, June 14, 12 p.m.

Where: KOVAL Distillery, 5121 Ravenswood Avenue, Chicago 60640

Admission: Free, but limited to 30 CJHS members
RSVP: Jlevin@chicagojewishhistory.org

Learn more about KOVAL Distillery at www.koval-distillery.com.

Abraham Kohn: Chicago Merchant, Public Servant and Proud Republican

Join the Chicago Jewish Historical Society for a look back at one of the city's Jewish forefathers, when journalist and historian Matt Nickerson presents "Flag of Our Fathers: The Story of Chicago's Jewish Pioneer, Abraham Kohn, and His Lost Flag."

According to Nickerson, Kohn (1819 – 1871) had an unlikely beginning in America. He detested his adopted country and longed to go back to Germany, despite its antisemitism and monarchy.

Yet Kohn opted to remain in the United States and ultimately enjoyed more than a modicum

of personal, professional, and political success. He became a prominent merchant in Chicago, where he was eventually elected Chicago City Clerk.

Kohn was also an enthusiastic supporter of Abraham Lincoln, whom he met during the 1860 presidential campaign. As a post-election gift, he sent to President Lincoln an American flag onto which he inscribed these words from the Book of Joshua: "Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid or dismayed; for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

When: Sunday, May 17, 2 p.m.

Where: Temple Beth Israel,
3601 Dempster Street, Skokie



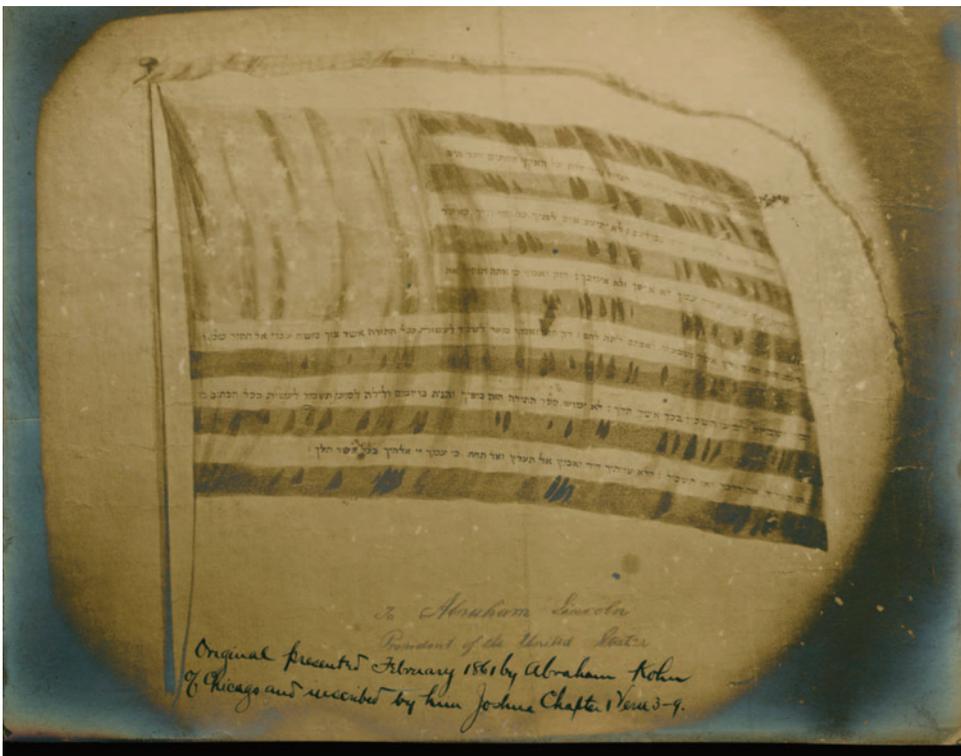
Abraham Kohn, courtesy of the Newberry Library

Fee: Free to CJHS members; \$10 at the door for non-members

Following Nickerson's presentation, join us for light refreshments with kosher pastries.

About the presenter:

Chicago Jewish Historical Society member Matt Nickerson is a private historian. He received a bachelor's degree in American history from the University of Chicago, going on to work for 25 years as a reporter and editor at five metropolitan Chicago newspapers, most recently the Sun-Times and Tribune. While a journalist, he earned a master's degree in European history. In 2014, he paired his newspaper skills and historical knowledge and became a family historian. A Chicago resident and neighborhood buff, Matthew Nickerson wrote the Arcadia Publishing books on Lake View and East Lake View.



