



# SOUTHERN JEWISH HERITAGE

VOL. 12, NO. 1

SPRING 1999

## Isaac L. "Ike" Myers

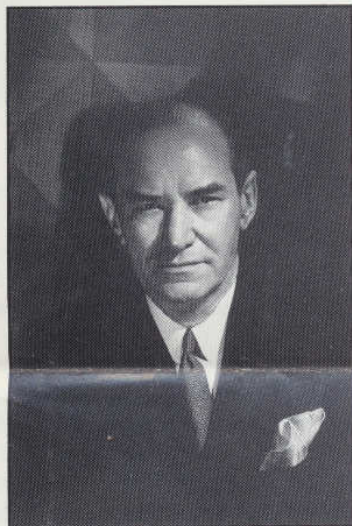
Patron of the Arts

A Friend to the World

Bringing Memphis Great Music, Great Art, Great Drama

by Dr. Selma Lewis

*This is the nineteenth in a series of biographical sketches of Jewish community leaders written by Dr. Selma Lewis while doing research for our book, "A Biblical People in the Bible Belt: History of the Jews of Memphis, 1840's - 1960's." Mercer Press, 1998.*



Ike Myers

For twenty-nine years, from 1931 until his death in 1960, by means of Arts Appreciation he brought annual performances of The Metropolitan Opera Company and many other fine artists to Memphis. Who was this man who gave so liberally to enhance the quality of life for Memphians?

Francis Robinson, the assistant manager of the Metropolitan Opera in charge of their tour, described his friend, Ike Myers, as an enigma, "He liked to appear to be shy, but I think he liked reclamé... He was a wonderful man. The Met is most beholden to him. And he was a good friend. I'll always be indebted to him." But that self-effacing surface was not altogether real.

"He was almost Oriental... Unsmiling... His dress almost a uniform, a stiff-front shirt, a tiny little necktie, a tiny little bow, a starched collar,

always flawlessly groomed, never a hair out of place."

Mississippi writer, David L. Cohn, said "He makes a niche for himself, not by shoving someone else out of the way, but by carving out a place for himself where no place existed before. In an editorial tribute, Jack Carley, of the Commercial Appeal, called Ike "a sharer of beauty", and spoke of him as "contradictory".

Ike's parents, Morris and Sarah Caplan Myers, were also parents to three other sons. His father, who had studied to be a rabbi, was a learned man who also had a deep love of beauty. To Ike, the connection between art and God was obvious: He said: "Anyone can appreciate and be moved by a great work of music, anyone, anywhere. And no one who has a chance to see and appreciate the beauty of the world can doubt the love of the Creator behind it."

Ike Myer's formal education ended when he left Central High without graduating, to enter the business world. He and his brother, Mayer, became partners in a paper distribution business. When the partnership ended, Ike formed his own I.L. Myers Paper Company in 1939. In business as well as in his contributions to the arts, Ike seemed to prefer to work alone. He was a successful businessman, doing much of his own designing of paper boxes or bags. His business efforts, however, appear to have been motivated largely by his desire to underwrite artistic productions for the city.

Ike's sponsorship of the arts was not confined to one area, but extended to

*Please see Myers, Page 6*

## Society's First Overnight Bus Trip--GREAT!

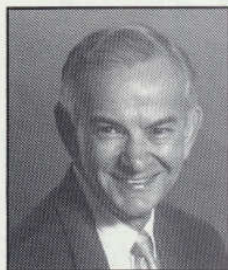
by Joel Felt

The big tour bus rumbled out of the parking lot of Anshei Sphard Beth El Emeth Synagogue at three minutes before 7 a.m. on Sunday, May 30. The 27 intrepid adventurers on board had arrived early; eager to imbibe the pleasure of the first two-day trip ever sponsored by the Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid-South. The destinations: Utica, Port Gibson, Natchez, and Vicksburg. The mission: to experience and learn first hand the Jewish historical role in this crucial area of Mississippi. The mood was jocular as driver, Jackie Price, cruised effortlessly down I-55 to a spot west of Jackson to pick up Betty Shornick of the Jacobs Camp and Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience at Utica—our first stop. Betty had worked with Gil Halpern and Sumner Levine to organize this ambitious journey and would serve as co-ordinator, explicator, and shepherd for the entire trip. Those unfamiliar with the camp were quite impressed with the quality and beauty of its modern facilities.

