



SOUTHERN JEWISH HERITAGE

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Gloria Felsenthal Elected President



Gloria Felsenthal was elected President of the Memphis and Mid-South Jewish Historical Society at its annual meeting held at Plough Towers, Sun-

day, May 5, 1990. The guest speaker, Rabbi Martin Hinchin, Rabbi Emeritus from Alexandria, Louisiana, was introduced by President Leonid Saharovici. Rabbi Hinchin spoke about his book, "Forescore and Eleven", a history of the Jews of Rapides Parish, Louisiana from 1828 to 1919. He explained that practically all records were burned when the Union Army virtually destroyed the city during the Civil War and factual data was most difficult to obtain. Rabbi Hinchin's book, "Forescore and Eleven", was published during the 125th anniversary year of the Synagogue. Through his research, Rabbi Hinchin was able to establish the correct date for this celebration proving that earlier anniversaries celebrated by the congregation were in error.

After Rabbi Hinchin's address, President Saharovici called upon Harriet Stern, a member of the nominating committee, who presented the slate of Officers and Board Members for the coming year. Those elected and retained for another year are as follows:

President, Gloria Felsenthal; first vice-president, David Schneider; second vice-president Judge Irving Strauch; secretary, Harry Jaffe; treasurer, Abe Schwab; honorary president, Harriet Stern; consultant and project director, Judy Peiser; legal counsel, Marx Borod; honorary officer, Leonid Saharovici; historian, Shirley Feibel-

"History of the Jews of Memphis" Scheduled for 1992 Publication

On March 27, the Board of Directors of the Memphis and Mid-South Jewish Historical Society met at the home of Dr. Selma Lewis in what was considered a truly historic meeting. In advance, we had been furnished an outline of the first twelve chapters of the book, "The History of the Jews of Memphis". This outline represented a tremendous amount of research and work on the part of Dr. Lewis and it gave us an insight of what we might anticipate in the finished work. The outline covered the period from 1820 to 1930 and we received from Dr. Lewis an insight into the vast research, careful planning and effort that goes into a tremendous undertaking of this scope. In the preface to her outline, Dr. Lewis said "the history of the lives of Jews in this southern city will record from where they came; where and how they lived and when they arrived; what institutions they developed; how they made their living; how they practiced their religion; how they related to the numerically dominate religious groups among whom they lived; and how they adapted and changed in their adjustment to their new circumstances". As we consider Jews as southerners, it will be necessary to explore the meaning of this juxtaposition in the formation of the present Jewish community. Dr. Lewis continued, "it will be concerned with the history of the Jewish community, not as an isolated story, but as a part of the story of the growth and development of the city of Memphis in the southern region of the United States of America."

As we read and discussed the ideas, members of your Board had numerous suggestions and explored a number of possibilities, particularly as to the period of time to be covered in the book. The many difficulties of bringing the work up to a current date were discussed and a vast array of subjects, both large and small were bantered about in an effort to expand certain areas and be certain that the relationship of the Jewish community to our city were shown in its proper prospective. Publication of the book is expected to be in the early part of 1992.

The Memphis Jewish Federation through generous grants has become a major partner with the Historical Society in making the writing of this history of the Jewish people of Memphis possible. The encouragement and financial support of the Memphis Jewish Federation is greatly appreciated by the Historical Society.

I believe I speak for all members of your Board in congratulating Dr. Lewis on her presentation and we look forward to our next meetings where we will have the opportunity to review completed chapters of this exciting project. We know its completion will be a most significant contribution to our Memphis Jewish Community.

man. For directors; a three-year term--Helen Wax, Nathan Goler; a two-year term--Ruth Kahn, H. Kirke Lewis, Jack Leiberman, Jean Pierce; and a one-year term--Lester Sewel, Laura Spiegler, Elias Goldsmith, Jr.

Before concluding the meeting, vice-president, David Schneider presented outgoing President Leonid Saharovici with a beautiful Star of David Plaque for his outstanding leadership and service to the

Historical Society.

President Saharovici announced that we had again received a grant from the Memphis Jewish Federation and he expressed our grateful appreciation for their continued support of our organization, and its work in progress.

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DUES STATEMENT
PLEASE PAY PROMPTLY**

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MEMPHIS AND THE MID-SOUTH - FOUNDED IN 1986
163 BEALE STREET, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38103

Presidents Message Gloria Felsenthal



Gloria Felsenthal

Greetings from your new president. The first president of our society, Harriet Stern, spent her youth in east Tennessee; our second president, Leonid Saharovici, came to Memphis from Eastern Europe. I am your first "home-grown" president, but my family tree also attained its main growth across the ocean. What do we all have in common? We all believe trees grow where they are planted (or transplanted) and that the trees that survive send their roots to great depths for nourishment. We, your leaders, and you, our supporters, share the commitment to learn about our past and to perpetuate it. We look forward to future programs about Memphis Jewish history; we support Selma Lewis in her project of writing about our history, and we encourage each other to share our rich heritage.

