



chicago jewish history

Rosa Raisa—Diva in the Golden Age of Opera

BY BEV CHUBAT

The audience at the October 4, 1963 opening night of the Lyric Opera of Chicago season found a rose pinned to every theater seat. The performance was dedicated to the memory of Rosa Raisa who had died on September 28, and the house was decorated with some 3,700 roses donated by Medard C. Lange.

The opera being performed that night offered a particularly apt memorial to Chicago opera's great Jewish soprano. Verdi's *Nabucco* (Nebuchadnezzar) is about the



Rosa Raisa in 1924

photograph from the book
History of the Jews of Chicago;
published by the Jewish Historical
Society of Illinois, 1924

Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem, and contains the stirring "*Va, pensiero,*" the chorus of the captive Jews on the banks of the Euphrates. They think of home and sing the nostalgic words, "Fly, my thoughts, on golden wings."

She was born Raisa Burchstein in Bialystok, Poland on May 23, 1893. Even at a young age her voice attracted attention, and she travelled through Poland as a child singer. She fled the Bialystok pogroms of 1907 to settle in Italy. Her potential was discovered by a wealthy family

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Learn the Art of Interviewing at Society's Oral History Workshop Sunday, May 23

"Preserve Your Family and Community History" is the message of the Society's much-anticipated Oral History Workshop, on Sunday, May 23, at Spertus Institute, 618 South Michigan Avenue. Registration is limited! Members and friends are invited to learn the valuable techniques of interviewing from skilled professionals Emma Kowalenko and Victoria Haas.

The afternoon is divided into two parts to make it flexible enough for participants who can't attend the entire program:

1:30 to 3:30 p.m. A "hands on" oral history workshop.

3:30 to 5:00 p.m. Video presentation and general discussion.

Participants in the program will be given a manual on methodology and sources for genealogical research, including internet information.

Cost: \$10.00/CJHS Members \$12.00/Nonmembers

For Information call Norma Spungen at 847-446-0113

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Walter Roth

MAY IS A MONTH OF CELEBRATION

for us today, for it was in May, 1948 that the State of Israel was established. Yet the beginning of May is also notable for a great tragedy that occurred in Chicago in 1886. In May of that year, a bomb was hurled in Haymarket Square during a workers' rally, killing several policemen. Seven individuals were convicted of murder, though no one was ever identified as the actual bomber. The seven had

been represented by a volunteer team of Chicago attorneys, among them the young Jewish lawyer Sigmund Zeisler. The legal careers of these attorneys were destroyed by the public's hatred of the defendants, (three of whom were hanged and one who died in jail). The three surviving defendants were later pardoned by Gov. John Peter Altgeld, whose own political career was ended because of his action. Of the attorneys, only Zeisler went on to achieve success in later life.

Sigmund Zeisler was born in Bielitz, Austria in 1860. He gained a Doctor Juris degree with honors from the University of Vienna in 1883. In the same year he came to Chicago, and in 1884 received a law degree from Northwestern University. He was quickly admitted to the Illinois Bar and became a lecturer at John Marshall Law School. Zeisler's brilliant legal ability made him known in the immigrant community, and when the Haymarket trial began he volunteered his services. He was active at the trial, and was quoted in the press on the absurdity of the "conspiracy" charges on which the defendants were being tried. Years later he wrote a classic resumé of the trial proceedings, which is still available in law libraries today.

No doubt Zeisler's youth, his identification with the Bohemian community, his political connection to the Democratic Party and his overall brilliance saved his career. By 1893, he was assistant Corporation Counsel for the City of Chicago. Ten years later, he became Master in Chancery of the Circuit Court.

In private life, he was a leading light of the Hyde Park and citywide literary scene. Upon his death in 1931, he was survived by his second wife, (his first wife, internationally famed concert pianist Fannie Bloomfield, having died in 1927), and three sons. Many of his descendants still live in the Chicago area.

Sigmund Zeisler's Last Will included bequests to the Jewish Charities of Chicago, the Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler Musicians' Relief Fund, the Legal Aid Bureau of the United Charities of Chicago, and set aside a publication fund to be administered by the University of Chicago, "the income to be devoted to the printing and publication of books and monographs worthy of preservation and publication for which adequate funds might be lacking."