The 1861 flag that Chicago City Clerk Abraham Kohn, a Jewish German immigrant, sent to President Abraham Lincoln as a post-election gift, courtesy of the Newberry Library

Reflections on Auschwitz, 75 Years After Liberation

Recent front-page news articles and radio and television segments have noted the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the Nazi death camp in which approximately 1 million of Europe's Jews lost their lives.

Here in Chicago, once home to tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors, many members of the Jewish community observed the January 27 date at synagogues and at the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center, among other venues.

Others, for whom the Shoah is a constant reminder, also marked the occasion, but more privately. They included a number of longtime Society members, such as Olga Weiss, 83, a Belgian-born Jew and former curator of collections and exhibitions at Chicago's Spertus Museum of Judaica, who also serves as a director on the board of the Illinois Holocaust Museum and sits on its Arts Committee.



Olga Weiss, during a recent trip to France

in an apartment in a sleepy countryside town between the city and Waterloo. There, she assumed a Flemish name, attended a Catholic school, and generally kept a low profile with her parents, who were constantly extorted by their antisemitic landlady who regularly threatened to turn them in to German authorities. By this time, her maternal grandfather, who had a diamond business in Antwerp, had been transported to Auschwitz, never to be heard from again. A beloved uncle was deported on the same train, but he escaped by jumping from it. He broke an ankle, Weiss related, but he also survived the war.

"All of the Jewish children [in hiding] had a huge responsibility not to betray themselves or their families," said Weiss, reflecting on the need for very young children to grow up so quickly.

After her family had been in hiding for two years in the village, Rhode-Saint-Genèse, Allied forces liberated Belgium, and Weiss

This past winter, Weiss, who lives on Chicago's Near North Side with her husband, retired pediatric hematologist and oncologist Dr. George Honig, recounted over tea her connection to Auschwitz and the trauma that she and her immediate and extended family members sustained as they endeavored to survive before and during World War II.

Weiss was only 3 at the start of the conflict, but she retains vivid details of the war from the age of 4, she said.

Most of Weiss's father's family, the Kirschenbaums, who had remained in Poland, were deported to concentration and death camps. As she notes in "Reminiscences of Being Hidden," a chapter she wrote for the anthology "Out of Chaos: Hidden Children Remember the Holocaust" (Northwestern University Press, 2013), only "[t]hree of my cousins came back from Auschwitz."

Weiss, an only child, lived her earliest years in Brussels, but after it became too dangerous for Jews to be seen in public, she and her family went into hiding



Olga, with her father, Jacques

and her parents, Régine and Jacques Kirschenbaum, returned to Brussels, where her father resumed his business in leather manufacturing.

As she described in “Reminiscences,” those early postwar years in Brussels were difficult. Displays of antisemitism persisted for a long time. Slowly, life did return to normal, however. Survivors—Weiss’s relatives among them—who had returned from the camps would congregate in a large park on Sunday afternoons. After sharing meals, they would recount the atrocities they had endured. Many were on second marriages and starting new families, their initial spouses and children having perished during the Holocaust.

“But I and other children who had survived the war were simply ignored,” she writes. “Even my mother was unwilling to respond to my questions regarding our wartime circumstances. She replied dismissively, ‘You were too young to remember; the war could not have left any impression on you.’ She was wrong: I may have been young, but I remembered the dangerous circumstances we faced during those years.”

She had been particularly terrified of the possibility of being separated from her parents, Weiss said.

In 1950, when she was 14, Weiss and her parents moved to Chicago, where they dropped the “c” in their surname and became Kirshenbaum. It was a difficult transition for Weiss and her father, both of whom missed Europe. The family eventually settled in the South Side neighborhood of South Shore.



Olga as a young child in wartorn Belgium



Olga with her mother, Régine

Many, if not most, of her South Shore High School classmates were Jewish, Weiss said. She had experienced tremendous fear and loss in her early years, and it seemed odd that her peers never expressed any interest in what she had undergone in Europe.