The Museum holds the Alsace to America exhibit, previously displayed in Jackson, tracking the exodus of Alsatian Jews escaping persecution and conscription and in some cases making their way up the Mississippi from New Orleans to the freedom and opportunity available along the River in a terrain resembling their homeland. Other groups of friends and relatives followed the first settlers, who then provided jobs and support for the newcomers—a familiar pattern. The exhibit depicts the religious, economic, and cultural development of these new Americans throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Soon it was time to leave Utica and begin witnessing the places and buildings where it all began.

*Please see Trip, Page 5*





Sumner Levine

The Society continues to experience a most productive year. Rob Cooper, well know videographer and former Memphian, has completed the interviews for our upcoming video. The finished product could be ready as soon as July. You will be notified when it is ready, and we are planning a general meeting to show this video to the

entire membership. The video will be available to all. Bob Kalin is also working on the video for Brownsville and this also will be available shortly.

Our Book, A Biblical People in the Bible Belt, written by Dr. Selma Lewis, has experienced phenomenal success both in Memphis and nationally. There will be a second printing of the book since there has been a complete sellout of the first printing. For those of you who have been asked by friends where you can purchase the book, it is still available at the Jewish Community Center, Baron Hirsch and Temple Israel gift shops and soon will be back in local bookstores.

On April 14th, Irwin Kaufman chaired a program, "Growing up Jewish in Mississippi". There was a showing of the film "The Jews of the Delta", and a panel discussion with Hermine Davidson, Alvin Labens and Bernard "Nutt" Moyer. The large crowd in attendance enjoyed a most interesting afternoon.

Gil Halpern planned an outstanding trip to Natchez, Henry S. Jacobs Camp, Vicksburg and other interesting sites, on Memorial Day Weekend. As in the past, the local congregations were involved which was one reason all the previous trips have been successful.

May Lyn Mansbach and Marcia Bicks continue to collect

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written histories from the community and we are planning on making these available to the entire community in the future. Shirley Feibleman can use volunteers to input information for the archives. Please call Shirley if you have the time and can work on a computer.

There have been so many compliments on the last issue of the Newsletter. David Schneider certainly does an outstanding job and we want him to know how much we appreciate all of his and Mary Ann's work on behalf of the Society.

We have a large increase in membership this year. We want to encourage everyone to participate in the programs we are planning. ✨

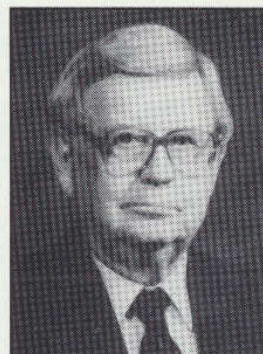
## Marx J. Borad, Founding Member of Our Society Dies at Age 91

Marx J. Borad, a retired Memphis attorney, died Wednesday, December 30, at Baptist Hospital East. Mr. Borad was a founding member of The Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid-South and was active in many community volunteer roles. In 1994, he received the Sara Stone Board Leadership Award given by the Jewish Children's Regional Service of the Jewish Children's Home in New Orleans.

Mr. Borad was a graduate of Vanderbilt University and its School of Law. He was active in civic affairs as well as Jewish organizational life. While a student at Vanderbilt University, he served as editor

of the campus weekly newspaper known as "The Hustler", and he previously served as a "stringer" correspondent for the Memphis Press Scimitar, New Orleans Item, and Jackson Mississippi Daily News. He was a member, former board member and past secretary of Temple Israel.