Welcome To Our New Members

Mr. Lawrence Beck
Mr. & Mrs. Nate Goler

Mrs. Janice Lazarus
Mr. & Mrs. Alfred Halperin
Mr. & Mrs. Buck Boshwit

Thanks To Our Contributors

Memphis Jewish Federation
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Jewish War Veterans - Memphis Post 121

by Ben Schwartz, Past Commander

In 1654, Asher Levy, one of the original twenty-three Jewish settlers in New Amsterdam, demanded and secured for himself and fellow Jews the right to stand guard at the stockade. From Colonial times to the present, Jews have played an important part in the defense of the United States. On July 31, 1776, Frances Salvador, a plantation owner from South Carolina, was the first Jew killed in the Revolutionary War. In 1896, a group of Jewish Civil War veterans organized the Hebrew Union Veterans, an organization that was later to become the Jewish War Veterans of the USA. The Hebrew Union Veterans was founded as a direct result of slander and insinuations that Jews had not participated in the military during the War Between The States.

What concerned Jewish veterans then, and throughout America's development, concerns the Jewish War Veterans to this date. Jews must still defend themselves against the slanders of anti-semites who continue to spread the LIE that Jews have not served in the armed forces of this country.

Thousands of Jews have died in combat for their country, and thousands more have been awarded combat medals for the performance of their duty in time of war. In spite of this record, the bigots continue to spread lies.

A study of the Jewish participation in the military during

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World War II indicates, the following: Jews were 2 to 2 1/2% of the U.S. population, and upwards of 8 to 10% of the military. They received more than 52,000 awards, including the Medal of Honor, Air Medal, Silver Star, and Purple Heart. More than 51,000 Jews were listed as casualties; 11,000 died in combat.

Today, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA combats anti-semitism, upholds America's democratic traditions, is totally involved in civil rights, defense spending, national security, injustice and discrimination wherever it occurs.

The Jewish War Veterans of the USA is the very oldest active veterans organization in America, pre-dating by many years the American Legion, and other veteran groups.

The Memphis Post, Cpl. Harry Washer, Post 121 of the Jewish War Veterans, was named in memory of a Memphis Jewish soldier who died during the "Battle of the Bulge" in honored service to his people and country. Formed in 1980, with a nucleus of about 40 veterans, our Post has grown to 125 members, mostly World War II veterans, a few Korean Veterans and two Viet-Nam veterans.

Our local activities include running Bingo games at the V.A. Hospitals extended care facility, having Veteran's and Memorial Day activities, and are involved in community actions with Yom Hashoah services at Synagogues and the Jewish Community Center. We have speakers at our meetings and deal with current topics, such as the skin heads and anti-semitism.

The Jewish War Veterans will continue to be a force in our community for remembrance, dedication, and action on current problems of Jews in our community and around the world.

YIDDISH WITH A SOUTHERN ACCENT

Growing up Jewish in Knoxville, Tennessee

First Published in *Pioneer Woman's Magazine*, Mar.-Apr., 1978
(now *Na'amat Magazine*)



by Helen S. Silver

Helen Silver is a free-lance journalist based in Charleston, SC. Her articles have appeared in Hadassah Magazine, St. Louis Jewish Light and many other publications. She was also a correspondent for the Washington Bureau of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency 1974-84.

Mrs. Silver is the sister of our editor, David Schneider

They say it's all stored away on some cerebral memory tape, and can easily be retrieved by pushing the right mental button...so when the editor says, "Tell me what it was like growing up as a Jewish child in a small Southern town," that should immediately activate the computer process and the story should just come pouring out.

In reality, this does happen almost every time I observe a Jewish holiday or a parent's Yahrzeit or answer the frequent question, "Helen, are you Jewish?" My mind instantly goes back to my childhood days in Knoxville, Tennessee, a rather unlikely place for my parents, two young Lithuanian immigrants, to begin a new life.

My parents arrived on these shores during the great Jewish exodus from Eastern Europe before World War I. My mother,

Mollie Simon, was a girl of 14 with shiny, dark brown braids down to her waist. She left her mother and her childhood behind in the tiny village of Smargon. My father, Julius Schneider, was brought to the United States by one of his brothers. He had been in Vilna studying to be a chazan and shochet like his father who had been the chazan-shochet of the village of M'yadl.