The coming year marks the centennial anniversary of the founding of the Associated Jewish Charities of Chicago, and Sigmund Zeisler's spirit provides a splendid example of how courage and charity will always be remembered. ♦



chicago jewish historical society

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**May 19:
Chicago YIVO Society
Special Tribute to
Famed Yiddish Actress
Dina Halpern^{Z"l}**



Dina Halpern

CJHS members and friends are invited to attend a Special Tribute commemorating the 10th anniversary of the passing of Dina Halpern, and honoring Danny Newman for his contribution to Yiddish culture, on Wednesday, May 19 at the Harold Washington Library Center, Lower Level, 400 South State Street.

Maynard Wishner, the distinguished community leader and veteran of Chicago Yiddish theatre, will be the guest speaker. Guest artists are Sima Miller and Willie Schwartz. Reception at 5:30 p.m. Program follows at 6:30. Dietary laws observed; Admission \$18 (for non-contributors).

Dina Halpern was a widely beloved, international star of the Yiddish stage whom Chicago was privileged to have counted as a resident for more than forty years.

The Chicago YIVO Society is an affiliate of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. Each year, the Society offers a diverse series of programs and events designed to promote and preserve the rich language and culture of the East European Jews. ◆

Society Schedules Three Exciting Summer Tours

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society—in cooperation with the Dawn Schuman Institute—is offering three Sunday historic Jewish tours in 1999.

CHICAGO JEWISH ROOTS Sunday, June 13 *Guide: Dr. Irving Cutler.* Sentimental journey from the Maxwell Street area, Lawndale, Logan Square, Humboldt Park, Albany Park and Rogers Park. Special stops included. 12:00 noon—Bernard Horwich JCC, 3003 W. Touhy Return—5:00 PM
Cost: \$25/CJHS or DSI member; \$30/nonmember

LIGONIER and SOUTH BEND, INDIANA Sunday, July 25
Guides: Leah Axelrod, Chuck Bernstein, Michiana Jewish Historical Society. First stop, Ligonier—a special Indiana community where the Jewish population made a significant impact from the 1850's well into this century. Then on to South Bend—an active Jewish community with a rich history. Bring a sack lunch. Dinner included in tour fee (chicken or salmon entree). 8:00 AM—Bernard Horwich JCC, 3003 W. Touhy Return—10:00 PM
8:30 AM—Marriott Hotel, 540 N. Michigan Return—9:30 PM
(RUSH STREET ENTRANCE)
Cost: \$57/CJHS or DSI member; \$65/nonmember

SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN Sunday, August 29
Guide: Leah Axelrod. Learn about the early Jewish farmers. Travel to the summer haunts of South Haven and Benton Harbor, and learn about the development of these famous resorts. Meet the people and hear their stories. Bring a sack lunch; drinks provided. Dinner included in tour fee. 8:00 AM—Bernard Horwich JCC, 3003 W. Touhy Return—9:30 PM
8:30 AM—Marriott Hotel, 540 N. Michigan Return—9:00 PM
(RUSH STREET ENTRANCE)
Cost: \$54/CJHS or DSI member; \$62/nonmember

REGISTER NOW—WE SOLD OUT LAST SUMMER!

For Information: (CJHS) Leah 847-432-7003 (DSI) 847-509-8282
Reservations: Leah Joy Axelrod, 2100 Linden, Highland Park, IL 60035
Advance Payment Required



Steve Cohen

June 13: Annual Society Brunch to feature Humorist Dr. Steve Cohen

The brunch is set for Sunday, June 13 at 11:30 a.m., at the Spertus Institute, 618 South Michigan Avenue, to be followed by the Annual Meeting of the Society and the election of board members. Stephen Z. Cohen, Ph.D., recently retired Professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, will entertain us with his humorous lecture exploring Jewish life in America. Details will be included in an invitation. ◆

Raisa *continued from page 1*

that sponsored her vocal studies in Naples with the great teacher Barbara Marchisio, a legendary soprano of the 19th century.

Raisa Burchstein made her concert debut in Rome in 1912. She was then introduced to the conductor Cleofonte Campanini and her operatic career was launched.

Campanini engaged Raisa to sing during the 1913 Verdi centennial celebration in Parma. She sang the dramatic role of the seduced heroine, Leonora, in the revival of *Oberto*, Verdi's first opera. Raisa Burchstein's success was so phenomenal that Campanini immediately brought her to Chicago for the 1913-14 season. But first he shortened her name. He asked her the meaning of "Raisa" and when she answered, "rose, in Russian," he created the melodious name, Rosa Raisa—"Rose Rose."

