



OUR BOOK MAKES HISTORY IN MEMPHIS

Our new book and its author were toasted at a beautiful champagne reception at the Jewish Community Center, Sunday, November 8, 1998. The book commissioned by the Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid-South, "A Biblical People in the Bible Belt: The Jewish Community of Memphis, Tennessee 1840's-1960's", took its rightful place among the great Jewish histories of the South.

Dr. Abe Kriegel, professor of history at the University of Memphis introduced Dr. Selma Lewis with accolades on her new book. He gave a brief outline of her many accomplishments.

Always concerned about others, Selma helped start a fund to feed needy school children. It was an extremely successful preface to our present Federal School Lunch Program. She

Please see Our Book, Page 4

Abe Waldauer

by Dr. Selma Lewis

Attorney

Politician

Life Long Scout

This is the eighteenth 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.

Abe Waldauer was guided by strong interests, principles, and legalities. Born in Vicksburg, Mississippi, he was admitted to the bar in Memphis in 1916. He remained interested in the practice of the law all his life. He was a dedicated Boy Scout, the leader of Troop #25 at Temple Israel for many years. That troop sold more war bonds than any other in World War I. After the war Waldauer continued to be committed to serving his country. He was an active member of the American Legion.

One of Waldauer's political connections had its roots in World War I, when he had served in the 114th Artillery under Captain Gordon Browning. Waldauer chose to remain a private all through the war, refusing all promotions so he could continue to serve with Browning. Browning's campaign for Congress was "planned in the dugouts of the Argonne Forest." When the war was over, Waldauer allied himself with Browning's political fortunes and saw him rise to become governor of Tennessee. Waldauer then became the liaison between Nashville and Memphis. Browning named him a member of the State Election Board, whose principal function was to appoint one member to each county election commission. Browning's break with Boss Crump, another Waldauer loyalty, placed Waldauer in an awkward position. Waldauer was Assistant City Attorney until 1936 when he resigned rather than vote against his old friend Browning, who was running for the Senate against Crump-supported Nathan Bachman. Waldauer made his decision not in order to break with Crump, but to adhere to the principle of personal friendship. Later, however, when Browning requested an increase of six members to the State Board of Elections, Waldauer viewed this as an expression of no confidence in the board's personnel. He decided to sever the friendship with Browning.

Waldauer, progressive and astute, became a close and welcome Crump ally.

Waldauer had the opportunity to demonstrate his support for Jewish refugees even before World War II, when the United States quota system made it almost impossible for an immigrant to be admitted to the country unless he

had a job waiting for him at his destination. (The labor movement was a strong legacy of World War I; the Immigration Law acted as a protective tariff for American labor.) A Rabbi Wise in Germany wanted to immigrate before World War II.

Waldauer found a small congregation in Clarksdale, Mississippi, in need of a rabbi. Rabbi Julius Mark of the Vine Street Temple in Nashville agreed to pay Rabbi Wise's salary; Waldauer, his father-in-law, Nashville leading citizen, Lee Loventhal, and others joined the Clarksdale congregation to make it large enough to secure the rabbi's employment. In spite of all these measures, no visa was issued by the local consul in Germany. Waldauer went to Washington and asked Senator McKellar to arrange an appointment with Secretary of State Cordell Hull, a Tennessean whose wife was Jewish. Even he could not expedite the visa, so Waldauer called President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and the visa was issued.

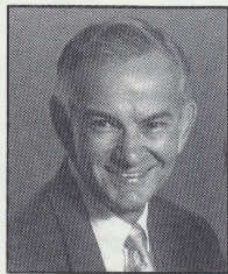
Later, in the 1930's and 1940's, when the need to save

Please see Waldauer, Page 7



Abe Waldauer

President's Message • • •



Sumner Levine

1998 may be one of the most exciting years since the Jewish Historical Society was formed by Rabbi James Wax, Harriet Stern, Leonid Saharovici and others. All members of the Society were presented with personally autographed copies of A Biblical People in the Bible Belt, written by our own Selma Lewis and

sponsored by the Jewish Historical Society, during a champagne reception planned by Lynn Mirvis, Michael Parker and their committee at the Jewish Community Center on November 8, 1998. A program followed the reception at which time Selma discussed the book and answered questions on its subject matter. Rob Cooper, well known videographer and former Memphian, has interviewed many Memphians for a video that will be a supplement to our book and should be finished in early 1999.

