



# SOUTHERN JEWISH HERITAGE

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## Sam Margolin . . . . .

by Dr. Selma Lewis

Lawyer - Mortgage Banker - Community Leader  
Hebrew Day School Founder

*This is the ninth in a series of biographical sketches of Jewish community leaders included in our forthcoming book, "Chronicles of the Jewish Community of Memphis."*

Three peaks, each representing a separate pinnacle of achievement, dominate the biography of Memphian Sam Margolin. In chronological order they are the establishment of the Southern Law School in 1932; the founding of National Mortgage Company in 1951; and the creation of a Jewish Day School, renamed on December 1, 1991: the Margolin Hebrew Academy/Yeshiva of the South. Each peak adds significantly to the community.

Sam Margolin was born in 1910 to immigrant parents who had been part of the great wave of migration from Russia in 1905. His father Raphael came first, sending for the rest of the family when he could afford their transportation. Like many others, Raphael Margolin peddled with a horse and wagon. Never in good health, he died at an early age, leaving his wife with five children whom she supported by taking in roomers at their home on Adams Street.

After graduation from high school in

1923, Sam Margolin went to work for a former Memphis newspaper, The Press Scimitar, in its advertising department. At the same time he attended the University of Memphis Law School at night, graduating three years later at the age of eighteen at the head of his class. He set up a legal practice, but within a short time some friends and students asked him to open a night law school, which he did, operating it until it merged with the Memphis State University Law School in 1964, graduating over 1,000 lawyers during its existence.

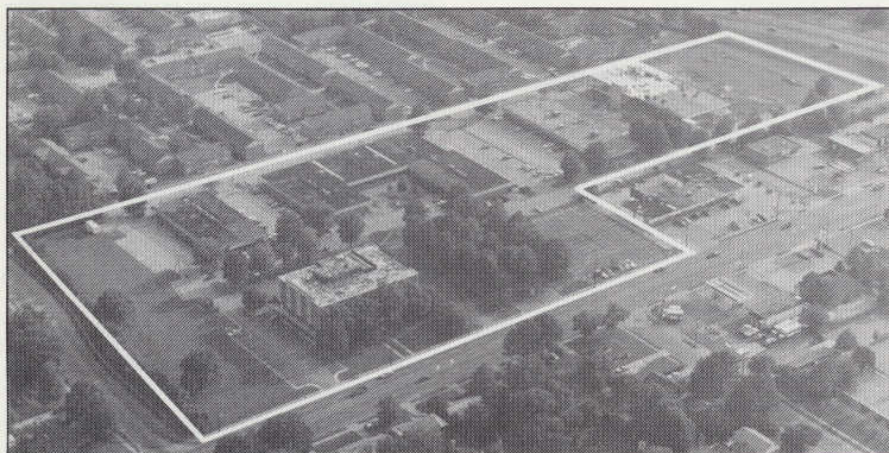
When the Southern Law School started in 1932, accreditation hinged on the performance of the first ten students on their mandatory state bar examinations. Coached by Margolin, all ten passed, and the school was accredited. Throughout its history the school was regarded as "second to none in percentage of graduates who passed the bar exam on the first try." The faculty was comprised of practicing attorneys,



Sam Margolin

including, but not limited to Joseph Bearman, Herschel Feibelman, Sam Myar, Jr., Al H. Thomas, Judge Irving Strauch, Judge Greenfield Polk and, of course, Sam Margolin. Speaking of the school, Margolin said, "The Southern Law School meant a great deal to me. I knew that there were many others, like me, who would never have the opportunity of becoming lawyers unless they could study in the evenings after working all day. I realized that the standards of evening classes had to be elevated so that the general public would have a greater respect for the graduates...I know that my mother would be pleased to know that on the site of her rooming house, a fine school offers opportunity to men and women to elevate their positions in life."

Margolin was recognized in the courts as a gifted speaker and his lectures at Southern Law School were recognized as among the best in the profession. Over the years, he has been a sought after speaker on behalf of the Hebrew Day School movement and Orthodox Judaism. In 1954, a Jewish soldier stationed in Greenville, Miss. was accused



National Mortgage Company - Memphis Campus

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



## President's Message . . . .



David Schneider

The work on our book, "Chronicles of the Jewish Community of Memphis" is progressing nicely. I am pleased to report that Dr. Selma Lewis has completed necessary changes, rewritten certain segments of the book and updated several of the biographies. The manuscript is now in the hands of our editor in

Cincinnati. Watch for more news in our next issue.

