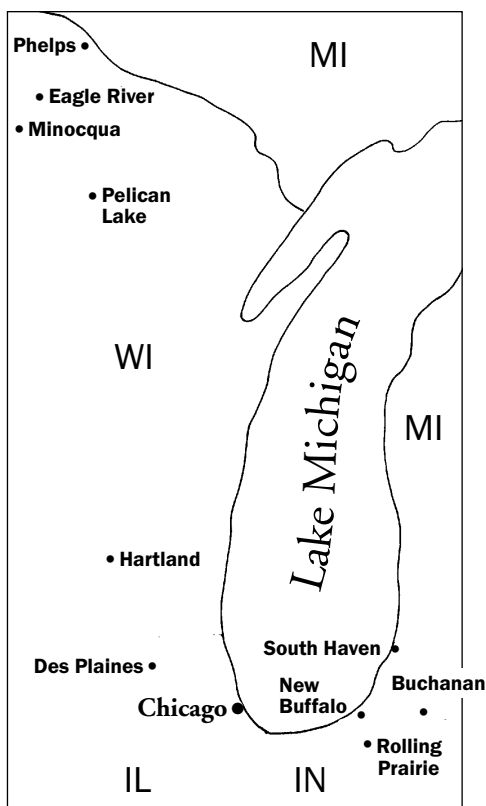




chicago jewish historical society

# chicago jewish history



*Sites of Jewish Summer Camps  
discussed in our articles*



**Camp Avodah: "Victory Farm Volunteers of America"**  
*photograph reproduced from 1944 promotional piece, courtesy Ira Glick*

## ***Society Celebrates Successful Year, Welcomes New Board Members, Enjoys Lox and Laughter***

The Society's Annual Brunch was held on Sunday, June 13 at the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies. The gourmet lox buffet and social hour were followed by a program chaired by President Walter Roth.

By unanimous vote, Harold Berc and Joe Kraus were elected to the Board of Directors, and Danny Greenberg was re-elected to another term. Office Manager Eve Levin, who has served the Society for nine years, was honored for her excellent work. Bev Chubat, named editor of *CJH* this year, was commended for her efforts.

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**From the Archives:  
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Hints for Interviewers**

## President's Column



Walter Roth

**SOME TIME BACK, I ASKED A NUMBER** of my friends whether they had any recollections or memorabilia from a summer camp I had attended for eight weeks in 1946—Camp Avodah, located near Buchanan, Michigan.

To my considerable surprise and pleasure, nearly all of those I talked to had affectionate remembrances of their camp experience at Avodah. Some had been at the camp a few years earlier, in 1943, when it was founded in Des Plaines, Illinois, and some were there in subsequent years. Some of them sent me material they had saved for over 50 years!

In this regard, I particularly wish to thank Werner Frank, who is writing his own account of the camp in his forthcoming book. Ira Glick had the foresight to preserve his considerable collection of publications, brochures and the like from the years when he was counselor at the camp. Herb Glass also sent me material he had retained. Bernie Lewis phoned me a number of times from his home in Los Angeles with great enthusiasm about his years at Avodah.

As I reviewed all this material, I realized that Camp Avodah needed a much more lengthy and comprehensive treatment than *Chicago Jewish History* could handle.

So for this issue of our quarterly I have written a short piece about my own memories of Camp Avodah, limiting myself to the summer of 1946. In the future, I hope to write in detail about the history of the camp, its purposes and its programs.

Avodah, of course, was not the only Jewish summer camp that served Chicago-area youth in the 1930s and 1940s. Our editor and editorial board, with their own happy recollections in mind, decided to expand our coverage to include other camps of that period.

But with space sharply limited, we are including reminiscences of only two other well-remembered places—Camp Kinderland, the Workmen's Circle camp that was located near South Haven, Michigan—and Camp Interlaken, founded by Herb Magida, the Jewish athletic coach at Chicago's Von Steuben High School, and located in Wisconsin—first at Hartland, and then at Eagle River.

Also mentioned, briefly, and in connection with our features: Camp Moshava, in its formative era at Rolling Prairie, Indiana; Camp Tel Chai, then at New Buffalo, Michigan; and the group of privately-owned Jewish camps, (some still in operation), in their early years in the North Woods of Wisconsin.

The historic period we covered pre-dates the founding of Camp Ramah of the Conservative movement, Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute of the Reform movement and other new, thriving, camps.

In this hot and sultry, (and fortunately, air-conditioned), Chicago summer, join with us in recalling the camps of 50 years ago, when Jewish concerns and causes may have been different than they are today, but the weather was just as hot and sultry. ♦



chicago jewish historical society

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### Chicago Jewish History

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## *Bea Kraus to Discuss Era of South Haven Jewish Resorts at Open Meeting on October 10*

Mark your calendar for Sunday, October 10. Bea Kraus, writer, teacher and CJHS Board Member, will carry you back to the heyday of the Jewish resort area in South Haven, Michigan—the “Catskills of the Midwest.”

Come and hear all about it—where it began and why it faded out. Experience the pre-expressway trip to the beautiful white sand beaches and the lake that sometimes thinks it's an ocean. Recall the sumptuous meals at the fine resorts and the chaos of sharing a kitchen with five other families.

Historical information and anecdotes have been collected by Ms. Kraus in her newly released book, “A Time to Remember: A History of the Jewish Community in South Haven,” and the meeting will include a book-signing.

Bea Kraus's illustrated talk will begin at 2 p.m., following a social hour starting at 1 p.m., at Temple Sholom, 3480 North Lake Shore Drive. Members and friends are cordially invited to attend. ♦



**Elsie Orlinsky <sup>Z"l</sup>**

*photograph from the publication*  
The Chicago Jewish Historical Society:  
A Ten-Year History 1977-1987

### **Guilty Verdict in Murder of CJHS Board Member**

Five years after the brutal 1994 carjacking murder of Elsie Orlinsky, a jury returned a verdict of guilty against Demetrius Cunningham.

Mrs. Orlinsky, who had training as an archivist, was the long-time chairman of the Society's Archives Committee. In this capacity she had supervised the receipt, sorting, and classifying of a mass of material so that the task of future historians might be made easier. ♦

*September 9: Society Video to be  
shown on WTTW-Channel 11.  
See page 15 for details.*

### **Meet Mike Hecht Contributor to CJH**

Ben Hecht, the world-famous writer, is represented by stories in the Spring and Summer 1999 issues of *Chicago Jewish History*.