We are blessed with an exceptional group of officers and board of Directors, and they have been very active in planning a most productive year. The activities of some of them are as follows:

Abe Kriegel has planned an excellent year of programming. The subject of our meeting on October 18th was the relationship between Jews and Blacks in Memphis. Participating in this program were Marvin Ratner and Russell Sugarmon (principals in Ratner and Sugarmon, the first integrated law firm in the South), Sheri Lipman (former Vice-President for Comprehensive Services for "Memphis Race Relations and Diversity Institute"), and Rachel Shankman (Director of "Facing History and Ourselves" at the University of Memphis).

May Lynn Mansbach and Marcia Bicks are busy gathering oral histories in the Memphis community. Shirley Feibleman continues to gather and document items for the Archives. Bob Kalin is planning a video of Brownsville, TN, which will include interviews with those familiar with the Jewish history of that city, and Irwin Kaufman will be doing the same for Clarksdale, MS soon. Irwin and Harvey Reisman are planning our spring program on "Growing up Jewish in Mississippi and Arkansas." Gil Halpern did a wonderful job planning our trip on November 1, to Helena, Arkansas. And last but certainly not least, we want to thank David Schneider for the continuous publication of our excellent Newsletter. We are pleased to note that Tom Stern is experiencing a good recovery from his recent surgery. Both his advice as immediate past president and Harriet's as well as Marjean Kremer's guidance have been invaluable.

We are all looking forward to your participation in the programs as they are announced. ☆

For Chanukah

Something completely new yet "old"
a gift everyone will enjoy
"A Biblical People in the Bible Belt"
available at the JCC

Jewish Historical Society of Memphis & The Mid-South

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A Biblical People in the Bible Belt

The Jewish Community of Memphis, Tennessee, 1840s-1960s



by Selma S. Lewis

Thoughts Upon the Publication of "Our Book"

by Dr. Selma Lewis

I have overwhelming feelings of gratitude to the Jewish Historical Society for understanding the need for the writing of this history. They envisioned it and supported it all along the way. So many people have been involved in this project, and every president of the organization has nurtured it. In every sense this has

been a collaborative effort.

Another source of gratitude is the fact that Mercer University Press accepted the book for publication. It is no secret that many worthy manuscripts languish unpublished. It is fortunate indeed that A Biblical People was able to make the

Please see Thoughts, Page 5

A Biblical People in the Bible Belt

Waves of immigrants formed the Memphis Jewish community, each determined to help the next to become Americans. An uneasy minority, the Jews, the people of the Bible, were welcomed by the Protestant majority in Memphis, the heart of the Bible Belt. The Jews of Memphis have had a uniquely positive experience as part of an expanding city. Buffered by the presence of African Americans, who replaced them as primary scapegoats for prejudice, Jews have been builders of businesses, full participants in civic life, and creators of enduring institutions from which to practice their religion in freedom and care for the needs of those who succeeded them.

The cordial atmosphere of Memphis was encouraged by the contributions of its first arrivals, the western European Jews, to the building of the city. It can further be explained by the fact that the city was governed for fifty years by political boss Edward H. Crump, who favored religious tolerance, appointing both a Jew and a Catholic as his primary lieutenants.

continued on backflap



"A Biblical People in the Bible Belt" . . . A Review by Joel Felt

The long wait is over. The eagerly anticipated history of the Jewish Community of Memphis, Tennessee, 1840's-1960's by Selma Lewis has now been published and is currently for sale in Memphis bookstores. Dr. Lewis has presented us with an ambitious yet tightly crafted example of the historian's art.