Eventually, Weiss acclimated well enough to excel in high school and to matriculate at the University of Chicago, from which she graduated with a degree in biochemistry. Always interested in art, she completed a graduate program in art history at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago after raising three children with her first husband, the late Dr. Gerald Weiss.

Weiss said that she sent her two daughters and her son to a local Jewish day school, Akiba-Schechter, in the Hyde Park neighborhood in which she raised her family because “I never had the experience” of a Jewish education as a child.

Weiss does not talk about her wartime experiences to school and museum groups as often as she once had. But that does not mean that the Holocaust and issues related to bigotry, discrimination, and human rights are any less important to her now. She marvels that her Jewish family is now four generations strong, and that she has great-grandchildren, some of whom live in Israel. It’s a reminder, she said, “that Hitler didn’t win.”

Be Part of a Legacy of Giving

JERRY LEVIN

Have you ever wondered what it takes for a not-for-profit to survive and thrive for 43 years?

First, the organization has to have a recognized goal or mission that benefits the community it serves.

Second, it needs dedicated people who support the fulfillment of the organization's goals.

Third, it needs volunteers willing to take time from their busy lives to do the less-than-glamorous work that enables the organization to fulfill its mission.

Fourth, it needs intelligent leadership.

And fifth, and not least important, it needs financial support from the community.

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society (CJHS) meets all of these criteria, but we need continued support so that we can thrive for generations to come.

The CJHS has a vital mission: to preserve, collect, and share the history of the Jewish community of Chicago.

We have a steady core of members, numbering close to 500 individuals, families, and institutions—and we continue to grow.

“President Roth championed the concept of legacy giving, and he successfully facilitated a significant number of substantial gifts from our members desirous of creating legacies on behalf of the Society.”

Over our 43 years, we have been blessed to count hundreds of volunteers, dedicated individuals willing to donate their valuable time and formidable talents to better our organization.

And, we humbly submit, and we hope that you agree, the Society's leadership has demonstrated a caring, wisdom, and foresight that have allowed us to do a stellar job in imparting the proud history of the Jews of greater Chicago.

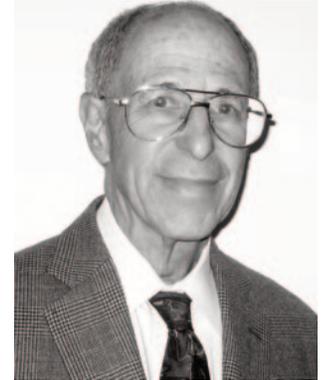
This leaves us with the funding needed to accomplish our goals going forward.

In the early years, our leaders generously dipped into their own pockets to financially support the Society. The dues structure allowed our membership to select the financial support it felt comfortable giving us.

During this time, membership dues, along with a few extraordinary donations, made it possible for the Society to achieve its annual goals. But as time passed and our project horizons widened, we required additional funds.

Fortunately, the Society had at its helm Walter Roth. President Roth championed the concept of legacy giving, and he successfully facilitated a significant number of substantial gifts from our members desirous of creating legacies on behalf of the Society. As many of us know, Walter was not only a brilliant attorney, but also a highly effective fundraiser.

In recent years, the Society has financially benefited from Walter's efforts. Indeed, these gifts, in the form of bequests, have proved life-sustaining. They have allowed the Society to keep our dues structure very modest and to support major projects, such as the Seymour Persky Cultural programs, the first of which was the Max Janowsky program in November 2016. Another major legacy gift, from the late Rose



Co-President Jerry Levin

Legacy Giving continued

Shure, made possible the reactivation of the Society's Oral History project, now known as the Rose L. and Sidney N. Shure Chicago Jewish Oral History Library.

Walter Roth retired from the Society's presidency in 2010, and, sadly, he died a year ago. We recently paid homage to him at our November 2019 program, which you can read more about in this issue.

As a tribute to Walter, we are asking you to consider a legacy gift to the CJHS in your will or trust. We understand that many people do not feel comfortable making significant gifts at the current time, as there is a chance they may need the funds in their later years. But in talking to your estate attorneys and financial advisors, you can structure a legacy gift that will allow you to make a meaningful and enduring contribution to an organization that perpetuates the history and culture of Jewish Chicago.

