

SOUTHERN JEWISH HERITAGE

VOL. 13, NO. 2

SPRING 2000

Marjean Kremer Elected President at Society's Annual Meeting

At the annual meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid-South, held at the Memphis Jewish Community Center, June 11, 2000, Mrs. Marjean Kremer was elected president for the 2000/2001 year.

Serving with Marjean are: 1st VP-Peggy Jalenak, 2nd VP-Abe Kriegel, 3rd VP & Fin. Sec.-Allen Cohen, Secretary-Bob

Kalin, Treasurer-Arthur Buring, Board Members-Mel Grinspan, David Patterson, Jane Ross, Keith Parker, Jimmy Ringel, Gil Halpern, Irwin Kaufman, May Lynn Mansbach, Harvey Reisman, Sumner Levine, David Schneider.

The new officers were installed by former president, and editor of Southern

Jewish Heritage, David Schneider.

After the election, the 3rd session of "Jews in the Arts", moderated by Memphis attorney, Richard Kremer, was presented. Panel members were Marcia Bicks, Joyce Lazarov, Dr. Joe Parker and Burt Barnett, all of whom are Jewish past presidents of arts organizations in Memphis. Details of this excellent program will be in a future edition. ✨

A Super Sunday - Bus Trip to Jonesboro and Blytheville a Great Success

by Sumner Levine

On Sunday morning, April 9, 2000, a group of travelers embarked on a trip to Blytheville and Jonesboro that was planned with the same efficiency as a George Patton invasion. Joel Felt had spent endless hours planning and organizing this most ambitious trip, which was really two trips. It was necessary to use a larger bus to accommodate the crowd of 51 people. We had an excellent driver, and once we were en route Joe told the group what was planned for the day.

One of the highlights of the trip was provided by Harry Samuels, who told us of the founding of the B'nai Israel Congregation in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, in the 1930's which was composed of approximately a dozen families in Cape plus another dozen in surrounding communities including Sikeston, New Madrid, Portageville, Haiti, Charleston, Caruthersville, and East Prairie. It was especially interesting to learn of the ties between the Cape synagogue and the Hecht Synagogue located on Mt. Scopus at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Our first stop, Blytheville, Arkansas, is a city of approximately 22,000 which was once known for its agricultural areas, and today Blytheville's manufacturing employees make up 35% of the total employees in the area.

When we arrived at Temple Israel, we

were greeted by many of the congregants, including among others the president, Jack Cooperman, "the Keeper of the Keys", Richard Falcoff, and Huddy and Jerry Cohen. The Temple is most impressive, surrounded by eight magnificent stained glass windows, which, incidentally, will be installed eventually in the new Beth Shalom Chapel in Memphis. The windows told many stories including The Burning Bush, Noah's Ark, A Horn of Plenty, The Biblical Ark of the Covenant, Intertwined

Shofars, A Chanukah Menorah, A Succah, and The Ten Commandments.

We were fortunate enough to attend a beautiful service conducted by Dr. Ariel Imber, Professor of Religion at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Not only did he do an outstanding job leading the service, but he delivered a most profound sermon on the possible rise of a new type of Anti-Semitism, a denial of the Exodus from Egypt.

While we had lunch in the social hall,

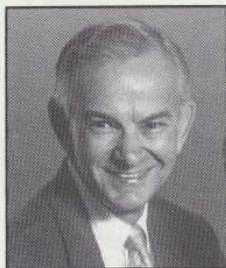
Please see Trip, page 7



Members enjoying our Arkansas history trip

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MEMPHIS AND THE MID-SOUTH - FOUNDED IN 1986
P.O. BOX 17304, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38187

President's Message



Sumner Levine

I want to thank you for having given me the honor of serving as your president for the last two years. Since this is my last President's Message, I want to reflect on the last two years and recognize some of the people that made this administration successful. First is my "best friend", Marjean Kremer, who along with tireless Harriet Stern were always there to not only give wise advice, but were always available to make invaluable contributions. We just about wore Arthur Buring out, but he was always prompt in paying bills and keeping records. Peggy Jalenak made innumerable suggestions and did a wonderful job as secretary. The Board made many, many contributions led by May Lynn Mansbach who, with the help of Marcia Bicks, set in motion the gathering of Oral Histories and the interviewing process. Abe Kriegel's programs were innovative and drew many large crowds. Gil Halpern and Joel Felt continued the popular trip program and every trip required larger buses than we planned. David Schneider continued producing this fine, professional newsletter and was constantly praised for its quality. Bob Kalin was responsible for the video on Brownsville, and Shirley Feibleman continued with the Archives.