Several of our members have ordered bound volumes of our newsletters and we have now, thanks to Lester Sewel finding extra copies of issue #1, put them together and they are at the book binder. We have enough issues left to make a few more bound volumes. If you did not order one and would like a bound volume (cost \$35) please call Leonid Saharovici or me.

My thanks to Marjean Kremer, our roving reporter (has tape recorder, will travel) and Lester Sewel for the Steinberg-Sewel family history; to Gloria Felsenthal for the story on Dr. Shreier; to Leonid Saharovici for sharing his trip with us; to Harriet Stern, our SJHS reporter; and as always, to Dr. Selma Lewis for her continuous flow of biographies.

Congratulations to our member and resource advisor, Dr. Berkley Kalin, who will become President Elect of the Southern Jewish Historical Society at their Annual Conference in Atlanta next month.

In this issue we highlight Sam Margolin, a wonderful man I have been granted the privilege of knowing since moving to Memphis 37 years ago and for whom I worked 33 of those years. To "Mr. Sam", I wish for you and your lovely wife Rose, a hundred and twenty years of good health and much happiness.

### Welcome To Our New Members

Mr. Robert H. Kalin (Brownsville, TN)  
Mrs. Rose Shainberg (Seminole, FL)  
Mr. & Mrs. Ira A. Lipman (Memphis, TN)

## SJHS Meets in Atlanta

The Southern Jewish Historical Society (SJHS) will host its 18th annual conference on November 5-7 at the suburban Atlanta Doubletree Hotel. Themes of the conference include Southern Jews and Civil Rights, New Approaches to Southern Jewish History, Atlanta and Georgia History, the Atlanta archives project, and Department Store Families.

This conference, like others in the past, will combine warm hospitality, the opportunity to meet and share ideas with others who are involved in preserving Southern Jewish History and the intellectual challenge of scholarly papers. A pre-conference sightseeing tour, from

noon to 4 P.M. on Friday, will introduce visitors to points of Jewish interest in Atlanta.

Of the eleven conference papers to be presented, two should be of particular interest to Memphians. Ms. Patricia M. Lapointe, Senior Reference Librarian of the Main Library History Department, will deliver a paper on "The Goldsmiths of Memphis" and Carolyn LeMaster, author of a history of the Jews of Arkansas, will speak on "Civil Rights Struggle by Jews in Arkansas".

The conference will open with services at 6:30 P.M. at the Sephardic or VeShalom Synagogue. Shabbat dinner will follow, with Rabbi Marc D. Angel as speaker. Rabbi Angel, religious leader of New York's Congregation Shearith

Israel, a Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue founded in 1654, is the immediate past president of the Rabbinical Council of America and the recipient of important honors for rabbinic leadership.

On Shabbat, services will be held in the conference hotel at 9 A.M. The morning academic session, "Community and Polity", will focus on the history of Atlanta Jewish social services, with an additional paper on "Isaac Harby of Charleston" by Dr. Gary P. Zola, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati. The luncheon program will feature a report on the Atlanta Jewish community archives project by Archivist, Sandy Berman, and Oral History Project Chairperson, Sunny Stern.

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## Jewish Historical Society of Memphis & The Mid South OFFICERS 1992-93

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## Thanks To Our Contributors

### In Honor of

HARRIET STERN'S BIRTHDAY

Mrs. Jan H. Meyer

SELMA LEWIS' MANY CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COMMUNITY

SHIRLEY & HERSCHEL FEIBELMAN'S

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SELMA LEWIS' BROTHER

Jed & Jeanne Dreifus



## A Family Portrait

Steinberg - Sewel

by Marjean Kremer  
as told by Lester Sewel

The story of the Lester Sewel family is the story of Jewish life in Memphis in the 20th century.

Samuel Steinberg, Lester's maternal grandfather, the first of his ancestors in the United States, emigrated from Bialstok, then a part of Germany, in 1897. He was 17 years old, spoke no English, but was literate in Hebrew. Somehow, and no one knows quite how or why, he settled in Clarksville, Tennessee and, as so many newly-arrived Jews before him, became a peddler with a backpack that held clothes, needles, thread—anything, his grandson Lester says, but food.