An honorary life member of Memphis and Shelby County Bar Association and the American Bar Association, he was also a past president and life honorary vice-president of Jewish Family Service of Memphis and a supreme historian of Zeta Beta Tau, national campus fraternity. In the 1950's he served as president of the Council of Jewish



Marx Borad

Welfare Funds, Southeastern Region. Born on April 27, 1908, in Marigold, he was the son of the late Amelia and Isadore Borad. He was married to the former Margaret Morris of Nashville for 50 years. Upon her death, he married Ruth Sater Malkin, who died June 8, 1992. ✨



# Heroes in our Midst

by  
Leonid Saharovici



Mina and Simon Wacksberg

In the last 30 years the world has learned from many sources, about the extraordinary story of a prison camp director, Oskar Schindler, a German industrialist, who at great personal risk saved 1200 Jews from the Nazi gas chambers.

Thomas Keneally, the acclaimed Australian writer, heard for the first time, in 1980, the story of Oskar Schindler from Leopold Poldek Page, a Schindler's list survivor. He convinced him to write a book, so the entire world could learn about this dramatic page of Jewish history and survival. The book published in 1982 by Simon and Schuster, became a milestone of Holocaust literature and inspired Steven Spielberg to create the classical film "Schindler's List", winner of several awards.

The Memphis community was privileged to have had as guest speakers, both Thomas Keneally and Leopold Poldek Page. From their lectures and the movie, we learned how Oskar Schindler, the profiteer, black marketeer, saved the lives of 1200 Jews. He had the courage to care when the rest of the world remained silent. Yad Vashem, the Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem documented the story of this rescuer and honored him in 1961 with the title of "Righteous Gentile". The Hebrew term for people who risked their lives to save Jews from the Nazis is taken from the Talmud "Hasidei Umot Haolam",

(Righteous Members of the Nations of the World).

Our history is replete with many moving tributes and honors to our rescuers, ensuring that the human race never forgets its humanity. Such a remarkable example, is that of the life of Simon Wacksberg and his late wife Mina. Shortly after they were liberated from the concentration camps, after escaping death marches, they met in Regensburg, Germany, fell in love and married on December 11, 1946. The young couple lived in a small apartment, supported by the UNRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration), with the equivalent of food stamps from the German Government. They heard the story of Oskar Schindler from Nathan Silverberg, a journalist for the Jewish publication "Warsaw Moment". One day, he introduced them to Oskar Schindler who was looking for a place to live. He was poor and in desperate need of help. The Wacksbergs were impressed by Schindler's deeds and extended him a helping hand, offering Oskar, his wife Emilie and his secretary Martha their only bedroom. The Schindler's, they felt, exemplified the talmudic saying that a person who saves one life is as if he saved the entire world.

The only precious possession that Oskar Schindler still retained was a golden cigarette case that Simon helped him sell in order to get some money to help support them. For almost a full year, the Schindlers and Martha stayed with the Wacksbergs sharing their meals together. Very soon, Schindlerjuden, Jewish Survivors from Schindler's List came to visit with their rescuers. They celebrated their freedom, praised the man who saved their lives and brought gifts to make his life easier.

To understand the Wacksbergs compassion toward Oskar Schindler, we have to look back into their lives filled with tremendous suffering during the Holocaust.

Simon Wacksberg was born September 1921, in Lodz, a cradle of Poland's Jewish life. His grandfather was the Chief Rabbi of Opochinow. His father was a wealthy textile businessman and a very religious person. Simon and his two brothers were raised in an observant environment. He was educated in Yeshivot and studied with great Rabbis. When he was seventeen years old, the

Nazis occupied Poland and following Hitler's orders the Germans renamed the city of Lodz, Litzmanstat, in memory of the German General Litzman. In April 1940, the Germans set the boundaries of the Lodz Ghetto. The Nazis degraded the Jews, confiscated their properties, enslaved them and finally massacred them. The Jewish elder, Der alteste der Juden, was named Chaim Mordechai Romkowsky, a former director of an orphanage before the war and a very controversial figure. In the Ghetto, Jews could use only special money with the Jewish emblem of the Star of David and signed by Romkowsky. Simon stayed in the Ghetto at the beginning of the war for a short time and then he was sent to a labor camp in Pozna (Amsei) working in railroad construction. Two years later he was sent back to the Lodz Ghetto and Romkowsky put him on a daily ration of soup.