Who was Cleofonte Campanini? He was a virtuoso conductor, comparable to Arturo Toscanini. But Toscanini conducted in New York, the operatic capital, while his rival spent most of his time in Chicago. Campanini didn't have recordings to extend his fame. Above all, Campanini died in 1919, at age 59—young for a conductor. Had he lived through the splendid Chicago seasons of the 1920s—who knows how well he might be remembered now?

Raisa's first role with the Chicago Opera—her first appearance in the United States—was in the first week of the 1913 season in the title role of *Aida*. Although Raisa was well-received from the start, she remained somewhat in the background during her first season

with the company. She was not the flamboyant type at all, and of course was very young at the time. Campanini himself said, "I know she is young now and not fully developed artistically, but mark my words, one of these days she will be known all over the world as one of the greatest dramatic sopranos."

Indeed, Rosa Raisa would remain the backbone of the Chicago Opera Company's dramatic wing for over 20 years. She sang all the great roles. The volume and intensity of her voice were magnificent.

The musical scholar Charles B. Mintzer, in his splendid personal appraisal of Raisa's recordings, tells of writing to the *Chicago Tribune* critic Claudia Cassidy in 1968, asking her to reconcile the esteem in which she held Raisa with her recordings.

Cassidy replied, "Yes. Raisa was that good. Records never fully captured her voice, not the records of those days. But it was a huge voice of wonderful warmth and color, and it belonged to the most warmhearted woman. No doubt one of the reasons for the lavish language is that it was impossible to hear her in opera without being emotionally stirred. She was generosity itself, on and off the stage, and her voice and presence shared the color and opulence of the great roles....Raisa's voice struck straight at two vulnerable places: the spinal cord and the heart."

When World War I began, Raisa remained in Italy, missing the 1914-15 Chicago seasons. But she did return in 1917 to sing the first American performances of Mascagni's *Isabeau*, Montemezzi's *La Nave* and Respighi's *La Fiamma*.

In the 1919-20 season Raisa became identified with a significant new role, Bellini's *Norma*, staged for the first time in Chicago in 25 years. Raisa had performed the role first in Mexico City the previous summer, where the audience demanded 17 performances. Perhaps it was at that time that she sang for the revolutionary bandit Pancho Villa when he accosted her train en route from Mexico City to El Paso, Texas.

The overwhelming event of the 1919-20 season was the death of Cleofonte Campanini. The company gave him a farewell as theatrical as his life had been, with a memorial at center stage of the Auditorium, home of the Opera.

In the 1920s, the company toured the country, delighting audiences everywhere with performances of Mary Garden's *Cleopatra* and Rosa Raisa in Halévy's *La Juive* (The Jewess).

In 1924 Toscanini engaged



Giorgio Polacco in 1924

*photograph from the book
History of the Jews of Chicago;
published by the Jewish Historical
Society of Illinois, 1924*

In 1918, the Venetian-born Giorgio Polacco was invited by Cleofonte Campanini to become conductor of the Chicago Opera Company. Polacco conducted Raisa's 1929 opening night *Aida* in the new Civic Opera House.

Mme. Raisa for La Scala, Milan to create Asteria in Boito's posthumous opera, *Nerone*, and most significantly, to create the title role of the icy Chinese princess in the world premiere of Puccini's *Turandot*.

In 1936, she sang Leah in the American premiere of Rocca's *The Dybbuk* in Detroit.

In 1920, Mme. Raisa had married Giacomo Rimini, the Italian-Jewish baritone, and in 1937, upon retirement from the stage, they opened a singing school in Chicago. She would say, "We sang together, we quit together, we teach together." After Giacomo Rimini's death in 1952, she retired to her Pacific Palisades home with her daughter. She divided her time between California, Chicago and Italy and returned here for many performances of the young Lyric Opera. She gave her entire opera wardrobe to the Lyric in 1956.

In the mid 1950's Mme. Raisa maintained a vocal studio in the Fine Arts Building at 410 South Michigan Avenue. Across the hall was the office of the young theatrical manager Danny Newman. In 1948, he had married the great Yiddish actress Dina Halpern. Mr. Newman would listen for the departure of Mme. Raisa's students, and when she was free, they would converse in Yiddish through the open doors of their offices, so as to improve his Yiddish language skills.

A Three-CD Set: *Rosa Raisa: The Complete Recordings* (Marston 53001) has recently been issued—technically excellent, and including a portion of Mme. Raisa's 1959 interview with Studs Terkel, and with a beautifully illustrated biography by Charles B. Mintzer. At local stores or phone Marston at 610-690-1703. Available via the net at www.marstonrecords.com.