In his travels the young, hard-working Samuel met and married Sarah Weinberg whose family, from Lithuania, settled in Waverly, TN at the turn of the century. In 1905, the Steinbergs moved to Memphis where he founded the S. Steinberg Co., a hide and fur concern that prospered. With his newly acquired wealth, Steinberg was able to bring his entire family, including his widowed mother, several sisters and two brothers to the country that had brought him such spiritual and material success.

On January 9, 1916, Steinberg was elected president of Baron Hirsch, succeeding his good friend, Dave Demon. During his two year term, Baron Hirsch hired its first Americanized rabbi, Henry Raphael Gold. Born in Poland in 1893, Gold came to America when he was fifteen years old, attended the Jewish Theological Seminary, Columbia and Harvard Universities. Years later, while a rabbi in New Orleans, Gold studied medicine, became a psychiatrist and thus was both a "physical and spiritual healer."

Steinberg expanded his business interest; with Dermon, he developed much of Crosstown and, in 1937, he helped his son-in-law Perry Sewel found the packing company known as The Memphis Butchers Association, Inc. One of the first from The Baron Hirsch Congregation to become a member of Ridgeway Country Club, this proud-to-

be-an-American-Jew suffered a fatal heart attack while playing in a poker game there on July 4, 1951.

Steinberg's oldest daughter had finished only one year at New Orleans' Sophie Newcombe College when, at a family wedding in Birmingham, she met Perry Sewel. Fannie Steinberg and Perry Sewel were married in 1922; their son Lester was born three years later.

Perry's father, Shalom, was, like



Marjean Kremer



Lester Sewel

Steinberg, a "hide" man, having founded Empire Leather Company in Birmingham, AL soon after he moved there from Atlanta. In his early 20's when he emigrated to the United States from Lithuania, he liked to recall that he came by such "restlessness" naturally. His great grandfather was himself an immigrant, leaving his native Sweden to come to Lithuania, which was at that time less anti-Semitic than his homeland!

Fannie Steinberg Sewel quickly followed her mother's lead into the Memphis chapter of Hadassah founded in the Sam Steinberg home in 1918 when Zionism was a none-too-popular cause in the South. In 1942 she was elected President of the Southern Region of Hadassah and to the national board. In 1947, she was selected as one of 30 Hadassah representatives to the World Zionist Congress in Switzerland.

"No person understands better than she that a real American, a good Jew and a true Zionist are dedicated to the same ideals," editorialized The American Jewish Review in September, 1947.

With no Sunday School at Baron Hirsch, Sam Steinberg was also a member of Temple Israel where his three daughters were confirmed. Continuing this tradition, the Perry Sewels were members of the two congregations. Their

son Lester's Bar Mitzvah was at Baron Hirsch and he was confirmed at Temple Israel.

Immediately after his graduation from the University of Virginia in 1946, Lester joined both congregations. He recalls that, in 1978, he was named Baron Hirsch Man Of The Year.

Lester married Dessie Minnen from Cape Girardeau, MO in 1949. Their daughter Patsy and son Perry were confirmed at Temple Israel; Perry's Bar Mitzvah, as his father's before him and as his grandfathers would have wanted, was at Baron Hirsch. Dessie's father, David Minnen, was a founder and president of B'nai Israel Cong. in Cape Girardeau for 29 years.

Patsy now lives in Wynnewood Pennsylvania where she continues the family tradition of commitment and service to her religion. On the board of Philadelphia's Mainline Temple, the mother of two served as president of her 800 person Hasassah chapter.

"I'll always be proud of my part in the development of Youth Aliyah but you will always be my greatest contribution to Hadassah," wrote 90 year old Fannie Steinberg Sewel to Patsy after her installation in 1991.

And Memphis will always be proud that the Steinberg-Sewel family chose to make so many of their contributions to Jewish life in our city. ✨

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Schreier *continued from page 5*

Outstanding Physician of the Year in 1982 by the Tennessee Medical Association; he established a scholarship fund at the University of Tennessee for aspiring physicians and donated funds for an auditorium at the University of Tennessee student center, in memory of his parents and his brother; he volunteered for many years at the B'nai B'rith Home and Hospital, where he served as Chief of Staff, and at Planned Parenthood, later named the Schreier-Guttmacher Planned Parenthood Center. Perhaps the best proof that he lived his philosophy to the fullest is the testimony of countless physicians who trained under him as well as the thousands of healthy babies, now grown, whom he lovingly ushered into the world. ✨