We thank you for your abiding interest in the Society, and we appreciate your generosity. If you are interested in making a legacy gift, please contact me. My contact information is below. The Society will work with your legal and financial advisors so that your legacy gift accurately reflects your values and intentions.

And, of course, we welcome all forms of generosity—not simply legacy gifts. You can always contribute to the Society by making an online gift through our website: www.chicagojewishhistory.org. Thanks for your continued interest in and support of the critical work we do to keep Chicago's Jewish history and culture alive.

Jerry Levin, Co-President
The Chicago Jewish Historical Society
610 South Michigan Avenue, Room 803
Chicago, IL 60605
312-663-5634 (office)
312-613-5646 (mobile)
jlevin@chicagojewishhistory.org

Saul Bellow Remembered

Take note of a fascinating program on Thursday, April 23, 6:30 p.m., at the American Writers Museum, 180 North Michigan Avenue.

As part of the museum's exhibit "My America: Immigrant and Refugee Writers Today," it will be screening a film about one of Chicago's—and this country's—great American Jewish novelists, Saul Bellow.

Bellow, the author of "The Adventures of Augie March," "Mr. Sammler's Planet," "Herzog," and "Humboldt's Gift," among many others, was born in Montreal in 1915 to Lithuanian Jewish immigrants. When he was 9, he and his family came to Chicago, where they settled in Humboldt Park, a predominantly Jewish neighborhood in the 1920s.

Following the movie, "The Adventures of Saul Bellow," there will be a panel discussion with filmmaker Asaf Galay and Yiddish Book Center academic director Josh Lambert. General admission is \$10; it is free for museum members.

Two Men of Valor

continued from page 7

Roth's three children, Ari Roth, Judy Roth, and Miriam Raider-Roth, also lovingly recalled their father.



Julien Gorbach talked about his Ben Hecht book at the Society's November 24 program.

"He was endlessly curious," Ari Roth said, drawing parallels between his father and the writer Ben Hecht. Both were creative individuals who were interested in "Israel, antisemitism, the decimation of the Jews of Europe, and Chicago."

Those interested in purchasing a signed copy of Gorbach's book, "The Notorious Ben Hecht: Iconic Writer and Militant Zionist," should contact the author directly at gorbach@hawaii.edu.

Look to the rock from which you were born
הביטו אל-צור חצבתכם



chicago jewish historical society

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- **A Legacy of Giving**
- **Save the Dates: May 17 and June 14**

Our History and Mission

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society was founded in 1977, and is in part an outgrowth of local Jewish participation in the United States Bicentennial Celebration of 1976 at an exhibition mounted at the Museum of Science and Industry by the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago and the American Jewish Congress. Forty-three years after its founding, the Society's unique mission

Tribute Cards for Celebrations or Memorials The card design features the Society's handsome logo. Inside, our mission statement and space for your personal message. Pack of five cards & envelopes \$18.00. Individual cards can be mailed for you from our office at \$5.00 per card, postage included. Mail your order and check to the CJHS office, 610 South Michigan Avenue, Room 803, Chicago IL 60605-1901. You may also order online at our website.

Visit our website www.chicagojewishhistory.org

Pay your membership dues online via PayPal or credit card, or use the printable membership application.

Inquiries: info@chicagojewishhistory.org

All issues of our Society periodical from 1977 to the present are digitized and posted on our website in pdf format. Click on the Publications tab and scroll down through the years. There is also an Index to the issues from 1977 to 2012.

ABOUT THE SOCIETY

continues to be the discovery, collection, and dissemination of information about the Jewish experience in the Chicago area through publications, open meetings, tours, and outreach to youth. The Society does not maintain its own archives, but seeks out written, spoken, and photographic records and artifacts and responsibly arranges for their donation to Jewish archives.

Membership in the Society is open to all interested persons and organizations, and includes:

- A subscription to the Society's award-winning quarterly journal, *Chicago Jewish History*.
- Free admission to Society public programs. General admission is \$10 per person.
- Discounts on Society tours.
- Membership runs on a calendar year, from January through December. New members joining after July 1st are given an initial membership through December of the following year.

Life Membership	\$1,000
Annual Dues	
Historian	500
Scholar	250
Sponsor	100
Patron	65
Member	40
Student (with I.D.)	10



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