In the summer of 1944, with the last transport of Jews from the Lodz Ghetto, he was sent to Auschwitz. From Lodz to Auschwitz is a relatively short distance, but it took the train four days to arrive and it was like hell, with no food and inhumane traveling condition. From Auschwitz he was sent on several death marches to Silesia and then to the terrible Flossenbuerg Concentration Camp from which he was liberated by the American Army.

He was very sick and was put in a hospital in Kloster Reichembach. In the Bavarian Mountains, with fresh air, good food and decent health care, he recovered in a short period of time. Realizing that he lost his entire family, he moved to Regensburg, Bavaria. There, he met Mina Singer, his future wife for 52 years, who had a remarkable story of surviving one of the cruelest Nazi death marches.

Mina Singer Wacksberg was born on September 26, 1921, in Kattowitz, Poland where her father had a tailor's shop. When Poland was occupied by the Germans, Mina, 18 years old, was sent to the Grunberg Concentration Camp in Silesia. Before the end of the war she was forced on a 700 km. Death March and luckily survived, being liberated on July 10, 1945, by the American Army in Volary, Czechoslovakia. There, she received medical care in the local hospital. On the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of

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## Heroes

Continued from Page 1

WWII, May 5, 1995, the mayor of Volary, the Czech Republic, sent Mina Wacksberg a Memorial Certificate dedicated "to the Jewish women who survived, and to those who perished in the 700 km. Death March and to the men of the Second Regiment and the Fifth Medical Battalion of the US Army's Fifth Infantry Division.

In Regensburg, Simon and Mina began rebuilding their lives together. Two years after they were married, the Wacksbergs had twin daughters, Berry and Nancy, who filled their lives with love and hope for a better world.

With the help of the JOINT Organization and the support of others, Oskar Schindler dreamed again of opening a new business in Argentina. He asked Simon to join him. At that time Argentina was not too favorable for Jewish emigration. Oskar Schindler suggested to Simon that he go to a Catholic Priest that Oskar knew, who would arrange the papers proving that Simon was a Catholic. The Wacksbergs flatly rejected this proposal saying that they would not betray Judaism. All their lives they suffered and survived as Jews and wanted to remain Jews. Schindler went to Argentina, but did not succeed in business. He died in 1974, and his wife Millie remained in Argentina. The Wacksbergs immigrated to the USA in 1949 and settled in Memphis where Simon worked in groceries, textile factories and for 25 years owned a dry cleaning business. His wife Mina died in 1998.

Their friendship with Millie Schindler and with Martha, Schindler's former secretary continued. They maintained correspondence and occasionally talked on the phone. When Mina died, Simon received condolences from both of them and in a condolence card Martha wrote to Simon: "My memory of her is that of a human being with compassion, a heart as big as a mountain and with understanding for everybody. You, Simon, were so good to us when we lived in Regensburg."

Simon Wacksberg is now retired, a widower, father and grandfather. He well remembers the dark tragedy of the Holocaust, the very few lights of humanity and the chance that he had to meet a righteous gentile Oskar Schindler and to express to him his gratitude for saving Jewish lives.

*This is a copy of the  
Memorial Certificate which  
Mina Wacksberg received from the  
Mayor of Volary, dedicated to the  
Jewish women, living and dead,  
and to their liberators.*

### WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Mr. & Mrs. Charlie Blustein  
Mr. & Mrs. Norman Davidson  
Ms. Carol Geller  
Mrs. Dorothy Kantin

Dr. & Mrs. Charles Plesofsky  
Mrs. Helen Elchenbaum  
Mr. & Mrs. Ronald Harkavy  
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Eiseman



Mina Wacksberg shows an American Army Officer, one of her liberators, where 22 Jewish women were murdered the night before they were to be freed. (US Army photos)



Mina Wacksberg turns away as the first body is uncovered. (U.S. Army photos)

#### PAMĚTNÍ LIST

k 50. výročí ukončení II. světové války  
věnovaný

židovským ženám, které přežily, i těm, které zemřely, při 700 km  
„Pochodu smrti“  
a mužům druhého pluku a patchu zdravotního praporu  
5. pěší divize armády USA