When Lullabies Are Arias—No romantic scene in which Rosa Raisa and her equally gifted husband, Giacomo Rimini, stars for years with the Chicago Civic Opera Company, have been cast, can compare with the above attractive and appealing picture showing the happy parents in their apartment at the Congress Hotel with their infant daughter, Rosa Giuletta (Juliet), who was born July 7 at the Presbyterian Hospital. This summer is an unusually radiant one for the opera favorites, an ideal couple, whose golden voices blend as never before in glorious lullabies.

This photograph, and the accompanying caption, written in the flowery Society Page language of the time, appeared in the Chicago Jewish weekly, The Sentinel, August 14, 1931.

(Apologies for the quality of our picture. It was reproduced from a photocopy of the printed page of the 68-year-old magazine.)

“VOTERS OF CHICAGO USE YOUR NOODLES!” urged the *Standard Opinion* just before the primary election of February, 1929. “Do not be misled by reform organizations who would have you believe that your alderman is hooked up with crime and indirectly responsible for the gang murders that have shocked Chicago.” Many aldermen found themselves fighting for their political survival in that election, having been targeted for defeat by the Municipal Voters’ League in its effort to sweep the city clean of corruption. Among those whose seats were in jeopardy was Leonard J. Grossman, alderman of the 5th ward and former assistant corporation counsel.

Grossman’s political troubles had begun shortly after his election in 1927, when he abandoned the Democrats to join William Hale Thompson’s camp. Although the Republicans welcomed the move, the Democrats were understandably resentful, and there was bitterness on both sides. During the two years he served as alderman, Grossman led the fight to get \$30 million worth of improvements for the South Side; an agreement reached with Mayor Thompson was a major victory for the alderman and his allies. Other issues were the usual zoning fights, crime, and parking woes.

But a high point in his term occurred in October, 1928, when he arranged a visit by the famous aviator Amelia Earhart. The heroine of the city, she was followed everywhere by cheering crowds. She visited her alma mater, Hyde Park High School, and was escorted around town by Grossman and other politicians.

Alderman Grossman had always been active in the Jewish community, serving as president of the Ramah Lodge of B’nai B’rith and of the Chicago Central Zionist Organization. In January 1929 he played host to David Bloch, Mayor of Tel Aviv, as he was wined and dined by all the major Jewish organizations. Bloch spoke of the efforts of the *chalutzim* to harness the Jordan River and reclaim Palestine: “Eventually we hope to buy back Palestine,” he said, “and develop it for the good of the race.”

By now the election was drawing near, and in spite of the good will generated by these social and diplomatic high points, Grossman was in trouble. The Municipal Voters’ League, which had called the City Council a “spineless mass of protoplasm,” urged voters to sweep politicians out of office. A last-minute debate could not rescue Grossman. Unable to shake off charges that he was a tool of Mayor Thompson, Grossman was defeated by Charles Scribner Eaton, who had himself been ousted two years previously.

After the election, Grossman returned to the practice of law, but retained his flair for the dramatic and his ability to catch the public eye. In 1932, he was again embroiled in politics, this time fighting the gubernatorial candidacy of Henry Horner. Grossman said, “The issue for me in this campaign is why I, a Jew, find it in my heart to vote for Len Small, a Christian...I resent any attempt that is being made to boycott all Jews who are not lashed into a corner for Horner.” Again, Grossman found himself on the wrong side of the fence, as Horner won the election handily, backed by most of the Jewish community.

FROM THE CHICAGO JEWISH archives

When Leonard Grossman died in 1956, at the age of 64, he had lived a colorful, active life; he was survived by his second wife, Trudel, and three children. Alderman Grossman’s political career was short and stormy, but it is documented in remarkable detail by six scrapbooks which were donated to the Chicago Jewish Archives by his widow. The scrapbooks are full of newspaper clippings, membership cards, letters, flyers and programs covering the years 1923-1935. One scrapbook is devoted entirely to the visit of Amelia Earhart. These scrapbooks have an amazing ability to convey not just the events, but the feel and spirit of the age. ♦



The Grossman Scrapbooks

By Joy Kingsolver Photography by Mark Akgulian

Joy Kingsolver is archivist of the Chicago Jewish Archives at the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies. Mark Akgulian is director of design at Spertus.