Both young people found their work in the shops of the New York garment district to be joyless and without opportunity. They saved for their future during their courtship. The day after their wedding, Dad boarded the train for Tennessee where some of our relatives had already settled. He bought a tiny grocery store with adjoining living quarters, and sent for my mother.

My mother had made a difficult adjustment from her little shtetl to the tumult of New York. But she learned to love New York, earning her own money, getting standing room at the opera and dancing with friends. She told me once of her feelings of strangeness and isolation when she stepped off the train into the muddy station yard in Knoxville--another big adjustment was facing her.

My parents worked hard to establish their business and furnish their modest living quarters. They also had to learn a slightly different spoken English than they had learned in night school in Brooklyn--the Southern accent and idiom. In about two years, I arrived, and they often related how they transported me, using a bread crate as my cradle, on the momentous day when they moved to a larger store with an apartment upstairs at 600 East Church St. In years to come, Schneider's Grocery became a landmark in East Knoxville.

My parents claimed I spoke Yiddish before English, as they still conversed mostly in Yiddish and spoke Yiddish in the store when they didn't want the customers to understand what they were saying. Like most parents, they often quoted what they considered my most amusing early childhood expression. It seems I had announced to a total stranger, having his shoes shined in the chair next to my Dad, "I am a Jew baby and an American beauty."

Through the years, I cringed whenever this story was repeated. Today, I can see that even as a very young child, I had sensed that I was a dual person, both an American and a Jew, and had also learned about the ideal feminine image.

My playmates were non-Jewish children since the Jewish families in East Knoxville were moving to another section. My younger brother, David, and I were the only Jewish children in our all-white grammar school. On Sunday, therefore, my parents made a special effort to visit Jewish families with children of our age. We especially liked to visit the Goodstein clan and the Robinson and Shaw families. (We still keep in touch with some of those childhood friends.)

We mixed very well with the gentile children at school and in after-school activities like scouting, occasionally bringing them home or going home with them. Everyone's favorite teacher at the Mountain View School was Louveta Bunch. In addition to teaching the highest grade and the music class, Miss Bunch was our impresario. She produced a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta every spring, and we vied for leading parts. I longed for a leading role but had to be content with a bit part in "H.N.S. Pinafore," which I received because my voice was probably the only one that could reach the high squeaky phrase, "And we are his sisters, and his cousins, and his aunts."

Another favorite teacher was Mamie McCallie who like my work in third grade English and appointed me school news reporter. Each week I'd write about the important happenings at our school in my neatest hand, and take the reports to the Knoxville News-Sentinel and Knoxville Journal. The clacking of the typewriters in the news room and the roar of the presses spinning off the latest headlines filled me with fascination.

Our English class entered a Dental Week Jingle contest, and my jingle was one of the winners. I wasn't all that impressed with the prize of a toothbrush but enjoyed seeing my jingle in print, and thus my literary career was launched. When I was given a typewriter upon entering junior high school, I produced a newsletter for my Zionist youth group, and through the decades, many bulletins, programs and skits emerged from my beloved Remington portable.

Like true Jewish parents, ours sacrificed to give us violin lessons, and for me there were dancing and elocution lessons, to help bring me out of my innate shyness. In the long, hot summer months, I spent many hours reading, knitting, and doing embroidery, the skills little Southern girls were taught in that era. David and I also

Southern Accent

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spent many enjoyable hours in the gilt and rococo Tennessee Theater, for this was the heyday of the movies. Sometimes there were Sunday picnics high in the Smokies, just before it became a national park. We children were all crowded into our friends' rumble seat.

Around this time my parents realized that we needed more association with Jewish children. Even though it was the depths of the Depression, when they were even opening the store on Sunday mornings and evenings to take in a few extra cents, they joined a new congregation that was hiring a young rabbi to organize a Talmud Torah. Rabbi Israel Levine, of blessed memory, entered our lives and introduced us not only the basic Aleph Beth, but to a love of traditional Jewish observances and values. We girls in the group were given the equal honor of reading from the pulpit during the youth group Sabbath and junior congregation. Our small group of students, probably less than thirty, were heartbroken when Rabbi Levine accepted a post in Roanoke, Va. No rabbi who followed could quite take his place for us.

Our small conservative congregation also formed a combined Sunday School with the children of the Reform Temple. The two rabbis, Rabbi Levine, and Rabbi Jerome Mark of Temple Beth-El, together with our wonderful superintendent, Professor William Shaw, organized an outstanding Sunday School in our fine Center building.