#### MEMORIAL CERTIFICATE

On the 50th Anniversary of the End of World War II  
Dedicated to

The Jewish women who survived, and to those who perished,  
in the 700-km Death March  
and The Men of the Second Regiment and the Fifth Medical Battalion  
of U.S. Army's Fifth Infantry Division



vydaný  
given  
Mgr. Svatopluk Vokurka  
starosta  
mayor

5. května 1995 ve Volarech, Česká republika  
This 5th day of May 1995 at Volary, Czech Republic



## Trip

*Continued from Page 1*

We arrived at Port Gibson, a quiet town not much bigger than a yawn. The well-manicured cemetery held the remains of many of the first Jewish settlers, some graves with markings of Odd Fellows, Woodmen of the World, and Free Masons. One stone mysteriously had the Hebrew backwards and the lettering upside down. The Gemiluth Chessed Temple, built in 1891, claims to be the oldest synagogue in the state of Mississippi. On the National Register, this red brick structure has a distinct Byzantine Moorish design. The community itself—gone.

On to Natchez, at one time the most prosperous town in Mississippi, containing 600 antebellum structures. The Jews arrived early and participated fully in the growth, prosperity, and social life of the city. They were planters, professionals, bankers, and merchants—active in politics and every aspect of daily life. Broadly accepted and often individually acclaimed, such early Jewish citizens as John Mayer (who fathered 14 surviving children) and Isaac Lowenbrug, who served twice as mayor in the 1870's commanded the respect and affection of all. This prominent participation would remain the hallmark of the Jewish community of Natchez to the present day. There was a Chevra Kedusha (burial society) as early as 1843, the first synagogue in 1867. When it burned in 1903, Baptist, Methodist, and Episcopal churches all offered their buildings for services to the Jews of Natchez. The present Temple Bnai Israel opened in 1905, still as charming, beautiful and lovingly maintained as ever.

We toured Natchez by horse drawn carriage, bus and on foot. Across from the Temple there is an early Jewish home called Glen Auburn, now lived in by Catholics of Jewish descent, gracious and generous like the home itself. The City of Natchez owns and operates the superbly maintained Jewish cemetery, with a breathtaking view of the River and the Louisiana shore. Seven year old Rosalie Beeckman, a Jewish child, was killed by shrapnel from a Union shell fired from a ship in the harbor. The only casualty to die during the War in Natchez, she is buried in the cemetery. Natchez has three Pilgrimages a year, featuring the magnificently restored old homes; tourism is second to



*JHS group at the gazebo in Natchez overlooking the Mississippi River. (Picture by Max Notowitz)*

manufacturing in the local economy. We lunched at one of these, Stanton Hall, before streaking toward the Vicksburg Battlefield.

Betty England, a grand lady and a member of Anshe Chesed Temple in Vicksburg, served as our guide. An outstanding military historian of this titanic clash, Betty gave us dazzling insights into the drama of the Battle, the zigzag trenches moving the Union troops ever closer to the Confederate positions, the myriad monuments detailing the individual states' fighting units, the horrendous suffering of the townspeople as well as the Confederate soldiers during the vise-like siege of May and June in 1863. Confederate General Pemberton surrendered to General Grant on July 4, and the painful healing process for Vicksburg began. We visited the raised union gunboat, Cairo, which had been sunk by a mine in 1862, resulting miraculously in no casualties. We finished our tour with a visit to Anshe Chesed Temple nearby. As in Natchez, services are still held regularly with a lay leader. Where Natchez may have 4 to 6 attendees, Vicksburg may draw 8 to 12. Ted Levy said there were no children and no young people in Vicksburg's Jewish Community. A small handful of locals did come to greet us with evident pleasure and hospitality and perhaps appreciation that we had come to acknowledge their courage and commitment.