But earlier, we had published a personal memoir by Mike Hecht, [“My Maternal Grandfather,” *CJH* Winter 1999], and we neglected to offer any information about this talented local contributor. So we asked *our* Mr. Hecht to tell us about himself, and he replied:

“Mike Hecht, approaching 80, works as a printing press and boxmaking technician and inventor; he is the husband of one, the father of three, the grandfather of two; a lifelong Zionist; a full-time curmudgeon; a regular *schlepperman* in Pesach and Rosh Hashanah food distribution to Chicago's needy by Maot Chitim; and for 31 years, the shofar blower at Temple B'nai Torah in Highland Park.” ♦

### **Annual Brunch**

*continued from page 1*

President Roth noted the well-attended 1998-99 Open Meetings featuring illustrated talks by interesting lecturers: Michael Karzen's “Chicago Jewish Artists 1940-1980: An Overview;” Larry Stern's “Photographs: The Synagogues of Chicago;” and Helen Sclair's “From Lincoln Park to Eternity: An Overview of Chicagoland's Jewish Cemeteries.”

Roth also recalled the Joint Meeting (with the American Jewish Congress and the Human Relations Foundation of Illinois) featuring author Louis Rosen in a discussion of his book, “The South Side: The Racial Transformation of an American Neighborhood.”

Also noted was the excellent Oral History Workshop conducted by Emma Kowalenko and Victoria Haas on May 23.

Tour Committee Chair Leah Axelrod remarked on the good rate of registrations for this year's Jewish historic tours.

The Brunch concluded with hearty laughter stimulated by our guest speaker, Steve Cohen, in his presentation, “The Best in Jewish Humor.” His jokes and stories were delivered with warmth and insight, reflecting the wisdom gained in his “real life” identity—as Dr. Stephen Z. Cohen, Ph.D., recently retired Professor at the Jane Addams College of Social Work in the University of Illinois at Chicago, and lecturer on aging and the family.

Burt Robin, Vice-President and Program Chair, organized this successful event. ♦

# Camp Avodah 1946

BY WALTER ROTH

A few years back, while vacationing at my summer home in Michiana, Michigan, I took a side trip with some friends to Buchanan, a small industrial town about 75 miles from Chicago. From Buchanan we drove another few miles to Clear Lake, a small body of water in the midst of the beautiful rolling farmland of southwestern Michigan. We stopped at a small store on the lake shore and ordered some ice cream. An elderly lady waited on us. Trying to make conversation, I told her I had spent two months at a camp located on the other side of the lake, over 50 years ago.

"Oh," she immediately answered. "You must be one of the Jewish boys from Chicago who camped there."

Indeed I was. In June 1946, after my junior year at Hyde Park High School on Chicago's South Side, I joined two of my classmates, Werner Frank and Eddie Rosen for a summer at Camp Avodah at Clear Lake.

We knew of the camp through our involvement in Jewish youth organizations. Camp Avodah was sponsored by the Chicago Board of Jewish Education and it cost little money, since it was said to be a work-camp.

When we arrived at the camp—I believe it was by bus—we discovered that the camp was just starting up. Tents had been pitched, and counselors—just a little older than me—were engaged in erecting army-style barracks for more permanent sleeping accommodations.

The camp was new to this site. For its first two years, 1943-44, Camp Avodah had been located in Des Plaines, Illinois. The original camp had been devoted almost exclusively to agricultural work at nearby farms. But the work, although often gruelling and difficult, was done in a Jewish setting, with the purpose of helping the war effort and bringing young Jewish boys together in a spirit of comradeship and common identity. By 1944, as the war raged on, many of the boys were inducted into the armed forces. In 1945, the camp relocated to Winfield, Illinois.

My friend Bernie Lewis remembers the 1945 camp: "We were about 55 campers and counselors with one woman who cooked for us. Everything was primitive. We had to dig a latrine first, just for our outhouse. We put up army tents that held eight campers. We had to build—from scratch—the mess hall and the kitchen. Our shower was outside. In the beginning we had to go to Wheaton, Illinois, to the local pool, to take a shower. Everything was built by us—a real *kibbutz*. We worked for the local farmers, detasseling corn, baling hay,

shucking oats, and doing other work as they needed us. For me it was a tremendous growth experience. We observed all the rules of *kashruth* and the Sabbath."

Now, in 1946, Camp Avodah had obtained the gift of a beautiful piece of open land bordering Clear Lake. There were about 100 campers, including about 25 boys from the Marks Nathan Home, a Jewish orphanage. The war was over, and Camp Avodah was energized with a different purpose.

The director was Sam Kaminker, a legend today to the campers and students who were under his tutelage 50 years ago. He was the son of an Orthodox Rabbi on Chicago's West Side. Sam was steeped in Jewish learning and ritual, yet he was also an ardent Zionist and had been a member of *Hashomer Hatzair*, a leftist Zionist youth group. His chief assistants were Herzl Honor, Aryeh Simon and Ed Rothbard. The first two made *aliyah* to Israel. (They are now deceased.) The camp also had the creative help of Ben Aronin, a poet and musical talent, and the artist Todros Geller.

Under the staff were a group of counselors. Among them were Frederick "Fritzie" Schwartz (later Rabbi of Temple Sholom), and Jerry Rivlin (later a successful investment advisor). Others included future Rabbis Morrie Kipper and Kenneth Rivkin. My fellow Hyde Parkers Werner Frank and Eddie Rosen have remained my life-long friends.

"Victory Farm Volunteers of America" was a government-sponsored program created to alleviate the farm labor shortage caused by the war, and we boys became participants. The camp received compensation for our labor. From early morning through mid-afternoon we worked on the farms in the Buchanan area. Our assigned roles included hoeing, weeding and, in season, picking vegetables and fruit such as raspberries and peaches. We were given a break for lunch and often ate with the itinerant farm workers.

The labor was difficult at first—for the campers and also for our camp back-up. In the beginning, even lunch proved to be a problem. When we first went out to work we found to our consternation that our kitchen help had made lox sandwiches for us. This was considered a treat by the Jewish woman who ran the kitchen. Of course, the salty salmon made us very thirsty as we worked under the broiling sun—so lox was eventually replaced by tuna.

Our afternoons were spent on clean-up, rest, swimming and other sports. There was also, as I now realize, a rather subtle study of Jewish history, with an emphasis on Zionism and the leaders of the movement. All this while we were putting up our khaki-colored permanent barracks, exactly, we were told, as the Jews in Israel were building their *kibbutzim*.

The cultural programming was intense. For example, one night we were awakened and divided into three groups: Jews, British and Arabs. We were taken through an exercise on how to bring Holocaust survivors from Europe illegally into Israel. On another night, in front of a roaring campfire, we went through a mock trial of Josephus, the Jewish general, who in the great uprising against the Romans, after ordering his men to slay each other, betrayed them by surrendering himself to the Emperor Titus. We learned that Josephus had gone on to become a famous historian, preserving for his people an eye-witness account of the revolt and creating a lasting record of Jewish history. Was his contribution as a historian a vindication of his betrayal? What did we think? We split on this issue but the program was brilliant in its conception and execution.