During these happy growing years, we felt at home in our dual but sheltered environment, especially my happy-go-lucky brother. However, I had a few painful experiences that introduced me to prejudice. We traveled some distance to school, walking in nice weather and riding the bright orange trolley cars in bad weather. Coming home alone from school one day, I was accosted by a little black girl who was very belligerent and actually tore at the trimming of my favorite blue dress. I instinctively struck back in self-defense with my lunch box. The other two children pulled the girl away, and I ran home breathlessly to tell my parents. After that, I came home by a slightly different route accompanied by one of my taller classmates. This experience mystifies me even today.

Another lesson in racial prejudice was getting used to being called "Jew baby" on

the school playground. I recall the blonde boy who was on safety patrol and his whippers of "Jew baby" as I crossed the street to the school. I just pretended not to hear instead of reporting it to the teachers. (Today I'm told that very boy is the new sheriff of Knoxville, so I hope he has learned about tolerance in the years in between.)

Another time when David and I were very visible was when we unwrapped our Passover lunches at school. Those soggy, rather pungent egg salad matzo sandwiches were the center of attention at my lunch table. "What is that?" led to patient explanations. I soon learned that passing out some extra matzo, sponge cake, and marmalade candy made the explanations easier.

Passover was my favorite holiday, in spite of the extra work in helping lug the Passover dishes, pots and pans up the steep stairs. When the large box of Passover goodies arrived from our cousins' delicatessen in Chattanooga, it was my job to arrange everything neatly in the special cabinets all ready and waiting. Helping mix the sponge cakes and matzo kneidlach was another one of my favorite duties, and my mother and I were never closer than when laboring over these Passover treats. Dad conducted the Seder in his beautiful tenor chant, and often we had extra guests to keep our tiny group from felling lonely, particularly my parents, so far from their relatives and roots.

Purim was another holiday we loved. Often David and I had parts in Purim plays—it seemed my mother was always sewing costumes! I especially recall a Purim congregational dinner where my father read selections from Sholom Aleichem. Chanukah also brought traditional latkes and dreidl games. As Chanukah frequently coincided with Christmas, this helped overshadow the Christmas festivities in our schools.

There was a big and somewhat traumatic change in my life when I began the seventh grade. My young gentile friends were beginning to invite boys to their parties, and once again, I had to give them an explanation, this time for not being allowed to attend. This wasn't exactly like explaining the matzo sandwiches—this was telling them that we were different socially. The breakoff was quick and without feeling. I was suddenly alone at the lunch table, and I found it rather hard to chew with lumps welling up in my throat.

I made some new friends and when I

entered our big city-wide high school, there was a bigger group of Jewish friends to see daily. Meanwhile, my Sunday and Hebrew School activities became even more important than ever. David and I joined Zionist youth groups that met at the Center and our weekends were almost entirely taken up with Jewish activities. I began to hold the first of many group offices and somehow like the responsibility.

My knowledge of a bigger Jewish world out there came from newspapers, books, and from a special paper eagerly awaited in each day's mail, "Der Tag." In the pages of *The Day*, I saw photos of the great Jewish personalities and leaders of the times, like Chaim Weizmann walking down the gangplank on his arrival in Israel. Although I could read a little Yiddish, I looked forward to the English page of the Sunday edition of *The Day*.

When we were teenagers, we met young Jewish people from our neighboring Southern cities at Zionist conclaves and conventions. Our local youth group often or twelve girls undertook some fantastic fund-raising projects like producing plays, handling every detail from start to finish. Thanks to the foresight and dedication of parents and teachers, we gained a strong Jewish identity in a very non-Jewish environment. Certainly for me, it arrived at a very critical moment. As adults, every member of our group achieved a successful career and has been active in Jewish communal work.

I had planned to go to college to become a language teacher, having won honors in both Hebrew and Latin. However, my parents convinced me to attend business college instead. I liked this work, too, since it also involved the use of language skills, and I was employed as a secretary by the Tennessee Valley Authority. World War II had started and this was one way of being involved in the war effort, for TVA furnished the critical power used for the mysterious activities at nearby Oak Ridge which we were later to learn was the making of the first atomic bomb.

On my first day at work I saw a handsome young man who obviously was Jewish also checking in for his first day of work as an electrical engineer. We were introduced the following week and were married a year and a half later. Sid had a background similar to my own—his parents came from Oman, Russia, (near Kiev) and then brought their three small boys from New York to their mom-and-pop

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Beth Sholom Synagogue.