SCRAPBOOKS are unique historical artifacts, created and organized to tell the story of a person, a family, a business, or to document a particular time in history. Unfortunately, they are also difficult to preserve. Since newspaper is highly acidic, it will turn brown and crumble in a relatively short time. Moreover, the acid in clippings will transfer to the photographs or letters, if placed next to them. Since the paper in most scrapbooks is of low quality, it too will deteriorate, and adhesive will bleed through the paper. Today, archivists recommend the use of acid-free scrapbooks and mounting corners to minimize damage. Scrapbooks like those of Leonard Grossman, fragile though they are, can tell us a fascinating story. At the Chicago Jewish Archives, we do everything we can to preserve them, so they can tell that story as long as possible.





Ben Hecht in 1924

*photograph from the book
History of the Jews of
Chicago; published by the
Jewish Historical Society of
Illinois, 1924*

Ben Hecht has been characterized as the most prolific multimedia writer of the 20th century, leaving behind after his death in 1964 eight novels, hundreds of short stories, memoirs, plays, two literary magazines and screenplays for over 70 Hollywood films.

Born in Racine, Wisconsin to Jewish immigrants from Ukraine, Hecht came to Chicago with his parents in the early 1900's. It was in Chicago in the years

between 1915 and 1924 that Hecht became a legendary Chicago newspaper reporter and a leading figure in the city's literary renaissance. It was our good fortune that after his death, Hecht's second wife, Rose, donated all of his personal notes, diaries, letters, books

and memorabilia to the Newberry Library on Chicago's Near North Side. This special collection is called the Ben Hecht Papers, and is available for viewing by appointment.

Starting in 1921 Hecht wrote a daily column for the *Chicago Daily News*, which featured it on the back page of the newspaper. The column was called "A Thousand and One Afternoons in Chicago." He wrote over 400 stories on varied subjects for his column.

Included was a series called "The Mishkin Stories," featuring his creation, Feodor Mishkin, "the corpulent freelancer of West Side journalism." Although Hecht was Jewish and close to his parents, he was assimilated into the prevailing avant garde culture of literary Chicago. Still, he was familiar with the Yiddish culture of the Jewish West Side and could identify with it.

Florice Whyte Kovan, a writer and scholar who claims to have collected all 400 of the "Thousand and One Afternoons" columns, sent us a copy of a Hecht column written in 1922—this "Mishkin story." ♦

WALTER ROTH

Walter Roth is President of the CJHS

AROUND the TOWN

A THOUSAND AND ONE AFTERNOONS IN CHICAGO

By **BEN HECHT**

ROMANCE



“HELLO!” said Feodor Mishkin. “Do you like romances sometimes? One of the chief troubles about you is that you have no eye for romance.”

The rotund and omniscient journalist blotted out the swivel chair as he sat down.

“Yes, I am fond of romances.”

“Hm! You are fond of romances! As if that was something to be proud of. Who isn't fond of romances? Last week I was to a wedding.”

“Indeed! Who got married?”

“Nobody. I just said I was to a wedding. I didn't say somebody got married. You leap, like usual, to conclusions.”

“But what is more usual, Feodor, than to leap to the conclusion that a wedding is an event during which two people get married?”

“For you, yes. That's usual. Because you have no eye for romance. And because the most interesting thing for you about a wedding is the name of the bride and groom and where did they go for their honeymoon? Well, if you're so convinced that people get married at weddings there's hardly any use telling the story to you.”

“I am not convinced of anything. Go on.”

“You know what a chupa is?”

“Yes.”

“A chupa is a canopy under which the groom and his colla walk to be married.”

“I knew that.”

“All right. It don't do any harm to make sure. Well, Mrs. Brightenberg didn't want a chupa, but Samson did. Do you know who I mean?”

“I haven't the slightest idea.”

“Hm! I thought not. Mrs. Brightenberg is a widow, a fine-looking woman and for five years since she's a widow she has been in love.”

“But Samson insisted on a chupa, so she wouldn't marry him. All your stories are alike, Feodor.”

“Aha! He leaps to conclusions again! And all my stories are alike! Well, to a man who is blind everything looks like an identical darkness. If I say Mrs. Brightenberg has been in love for five years you already have it all figured out and

there's no use telling you anything."

"I beg your pardon. I thought—"

"Yes, you thought! One of your chief troubles is that you always think when somebody else is talking. If you'd listen—"

"I'm listening."