In another program, we pretended to establish a *kibbutz* overnight—just as had been done in Palestine to confound the British authorities.

**T**he Sabbath was the highlight of the week. The arrival of the Sabbath was heralded by music emanating from loudspeakers—glorious classical and Jewish music. Every Friday evening began with music from Grieg's *Peer Gynt Suite*, a most melodic, serene musical piece which still brings waves of nostalgia each time I hear



*“Where dreams come true for teen-agers!*

Every camper at **Morris Perlman Camp Avodah** on beautiful Clear Lake, Buchanan, Michigan is a lucky boy (age 12-17) who is awarded a scholarship by the Board of Jewish Education of Chicago because he shows qualities of leadership and genuine interest in Jewish life.

For eight glorious weeks, Avodah is a self-governing community where the emphasis is on a well balanced program of physical, social, agricultural, and Jewish cultural activities, with particular attention given to individual needs. The spirit and inspiration of Judaism and Americanism are embodied in its daily life. Out of this environment emerge the Jewish leaders of tomorrow.”

#### **Camp Avodah: Picture and Quotation from 1946 Brochure**

*photograph reproduced from printed piece; courtesy Ira Glick*

it. The Sabbath service, while basically secular in nature, was filled with readings from various Jewish sources, including material written by Ben Aronin.

We had a camp newsletter for which I did some writing. I had encountered some anti-Semitism from one of the farmers and I wrote about it, naming the farmer. It raised a commotion. Sam Kaminker backed me, but

*continued on page 12*

# On Stage at Camp Kinderland

BY BEV CHUBAT

**S**outh Haven, Michigan: Camp Kinderland and the Colony were established in 1924 by the Jewish socialist fraternal organization, the Workmen's Circle (*Arbeter-Ring*). The directors of the camp were chosen from among the teachers in the Workmen's Circle Yiddish folk schools. The counselors and campers were mostly students in those folk schools and usually the children of Workmen's Circle members. In 1964 the property was sold, and turned into a tennis camp. Just a few years later it was sold to the present owner, an individual who owns an art gallery in Saugatuck, Michigan. The land is now fenced-in, and is not visible or accessible to the public. ♦

From the time I was a toddler, I was lucky enough to spend some weeks every summer in South Haven, Michigan. In my Chicago West Side neighborhood, in the late 1930s and 1940s, the summer wind blowing from the southwest carried the reek of the Union Stockyards. There were city parks and beaches, but there were also polio scares. It was good to get away.

My mother, my older sister Jean, and I would share a room at a resort, a cottage or a *koch-alein*.

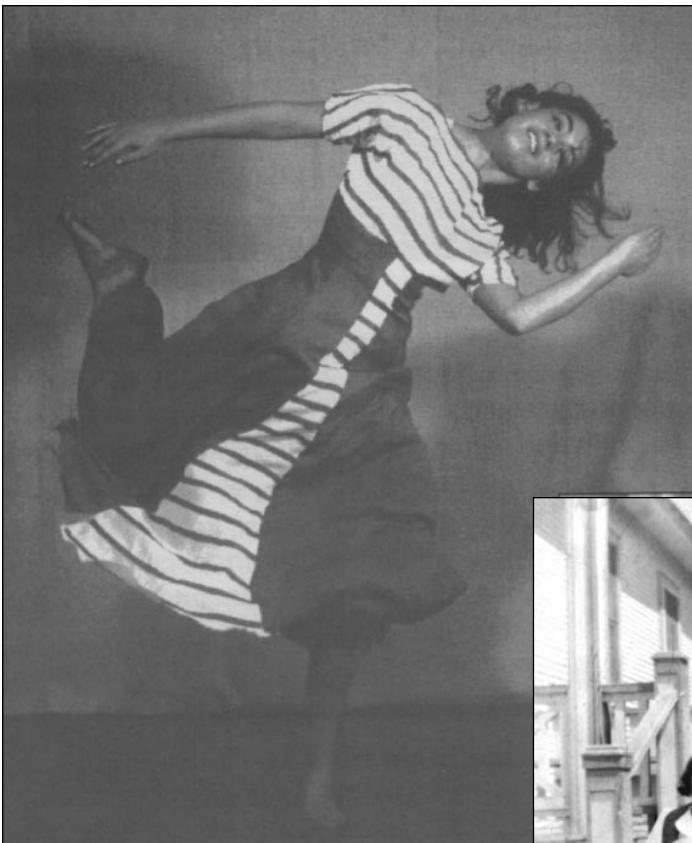
In the summer of 1942, wartime black-outs were in effect, even in South Haven. The total darkness gave cover to a group of our friends, teen-age Jewish boys, who were proceeding to steal the "GENTILES ONLY" sign from the gate of a nearby resort.

That summer we paid some visits to Kinderland, located a few miles north of town. I had been there before, as a little child, when my sister was a camper, and Mother and I had stayed at the Workmen's Circle Colony, the resort adjoining the camp.

(I had heard about Jean's counselor, *Perele* Lach, a brilliant young dancer and choreographer who had recently been accepted into the Martha Graham dance company, and was now known as Pearl Lang.)

On that visit in 1942, I was thrilled by the beauty and spirit of Kinderland. The following summer I became a camper and began a ten-year association with the place and a life-long affection for its people.

In a recent phone conversation with Ms. Lang she offered a word-picture of Kinderland in the 1930s, when she was a camper and counselor: "The land on



**Teen-age Dancer Pearl Lang (*Perele* Lach)**  
*photograph by Paul Berg; courtesy Pearl Lang*

**Counselor *Perele* and Girls of Dorm #4  
Camp Kinderland, 1937**  
*photograph courtesy Bev Chubat*





**Exterior, Dining Room-Theater, 1947**  
**Workmen's Circle Colony & Camp Kinderland**  
**South Haven, Michigan**

*Sign reads: Welcome Delegates and Guests to the Opening of the 23rd Season of the Workmen's Circle Colony & Camp*

**Interior, Dining Room-Theater, 1951**

*photographs courtesy Bev Chubat*

which this camp was built is magnificent. The wide field was framed by four dormitories on the east and six cabins on its north side. A single row of trees on the west side also edged the cliff along the grand and beautiful Lake Michigan. The field was the focus of the camp's activities—baseball games, volleyball, campfires, running races and folk dancing. The south side of the field was open to a farmer's rye field. The whole feeling of this camp was of light, wide spaces, and freedom to run and play and grow.

"Kinderland was also a learning experience in how to live with people. The first words we heard were *'alle far einem, un einem far all...'* (all for one, and one for all). The focus of the camp was Yiddish culture: daily choral singing in



Yiddish and plays in Yiddish which culminated in a concert at the end of each two-week period. As a dancer and choreographer it was a creative nurturing ground that I feel privileged to have experienced."