The Conservative Movement in Memphis

by the Staff of Beth Sholom

The first stirrings of the Jewish Conservative movement in Memphis began in December, 1954. A small nucleus of 19 families, interested in forming a new congregation, selected Mr. Herman Appelson as their chairman. The Charter of Incorporation for the new Beth Sholom, East Memphis Synagogue was recorded January 4, 1955. By March of 1955 the newly formed congregation was holding Friday night services and had formed Beth Sholom Sisterhood with Mrs. Abe Katz acting as Chairman.

This small group of people was the beginning of the Beth Sholom 'family'. The spirit of love and support for each other and the Conservative movement were obvious to all. Every member of this small congregation participated in some way with the work of the new Synagogue. The year 1955 proved to be a fun and exciting year for the Beth Sholom Family. It was a year of 'firsts'; a Board of Directors was installed; the first Rabbi, Rabbi Herbert Berger, was selected; the first Bar Mitzvah was held; a Hebrew School was started; and the Synagogue was inducted as the 522nd affiliate with the United Synagogues of America.

The new congregation was thriving and it became apparent, by Spring of 1956, that a permanent home for Beth Sholom

must be found. The property at 482 S. Mendenhall seemed the perfect location. But with a price of over \$65,000 it seemed impossible. Then a group formed within this small group, The Friends of Beth Shalom, to raise the necessary funds. By individual sacrifice, some members taking out personal loans to make donations, the necessary funds were raised. Beth Sholom is still located at Mendenhall & Sanderlin 33 years later.

In October of 1956, the existing house on the property was dedicated as the new Synagogue by a new Rabbi, Rabbi Meyer Passow. The first Bat Mitzvah in the new home of Beth Sholom was in the fall of that year. After the completion of the new building, discussions began concerning housing for the Rabbi which would be closer to the new Synagogue. By October of 1957 the new home for the Rabbi had been built on the Synagogue grounds.

In April of 1958 a wonderful tradition began at Beth Sholom that continues until today. Every year the Beth Sholom Family sponsors a Community Passover Seder. This Seder serves not only the resident Jewish community, but also makes it possible for the Jewish students at our local universities and our Jewish servicemen stationed at Millington, to participate in this traditional family dinner.

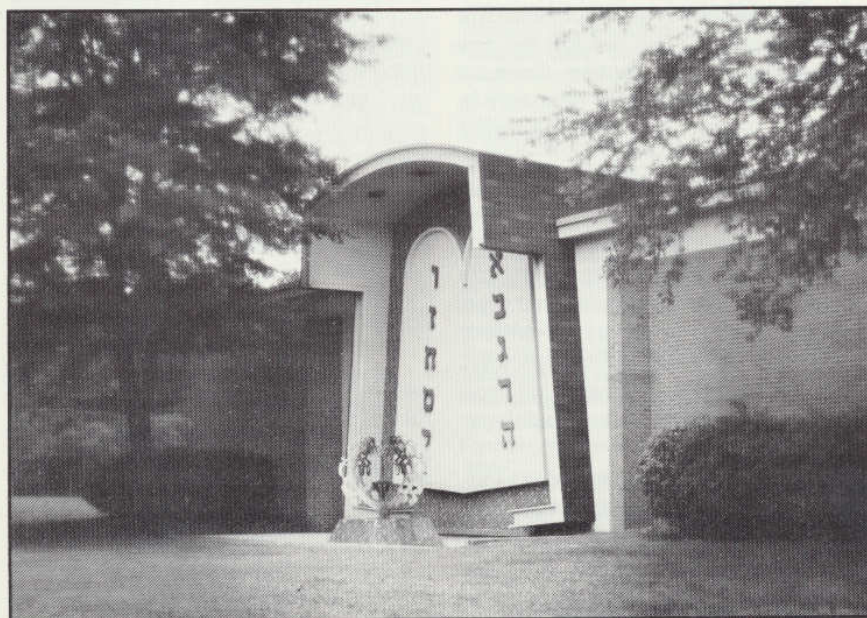
In June of 1959, the congregation was disheartened to learn that Rabbi Passow was resigning to move to Israel. Rabbi Passow was instrumental in many changes during his short tenure at Beth Sholom, one of which is continued today, that of the daily minyan. These minyans continue to provide a vital connecting spirit for the Synagogue.

Rabbi Arie Becker became the new spiritual leader of the congregation in August of 1959. With the arrival of Rabbi Becker, Beth Sholom entered another phase of its history. He stirred a new awareness within the congregation and a growing urge for greater knowledge and insight into Jewish heritage. He had an extraordinary faith in the young people of the congregation and began utilizing the students of the Hebrew school in all phases of the religious services. Rabbi Becker was well respected throughout the entire city, active in both the Jewish and the Christian communities.