After dinner, on the long ride home, we reflected that one had to see all this in

order to understand it. In the effort to maintain their sense of Jewish identity and community, this battle-hardened remnant remained at their posts long after the war had been lost in the rural forts and moved on to the more defensible ramparts of large metropolitan centers. What could not be eradicated were the glory, the history, the pioneering heroism, and the pride burned into the collective memory. Through the recurrent struggles of a century and a half, this remarkable group of people had irreversibly demonstrated their honor and integrity. ✪

*(Additional picture on page 7)*

## Sam Cooper Dies

Sam Cooper, 87, businessman, public servant, and often called fund raiser extraordinaire, died Wednesday, January 6, at Baptist Hospital East.

Mr. Cooper was the retired President of HumKo and was known for his commitment to many causes, and his fund raising abilities made him "a legend in his own time", winning for him in 1989, President George Bush's "Thousand Points of Light" award. He was devoted to cancer research and worked tirelessly for St. Jude Children's Hospital and the University of Tennessee cancer research program. He was a great friend of St. Jude's founder, Danny Thomas, as well as former Governor Lamar Alexander. In our Winter, 1995 edition of Southern Jewish Heritage, we were honored to publish a biographical sketch about Mr. Cooper.

We send our condolences to his wife, daughters and the entire family



nearly all of the arts. He was an important participant in the musical life of the city sponsoring both the Memphis College of Music and the Memphis Symphony. It is difficult to write of the individuals he helped, because the help was given quietly, known often only to the recipient. In the visual arts, he periodically brought high quality exhibits to Brooks Memorial Gallery. For years he was President of the Board of Trustees of the Memphis Art Academy, whose first student yearbook was dedicated to him.

As has been noted, Ike's favorite activities involved bringing the arts to children, especially those whose only contacts with that aspect of life would come because of events he sponsored. One of his goals was to give Memphis children the opportunity to see, hear and enjoy the arts. He brought free concerts for children, putting any profits made by Arts Appreciation into this or similar projects. Several times a year all the

children of Memphis would be invited to performances held by musicians at the Malco Theater at Beale and Main, or the auditorium. He also made arrangements for handicapped men from army and navy hospitals to attend these concerts. In addition, he subsidized many aspiring authors, musicians, and artists. He paid tuition and expenses of music students at Southwestern and other schools, and arranged for auditions for many young artists, including that of Mignon Dunn for the Metropolitan Opera. The Memphis Youth Symphony Orchestra was founded by him in 1951 to give young musicians the opportunity to play before an audience.

Ike was honored by being presented the Memphis Newspaper Guild's first Good Citizenship Award, in 1946. He was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Fine Arts by Southwestern of Memphis in 1948, and received one of the highest of European civilian awards when he was made a chevalier in the Legion of Honor of France, in 1951. This

award was given to him for his work in helping to restore French art museums after World War II, in consultation with an international group of art lovers, for arranging four tours of French art, and for "his great contribution to a better knowledge of French contemporary painting in the United States."

When Ike Myers died of a heart attack, following emergency surgery, in New York City on September 23, 1960, the city of Memphis lost a great and unselfish patron of the arts. In a memorial editorial in the Commercial Appeal, Jack Carley wrote: "All his life Ike Myers sought beauty and when he found it, gave it to others. To say that he was a patron of the arts is not enough. He was a sharer—an opener of doors to the aesthetic where sights and sounds have kinship with the soul. Ike Myers wanted the best in artistry for Memphis and the Mid-South. His only ambition was to be a medium through which it could be attained." ✨

### *Josie Burson Receives Humanitarian Award*

Josie Burson, well known for her work in politics and legendary work for Hadassah, received along with three other Memphians, the Humanitarian Award presented by the National Conference for Community and Justice. A phone call from Vice-President Gore, who singled out Burson for "paving the way for women to play a vital role in politics and the community" was the beginning of the evening's presentations. Her son, Charles Burson, legal counsel to the Vice-President, described his mother as an "activist homemaker" who accepted an appointment as employment commissioner from Governor Buford Ellington in 1966. Josie and her son, Charles, are the highest-ranking Jewish Memphians to hold political office in the state. Burson was also recognized for her role in the family when on Mother's Day 1975, she received the American Mother of the Year Award. She is the only Jewish woman ever to be so honored.