At this point in the chronicling of Kinderland, a leading actor takes the stage—Maynard Wishner. In 1940, *Maish* joined the staff, and

for the next eight years starred in the bi-weekly concerts, coached the campers in their roles, equalled Danny Kaye, (we thought), in comedy scat singing, and even hit an occasional home run to the farmer's field. In the early '40s, the Kinderland baseball team would travel by car caravan to Camp Tel

*continued on page 14*

## Pioneers at Camp Moshava

In 1939, a group of Chicago members of *Mizrachi*, the Religious Zionist Movement, purchased 12 acres of land in Rolling Prairie, Indiana, and established a summer camp. The campers and staff built the camp 'from scratch' every year, putting up tents, erecting a wooden watchtower, and creating for themselves a real *moshava*—a cooperative settlement like those in *Eretz Yisroel*. The boys and girls felt like they were real *chalutzim*—pioneers! At first, the camp site had only one permanent building, which was used as a kitchen. In 1940, a dining hall was added.

*continued on page 14*



**Lya and friends: Camp Moshava, Rolling Prairie, Indiana, 1940s**

*photograph courtesy Lya Dym Rosenblum*

# AROUND the TOWN

## A THOUSAND AND ONE AFTERNOONS IN CHICAGO

By BEN HECHT

### MISHKIN'S MINYON



WE WERE discussing vacations and Sammy, who is eleven years old going on twelve, listened nervously to his father. Finally Sammy spoke up:

"I won't go," he bristled. "No, I won't go if I gotta tell the conductor I'm under five. I ain't going."

Sammy's father coughed with some embarrassment.

"Aha!" said Feodor Mishkin, removing his attention from the bowl of fruit. "I see it takes more than naturalization papers to change a landsmann from Kremetchuk." And he fastened a humorous eye on Sammy's father.

"It's like this," continued the Falstaffian one from Roosevelt Road: In Russia where my friend here Hershela comes from, that is in Russia of the good old days where there were pogroms and

ghettos and provocateurs—ah, I grow homesick for that old Russia sometimes—the Jews were not always so honest as they might be. Don't interrupt me Hershela. My friend here I want to tell a story to is a journalist and he will understand I am no 'antishemite' if I explain how it is that you want your son Sammy to tell the conductor he is under five."

\* \* \*

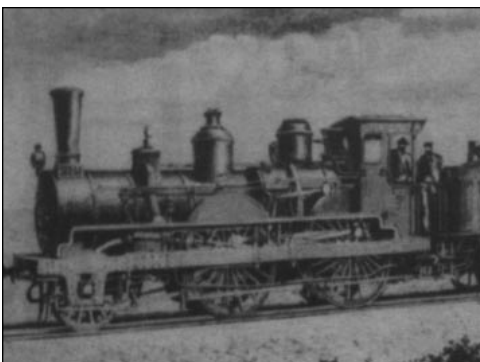
Turning to me, Mishkin grinned and proceeded.

"The Jews, as you know, are great travelers," he said. "They have traveled more than all the other peoples put together. And yet, they don't like to pay car fare, in Russia, particular. I can remember my father, who was a good rabbi and a holy man. Yes, but when it came time to ride on the train from one city to another he would fold up his long beard and crawl under the seat.

"It was only on such an occasion that my father would talk to a woman. He would actually rather cut off his right hand than talk to a

woman in public that he didn't know. This was because Rabbi Mishkin, my father was a holy man. But he was not above asking a woman to spread out her skirts so that the inspector coming through the train couldn't see him under the seat.

"Of course, you had to pay the conductors. But a ruble was enough, not ten or twenty rubles, like the fare called for. And the conductors were always glad to have Jews ride on their train because it meant a private revenue for them. I remember that the conductors on the line running through Kremetchuk had learned a few words of Yiddish. For instance, when the train would stop at a station the conductor would walk up and down the platform and cry out a few times—'mu' kennt.' This meant that the inspector wasn't on the train and you could jump on and hide under the seats. Or if the inspector was on the train the conductor would walk up and down and yell a few times, 'Malchamovis!' This is the Hebrew



WE received such positive response to the first Ben Hecht story we published, ["Romance," *CJH* Spring 1999], that we are pleased to present a second one. This story, like the first one, dates from 1922, when Ben Hecht was writing a daily column for the *Chicago Daily News* that was featured on the back page of the newspaper.

In all, Ben Hecht wrote over 400 *Daily News* columns under the heading "Around the Town—A Thousand and One Afternoons in Chicago." These lively columns displayed the genius for dialogue that made Ben Hecht's stage and screen writing so successful.

Included among Hecht's columns were stories featuring his creation,



word that means Evil Angel and it was the signal for nothing doing.

“The story I remember is on a train going out of Kiev,” said Mishkin. “Years ago it was. I was sitting on the train reading some Russian papers when I heard three old Jews talking. They had long white beards and there were marks on their foreheads from where they laid twillum. Yes, I saw that they were holy men and pretty soon I heard that they were upset about something. You know what? I’ll tell you.

“For a religious Jew in the old country to pass an evening without a minyon is a sin. A minyon is a prayer that is said at evening. And to make a minyon there must be ten Jews. And they must stand up when they pray. Of course, if you are somewhere where there are no ten Jews, then maybe it’s all right to say it with three or four Jews only.

“So these holy men on the train were arguing if they should say a minyon or not because there were only three of them. But finally they decided after a theological discussion that it would be all right to say the minyon. It was dark already and the train was going fast and the three Jews stood up at their place at the end of the car and began the prayer.

“And pretty soon I began to hear voices. Yes, from under nearly every seat. Voices praying. A

mumble-bumble that filled the car. I didn’t know what to make of it for a few minutes. But then I remembered. Of course, the car was full of rabbis or at least holy men and they were as usual riding with their beards folded up under the seats.

\* \* \*

“So,” smiled Mishkin, “the prayer continued and some of the passengers who were listening began to smile. You can imagine. But the three Jews paid no attention. They went on with the minyon. And now, listen, now comes the whole story. You will laugh. But it is true. I saw it with my own eyes.

“The minyon, like I told you, must be said standing up. At least it is a sin to say the last part of the prayer, particularly the ‘amen,’ without standing up. So as the prayer came towards its finish imagine what happened. From under a dozen seats began to appear old Jews with white beards. They crawled out and without brushing themselves off stood up and when the ‘amen’ finally came there were eleven Jews standing up in a group and praying. Under the seats it was completely vacant.

“And just at this moment, when the ‘amen’ filled the car, who should come through but the inspector in his uniform with his lantern. When he saw this whole car full of passengers he hadn’t seen

before he stopped in surprise. And the finish of it was that they all had to pay their fare—extra fare, too.