As Beth Sholom continued to grow and flourish, the ground breaking for a new building and sanctuary was held in June of 1966. During the construction of the new sanctuary, the Synagogue, continuing to meet the needs of a growing congregation, consecrated the new Beth Sholom Memorial Gardens. By the spring of 1967 the new sanctuary was completed and the dedication service was held on March 5th.

In the fall of 1978, Rabbi Becker was in failing health and it became necessary to select an Associate Rabbi, Rabbi Edmund Winter, to assist in the leadership of the congregation. In the spring of the following year, the beloved Rabbi Becker passed away, after twenty years of dedicated service to Beth Sholom and the city of Memphis. After the death of Rabbi Becker, Rabbi Winter continued as the spiritual leader of the congregation.

An event on January 27, 1980, shook not only the members of Beth Sholom, but the entire community, both Christian and Jewish. An empty Ark met the members of that Sunday morning minyan. The four Torahs kept in the Ark, in the main sanctuary, had been stolen. Two of the Torahs were found on the banks of the Wolf River.



Beth Sholom Synagogue

482 South Mendenhall

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With selfless devotion and extraordinary love, several congregational members began searching the river in boats for the still missing Torahs. These were recovered three days later. A Scribe and an expert in preservation were brought in to examine and restore them, but it was impossible to save the scrolls. One of the stolen Torahs was a survivor of the Holocaust, a constant reminder of the atrocities of the past. This Torah, having survived another tragic disaster, has been kept at Beth Sholom as a continuing symbol of the Jewish struggle. New scrolls for the congregation were purchased and the dedication was held in October of 1980.

The Rabbi Arie Becker Memorial Chapel was dedicated on March 14, 1982 and serves as a continuing memorial to Rabbi Becker. This chapel is utilized for daily minyans, adult education and Junior Congregation.

In the fall of 1984 Rabbi Winter resigned and Rabbi Ephraim Rubinger became the spiritual leader. Under the leadership of Rabbi Rubinger the educational programs offered by the Synagogue grew stronger. Along with the expansion of Adult Education, a movement was started to bring a Solomon Schechter Day School to Memphis.

On November 9th of 1986 the thirty year old mortgage for the Synagogue was burned in a special ceremony.

As the Conservative movement began to recognize the rights of women to serve on the Bimah and be counted in a minyan, the controversy also began at Beth Sholom. After much debating and several votes, it was finally passed by the Board and congregation in the Spring of 1988. Mrs. Rachel Shankman was selected as the first woman of the congregation to be given an Aliyah.

There were even more exciting changes in store for Beth Sholom. In 1988, the Solomon Schechter Day School of Memphis became a reality. The new Day School was housed at Beth Sholom. The existing Beth Sholom school building was remodeled and an addition was built which contains 3 classrooms and a multipurpose room. This addition now connects the synagogue proper with the Religious School. This new building, know as the Oscar Makowsky Education Center was dedicated on October 23, 1988.

In April of 1989 Rabbi Pinchas Aloof



Beth Sholom Sanctuary

joined Beth Sholom as the new Rabbi. While his tenure lasted only a year, Rabbi Aloof reinstituted an Adult Choir and expanded the Adult Educational program to include classes in conversational Yiddish.

In July, 1990, Rabbi Peter Light, who most recently served synagogue Beth El in Highland Park, IL, will become the new spiritual leader of Beth Sholom. Ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, Rabbi Light has an extensive

and broad educational background, having studied at the Hebrew University and Medreshet Yerushalim in Jerusalem. The University of Judaism in Los Angeles and California State University.

And, as a new era dawns at Beth Sholom, Rachel Shankman, president-elect will become the first woman to lead a Memphis congregation. Beth Sholom, thirty-five years young continues to grow and serve the ever changing needs of the Memphis Jewish Community.

Southern Accent

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grocery store in Atlanta, Ga.

Although we were to face separations during World War II and it was four years before we could settle down and begin our family life, it was a new beginning for me. At the age of twenty, I was ready to leave childhood behind and accept adult responsibilities.

We have lived in a number of cities during the ensuing years, and it was our Jewish identity that helped us integrate into our new communities, I believe, more than anything else, it doesn't hurt if you speak a little Yiddish, even if it is with a slight Southern accent.

You Can Help !

Our Archives Committee would like to know about any material you have relating to early Jewish History in Memphis. Pictures, books, synagogue and temple publications, family histories and early documents.