The main reason for the success of this administration was the publication of *A Biblical People in the Bible Belt* and tangentially the film, *The Jews of Memphis*. These two historical documents are now in homes throughout the United States as well as countries overseas. Most of this success is due to the work of Selma Lewis. She leaves a legacy that this community will never forget. My biggest regret is that Marjean will not have this giant of a woman to consult with daily and lean on, as I did. We want to dedicate this administration to the woman we all loved, SELMA LEWIS.

CONTRIBUTIONS

In Memory of Selma Lewis

Mr. & Mrs. Laurence Bloch	Mr. Allen Cohen
Mr. & Mrs. Alan & Corey Cooper	Mr. Mannie Ettingoff
Mr. & Mrs. Gil Fox	Mr. & Mrs. L.R. Jalenak
Mrs. Claudia Kaplan	Mr. & Mrs. Roy Kaminsky
Mr. & Mrs. Glenn Kiersky	Dr. & Mrs. Abe Kriegel
Mr. & Mrs. Kirke Lewis	Mr. & Mrs. Sumner Levine
Ms. Jeanine Mah	Ms. Jan Meyer
Ms. Heleen Schroff	Mr. & Mrs. Leon Shahun

Mr. & Mrs. David Schneider

In Honor of Leonid Saharovichi's receiving the Zachor Award
Ms. Fagie Schaffer Mr. & Mrs. David Schneider

For the Recovery of Mildred Schwartz
Mr. & Mrs. Sumner Levine Dr. & Mrs. Charles Plesofsky

Special Birthday Jack Lewis
Dr. & Mrs. Charles Plesofsky

In Memory of Buddy Cohn
Mr. & Mrs. Leon Shahun

Jewish Historical Society (Special Bequest)
Golden Circle of Memphis

Jewish Historical Society of Memphis & The Mid-South

Officers 1998-2000

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Helen Wax, Lester Sewel, Laura Spiegler,
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Leonid Saharovici, Gloria Felsenthal, David Schneider

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Mr. & Mrs. David LeVine	Ms. Frances Loring
Mr. & Mrs. Ross Felt	Ms. Sherri Lipman
Ms. Nora Rothchild	

We Continue To Make Our Own History

Our book, "A Biblical People in the Bible Belt", and our video, "The Jews of Memphis", continue to make history. The film was broadcast on WKNO, Channel 10, on April 1st and received many accolades from the viewing public.

A copy of the book and video has been presented to the following organizations.

Margolin Hebrew Academy	Temple Israel
Baron Hirsch Congregation	Harding Academy
Chabad Lubavitch Congregation	Rhodes College
Beth Shalom Synagogue	Memphis Public Library
Kesser Torah Synagogue	University of Memphis
Christian Brother's University	Memphis Jewish Home
Museum of the Southern Experience	
West Tennessee Historical Society	
Anshei Shpard-Bethel Emeth Synagogue	
Bornblum Solomon Schechter Day School	
University of Florida/Price Library of Judaica	
Yeshiva University/Mendel Gottesman Library	

Also, "The Jews of Memphis" film is being considered by the Jewish Museum of New York as one of the films for their film festival. We will keep you informed of this exciting development.

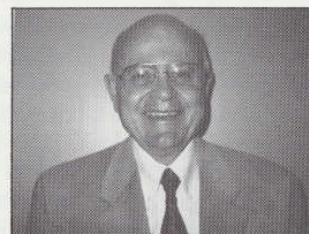
Sumner Levine, our immediate past president, has done a wonderful job of promoting the book and film. Our congratulations and thanks to Sumner.

Cape Girardeau - - A Focal Point for Jews of Southeast Missouri

by Harry Samuels

Harry Samuels was born in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, May 19, 1931, and lived there until 1948 when he moved to St. Louis to attend Washington University where he graduated in 1952. He served two years in the army during the Korean War. In 1956, he formed a business partnership with the late Victor S. Shainberg and operated S&S Department Store and The Children's Shop in Jonesboro, Arkansas. In 1960 he moved to Memphis and helped establish and manage the DixieMart and Corondolet stores in Memphis. In 1969, he and Victor Shainberg formed the Samuels and Shainberg Real Estate Firm, which he continues to operate.

Harry is President-elect of the Memphis Jewish Federation, board member and former President of the Memphis Jewish Community Center, Board Member of the Memphis Jewish Home where he helped establish it as an Eden Alternative facility and is active in many civic organizations. Harry is a member of Baron Hirsch Congregation and Chavad Lubavitch Congregation and, with all this, he always finds time to spend with his grandchildren and play tennis with his wife, Flora.