"It was Moytka the barber."

"What was?"

"Her lover. The man she is in love with. He is a barber on the west side by Salzman's cafe. You know where that is?"

"No."

"Well, it's a block away to the south. But Moytka has ambitions. He plays the fiddle and is only a young man. So they want him to be a Kubelik."

"Excuse me, Feodor. Who wants him?"

"Well, who would want him? His father, who else? His father says, 'Moytka, you want to spoil your chances by marrying a woman older than yourself and a widow? Let her marry someone her own age and when you are a Kubelik it will be time enough to be married for you.' So she did."

"Samson."

"Please, are you telling me a story or am I telling you a story? I can't tell. Maybe you can enlighten me?"

"The story, Feodor, is coming from you."

"Maybe. Well, Samson is a fine, wealthy man and he is in love with Mrs. Brightenberg, and after her heart is broken by Moytka going away and no longer paying her calls she agrees she will marry him. So he wants a big wedding with a chupa. He is also a widower for seven years. Listen, didn't you read about this last week? The west side was full of it."

"Not a word."

"I'll tell you, then. But if you'd read something besides the English

papers you might save me a lot of trouble. Samson hires the hall and he engages a fiddler to play at the wedding. And who is the fiddler?"

"Moytka."

"All right. Go on with the story, if you know."

"I don't know, Feodor. I merely guessed."

"Well, it's Moytka the barber. He is there with his fiddle to fiddle at the wedding. And when Mrs. Brightenberg sees him she remembers how she loves him and she lets out a holler and she faints."

"Well, and then what?"

"Nothing. Who can marry a fainted woman? Samson and the guests are excited and the rabbi calls a doctor and the wedding is over. And where is Moytka the barber? He is sitting in a corner and drinking until he gets drunk. So when Samson asks him what's the matter, if he knows, he says: 'Nothing. Only your colla is in love with me. Not you.' So you can imagine how bad Samson feels."

"Jealous."

"No. Not jealous. He's upset. Moytka is his favorite barber. For eight years he has been shaving by Moytka four times a week. If you know how attached to a barber a man like Samson, who is middle aged and has a hard beard to shave, can become you will understand."

"Yes, I can imagine."

"That's good. Because the point is that Samson is terrible upset because he has lost his bride and his barber at the same time. And when he finds out that Mrs. Brightenberg only consented to marry him after Moytka had jilted her, well, what should he do? He can't go to Moytka to get shaved any more. And to break in a new barber after eight years—well it was a mess. As for Mrs. Brightenberg, she refuses absolutely to see Samson any more

or have anything to do with him. But the whole thing ends worse than that, even. Because Samson is a short man with a square face. You know the kind?"

"Yes. Of course. What happened?"

"What happens is that he has to grow a beard. He says to me, 'Mishkin, how can I go to Moytka to get shaved after this? And how can I go to anybody else? I hate barbers and am afraid of them. So I must grow a beard.' And he is. In three weeks more he will have a full beard. And already he looks like the devil because he is the kind of man who doesn't go well with a beard. And besides, his business, yes, his business will suffer. Ain't that a romance for you?"

"What's his business, Feodor?"

"Well, imagine for yourself if you can a heartbroken ice-cream salesman with a full beard." ♦

Society Welcomes New Members

With pleasure we welcome

Esther Bernstein

Stephen Bezark

Sally Brotman

Herbert Eiseman

Ernest Fruehauf

Enid Golinkin

Esther Hirsh

Nathan Kantrowitz

Marian Morris

Mr. & Mrs. Jerome Ross

Malvin Ross

Mr. & Mrs. Harold Schaffner

Nancy Segal

Esther Shlensky

Betty Solomon

Shirley Stern

Harvey Teitelbaum

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Society Offers Solace to Chicago Major League Baseball Fans

Society Past President Norman Schwartz heard “Moe Berg: The Song” played on the WFMT radio show *The Midnight Special* last fall and received permission for us to reprint the lyrics.

Moe Berg, who played for the Chicago White Sox in 1926-30, was the subject of an article in *Chicago Jewish History*, Spring 1995.