PLEASE CALL - LAURA SPIEGLER

767-5924

ends when we went to check on the restaurants, he would walk ahead clearing a path for us due to the masses of people. They were wall to wall, sidewalk and street. There were hundreds of people who lived near the street. In the alleys off Fourth and Hernando, many of apartments or rooms were on the second floors of a lot of the Beale Street businesses. Most of our customers in the grocery store came from this area.

There were not too many major crimes on the street. All the years we were on

Beale Street we were never afraid or uneasy. All the storekeepers and restaurant owners had an unspoken code that helped. Watching out for each other helped avert major trouble.

The Street was an area for the people to have fun. Laughter, eating, meeting friends, forgetting troubles was the spirit of Beale Street. The shopkeepers and business owners were a potpourri of many ethnic and religious backgrounds. Italians, Greeks, Chinese, Blacks, Jews, Protestants, Catholics, gave our block a diverse outlook as to business practices. It was a feeling of live and let live. We all were there to make a living and all became part of the Street.

Another interesting business on Fourth Street just off Beale was Johnny Mills' Bar B Que place. This was the first partially integrated eating place in Memphis. A business that enjoyed both white and black customers. There was a four foot wall with screening going to the ceiling. One side served whites the other side blacks. Oil cloth covered tables and small electric lights hanging from the ceiling completed the decor. White people, particularly musicians and actors who were playing at the Peabody and Claridge Hotels and the Orpheum Theatre ended their nights work at Johnny Mills', enjoying the best Bar B Que in Memphis.

You can readily see that Beale Street was one of a kind, a Street filled with masses of people coming, going, laughing and enduring. There was no pretense on Beale Street. You either liked it with its noise and tumult or you didn't, and stayed away. I have been asked many times if I thought Beale Street refurbished would work, and I have said for a long time that the Old Beale Street cannot be returned.

Southern Jewish Historical Society Examines Uniqueness of the Southern Jewish Experience

by Helen S. Silver

Charleston, S.C. — A hundred delegates from ten Southern states assembled in Charleston, South Carolina, March 23-25, to learn more about Jewish life in the old and new South at the Southern Jewish Historical Society's Fourteenth Conference on the Southern Jewish Experience.

The conference began with Friday evening services at Charleston's historic Reform Temple Beth Elohim, and delegates were greeted by Rachel Heimovics, president of the SJHS. Bernard Wax of the American Jewish Historical Society brought greetings from the AJHS president at the opening session held in the Stern Student Center of the College of Charleston.

Dr. Mark Bauman, professor of history at Metropolitan College in Atlanta, delivered a presentation titled, "The Southerner as American, Jewish Style." Differing with much that has been written about Southern Jews as being assimilated or "hyphenated Jews," Bauman stated, "Jews in the South were influenced by the regional subculture in a relatively marginal fashion. Where they were most influenced, the casual factors were ecological and were not unique to the Southerner." He added that "to a remarkable degree, in fact, their experiences were far more similar to those of Jews in similar environments elsewhere in America than they were to white Protestants in the South."

Bauman emphasized that "American Jewish history is not New York City Jewish history," adding that Southern Jewish communities experienced the same historical trends as their counterparts in non-Southern cities of comparable population, industries, and commerce.

At a banquet held at Orthodox Congregation Brith Shalom-Beth Israel, Dr. Kathleen Berkeley, associate professor of history, University of North Carolina, Wilmington, N.C., spoke about Southern Jews as "Strangers in a Strange Land." She reviewed the ethnic customs and traditions brought to the South by successive waves of Jewish immigrants—Sephardic, German, and Eastern European. Berkeley concluded that "it is important for American Jewish history" that more research be conducted on ethnic practices of Southern Jews, including such data as "class, religious traditions, customs, habits of the country of origin, whether they came from political servitude or persecution, etc."

At the closing session, two professors at Southern state universities shared their experiences in teaching religion in the Bible Belt. Peter Cohen, professor of religion and philosophy at Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C., deplored the fact that his Jewish students usually make lower grades than their non-Jewish classmates, including courses in Judaism. "They simply have not read the Bible growing up, and they assume they know this material better than others in the course because it is 'their book.'" He added it was "most distressing of all that these students rarely see any connection whatever between their religious identity and practices and this ancient document (the Bible)."

It cannot be recaptured with paint, new fronts and buildings and new people that did not know the old Beale Street.

You can toss the old feel of Beale Street into the waste basket of oblivion. Let it rest in peace.

Cohen said that both his Jewish and Christian students "see themselves as already having arrived at where they want to be religiously. They see faith or religion as a destination."