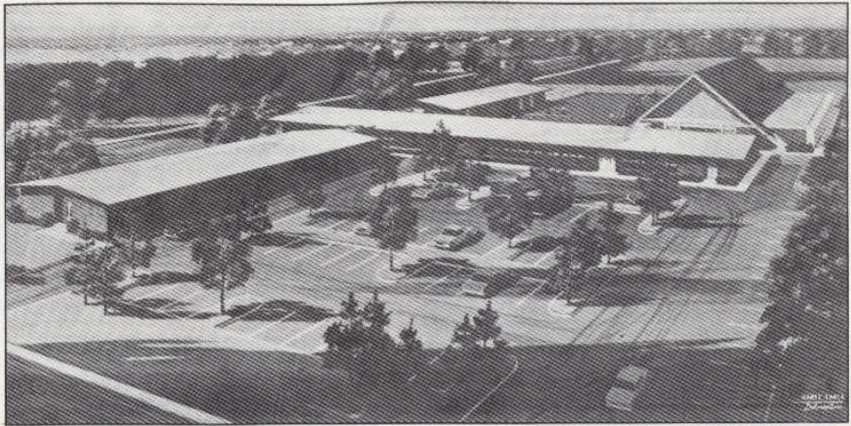


## Margolin *continued from page 1*

of murdering a fellow soldier in Memphis, was subsequently found guilty and sentenced to death. Later, after the Governor had commuted the sentence to 99 years, Margolin twice went before the West Tennessee parole board on the soldier's behalf. It was Margolin's second eloquent plea before the board that was instrumental in getting the sentence reduced and winning the man's freedom.

In 1945, when Ben and Joe Margolin decided to leave their respective businesses and embark together upon a construction business venture, Sam decided to join them. After becoming Memphis' largest home builders, the Margolin brothers established the National Mortgage Company in 1951, specializing in home mortgages. Ben died in 1975; Joe in 1985, leaving Sam the sole surviving brother of the original three partners. All of them have descendants, however, who participate in the three generation business. Since its inception, National Mortgage Company has grown to a company servicing approximately \$14 billion of single family residential loans and the number of employees has grown from 3 persons in 1951 to over 900 persons in Aug., 1993. As part of a growth and expansion plan, a new 82,000 square foot building, which will accommodate 500 employees, has just been completed. Today, National Mortgage Company is one of the largest independent, privately-owned mortgage companies in the United States and is the 25th largest mortgage company in the country.

The Margolin brothers helped found the Memphis Hebrew Academy in 1949, and their families have continued to contribute "time, money, and efforts" on behalf of the school, Sam Chafetz, president of the school said when he announced that the name had been changed to become the Margolin Hebrew Academy/Yeshiva of the South on December 1, 1992. (Two schools, the Memphis Hebrew Academy and the Yeshiva of the South were merged in about 1987 to form the current school, which includes pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade and serves over 200 students.) Sam Margolin served as chairman of the board of the Memphis Hebrew Academy for many years. He believes that the Jewish Day School



*Margolin Hebrew Academy-Yeshiva of the South*

movement, started after the Holocaust, is the most dynamic religious development in the United States. He credits it with the success of the Orthodox movement in Memphis which, he says, "has prospered in direct relation to its support of the day school movement." He also believes it is reflected in the size of the Orthodox community in the city, because "Memphis attracts people because of the Orthodox facilities that are available."

Margolin served as president of Baron Hirsch Synagogue in the 1950's. He purchased a "second" home across the street from the synagogue for his family's use and occupancy on religious holidays and every Sabbath. The Sam Margolin family, including children, grandchildren and guests moved into the "Shabbos House" each weekend for approximately twenty years to attend services at their synagogue. The Shabbos House was sold when the synagogue moved to an east Memphis location.

Sam Margolin along with his wife, Rose raised four daughters, have 17 grandchildren and 23 great grandchildren. In 1993, at age 83, "Uncle Sam" as he is affectionately called by family and friends alike, celebrated his second Bar Mitzvah. His wife, Rose, and their family presented him with a Torah scroll completed at their home by the scribe from Israel who was commissioned to write this Torah. The celebration culminated in a procession carrying the Torah from the Margolin home to Baron Hirsch Synagogue.

Responding to the naming of the school in honor of his family, Margolin remarked that he and his brothers had been resigned to the fact that there

would be no continuity of the family name because they had no male heirs. But now, "the Margolin name is associated with an institution of greatness in our community."