As the 1999 major league baseball season begins, and Chicago fans prepare for our annual disappointment, we offer these humorous, history-filled lyrics as a comforting diversion for our readers. ♦



**Moe Berg as a Boston Brave
in the middle 1930's**

photograph courtesy George Brace

MOE BERG: THE SONG

Moe Berg the catcher—good field and no hit
Somehow he lasted 19 years—’til his knees made him quit
He never really played much & he never really cared
He was happy just to hang around with a uniform to wear

Moe Berg the Princeton graduate—went on to study law
Got his degree from Columbia—all the while playing ball
He caught the eye of the Dodgers—who were trying to sign a Jew
Who might help ‘em sell some tickets—in the Bronx & Yonkers too

Moe Berg the professor of the bullpen joked with pitchers
Reading them the newspapers he used to have delivered
He spoke to ‘em in Russian, Japanese & French
He was the greatest scholar that ever rode the bench

Moe Berg & The Babe, they went on to Japan
With a team of touring all-stars giving clinics for the fans
This was back in the ‘30s as the world prepared for war
Moe took a lot of pictures—nobody knew what for

Moe Berg the secret agent—never even told his mom
Of his mission to determine if the Germans had the bomb
He learned to speak good physics—without hardly a lisp
He infiltrated lectures with German scientists

Moe Berg the walking riddle—would put his fingers to his lips
If you recognized him on the street—he’d nod and whisper, “shhhh”
He kept a lot of secrets—no one will ever know
He knew a lot of people—but nobody ever knew Moe

Moe Berg the beloved—he had the gift of gab
The moocher, the celebrity—he never paid the tab
He could get in at the ballpark—with his lifetime player’s pass
He could eat up in the press box—someone always filled his glass

Moe Berg the son of an immigrant—brought his father shame
All that education—then to play a child’s game
Moe made it to the Majors—but his dad would never go see him
Moe’s baseball card is on display at the CIA museum

Long after he’d retired—there was still Moe Berg the myth
He rode into the sunset hanging sadly on to it
Appearing on a game show—as the mystery guest
Some say disappearing—might be what Moe did best

“Moe Berg: The Song” was written and performed by Chuck Brodsky on his CD *Radio* on the Red House label, RHR-CD 119. The lyrics are included in the CD booklet. Red House records are carried by most major record stores, but if you have trouble locating this CD, you can call Red House directly at 800-695-4687.

Rich Warren, Host/Producer *The Midnight Special*
98.7 WFMT Radio



Colonel Irving Salomon

from the book *Incidents and Coincidences*;
donated to the Society by
Abbe S. Wolfsheimer Stutz



**Pvt. Irving Salomon
USMC**

Photograph from the
collection of Hattie
Grossberg Goldstein and
Matilda Grossberg Bender.
Donated to the Society by
Anita Navon, grand-
daughter of Mrs. Goldstein.

May 23: Oral History Workshop *continued from page 1*

About the presenters: Emma A. Kowalenko is President of Kowalenko & Bilotti, Inc., consultants in environmental and informational technology. She has more than 15 years of professional experience in oral history training, and cultural and historical resource evaluation. Victoria C. Haas is Principal of Tapescripts⁺, an oral history and transcription service serving clients all over the United States for the past 25 years. ♦

Follow-Up: U.S. Marine Irving Salomon

The photo we published in the Winter 1999 issue of *Chicago Jewish History*, asking "Do You Recognize U.S. Marine Irving Salomon?" has brought quick replies!

We heard from Mr. Saloman's nephew by marriage, Walter S. Naken of Kansas City, MO, who sent a copy of our article to his cousin, Irving Salomon's daughter, Abbe S. Wolfsheimer Stutz of La Jolla, CA. Via e-mail from Mrs. Stutz we learned that Pvt. Salomon became a successful businessman in San Diego and a diplomat—even serving as U.S. Representative to the United Nations. In World War II he reached the rank of Lt. Colonel. Mrs. Stutz's biography of her late father is about to be published. She seeks information about his Chicago years.

From a reader in Los Angeles, who identifies himself only as *A Maxwell St. Kid*:

"The uniform is 1912 issue. The field hat indicates Marines who went to Europe in WWI (wearing Army uniforms). Otherwise, field hats were worn only by medalist shooters, rifle range and boot camp instructors. Note the badge above the left side breast pocket of the blouse (jacket). These indicate a Marine's proficiency in handling the tools of war.