Dr. Jeffrey Gold, professor of philosophy and humanities at East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tenn., said, "I used to think the greatest theological difference separating Judaism from Christianity concerned the role and status of Jesus—whether he was the son of God and the Messiah." After teaching thousands of conservative Fundamentalist Christian students, Gold said, "I have concluded that there is something deeper and more essential that accounts for the difference in world views of Jews and Christians. The dispute settles around the concept of original sin. Most of my Christian students believe nature, life, and human beings are irredeemably corrupt and/or condemned. They believe human life is not sacred—it is profane; and the world is not God's world—it is Satan's," contrary to Judaism's teachings.

Mrs. Bobbie Malone of New Orleans was the winner of the B.H. Levy Essay Award for her essay titled, "New Orleans Uptown Jewish Immigrants: The Community of Congregation Gates of Prayer, 1850-1860," which she delivered at the conference.

Originally scheduled for November 1989, this conference had been rescheduled because of Hurricane Hugo's impact on Charleston. Ironically, almost all the main speakers were either from the North, or Northern academics transplanted to the South.

courtesy of Jewish Telegraphic Agency

AJHS Meets in Omaha

The annual national conference of the American Jewish Historical Society was held May 18-21 in Omaha, Nebraska. The conference theme was, "Midwestern Jewish Experience", and the program included papers, panels on Midwestern Jewish migration, settlements and farming. Of special interest were sessions on Holocaust survivors and their children from Minnesota and Nebraska, and reactions to the Holocaust by members of the Chicago and Detroit Jewish communities before and during World War II. The keynote speaker Mr. William Novack, was recently featured in a Time magazine story dealing with his books on Lee Iococa, former House Speaker Tip O'Neil and First Lady Nancy Regan. Novack spoke on "Jewish Humor and Jewish History" and discussed the uses of oral history in a separate workshop.

My Years on Beale Street

by Nate H. Goler

Beale Street during the 40's and early 50's was an exciting panorama of smells, laughter, music and people. More people on Friday night, Saturday, and Sunday than you can imagine. It was a unique Street, as if a wall was built around it, making the Street a separate part of the city. And on Friday thru Sunday, the Street had a certain mystic like no other part of Memphis. The Street came alive, as if a sleeping giant rubbed his eyes and awoke to a fun filled weekend.

When the lights went on, signaling that another weekend had begun, the regular Beale Street characters, plus visitors from all around the South moved in. Laughter accompanied by loud voices and a holiday like mood prevailed.

The different smells that filled the air rolled over the street like a fog. All of the eating places were going strong. Between Third and Hernando and Fourth Street, there were many eating places. The One Minute Cafe was the largest. It was owned by a wonderful Greek fellow with the nickname of Hot Dog Jimmy. You could get a hot dog and drink for twenty cents. Other well known places were the Green Castle, Hamburger Heaven, Harlem House, Gus' Cafe, Chop Suey Place.

There were three movie houses on this block, The Daisy, The New Daisy and The Palace. The Palace was the home of the world famous Midnight Rambles. This was a special stage show for white people only. The white population dressed in their finest clothes "went slumming" to attend these wonderful shows.

In 1946, my brother-in-law (now deceased) and I bought a grocery store on this block. The building had quite a historical background. As you entered the front door, inscribed in the marble, right inside the front door, on the floor was the word "MONARCH". The second floor had a solid wood door about three inches thick. There was a small peep hole in the center. There were single electric lights placed about six feet apart over this entire second floor. We had been told this was the famous Monarch Gambling Club. It was rumored that many gamblers had been killed there. This of course was before our time in the building.

We gradually opened three restaurants on this block. We owned the Harlem House, Hamburger Heaven and the Green Castle. We made one hundred dozen hamburgers every Thursday for the three places.

The street had many regular charac-

ters, and they filled the street on Friday nights until Sunday night. One that I recall had a small two wheel push-cart. He collected bottles, rags and junk. On Friday night dressed in his slick zoot suit with a long chain that extended almost to the ground, with his million dollar walk, he talked to everyone. He strutted around like he owned the world. Another worked at Wilson Drug Store on the corner of Fourth and Beale. His gender was questionable, but he had a beautiful operatic style voice. He loved to sing all the time and when he came into our grocery store, he would sing, and we would listen to his beautiful voice. We called him Hedy Lamar. He was a true Beale Street character, but he was very gentle and completely harmless.

Another regular was Sam Carter, who was about six feet five inches tall and weighed about two hundred and fifty pounds. His eyes were just slits



Nate Goler

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SOUTHERN JEWISH HERITAGE

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