Harry Samuels

Cape Girardeau, Missouri was originally settled by the French as a trading post. And, like most of the small towns along the Mississippi River, the economy of the city was primarily tied to the river. It is located approximately 125 miles south of St. Louis and 180 miles north of Memphis.

About 1910, Jewish immigrants began settling in Cape Girardeau and in smaller surrounding communities where, for the most part, they became owners of small retail stores. Most had come from small communities in Eastern Europe and felt their chances for success would be better in small communities. They felt that with less competition they could get a better start and would enjoy a higher standard of living.

The first Jew anyone recalls seeing in Cape was Sam Sherman who operated a ladies clothing shop. Later he moved to Denver where he became one of the founders of the May Company. My grandparents, Morris and Sarah Shaltupsky came to Cape in 1913, when their daughter, Rose (Shainberg) was five years old. My grandfather had been a shoemaker in Grodno, Poland and had come to St. Louis where several cousins lived and he opened a shoe store on Laclede Blvd. One of his suppliers suggested he go to the Cape where there was no shoe store, so he took the train there and opened a sample shoe store that he and his sons operated for several years. In addition to Mr. Sherman, the only other Jewish family in Cape Girardeau was Mr. Herbert Moss and his parents. No one remembers what he did for a living.

During the 1930's there were approximately 12-15 Jewish families in the city and an equal number living in New Sikeston, Mew Madrid, Kennett, Hayti, East Prairie, Caruthersville, Portageville and Charleston. These people recognized the great danger to

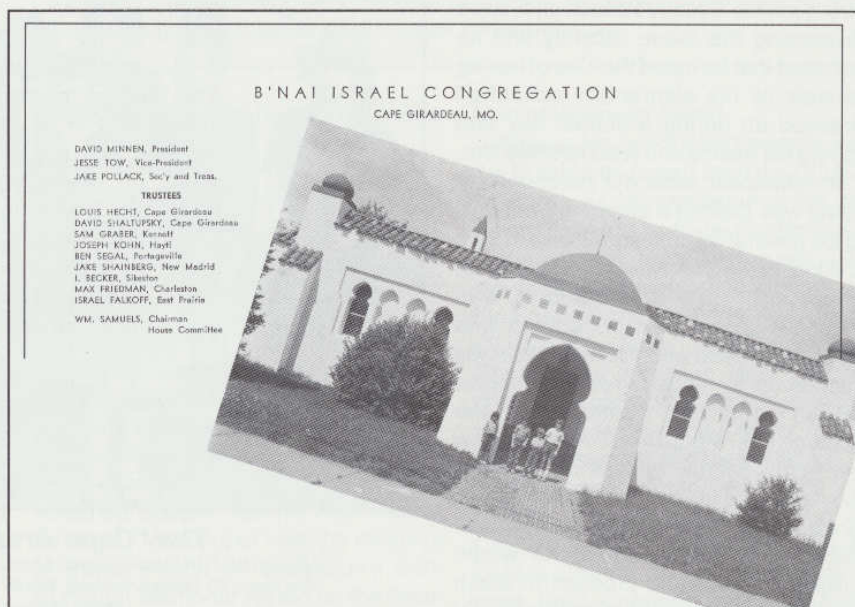
their children of assimilation unless a real effort was made to instill a sense of Yiddishkeit into their lives. They anticipated over seventy five years ago some of the problems we Jews are now experiencing. So, they established the B'nai Israel Congregation holding religious services at various homes. Later they rented a small building at a city park not too far from the swimming pool (as I recall the dressing rooms were next door) and began holding Friday night, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services there until it burned down in the mid-30's. One congregant, Louis Hecht, who operated a ladies ready-to-wear store which is still being operated by his son Marty, traveled to Palestine in the late '20's. He told me of the time he was walking round Mt. Scopus taking pictures of what he thought were synagogues. He met a lady who asked him what brought him there and he replied that he had a dream to help build a synagogue in this

small southeast Missouri town, and that the architect had never seen a synagogue, so he was bringing him some pictures of buildings he thought might be acceptable. He asked what brought her there and she replied that she had a dream of one-day building a hospital on top of that mountain. Her name was Henrietta Szold, the founder of Hadassah and the Hadassah Hospital.

The Cape Girardeau synagogue was built and dedicated in 1938 (I was seven years old). It cost \$12,500. The pews were donated by the old Baron Hirsch Congregation at Fourth and Washington Street in Memphis.