Southern Jewish Heritage was pleased to have published a biographical sketch of Josie Burson in our Winter/Spring 1994 issue.

Congratulations again to Josie Burson for this latest honor. ✨



*Ike Myers, overcome with emotion, as he was made a chevalier of the French Legion of Honor in 1951.*



## Let's All Help Make this Project a Great Success

The Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid-South has embarked upon another project that will preserve our historical record of Mid-South Jewish families.

Since last fall, the Society has been collecting copies of already compiled genealogies and histories of Jewish families who have lived in the Mid-South for at least three generations. Documents collected to date vary in form and in comprehensiveness. Some are simply photocopies of pages of a city directory showing marriage or death notices. Others, in the form of a family "tree", trace the ancestors of a particular person. The most complex is a huge, three-volume work of great intricacy and detail.

The society is still actively seeking documents. If you have information you would be willing to share, please telephone Marcia Bicks at 324-3739, or May Lynn Mansbach at 767-0638.

In the next phase of the project, members of the Jewish Historical Society will interview people whose family histories have not yet been recorded, and this information will be added to the community record. Interviewers will still seek those whose families have been in the Mid-South for at least three generations.

After the documents are collected and itemized, the Society hopes to make them available on a rotating basis. ★

Trip

*Continued from Page 5*



*Peggy Jalenak & her mother, Helen Eichenbaum, pose in front of a picture of Charlie Eichenbaum (Peggy's father & Helen's husband) in the Arkansas exhibit at the Museum of the Jewish Experience at the Jacobs Camp in Utica.*

## Letter to the Editor

Dear David,

The recent publication of Southern Jewish Heritage reflecting on the life of the late Abe Waldauer stirred an unforgettable childhood memory, which I'd like to share with you. I'm certain that you will understand after reading this why Mr. Waldauer made an indelible impression upon me and why I shall never forget him.

And so I begin——

My earliest memories of childhood were playing, growing-up and working in my parents' (Alex and Rose Katz, of blessed memory) grocery store on South Wellington Street, in the heart of South Memphis. Our family lived in a small house attached to the rear of the store where my parents worked Monday thru Saturday from 6:30 a.m. until late at night.

During the mid-1930's Memphis retail stores were compelled by law to observe the Sunday "Blue" Laws which prohibited retail sales on Sunday. No stores were open on Sunday.

Each Sunday morning my Father took me by the hand (I was 6 years old) and we walked thru the door connecting our house to the grocery store.

Once in the store, Daddy would go to the "hidden" safe, remove the sack containing cash received during the week and "check-up" to determine if we had a "good" week or just an "average" week.

Daddy would prepare the bank deposit and would allow me to count and "wrap" the pennies if I promised to be "very careful" about counting.

Mother would do the house chores and look after my baby sister while her "men" worked.

And so our Sundays went until one cold Sunday when an African-American lady holding a small baby in her arms began knocking impatiently at the locked door of our store.

My Father went to the door, with me at

his heels, and advised the lady that we were closed. She pleaded with my Father to sell her a bottle of milk for her baby. Daddy told her he couldn't; it was against the law.

She continued "Please, Mr. Katz, my baby's hungry!"

Daddy sent me to the "cooler-box" for a quart of milk. I brought it to him. He opened the door and told the lady that he could not sell the milk to her so he would just give it to her.

She took the milk, thanked him profusely and left.

I was very proud of my Daddy and I thought he was the best and smartest man I knew.

We then returned to "checking-up".

About 5 minutes later, Memphis Police Squad Car #25 pulled up to our curb and a big policeman with a badge and a gun pounded on the door. He told my Father that he saw a woman walk away from our store carrying a bottle of milk and that my Father had violated the law and would have to go to jail with him "right now".

My Father tried to explain but the policeman told him to "tell it to the Judge when the trial comes up".

The Officer, Mr. Charlie Peete, (I shall never forget him) took my Father to jail.

Sobbing, I ran to tell my Mother who began to cry.