\* \* \*

“It is a nice story, don’t you think, Hershela?” Mishkin laughed. “It shows a lot of things, but principally it shows that a holy man is a holy man first and that he will sacrifice himself to an inquisition in Madrid or a train inspector in Kiev for the simple sake of saying his ‘amen’ just as he believes it should be said and just as he wants to say it.”

Sammy’s father shrugged his shoulders.

“I don’t see how what you say has anything to do with what my son said,” he demurred. “Sammy looks under more than five and what harm is there in saving \$15 if—”

Sammy interrupted with a wail.

“I won’t go,” he cried. “No, if I gotta tell the conductor I’m under five I better stay home. I don’t wanna go. He’ll know I’m ‘leven going on twelve.”

“All right, all right,” sighed Sammy’s father. “But you see,” he added, turning to Mishkin, “it ain’t on account of wanting to say a minyon that my son has such high ideas.” ♦

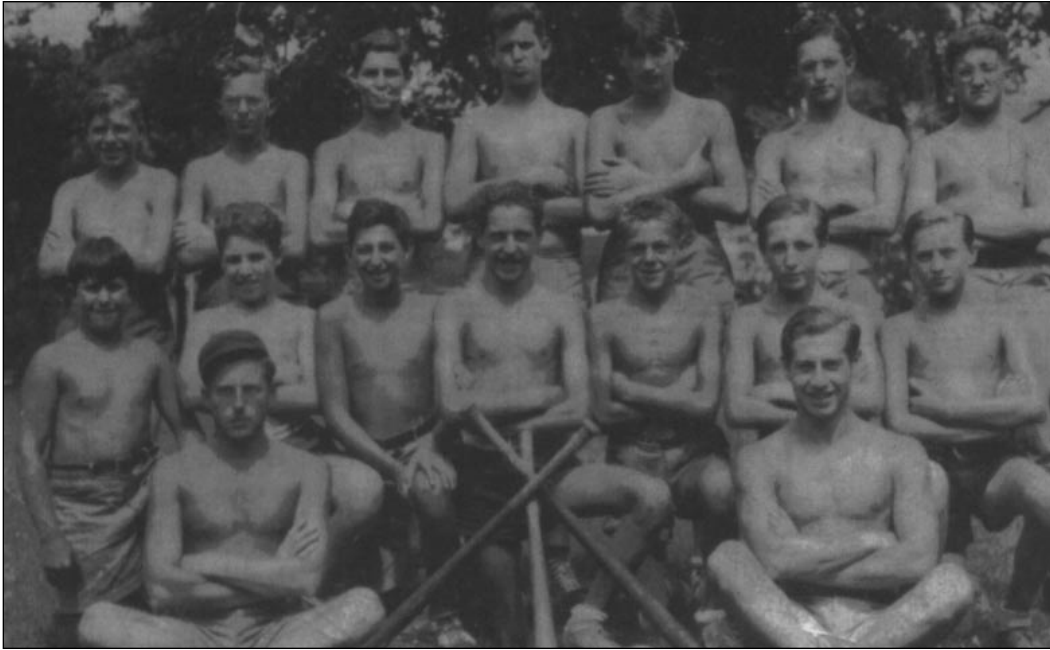
Feodor Mishkin, “the corpulent freelancer of West Side journalism.” Ben Hecht was an assimilated Jew, part of the avant garde culture of literary Chicago, but as the son of immigrant parents from Ukraine he understood and could identify very well with the Yiddish-speaking culture of the Jewish West Side.

Copies of the Mishkin stories were sent to the Society by Floryce White Kovan, a writer and scholar who claims to have collected all 400 of Hecht’s *Daily News* columns. We have used the author’s original spelling and punctuation, simulated the style of the original column heading and reproduced the decorative drop letter that started the first paragraph. ♦



**Ben Hecht, 1924**

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



**Camp Interlaken, Hartland, Wisconsin, 1935**  
**Al and Gil Magida (seated, fourth and fifth from left)**  
*photograph courtesy Gil & Esther Magida*

## Memories of Camp Interlaken

BY GIL & ESTHER MAGIDA *as told to Bev Chubat*

In 1935, when Herb Magida was the soccer coach at Von Steuben High School in the Albany Park neighborhood of Chicago, he bought a resort hotel in Hartland, Wisconsin, and turned it into a summer camp for boys. The hotel was named Interlaken—and that name stayed with the camp for its 30 years under private ownership.

Although Herb Magida coached in Chicago, private camp rates were too expensive for the boys of Albany Park, and the Interlaken campers were drawn from the North Side and North Shore suburbs. Counselors of ages 18-19 were recruited from local colleges. A wide variety of athletics and crafts were offered, in a highly structured program. The spiritual side of life was acknowledged at this Jewish-owned camp; Friday night services were held and the *hamotzi* blessing was said before meals. About 95% of the campers were Jewish.

From the start, Interlaken involved the whole Magida family. Indeed, it became a way of life for them. Herb started the camp; his brother Jack was the book-keeper; Jack's wife and her sister were the cooks, and Jack's sons, Al and Gil, were campers. Gil went on to become Assistant Director. After Esther married Gil she became part of the Interlaken family, too. Their first-

born, a daughter, came to camp with them from the age of one, and their two sons became long-time campers.

Esther eventually went on to become a Camp Mother and to run the dining room and meal planning at Interlaken. From her years of supervising the locally-hired kitchen help, Esther remembers a terrible food "crisis"—the day a cook spread butter on the corned beef sandwiches. The sandwiches, of course, went uneaten by the Jewish boys.

Hartland was the site of Camp Interlaken for only its first three years. In 1938, Herb Magida purchased a parcel of land from real estate entrepreneur Morrie Holtzman in the North Woods of Wisconsin at Eagle River, and that became the permanent home of the camp.

A number of other Jewish summer camps were established at that time in the Eagle River area. There were incidents of hostility toward the Jews by the local people. Wisconsin was a stronghold of the German-American Bund before and even during World War II. But by persevering, keeping a low profile, and especially by providing income for the local merchants, the Jews were tolerated—at least during the summer months.

Nate Wasserman, the football coach at Chicago's South Shore High School, purchased the Comiskey estate in Eagle River and turned the property into a Jewish boys' camp—Camp Menominee. (The Comiskeys were the owners of the Chicago White Sox baseball team.) Camp Menominee is still a thriving privately-owned camp, as is its associated camp for girls, Camp Marimeta.

Camp Ojibwa, for boys, and Camp Chippewa, for girls, are still operated under private Jewish ownership, as is Birch Knoll, the girls' camp in nearby Phelps, Wisconsin. (For three years, 1962-64, Gil and Esther Magida were the co-directors of Birch Knoll.)