Of the many achievements of his fruitful career, Margolin would probably choose the last as the most vital, giving him the most personal satisfaction. He has said: "From where will come the future leaders of our people...if not from our children, who have been properly trained in the ideals of Judaism and Americanism. Jewish mothers and Jewish laymen must come to know the beauty and sincerity of traditional Judaism through actual practice and knowledge. Only in such an institution as the Memphis Hebrew Academy can such training be attained." ☆

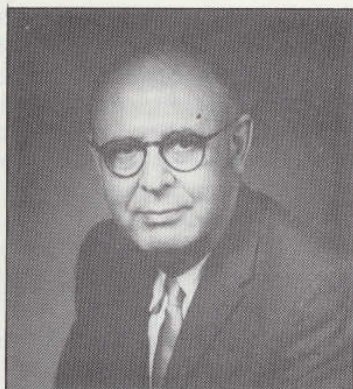


*Sam Margolin with his Torah in the procession to Baron Hirsch Congregation*



## Physician Extraordinaire

by Gloria Felsenthal



Dr. Phil C. Schreier

Phil C. Schreier, physician extraordinaire, who elicited the first angry howls from three generations of Memphis babies, recognized that there are many kinds of doctors. "I am a doctor of medicine," he once told his high school buddy, Donald Wilson, who had dropped out of the University of Mississippi medical school program the two friends entered in 1914. "You are a doctor of mill supply," Phil continued, referring to the business Wilson had chosen as his profession. "You can do just as well as I can."

The importance of doing one's chosen life's work well and believing in its worth was a lesson Phil Schreier lived out in his sixty years of practice in gynecology-obstetrics both as a private practitioner and as a trainer of aspiring physicians at University of Tennessee where he became Chairman of the Department of Gynecology-Obstetrics in 1953.

From whence came the roots of such a life philosophy and from whence the motivation for a distinguished career? In many Jewish families the mother instilled her dream of "my son, the doctor." Often, fathers dreamed of a better way of life, a profession, for their sons. Not so in the case of young Phil. It had always been assumed that he would join his father in running the hardware store in Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Phil's parents came to America from Austria-Hungary, his father as a teenager to escape conscription into the army and his mother as a young child. They met and married in New York and were brought to Mississippi by his mother's uncle, Sam Fell. Phil's father first opened

a small store in Waltersville, a suburb of Vicksburg, then moved into the heart of Vicksburg. On Saturdays Phil worked in the store, along with his mother and his brother, Paul.

The boys attended public school until junior high school when coeducation threatened to derail the concentration of young Paul and the boys' mother plucked them out of public school and into the Catholic Brothers' School, Brothers of the Sacred Heart. It was there that the seed was planted in the minds of Phil Schreier and his friend Donald Wilson to pursue higher education.

Dr. John Clayton Fant, professor of Secondary Education at the University of Mississippi, travelled the length and breadth of Mississippi, in a program designed by the state legislature of 1913-14 to encourage high school seniors to continue their education. Responding to Dr. Fant's urging, Phil's friend Donald Wilson said, "Phil, I think we ought to go to Ole Miss and study medicine." Phil agreed and later called this the one moment in his life when his "intelligence rose to the level of genius."

At Ole Miss Phil took one year of literary study, one year of pre-med study, and two years of medical school, receiving a B.S. in 1918. He continued his medical schooling at the University of Pennsylvania, encouraged by Dr. W.S. Leathers, dean of Ole Miss, who wanted Mississippi represented in the East. Phil represented Mississippi nobly, making the honor roll and earning his M.D. in 1920.

His choice of obstetrics and gynecology, another fortuitous event, occurred because a friend a year ahead had finished his internship and suggested Phil's name. In characteristic modesty and with his ever-present sense of humor, Phil told one of his classmates that he thought he had been chosen because of his Mississippi accent.

Phil returned to the South in 1923, settling in Memphis where his uncle Bernard Fell was residing, and established his own practice, aided by his friend Donald Wilson, who sent him family and friends as patients. He shared office space in the Shrine Building with several other physicians and one secretary for several years before moving to Madison Avenue. Sensing an opportunity to gain experience and be

active in university life, he volunteered at the University of Tennessee Medical School, working in the outpatient department and the hospital and teaching interns and residents. (The entire clinical staff was voluntary at that time.) He was rewarded for his efforts when the Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology left Memphis, and Dr. Schreier was asked to take the position temporarily while a nation-wide search ensued. After six months the powers on the selection committee realized that the best candidate was already in Memphis, and Phil became a full professor with pay and Chairman of the Department, a position he held until his mandatory retirement at age 70. While teaching and training young doctors, he retained his private practice in an office at John Gaston Hospital, delivering babies at Baptist, Methodist, and St. Joseph Hospitals. (Some of his private patients refused to come to his office at John Gaston, Memphis' charity hospital.) After his retirement from the University of Tennessee, he served as Director of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Residency Program at Baptist Hospital until 1976.