After a few minutes, she wiped her eyes and said she was going to call Abe Waldauer—"He'll know what to do."

She called Mr. Waldauer who, after hearing the story, told Mother not to worry. He would help her.

Mr. Waldauer drove to the jail, arranged to have my Father released and brought him back home to us Sunday afternoon. He subsequently represented Daddy at the trial and the charges were dropped.

So——Did I remember Abe Waldauer? You bet I did! He was the "Second Best" man I ever knew. (He tied with my Dad for the "Smartest" man.)

Thanks for reminding me of an incident that occurred over 60 years ago.

Sincerely,  
Sidney Katz

## First Edition SOLD OUT!

Our book, "A Biblical People In the Bible Belt: History of the Jews of Memphis 1850s - 1960s",  
continuous to receive great reviews.

Our second printing is on order and should be available in July.  
If you need copies, call Sumner Levine, 682-5935.



# Making Jewish History Today

Baron Hirsch Congregation Honors Grossmans  
For 25 Years of Service

by Barry Markowitz,  
condensed from "The Hebrew Watchman", April 1, 1999.

On February 28, at a tribute dinner, Baron Hirsch Congregation recognized Rabbi and Mrs. Rafael G. Grossman for 25 years of service to the synagogue.

Visiting rabbis, politicians, congregants and members of the Memphis Jewish community gathered to mark what Joel Katz, president of the congregation, said was "a milestone of 25 years of service to our congregation...25 years of a partnership of a couple whose love and friendship benefited us as individuals and as a congregation."

Accolades came in a videotaped message from Vice President Al Gore, noting his more than 20-year friendship with Rabbi and Mrs. Grossman. Senator Bill Frist (R-TN) spoke of his friendship with Rabbi Grossman and said that Rabbi Grossman has dedicated his life to reminding congregants "who they are, why they are here and what's expected of them as a congregation and as citizens of the world."

Rabbi Michel Berniker, Torah scholar and Rosh Hayeshiva of the Netzach Israel Yeshiva in Jerusalem, who has known the rabbi from his Yeshiva days, spoke highly of his leadership qualities.

Rabbi/Dr. Stephen Dworkin, executive vice-president of the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA), called Rabbi Grossman a rabbi's rabbi...an extraordinary rabbinic thinker whose dynamic spirit and vision have been an example to us all.

Mrs. Grossman is a "consummate professional...who has made a myriad of sacrifices for the Jewish community...and is a role model in modesty for all Jewish women," he added.

Jack Belz, a past president of Baron Hirsch and an honorary dinner co-chair, said that the Grossmans coming to Memphis resulted in "one of the most outstanding and vibrant Orthodox congregations in the country" and called the rabbi a unifier who believes and acts on the mandate that "a Jew is a Jew."

Ira A. Lipman, honorary dinner co-chairman, credited Rabbi Grossman for changing his life and that of his wife and children.

Recalling the decision to come to Memphis with small children following the death of a daughter, Rabbi Grossman admitted worrying about his children's yiddishkeit but being promised by Rabbi Schneerson, the Lubavitcher rabbi, that "your children will be the kind of Jews you want them to be if you go to Memphis."

"You don't know how good you are...thank G-D for this small Jewish community, one of the finest you'll find wherever you spin the globe."

Addressing his wife, Rabbi Grossman said that while he didn't owe quite everything to her, he did recall that after only one date he woke his parents and asked them to wish him Mazel Tov because he was engaged, prompting his father to ask, "since when do you go out with girls?"

Noting his parent's pleasure at his choice, Rabbi Grossman declared "my life totally revolves around her" and admitted that there were times when he lived his life only for her.

"It is G-D's approbation I seek, it is Shirley's approval."

Thanking the congregation, Rabbi Grossman concluded, "G-D knows how much I love you." ❄



Rabbi and Mrs. Rafael G. Grossman admire a plaque recognizing their quarter century of service to Baron Hirsch Congregation at a tribute dinner honoring the couple. Joining them were (from left) honorary dinner co-chairs Ira A. Lipman, Jack Belz and Irby Cooper.



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