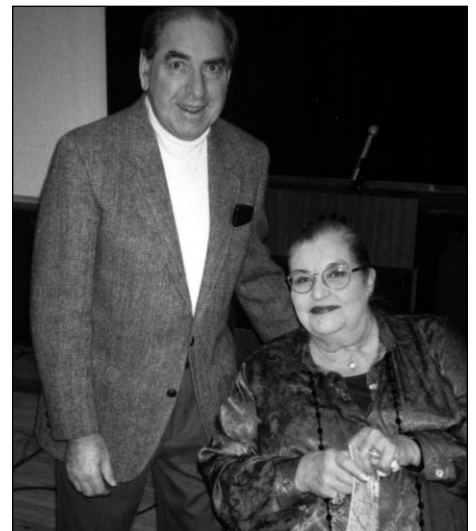
"There may be some members...of the Yarmo-Devere Post of the American Legion to which almost all of the West Side Jewish war veterans belonged. Their members used to practice their parade rituals behind the Adam-Schaff Piano Factory on the northwest corner of Central Park Ave. & Fillmore St., paralleling the railroad. All the neighborhood kids participated in these "parades." I hope this helps you in your search."

Thank you, Kid!

Raisa *continued from page 5*

For help in researching this article, thanks to Clare Greenberg, Andrew Karzas, Danny Newman and Walter Roth. Sources: John Dizikes, *Opera in America: A Cultural History*; (Yale, 1993); Ronald L. Davis, *Opera in Chicago*, (Appleton-Century, 1966); and Charles B. Mintzer, "Rosa Raisa: A Personal Appraisal," (booklet with Marston CDs, 1998) ♦

Bev Chubatz is editor/designer of *Chicago Jewish History*.



**Program Chairman Burt Robin
and Guest Speaker Helen Sclair**

photograph by Norman D. Schwartz

The lively "Cemetery Lady," Helen Sclair, presented a fascinating slide-illustrated lecture, "From Lincoln Park to Eternity: An Overview of Chicago's Jewish Cemeteries," at the Society's Open Meeting on March 14, 1999. A detailed report will appear in the next issue of *CJH*. ♦

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Would you like to become more involved in the activities of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society? We'd love to have you! Following are the various committees on which you can serve. Contact the Society at (312)663-5634 or any of the Chairpersons listed below.

■ **PROGRAM COMMITTEE**

Do you have a great idea for a meeting topic? If you are organized and creative, friendly and outgoing, the Program Committee would welcome your help in planning and implementing our bi-monthly and annual meetings. Contact Burt Robin (773)667-6251

■ **MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE**

The Society's membership continues to grow, and you could help us introduce Chicago Jewish history to even more people. Share your ideas and energy! Contact Elise Ginsparg (847)679-6793 or Janet Iltis (773)761-1224

■ **TOUR COMMITTEE**

Bring your creativity and organization to planning and promoting our popular roster of tours on Jewish history. Contact Leah Axelrod (847)432-7003

■ **EDITORIAL COMMITTEE**

Do you like to write? Are you a great proof-reader? You can contribute to our quarterly publication, *Chicago Jewish History*. Contact our Editor, Bev Chubat (773)525-4888

About the Society

What We Are

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society was founded in 1977 and is in part an outgrowth of local Jewish participation in the American Bicentennial Celebration of 1976. Muriel Robin was the founding president. The Society has as its purpose the discovery, preservation and dissemination of information concerning the Jewish experience in the Chicago area.

What We Do

The Society seeks out, collects and preserves appropriate written, spoken and photographic records; publishes historical information, holds public meetings at which various aspects of Chicago Jewish history are treated; mounts appropriate exhibits; and offers tours of Jewish historical sites.

Minsky Fund

The Doris and Joseph Minsky Memorial Fund was established in memory of two of the Society's founders and longtime leaders. It seeks to publish annually a monograph on an aspect of Chicago area Jewish history. Society members receive a copy of each monograph as it is published. Manuscripts may be submitted, and contributions to the Fund are welcome at any time.

Membership

Membership in the Society is open to all interested persons and organizations and includes a subscription to *Chicago Jewish History*, each monograph published by the Minsky Memorial Fund as it appears, discounts on Society tours and at the Spertus Museum store, and the opportunity to learn and inform others about Chicago history and its preservation.

Dues Structure

Membership runs on a calendar year, from January through December. New members joining after July 1 are given an initial membership through December of the following year.

Life Membership.....	\$1000
Historian.....	500
Scholar.....	250
Sponsor.....	100
Patron.....	50
Family.....	50
Senior Family.....	35
Individual.....	35
Synagogue / Organization.....	25
Senior Individual / Student....	20

Make checks payable to the Chicago Jewish Historical Society, and mail to our office at 618 South Michigan Avenue. Dues are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.



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