For a short time, a young newly married Rabbi from New Rochelle, Gershon Feigon and his wife, Bayla, were employed. And, while they were dearly loved by the congregation, they could not afford to keep them. Louis Hecht was the only successful merchant

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Letterhead and picture of B'nai Israel Synagogue

in Cape Girardeau and the rest of the members were barely making a living. Rabbi Feigon made a lasting impression on all of us. He taught the boys how to say kiddush and conduct Friday night services. As I recall, most of us at one time could lead the services by memory without the use of a siddur.

The letterhead of some shule stationery that was given to me by Mrs. Jake (Esther) Pollack lists the following: David Minne, President; Jesse Tow, Vice President; Jake Pollack, Secretary and Treasurer. The Trustees were: Louis Hecht, Cape Girardeau; David Shaltupsky, Cape Girardeau; Sam Graber, Kennet; Joseph Kohn, Hayti; Ben Segal, Portageville; Jake Shainberg, New Madrid; Abe Shainberg, Sikeston; Max Friedman, Charleston; Israel Falkoff, East Prairie; and William Samuels, Chairman of the House Committee.

After they left, the synagogue would hire someone to conduct the High Holidays services every year. Each storeowner would close his store and run an ad in the newspaper announcing they were closing for the Jewish Holiday. Most of the youngsters were embarrassed by this public announcement since we were trying our best to fit into our society and not to make waves. We didn't mind missing school and attending services, we just didn't want it to become such a public matter. Sydney Pollack and I were discussing this issue recently and he admitted that he hated the idea of having to walk by his elementary school all dressed up during a school day and having his friends and teachers see him.

In retrospect, what our parents were doing was making a statement not only to the general community but also to their children to the effect that our religion was important. How this concept was extended to the next generation was poignantly made when Julie Pollack was interviewed for a position at the Memphis Jewish Community Center before she became Mrs. Marty Belz. She noted how her father Sydney Pollack on Sundays would require her and her brother Bill to dress up in their nicer clothing and accompany him to shule. He would unlock the door and proceed to teach them their Sunday school class. Of course, it would have been much easier

to have done it at home but it would not have transmitted the same lesson.

One year it seemed impossible to find someone to conduct the High Holiday Services. Finally Sydney and his brother-in-law, Marty Hecht, managed to locate a Lubavitcher by the name of Mr. Heber who was living in Carbondale, Illinois. When asked if he would come to Cape he replied that he first had to ask his boyhood friend and rabbi, Menachem Schneerson, the late Lubavitcher Rebbe. The Rebbe reminded him of the times in Europe when they were asked to place lanterns around overpasses and embankments to assist people who might otherwise stumble or fall. He told him to go to Cape Girardeau since "you never know whose path you might light up."

Mr. Heber repeated that statement from the pulpit the following Rosh Hashannah where among others in attendance was an eleven year old young man, Allen Hecht, son of Marty and Tootie Hecht, who was so turned on by his remarks he began to take Hebrew lessons via long distance telephone and eventually attended a yeshiva in St. Louis. He ultimately had what would probably be the last shomer shabbos medical school education at Emory University and is presently a radiologist

in Chicago with thirteen marvelous children.

During his junior year in undergraduate school, Allen attended Hebrew University in Jerusalem. One evening he called his folks and complained that there was no place to pray there. His parents along with his uncle and aunt, Chic and Gale Hecht from Los Vegas, and his aunt and uncle, Teedie and Irv Applebaum from La Jolla (formerly Decatur, Illinois) immediately made a significant financial commitment to build a synagogue. They were joined by surviving founders of the Cape synagogue and some of their descendants along with friends throughout the country.

In June 1981, the magnificent Hecht Synagogue was dedicated and given to Hebrew University on Mt. Scopus. It is located in the humanities building complex next to the faculty lounge with an unbelievable view of the Temple mount and much of Jerusalem. It has been described as the most beautiful synagogue in the world largely because of its view. It was designed to resemble the Ochel or tent in the wilderness that housed the Torah and Ten Commandments prior to the building of the Holy Temple. In addition to services held there three times daily, it is filled to

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The "Cape Area Youth - 1938"

(Front row, L-R) Dessie (Sewel) Minnen, Harry Samuels, Jacob (Chic) Hecht
(2nd row, L-R) Tamara Rowhald, Martin Hecht, Sydney Pollack, David Samuels,
Phillip Gorman, Lionel Minnen
(3rd row, L-R) Marilyn (Yoffie) Pollack, Loraine Graber (Kolker), Joe Washstein (teacher)