Patients recall that office visits often concluded (medical concerns having been satisfactorily handled) with robust discussions of literature, history, philosophy, theater, or Reform Judaism. The office docket often became jammed as this avuncular devotee of the Hippocratic Oath pursued his interest in intellectual topics as well as the personal lives of his patients.

Phil grew up in an ultra-Reform environment and was confirmed at the Temple in Vicksburg in a class of five confirmants. He saw Reform Judaism as an intellectual interpretation of man's relationship to the universe. As an adult, he was involved in Jewish life at Temple Israel and was on the committee which selected Rabbi Wax to come to Memphis. He was fond of the prayer in the prayer book which offers the solace that we live after death in the memory of those who live after us. His philosophy of life was to make life better for others and to make the world a better place to live. His deeds are witness to the practice of his beliefs: He was named Outstanding Physician for 1981 by the National Conference of Christians and Jews and

*Please see Schreier, page 3*



## Anne Frank in the World: 1929-1945

### So Many Dreams

Once I was a young girl with so many dreams.  
Then I heard the torture and the silent screams.  
Once an identity that could be set free,  
Now a yellow star that labels me.  
Once upon a time when you could wander  
about,  
Now the "Secret Annex" is our only hide out.  
Once a blue sky to look upon,  
Now I'm wondering how to go on.  
One by one a German gets near.  
Day by day I shed a tear.  
Prayers and prayers I grasp without a doubt,  
When a pounding door awakens with a shout.  
Off you go to a faraway town,  
When it seems the earth is upside down.  
Death seeks with an outnumbering rank.  
This is the life of a girl named Anne Frank.

By Chantel Starbuck  
Grade 9, Lewis County High School  
Teacher: Mrs. Landrum

This Poem was taken from the Nashville collection of student written responses to their study, "The Diary of Anne Frank", the Holocaust and the Results of Hatred in the World.

The international traveling exhibit "Anne Frank In The World: 1929-1945", opened in Memphis October 16th at the Memphis State University Gallery and in Nashville October 11th at the Tennessee State Museum the exhibit was developed by the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam and is sponsored in North America by the Anne Frank Center, USA.

The exhibit examines events in Germany leading up to the Holocaust and the Nazi occupation of Holland. The brief life of Anne Frank, a Jewish girl who died at age 15 in a German concentration camp, is depicted in this exhibit, which features more than 600 photos from Dutch and German archives, previously unpublished photos from the Frank family albums, a model of the "secret annex" where Anne and her family hid, manuscripts of Anne's diary, and a moving video.

Visitors are invited to take guided tours through "Anne Frank in the World" and to talk with survivors of the Holocaust. By focusing on the daily life of individuals during the Nazi era, visitors will learn that victims, perpetrators and bystanders of violence are ordinary people. The exhibit looks at the choices non-victims could make in the 1930's--to obey Hitler, to protest his policies, or (a choice in itself) to do nothing--and how these choices

determined whose basic rights were protected and whose were systematically denied.

If Anne Frank had lived next door to any of us, could she have counted on our help? During the month long exhibit of "Anne Frank in the World", Facing History and Ourselves is pleased to present a variety of events that explore our role in preventing and stopping violence today. Through art exhibits, lectures, performances, and the day long conference "Anne Frank Revisited: Children Caught in the Crossfire" participants will have the opportunity to think about racism, antisemitism, and violence--and what they can do in response.

This exhibit includes writings and photographs of Memphis and Nashville youth reflecting on the theme "Anne Frank Revisited: Children Caught in the Crossfire."

The exhibit is also about hope--not only the hope that the young Anne displayed in her journal but also the hope that by looking back at a holocaust that killed some six million people, we, especially the children of today, can learn.

"When you think about six million people, nobody can comprehend that," says Rachel Shankman, regional coordinator of Facing History and Ourselves, which is bringing the exhibit to Memphis. "But when you can think about one human being, one young person, that just brings it all together."

Shankman says that in addition to reminding us of the horrors of Nazi Germany, the exhibit is also intended to teach us that not everyone was actively involved; many helped the victims, but many more simply did nothing.