In Minocqua, two privately-owned Jewish camps still operate—Kawaga (for boys), founded in 1915 by Reform Rabbi Bernard C. Ehrenreich, and Agawak (for girls), established a few years later by the rabbi's sister-in-law. Camp Kawaga is currently owned by the Fisher family of Cincinnati. *[Editor's Note: A collection of historic material from Camp Kawaga was donated to the Chicago Jewish Archives at the Spertus Institute, and is available for viewing by appointment.]*

West of Minocqua, in Minong, there was a camp that no longer exists—Camp Horseshoe, founded in 1926 by Rabbi Hirschberg of New Orleans. This privately-owned Jewish camp operated until 1991.

**T**here was exciting inter-camp sports competition among the boys' camps. And there was another kind of excitement, too. Hormones raged in anticipation of social visits to the girls' camps. On these occasions, Camp Interlaken was awash in Vaseline Hair Tonic. It was the fad in those days for the boys to present their girlfriends with *mezuzah* pendants. Part of Esther's job as Camp Mother was to console fellows whose *mezuzahs* had been returned by fickle females.

Friday Sabbath services were always held at sundown around a

blazing campfire, facing Lake Finley—as beautiful and inspirational a setting as any house of worship. Milt Shulman acted as Rabbi on more than one occasion.

**P**elican Lake, Wisconsin, was the site of Camp Maccabee, owned by Harold Korey. The camp director was Ben Aronin, the educator and author, known fondly to generations of young Chicago Jews as “Uncle Ben.” When the truck carrying Interlaken boys to a ballgame at Maccabee would approach his camp, Ben Aronin, standing at the gate, would call out in dramatic style, “Shalom, Gil Magida!” (This would become an ‘inside’ greeting of the Magida family.)

In 1948, Camp Interlaken was sold by Herb Magida to his head counselor, Joe Kupcinet, and the prominent Chicago attorney Arthur Morse. (Joe Kupcinet was the football coach at Taft High School—always a power in the Chicago Public League. Arthur Morse was the owner of the Chicago pro basketball team, the Stags, predecessor of the Bulls.) Gil Magida became head counselor.

In 1965, Camp Interlaken was sold to the Milwaukee JCC, and that institution operates the camp today.

As for Gil and Esther, they derive great pleasure from their frequent contact with former campers and counselors, who speak with nostalgia of those, their best years. All agree that much good can come to young people from the experience of group living with high standards and caring leadership.

Last year's reunion brought together 150 former Interlakenites. Dennis Dermer presented each participant with a tee shirt bearing the original ‘CI’ logo. Grown men became delighted boys! ♦



**Camp Interlaken, Eagle River, Wisconsin, 1941**  
Counselors Milt Shulman (standing, center), Joe Turoff (seated, center)  
and Campers of Cabin #5 *photograph courtesy Gil & Esther Magida*

Thanks to Milt Shulman of CJHS and Jordan Shiner, director of Camp Kawaga, for their help in researching this article.

*Gil Magida was a physical education teacher for 25 years in the public schools of River Forest, Illinois. Later he served as physical education supervisor for grades K-8 in Park Ridge, Illinois.*

## Avodah *continued from page 5*

warned about printing the farmer's name. The farmer had told me that the German prisoners of war who had worked for him the previous year were better workers than "Jew boys." There was also a sign, near the store, with which I started this story, that said only Christians were welcome.

Of course I made many new friends that summer. But I also learned about Theodore Herzl, Ahad Ha-am, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, David Ben-Gurion and Joseph Trumpeldor, the hero and martyr of Tel Chai. As for Sam Kaminker, it was a great loss to us all when he left Chicago for Los Angeles in 1948. Sam died in the 1960s, at an early age.

Camp Avodah continued to prosper along with its neighbor on the Clear Lake property, Camp Sharon. Established in 1946 by the Chicago Board of Jewish Education, the smaller Camp Sharon emphasized the study of Hebrew language and literature, and welcomed girls as well as boys. [See *Chicago Jewish History*, Winter 1998; "Archives Offers Glimpse of Life at Camp Sharon, a Place for Study and Fun" by Joy Kingsolver.]

By the 1960s, Camp Avodah had lost its appeal for Chicago Jewish boys, and it was sold to a Christian evangelical church, which to this day uses it as a summer camp for its members.

When I last visited the camp site and walked through the area, the people were pleasant to me. I told them that I was one of the "Jew boys" who had camped there in 1946. They said, jokingly I hope, that I was welcome to come again—if I became a born-again Christian. I looked for the tree where I had carved my initials so long ago, but did not find it.

**W**hy had Camp Avodah ceased to exist? No doubt it was due to loss of support for a camp sponsored by the Board of Jewish Education, whose primary purpose was Jewish education, without commitment to any particular movement, such as Zionism. Back in the wartime years of the 1940s, when the State of Israel had not yet been established, Sam Kaminker and his group had been able to convince the Board and B'nai B'rith (the organization that had helped raise funds for the camp), that tilling the soil was a worthwhile activity for young Jewish boys. In postwar 1946, Kaminker could include Zionist activities in the educational process—the return to the land and the rescue of Holocaust victims made the establishment of a Jewish State a less controversial goal.

By the 1960s, Chicago Jewish boys could participate in any of a growing number of travel-work-study programs in the State of Israel. They could do agricultural work on a real *kibbutz* and debate the character of Josephus while standing upon the actual site of the battle. But we "Men of Avodah 1946" will always remember the physical challenges, intense idealism and true comradeship of our summer in Michigan. ♦

*Walter Roth is President of the CJHS.*

### MEN OF AVODAH 1946

Allen, Fred	Levine, Howard
Auerbach, Herbert	Levy, Sid
Barney, Robert	Levy, Stephen
Berkove, Larry	Lewis, Bernard
Brandes, Harry	Minkus, Herbert
Brotman, Irwin	Neu, Henry
Burstein, Aaron	Newman, Marshal
Bykoff, Donald	Niebow, Clarence
Cooper, Mark Elliot	Niebow, Leonard
Cornfield, Gilbert	Oesterreicher, Ed
Daskal, Richard	Ozeran, Morton
Davidson, Philip	Ozeran, Robert
Davidson, Sandy	Pitler, Barry
Derin, Albert	Postal, Paul
Eisen, Irwin	Rivkin, Jerry
Eisen, James	Rosen, Edward
Ellis, Bernard	Rosen, Seymour
Engel, Manfred	Rosenfeld, Ralph
Fisher, Charles	Roth, Walter
Frank, Harvey	Rothbart, Jack
Frank, Werner	Rothstein, Leonard
Frooman, Richard	Sacks, Marvin
Gans, Werner	Schloss, Walter J.
Garbow, Burton	Schwartz, Fred
Giss, Herbert	Schwartz, Robert J.
Gold, Norman	Schweitzer, Donald R.
Goldman, Norman	Shirow, Larry
Gortman, Leo	Silver, Lessing
Green, Melvin	Simon, Aryeh
Gross, David	Simpson, Kenneth
Harris, Norman	Sklamberg, Lawrence
Harris, Robert	Slaw, Albert
Helfer, Charles	Slaw, Stanley
Helfer, Reuben	Smidt, Seymour
Handelman, David	Spiegel, Jerry
Honor, Herzl	Spira, Robert A.
Jakowsky, Max	Sultan, Earl
Kagan, Leon	Vinik, Sheldon
Katz, Joel B.	Wagner, Shelton
Korshak, Brian	West, Stanley
Labes, Marvin	Zacovitch, Jerry
Laporte, Bob A.	Zimmerman, Philip
Lasky, Allan	Zuckerman, Phillip