Jews and the Arts - Part I

In December, at the first of three programs devoted to a discussion of Jews and the Arts held at the JCC, the Jewish Historical Society presented a panel of four distinguished artists and critics—Jeff Nesin, President of the Memphis College of Art; Murray Riss, a distinguished photographer whose work has been exhibited internationally, Karen Mason Riss, an accomplished actor who has performed internationally, and Steve Stern, writer-in-residence at Skidmore College, who was honored with a national Jewish Book Award for his last collection of stories, *The Wedding Jester*. Once the moderator, Abe Kriegel, provided a brief historical introduction, the participants in turn considered how their "Jewishness" may have shaped or influenced their artistic visions.

Jeff Nesin set the stage with a discussion about the visual arts as an essential part of his upbringing in a family whose members contained an extraordinary array of talent, including the brothers Rafael and Moses Soyer. Descended from a Jewish immigrant family whose collective experience vaulted from *shtetl* to university in one generation, Nesin provided a panoramic view of Jewish involvement in the creative arts that was all the more immediate given his upbringing. His discussion emphasized that the prominence of Jews in the arts is a relatively recent historical phenomenon, one that for all its familiarity today was an accompaniment of the Jewish Haskalah and a product of Jewish emancipation in Western Europe and America. His intimacy with the arts seemed inextricably intertwined with his "family" Jewish immigrant background.

Murray Riss, who had wrestled with the question of what was specifically Jewish in his creative work, had a quite different experience. He concluded that something of his Jewishness might well be reflected in his photography, insofar as the individual artist is the product of his own past. He did not think that his photography, insofar as the individual artist is the product of his own past nor did he think that his photography suggested any specifically Jewish characteristics. Indeed, given his family's singular lack of enthusiasm for his decision to pursue a career in painting

by Abe Kriegel

and, later, photography, his work could as likely have been created by an artist from a vastly different religious or ethnic background. Karen Mason Riss agreed that, while culture in road sense contributed to her perception of character and motivated her to explore her individuality, she could not identify anything specifically Jewish in her performance as an actor. As a psychotherapist, on the other hand, she was prepared to consider that such influence may well be transmitted subconsciously. But she remained unaware of any specifically Jewish component reflected in her performance as an actress.

Steve Stern, on the other hand, arguable the most "assimilated" of the

four participants, had, as he put it, jumped "headlong into the Jewish past," albeit a fictive one. He transported that imagined past from the *shtetl* to Memphis's Pinch. He read a piece that had appeared in the Jewish magazine, *Tikkun*, a delightful encounter between Stern the narrator and Stern the author. A spirited discussion followed during which panelists and the audience considered a variety of related questions, particularly whether "alienation" is the artist's natural condition and how to account for the Jewish metamorphosis from outsider to participant in the cultural life of contemporary society.

Two additional sessions on the topic of Jews and the Arts were scheduled for the Society's spring programs.

Mark Your Calendar for September 17

Bornblum Judaic Studies of The University of Memphis and the Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid-South will sponsor a talk by Dr. David Patterson on Sunday, September 17, at 2:00 p.m. at the MJCC. Currently serving as the Bornblum Chair of Excellence and Director of Bornblum Judaic Studies, Dr. Patterson will discuss "The Summons of the Future in the Voice of History." His remarks will focus on memory's link to history and history's link to a future for the Jewish people, both as individuals and as a community. A winner of the Koret Jewish Book Award, Dr. Patterson has written, translated, or edited twenty-one books. Among those he has authored are *Along the Edge of Annihilation* (1999), *Sun Turned to Darkness* (1998), *The Greatest Jewish Stories Ever Told* (1997), *When Learned men Murder* (1996), *Pilgrimage of a Proselyte: From Auschwitz to Jerusalem* (1993), *The Shriek of Silence* (1992), *In Dialogue and Dilemma with Elie Wiesel* (1991), and others. He is also co-editor of the forthcoming *Encyclopedia of Holocaust Literature*.

Irby Cooper Dies After Long Illness

Irby Cooper, founder and chairman of the Cooper Companies, Inc. died July 3, 2000. Mr. Cooper, a lifelong Memphian attended Snowden Junior and Central High Schools. He graduated from Washington University in St. Louis.

Active in many civic and religious organizations, he was a past president of Baron Hirsch Congregation and the Margolin Hebrew Academy/Finestone Yeshiva of the South. In 1993, the boy's high school division of the Yeshiva was renamed Cooper Yeshiva High School for Boys. Mr. Cooper was the recipient of Baron Hirsch Congregation's Sam Abraham Memorial Award as the "man of the year" and the school's Ish Chesed-

Man of Kindness Award.