"We felt like we needed to take children through an in-depth look at a case study...to take a serious look at a historical time where almost every kind of behavior is exemplified, from victims to bystanders to perpetrators," she says. "It's all about human behavior. It may be too late for Anne Frank, but it's not too late for the kids in Dixie Homes."

In Memphis the exhibit is sponsored by Facing History and Ourselves, founded in 1976 by former Memphian Margot Stern Strom. FHAO is a national education and teacher-training organization dedicated to engaging people in an examination of racism, prejudice, and anti-semitism by studying the lessons of the Holocaust.

FHAO has put more than 200 local teachers through its formal training and exposed hundreds of others to its program. The Nashville exhibit is sponsored by the Tennessee Holocaust Commission. The premier of the Nashville exhibit held on October 11 was in honor of the Tennessee Holocaust Survivors.



### SJHS continued from page 2

Saturday afternoon's first session will be "Interpretive Frameworks", with two papers concerning new historical approaches toward Southern and Georgian Jewish history. The second session, "Department Store Families", will focus on the Strauss Family, two small-town mercantile families of Georgia, and the Goldsmiths of Memphis. A banquet will follow in the evening, speaker to be announced.

Sunday morning will begin with a business meeting and election of officers, followed by the final academic session, "Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights". At noon, Justin L. Wyner, President of the American Jewish Historical Society, will address the conference at the closing luncheon.

Full registration, before October 5, including all sessions, the four main conference meals and Friday night transportation, is \$125 for SJHS members, \$155 for non-members (basic membership is \$30). Costs are an additional \$10 after that date. The pre-conference tour of Jewish sites will cost a separate \$25.

A block of rooms is being held at the Doubletree Hotel, Seven Concourse Parkway, 30328, (404)395-3900. Conference participants should identify themselves as such to avail themselves of the special rate of \$65 per room if reserved by October 14. After that date, the special rate will be on a space available basis only. Hotel reservations must be made independently and directly with the hotel.

For further information on what promises to be a very rewarding conference, as well as a complete conference program and registration form, please call Mollie Goldberg in Atlanta, (404)261-6085, or Harriet Stern in Memphis, 682-3023. ☆



## The Valley of the Destroyed Communities ■■■■■

by Leonid Saharovici

"That the generations to come might know them . . .  
and tell them to their children" Psalm 78:6

This inspiring verset could be a source of reflection on the importance and educational purpose of the Valley of the Destroyed Jewish Communities. Located in Jerusalem, at Yad-Vashem, the monuments and memorials on the Mount of Remembrance (Har Hazikaron) were built on a rocky, wooded hillside overlooking the city of hope. Opened last year, the purpose of the valley was to preserve and chronicle for future generations and for the nations of the world the martyrology of the Jewish people during the Holocaust.

The memorial symbolizes a Jewish world of greatness that was destroyed, leaving only its ruins as an indication of its former glory. Most of these communities including their Jewish inhabitants, were wiped out during the Holocaust. The few communities that somehow managed to survive were greatly diminished in size and number.

The valley was conceived and developed by Dr. Yitzhak Arad, chairman of the Yad-Vashem directorate, a renowned historian, and author of many publications on the Holocaust. Constructed on six acres of rocky forest region, the whole area was built in the form of a labyrinth that resembles a huge map of pre-war Europe. Each courtyard is placed roughly in the geographical location of the country it represents. The original names of the communities are engraved on huge rock formations. In the center of the valley is Beit Hakehilot, the educational repository that provides information about the communities commemorated in the valley.

Why is this valley so important for Jewish history? The majority of the Jews of Memphis and the Mid-South are descendants of these people who either immigrated from Europe or were born of immigrant parents. A small number of more recent arrivals came to the United States either just before the beginning of World War II or after the war, bringing with them an imprint of their persecution and suffering during Hitler's attempt to exterminate the Jews of Europe. Most of these people still retain images from their childhood spent in the small towns of Europe and in



Leonid and Friderica Saharovici at the Valley of the Destroyed Communities, in front of the monuments commemorating communities from Romania.. Jerusalem-March, 1993.

segregated Jewish communities in larger cities. Many of these images were reinforced by colorful stories told to them by their parents, grandparents, or relatives. Pictures left in family albums without names or explanation reflect some aspects of these communities. Sometimes, their only knowledge is limited to the name of a town that may or may not belong to the same country that it once did, or possibly had its name changed in different periods of history.