*names copied from printed piece, courtesy Ira Glick*



Rosemary Krensky, 1950

Rosemary Krensky, lifelong supporter of Israel and community activist, traveled to Israel several times in the 1950s and 1960s in an effort to understand the nation that was taking shape. Daughter of Reform Rabbi Bernard C. Ehrenreich, and ardent Zionist, she and her husband Milton J. Krensky established one of the first municipal parks in Jerusalem, called the Garden of Generations, and were active in raising funds through State of Israel Bonds and other organizations.

But Rosemary was not content to just tour Israel; she recorded her impressions in travel diaries, reflecting on what she saw and heard. Several of these diaries are included in the Waterman-Bock-Ehrenreich-Krensky papers at the Chicago Jewish Archives.

“Extremes of old and new in living couldn’t possibly have a more dramatic setting,” she wrote during a 1959 trip. “High on one hill, sturdy youth in blue shirts and shorts busy at many cultural and agricultural enterprises—on the rolling hills below, black Bedouin tents, slow-moving camels, and kaftaned and turbaned Arabs

*Joy Kingsolver is Director, Chicago Jewish Archives at the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies. Pictures were scanned by Melissa Oresky, Conservator at the Archives.*

seeking the shade of a roof shelter.” At times, her impressions were a little less romantic. She recorded meeting many Israelis who were disgruntled with government policies. “Food is scarce,” she noted, “lack of rain hurt crops—sugar in docks but unreleased because of lack of funds—black market in everything...”

Finding herself in Jerusalem during the High Holidays, she discovered, to her disappointment, that the local synagogues were too crowded and noisy. She also met some young *sabras*, who said they weren’t going to synagogue, since they had been on a *kibbutz* all year and hadn’t sinned. “I cannot call them irreligious,” she mused.

In spite of minor disappointments, Rosemary never wavered in

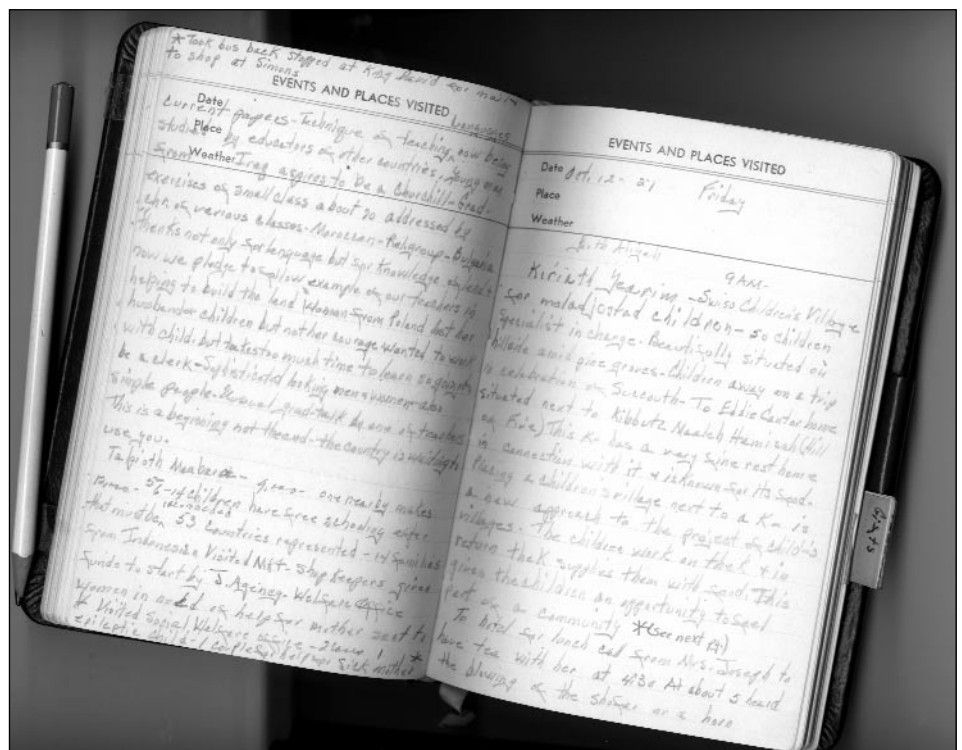
her hopes for the future of Israel. After a 1960 tour she wrote, “The thought rather comes to my mind of Ben Gurion, white wispy haired with a rosy, ragged, youthful face, squatting himself here like an ancient Buddha impenetrable and immovable, and by his example making this once lost land the hope of Israel’s future. He has willed it and so it shall be... Let the hatred of the defeated send forth the Jews. Israel, with our help has prepared for them. Never again will there be no land to receive them.”

Rosemary’s sense of history led her to record her impressions and set the tone for her other endeavors; she was the first woman trustee of Spertus College and generously supported the Archives. Rosemary Krensky died in 1996. ♦

FROM THE  
CHICAGO JEWISH  
archives

## Rosemary Krensky’s Israel Travel Diaries

By Joy Kingsolver



Rosemary Krensky’s Travel Diary, 1959

## Kinderland *continued from page 7*

Chai, the Labor Zionist camp in New Buffalo, Michigan, for a game, and then host the Tel Chai team in South Haven. This competition, accompanied by team cheers in Yiddish, continued through 1942.

In 1947, Mr. Wishner starred opposite our singing star-counselor, *Mindl* Mallin, in an abbreviated but effective production of the Goldfaden operetta, *Shalames*. Then, with other members of the staff, he wrote and performed the parody, *Shalamester-Ring*, that replaced the operetta's quartet of suitors for the heroine's hand with that year's field of presidential candidates: Harry S. Truman, Thomas E. Dewey, Henry A. Wallace, and the triumphant (in the parody) Socialist Party candidate, Norman Thomas.

In 1943, an amazing teenage girl led the whole camp in morning callisthenics, acted as lifeguard for us all, and also sang lullabies to the girls of Dorm #4. This was my counselor, Lya Dym. Lya's summers, before and after her time at Kinderland, were spent at Camp Moshava [see separate article].