Among his honors and awards were the Presidents Award from the UOJC of America, the Humanitarian of the Year Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews. In January, 2000, the Orthodox Union presented him with the Harold Boxer Memorial Award at the OU/NCSY Ben Zakki National Scholarship dinner in New York. He shared the honor with his wife, daughter and son-in-law, Laurie Cooper and Dr. Donald Emerson and their children.

Mr. Cooper is survived by his wife, Bernice, 3 daughters, Laurie Cooper and Cindy Ehrenkranz, both of Memphis and Debbie Cooper of Jerusalem, Israel; 2 sons, Pace Cooper and David Cooper, both of Memphis and 20 grandchildren.

capacity twice weekly for a beit midrash program that is the talk of Jerusalem and beyond, where students can come to explore their Jewish roots and strengthen their identity while learning Jewish History, philosophy, Talmud, etc...regardless of their level of commitment, all at no charge. Incidentally, it is the only synagogue in Israel where one faces west rather than east to pray since it is located northeast of the Temple Mount. In the foyer is a plaque that reads, "In honor of the founders of B'nai Israel Congregation, Cape Girardeau, Missouri, whose vision reached to Mt. Scopus."

One week after the dedication, the first religious service was held there. It was the bar mitzvah of our son David, of blessed memory, and was conducted entirely in Hebrew by David and his brothers, William and Marty Samuels whose grandparents, great grandparents and three sets of Aunts and Uncles are listed among the B'nai Israel founders.

A few years ago, I spoke to the students of the Beit Midrash program. It was the annual memorial service they hold for our son, and I told them some of the things I am telling you. Afterwards, a young man by the name of Ira Lit who was a friend of David's, introduced himself. I mentioned that I was so happy he came for the occasion. He replied that he was glad too, but that he didn't realize we were going to be there. He was in the Beit Midrash program and found it to be the most interesting course he had found of all his college courses. Also, in attendance that evening were Deena Newberger, Ronna and Hal's daughter, and Lauren Chafetz, Sam and Pat's daughter. There were even people there from Mea Shearim.

That evening I noted for the benefit of any sociology majors in the audience that I had traced some twenty eight descendants of those founding families who were, give or take, about five years either side of my age. All had married. None had married non Jews. And until this very day there has never been a single divorce. Additionally, almost every one of those individuals assumed positions of leadership in their respective communities both in the Jewish and secular world. One, Chic Hecht, became a U.S. Senator and Ambassador while

his brother, Marty, for over twenty years, has served on the board of governors of Hebrew University where the President of Israel also serves. Their sister and her husband, the Applebaums, were instrumental in establishing a reform synagogue in Haifa.

When Chic Hecht became a senator, he voted the straight Republican ticket on almost every issue. He kept a very low profile in the Senate and only authored one bill of which I am aware, a questionably beneficial one to raise the speed limit on the Federal highways. But in two instances he managed to accomplish much for Israel and Russian Jewry.

Being a Republican, he began to see a lot of Jesse Helms, whom many of us had thought of as certainly a bigot and probably anti-Semitic. Chic came to the conclusion that Jesse just didn't know many Jews since they represented such a small percentage of his constituency in North Carolina and he decided to do his best to enlighten him. This ultimately led to Chic and Marty taking the Helms to Israel where they made sure they got a good taste of the country. One of his most memorable experiences, he said, was when he attended services at the Hecht Synagogue. Since that event, Jesse Helms has been the biggest proponent of Israel in the U.S. Senate where he continues to control twenty votes.

Another time when the Senate was voting on whether or not to sell the A.W.A.C. airplanes to Saudi Arabia, President Reagan asked Chic for his tie breaking vote. Chic said he would only vote yes if he were convinced that doing so would not hurt Israel. The president assured him that it would not be harmful and would probably be very helpful as was proven by the events of Desert Storm when those very planes conveyed critical information to the U.S. and Israeli forces. Reagan acknowledged that he owed Chic a big favor for what he had done since his vote made the deal possible.

Chic decided that just as Jesse Helms really hadn't understood the Israeli situation, that Premier Gorbachev didn't really understand how badly the Jews of Russia wished to go to Israel. Chic proceeded to collect over 1200 names of Russian Jews who wished to immigrate and as President Reagan was

about to go to Iceland for a meeting with the Premier, Chic called in his marker. Reagan agreed to personally hand the list over to Gorbachev and he did. Several weeks later, the first Jews were allowed to leave Russia and go to Israel. A few years ago at one of many weddings held at the Hecht Synagogue, the groom spoke to the assembled guests of the fact that he was one of the 30,000 to leave Russia.