As the generation of baby boomers is growing older, many of them now realize how little they know about their ancestors and what limited knowledge they have of their family history to pass on to their children. Many are now trying to research as much as possible about their families, the countries, towns, and communities that they came from. Often I heard people saying their parents or grandparents came from this town, city or village, but they have no idea where it was located.

The Valley of Destroyed Communities, recently opened at Yad-Vashem museum, and still incomplete, is a wonderful source of information for everybody seeking answers about Jewish life in pre-war Europe. Every place, from a small "shtetl" to a big city that used to be the center of a flourishing cultural, religious and communal Jewish life is listed according to the country in which it was located.

A short time ago, a college student from Memphis called me from the Simon Wisenthal Center in Los Angeles where he was researching his roots and

asked me if I could shed any light on the location of a very small town in Romania that was the birthplace of his grandparents. He wanted to know what other cities were in that part of the country, how many Jews lived in them, and what were their main occupations. On my subsequent visit to Israel, while looking for my wife's and my family's birthplaces, we found all the answers for ourselves and for this young man. Not only did we find the cities in which we were interested, but a large number of neighboring Jewish communities that today have no Jewish population. Like this young man, everybody searching for the city of their origin could find their answers in this wonderfully planned and executed project at Yad-Vashem, the Valley of the Destroyed Communities. My wife's and my family lived in Romania, where Jewish communities have been in existence for more than one thousand eight hundred and fifty years. Romania is the sixth oldest Jewish community in Europe (Greece, Italy, France, Hungary and Crimea are the oldest). I found my maternal and paternal great grandparents places of origin (Tighina-Basaralia, Sadagura-Bucovina, Bucharest, Romania). My wife's maternal and paternal great grandparents lived in Targul-Neamtz, Piatra-Neamtz, Botoshani. We took pictures and information that helped us complete our genealogical trees and we will be able to pass this information on to our children.

Anyone searching for their family roots in old Europe will find great sources of information at the Valley of the Destroyed Communities. ☆



## The Lonely Days Were Sundays

"The Jews of the South have found their poet laureate." - Abba Eban

As an analyst of Jewish history and culture, Eli N. Evans brings to his writing the unique perspective of one who has grown up in the Bible Belt.

With insights from both worlds, his new book, The Lonely Days Were Sundays: Reflections of a Jewish Southerner, moves from southern subjects to those of world-wide scope and was published in June by the University Press of Mississippi.

Evans' grandmother helped him to appreciate the place of the southern Jew in the South, as well as the fact that the outsider among us may view the village with the clearest vision. "The lonely days were Sundays," she wrote in her diary. "Sundays when I watched the town people going to church, while we stayed upstairs in our apartment. Then I would feel like an outsider."

His two previous books--The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South and a Civil War biography of the South's Secretary of State, Judah

P. Benjamin: The Jewish Confederate--are considered classics, judged recently by scholars as among "the best books ever written in American Jewish history."

Eli N. Evans has accomplished what is rare in the world of ideas: He has created and articulated a unique perspective--that of the Jewish South--and has become its most eloquent voice. As this collection testifies, he is at home in many worlds--presidential politics, civil rights, Israeli history, the Jewish world, and southern life; he is conversant on films, fashion, sports, and culture, often seeing their lighter side but always with serious purpose. He writes movingly about his family and his hometown. This volume of essays, which concerns itself with the meaning of southern, American, and Jewish history, is anchored in the pivotal themes of the last century, ranging from the abolition of slavery to the tragedy of the Holocaust; from the agony of the Civil War to the creation of the state of Israel. He writes with the Jewish longing

for a homeland and a southerner's sense of home. Eli N. Evans combines his region and his Jewish heritage into a complex and subtle mixture of insights. He often intertwines autobiography with observation that informs as it inspires. This collection of his articles will take its place beside his other books as a unique contribution to southern, Jewish, and American history.

Published by University Press of Mississippi (1-800-737-7788), The Lonely Days Were Sundays: Reflections of a Jewish Southerner sells for \$25. ✪

Eli N. Evans was born and raised in Durham, North Carolina, earned his B.A. from the University of North Carolina and his Ilb. from the Yale Law School. Currently serving as president of the Charles H. Revson Foundation, he was formerly an executive at the Carnegie Corporation and served as an aide and speech writer in the White House of President Lyndon B. Johnson.



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all the blessings of peace, health, joy and happiness.*



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