After the war, our long-time director Ben Graubard made sure that we older campers went to hear the Warsaw Ghetto survivors, Vladka Meed and Shloime Mendelson, when they spoke at the Colony. Walking around a campfire, Graubard would say the names of the concentration camps, so we would never forget.

By 1950 a new auditorium had been built so the dining room would not always have to be reconfigured for concerts. Ben Graubard had been replaced by Sam Sigal, who, after an interim, was succeeded in 1950 by Camp Kinderland's last director, Avrom Gurwitz. ♦

Thanks to Clare and Danny Greenberg, Bea Kraus, Pearl Lang, Bina Nadler, Lya Dym Rosenblum and Maynard Wishner for sharing their memories with me and assisting in the research for this article.

## Oral History Workshop: Hints for Interviewers

One of the ongoing projects of the Society is to capture the history preserved in our midst through the recollections and stories of community leaders, business pioneers and other exceptional Chicago Jews. In order to bring new participants to the project and to sharpen the skills of our experienced interviewers, the Society hosted a hands-on workshop on May 23 at the Spertus Institute.

The excellent presenters were Victoria Haas and Emma Kowalenko of the Chicago Oral History Roundtable; both are experienced professionals in the field of information technology.

The manual that they distributed at the workshop offers a guide to conducting a good interview, and starts with the preparatory hints listed below.

### ***The more you know, the more you will find out.***

Learn everything possible about the narrator and the material to be covered before the interview.

### ***The interview is not a friendly social visit.***

Take it seriously. Plan in advance by having questions written down on a note pad. Plan on writing more questions during the interview.

### ***Make sure your tape recorder (and/or video-camera) is in good condition before the interview.*** Check batteries, converter and adapter.

***Listen, listen, listen.*** The narrator is giving information—it may be his/her life story. Don't compare personal experiences. Ask the question, then relax and listen. Maintain an attitude of neutrality during the interview.

To learn more about the oral history project, phone the Society office at (312)663-5634. ♦

## Moshava *continued from page 7*

Among the teenagers at Camp Moshava in the 1940s was Lya Dym, who had been a member of *Hashomer Hadati* in her native Germany.

Lya remembers the trip from Chicago to Moshava by truck. It took many hours of travel in those days.

The directors of the camp were Moshe Litoff and Moshe Weiss. Lya's *madricha* (counselor) was Esther Kahn, later the wife of Rabbi Nachman Frimmer.

Improvements were later made in the camp's physical plant with the expansion of the kitchen and

dining facilities and the construction of a synagogue-recreation hall and an infirmary.

In 1955, with the purchase of a large camp site in Wild Rose, Wisconsin, the era at Rolling Prairie came to a close. Today, the *Mizrachi* Camp Moshava in Wisconsin is the summer destination for hundreds of boys and girls of the Religious Zionist movement. ♦

Thanks to Lya Dym Rosenblum for sharing her memories with me. Thanks to Sanford L. Aronin for allowing use of excerpts from his article "Mizrachi Camp Moshava" in *Barr's Post Card News*. **BEV CHUBAT**

## Follow-Up: "From Lincoln Park to Eternity"

Helen Sclair, in her talk at the Society's March 14 Open Meeting, offered a point of information that we wanted to bring to our readers who may not have attended the event.

Starting only in the 1920s, she told us, were the graves of Jews in American military cemeteries marked with the Star of David. Until that time all graves would have been marked with a cross.

We discovered a 70-year-old news item also concerning the interment of Jewish war dead. *The Sentinel*, the Chicago Jewish weekly, in its August 30, 1929 issue, announced the dedication, on Sunday, September 8, of the Jewish War Veterans' Section at Oakridge Jewish Cemetery, Roosevelt and Mannheim Roads.

The new section would include a Military Plot and a National Jewish War Memorial (to Jewish war dead of all wars since the Revolutionary War).

Sponsoring the event was The Yarmo-DeVere Post of the American Legion, to which almost all of the West Side Chicago Jewish war veterans belonged. Joseph R. Dorfman, Commander of the Post, was general chairman of the dedication committee.

Who were Yarmo and DeVere, for whom the Post was named? Robert Yarmo, Sergeant of Company I, 152nd Infantry, was a veteran of the Spanish-American War and a well-known figure in local sports circles. He was killed in action at Albert, France, on August 10, 1918. James DeVere, Jr., Seaman First Class, died as the result of wounds received in action aboard the U.S.S. Chinchin off the coast of France on November 9, 1918. His interment was in Mount Carmel Cemetery.

Today, Oakridge Jewish Cemetery also holds a Holocaust Memorial. ♦

### TV Viewing Reminder:

*The Chicago Jewish Historical Society's Video "Romance of A People"*

**Thursday, September 9  
WTTW-Channel 11  
7:30 pm**

## Society Quarterly Seeks Memoirs of Jewish Chicagoans

*CJH* occasionally publishes memoirs of individual Chicagoans. Much of the rest of the work we publish in *CJH* focuses on broad themes, famous individuals, and notable events. Memoirs allow us to focus on the history that most of us actually lived.

Manuscripts should be no longer than six double-spaced pages, and preferably should be submitted on Macintosh-compatible disk using one of the popular word processing applications. But typed copy on paper will work just fine!

We attempt to comment on every memoir submitted, but are not always able to do so, and cannot guarantee the publication of any work. Be sure to include a return address and phone number with your submission.

Send memoirs to the editor of *Chicago Jewish History*, Bev Chubak, 415 W. Fullerton Parkway, #1102, Chicago, IL 60614-2859. ♦

## Tribute Cards Offered for Special Occasions

The Society wishes to remind members about the availability of our Tribute Cards. These attractive cards can be used for many reasons: to honor someone, memorialize a loved one, thank a friend, or offer congratulations.

The cards are printed on heavy white stock, 9-1/4" x 4" folded. They bear the handsome Society logo on the outside.

The copy on the inside describes the purposes of the Society: "The Chicago Jewish Historical Society, through its many programs and publications, collects, preserves, records and retells the history of the

Jewish community of Chicago" and

"A GIFT HAS BEEN MADE  
TO THE CHICAGO JEWISH  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BY \_\_\_\_\_"

There is also ample space for your personal message if you wish to add one. A package of eight cards with matching envelopes is \$10.

Individual cards can be mailed for you from our office at a cost of \$5 per card, (postage included). To order packages of eight, or individual cards, phone the Society office at (312)663-5634 or Clare Greenberg at (773)725-7330. ♦

## Society Welcomes New Members

Mrs. Allan Adelman  
Rosaleah Goland  
Mr. & Mrs. Irwin Lapping  
Carole Miller  
Lorie Shapiro  
Sara Shapiro

**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 Chubatz (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 Jewish 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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