Interestingly, AIPAC which fought desperately to kill the A.W.A.C. proposal was so upset with Chic that in the next election, they supported his non-Jewish opponent who beat Chic by a narrow margin. They have never seen fit to apologize although they recognize the tremendous contributions that Chic made.

In doing some research, I stumbled across an article that appeared in a St. Louis paper that I believe sheds some light on the character of the Jewish people of Cape. It was before World War II and some German Jewish refugees were beginning to show up in communities other than the East Coast. The article told of one family that came to Cape. My uncle David Minnen, Dessie Sewel's father, who was the president of the congregation for over thirty years, came up with the idea of asking each merchant in town to donate some of their stock of goods so they could help the new immigrant family get started in business. Imagine all these people of modest means not only sharing their livelihood but also creating competition for themselves. It was such a great idea it was recommended to be adopted throughout the country.

It is difficult to understand how that Cape Girardeau experience was able to influence our generation so positively. With a lack of Jewish infrastructure, peers, institutions, youth organizations, etc., the normal assumption would have been for widespread and rapid assimilation, yet the opposite occurred. Suffice it to say that communities throughout the United States, as well as Israel, are enjoying the harvest of those seeds that were planted in a small town in southeast Missouri some 70 to 80 years ago. ☆



Sundquist paid special tribute to Mr. Saharovici at the 15th Anniversary commemoration of the Tennessee Commission at the Peabody. Mr. Saharovici, as Chairman of the Baron Hirsch and Memphis Holocaust Memorial Committee, created the Zachor Award and presided at the awards programs as well as many other innovative and creative programs devoted to keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive.

The Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid-South congratulate Mr. Saharovici on this great achievement. We are very proud of you. ★

**Jerry Gontownic Receives
Distinguished Alumnus Award**

On Sunday evening, June 11, at the Peabody, the Margolin Hebrew Academy/Feinstone Yeshiva of the South held its 50th anniversary banquet. At the banquet, Mr. Jerry Gontownic, a native Memphian, son of Holocaust survivors Zina and the late Abe Gontownic received the school's first Distinguished Alumnus Award.

Mr. Gontownic is a senior vice-president of the Orthodox Union, Wexler heritage Foundation Scholar, national AIPAC executive committee member, and board member of his local UJA/Federation.

He received his BA degree from Touro College, his J.D. from New York University School of Law and he clerked in the Federal District Court in Manhattan. After working for a New York City law firm for five years, he started a real estate development company, which currently owns apartment, office buildings and undeveloped land. According to Mr. David Cooper, one of the chairs of the banquet,

"Mr. Gontownic represents all of the high ideals the school aspires to instill in its students. He is successful in the secular world while maintaining a commitment to Torah lifestyle. In addition, he gives unselfishly of his time and resources to many Jewish organizations, and has risen to an executive position in the Orthodox Union. He is the kind of role model that we need for our young students to emulate."

While it has been 29 years since his graduation from the Yeshiva, Mr. Gontownic has constantly maintained contact with the school and continues to form relationships with each new generation of students.

Each year when the MHS/FYOS basketball team visits New York for the Yeshiva University basketball tournament, he attends the games and takes the entire team out for dinner. Mr. Cooper said, "even though these visits are short he has been an inspiration to our high school boys over the past ten years". Mr. Gontownic served as chairman of the Orthodox Union's International Conference in Jerusalem in 1998. At that time, he sought out all of the young people from Memphis who were learning in Israel that year and invited them to be his guests at the conference for Shabbos. "He has never lost touch with his roots in Memphis," Mr. Cooper stated, "and that is what distinguishes him so clearly".

We congratulate Mr. Gontownic, the Margolin Hebrew Academy/Finestone Yeshiva of the South on its 50th year and will highlight the history of this unique institution in a future edition of *Southern Jewish Heritage*. ★



Jerry Gontownic

Trip

Continued from Page 1

Huddy and Jerry Cohen presented a history of the congregation and the Temple's place in the community. As in many older congregations in towns surrounding Memphis, the problem is that many of the congregants have left and it is difficult to keep up the Temple. There are 24 families that are listed as members but many of these do not now live in Blytheville. The hospitality was outstanding and, as always, the best part of the trip was visiting with the local people.

Our next stop was Jonesboro, which is a city of approximately 46,500 people. It is the hub of Northeastern Arkansas, and Riceland Rice has one of the world's

largest rice mills located there. Jonesboro is home to a large Medical Center, and Arkansas State University which is the second largest institution for higher learning in the state.

Temple Israel is a much more modern building than Blytheville, but it is a Temple that had been founded in 1898. We were greeted by Ellen Weingold, who had made most of the arrangements with Joel Felt. Charles Katz and Marty Buchman gave a most interesting presentation on the history of the congregation. They, as well as the president, David Levenback, are doing all they can to continue the Jewish presence in Jonesboro. They are very proud of the fact that there will be a Bar Mitzvah soon in the community. It was most interesting to hear Charlie talk

about moving to Jonesboro after having been stationed there during World War II. We had the opportunity of meeting with many of the congregants and were treated to desserts and wonderful Jonesboro hospitality.

We arrived back at the Jewish Community Center right on schedule. Everyone on the trip, both the "first-timers" as well as those who had been on all the previous trips, rate this one as one of the most interesting ones that we have had. Plus, the opportunity of meeting and visiting with our neighbors in smaller communities was very rewarding. Because of Joe Felt's efforts the entire trip went off with great precision and everyone had a wonderful time. Participants look forward to the next Jewish Historical Society trip. ★

Making Jewish History Today

by David Schneider

Rabbi Harry K. Danziger
Honored as Retirement Nears

On Friday evening, May 19, 2000, the congregants of Temple Israel honored their beloved Rabbi Harry K. Danziger with a special service and Oneg Shabbat in advance of his September 1st retirement. The sanctuary was filled to capacity, not only with members, but with other clergy, and special guests joining to make this an outstanding tribute to Rabbi Danziger.

Chairpersons for the event were Leo Bearman, Jr., James B. Jalenak and Judy Royal, all past presidents of the congregation. Rabbi Danziger's wife, Jeanne and their children, Shara, Jeff, David and Michael led the congregation in the Kiddush and lighting of the Shabbat candles. The beautiful Shabbat service led by Rabbi Micah D. Greenstein, included excerpts from Rabbi Danziger's past sermons. Rabbi Greenstein, who will succeed Rabbi Danziger, described his predecessor's career as "illustrious, distinguished and celebrated" and praised Rabbi Danziger for nurturing younger colleagues. In his remarks, he said, "Harry has touched more lives than he will ever know and has taught Judaism by embodying the very best of our faith and heritage."

Rabbi Paul Menitoff, executive vice-president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, in his remarks stated, "The rabbinate is an exhilarating calling and I know of no other rabbi who exudes that in his work. There are few other callings which bring meaning and holiness to lives. I don't know of any Rabbi who does it better... who has an impact on his congregation that equals or surpasses your Rabbi Danziger and Jeanne."

Rabbi Hillel Cohn, a former roommate of Rabbi Danziger at Hebrew Union College, said of his best friend, "He has put his heart, mind, soul, spirit and body into this sacred work. Now it is time to do other things he has not been able to do." Calling the Danzigers a model Jewish family who have made "all of us their family as well", Rabbi Cohn declared, "Harry is my closest friend, best man at my wedding; he is the brother I never had. We share a reverence for tradition, but never at the expense of reason."

Ben Isenberg, president of Temple Israel in his remarks said, "It is appropriate for Jeanne to be on the bimah because I can not speak about Harry without speaking of Jeanne. She treats everyone like they are friends." It was a wonderful evening as part of the tribute weekend in honor of Rabbi Harry K. Danziger and his lovely wife, Jeanne, on the occasion of Rabbi Danziger's retirement. ✡



Rabbi Danziger

Leonid Saharovici Recipient of Prestigious Zuchor Award

Leonid Saharovici, a founding member and past President of the Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid-South was presented with the Baron Hirsch synagogue's Zachor Award, an award given to those who have done the most towards remembering the Holocaust. Leonid was the first southerner to receive the Zachor Award, and joins a distinguished group of previous award winners, Benjamin Meed, head of the World Gathering of Holocaust Survivors; Ernst Michel, the founder of the Remembrance Movement; Dr. Jan Karski, the heroic Polish diplomat who brought the Holocaust to world attention; Holocaust survivor Abraham Foxman, National director of the Anti-Defamation League; and Harvey Meyerhoff, founder of the United States Holocaust Museum.

Mr. Saharovici is known in Memphis and elsewhere as a foremost spokesperson for the remembering of the Holocaust. He is a founder of the Tennessee Commission on Holocaust Education and Governor Don

Please See Making Jewish History Today, Page 7



Leonid Saharovici



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