For almost two decades after the 1819 founding of Memphis there were no Jewish citizens of Memphis. They began to arrive, at first one by one, gradually increasing the pace of immigration from Western Europe, followed by successive waves from Russia, Eastern Europe,

and, still later, Holocaust survivors, and post-Soviet immigrants. These seekers of safety, freedom, and opportunity have provided the raw material for the myriad fascinating stories of all these people and their descendents, lovingly and painstakingly depicted. Dr. Lewis had deftly drawn the historical background of the great seminal events of the twelve decades involved—Civil War, yellow fever, two World Wars, immigrations, depressions, the Holocaust, struggle for civil rights. From such sagas she has seamlessly blended the cataclysmic with the personal; human, identifiable stories

of people and families many of us have known and loved.

The Jewish community of Memphis by 1920 had grown to almost 10,000—a number which has been maintained to the present day. The rich elements of religious, economic, political, and social life that have sustained the uniqueness of this Jewish community have been chronicled, and interpreted in generous detail. Clearly, prodigious work and impressive organization have honed this highly enjoyable book. It's quite a commentary; go and read it. Published by Mercer University Press, 208 pp., \$35.★

OUR BOOK

Continued from Page 1

was the first female president of the Jewish Family Service; she organized the Community Family conference and co-authored "Historic Black Memphians," and "The Angel of Beale Street: A Biography of Julia Ann Hooks." In 1994, she received the Martin Luther King, Jr. Human Rights Award, and in 1996, the National Conference Humanitarian Award.

The wonderful occasion was a book signing and a talk given by the author, Dr. Selma S. Lewis. Selma, as she is affectionately called by those who know her and have had the privilege of working with her, thanked all of the past presidents of the Jewish Historical Society, each of whom had contributed to our ultimate goal, publication of this history.

Dr. Lewis spoke of the founding of the Jewish Community of Memphis and how the Jews participated in the development of our city and shared its problems and its successes. She touched on the important role of the different waves of Jewish immigration to Memphis and their importance to the founding of our various

synagogues and the relationships, or lack thereof, within the total Jewish community.

During the Civil War, due to its location, Memphis had become a major center of illegal trading and General Grant blamed the Jews for many of the area's problems. This led to General Grant's notorious general order #11, which was reversed only after Cesar Kaskie, of

Paducah, Kentucky, Congressman John Addison Gurley of Ohio and Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise of Cincinnati were able to secure an appointment with President Lincoln who issued immediate instructions to cancel the unfair order.

In her remarks, Dr. Lewis touched upon the contributions of many important Jewish leaders and the important role played by Rabbi James Wax and Rabbi

Continued on Page 5



Part of the attentive crowd at the book signing and lecture

OUR PAST PRESIDENTS ALL OF WHOM CONTR



Rabbi James Wax
Founding Member



Harriet Stern
1986-89



Leonid Saharovici
1989-90



Gloria Felsenthal
1990-91

OUR BOOK

Continued from Page 4

Ari Becker during the civil rights movement.

As the Memphis Jewish Community grew, its philanthropy grew even faster and has always been in much greater proportion to the Jewish population of the city. Abe Plough, Mr. Anonomous, became well known for his generosity as well as his many business accomplishments.

As Holocaust survivors began to make an impact on the Memphis community, Nina Katz became active, feeling that she had a mission to help others in America fight against discrimination. She

worked tirelessly for the cause of human rights. Other Holocaust survivors became viable segments of the Memphis Community.

And, she told us a bit of the humorous side of history with a story about Elvis in his role as a "shabbos goy" and an interesting story of a lifelong chain of gifts from Goldsmiths to their first customer. Over 300 people attended the reception and book signing and enjoyed the champagne and refreshments which were planned by Lynnne Mirvis, Michael Parker and their committee. Congratulations to the Jewish Historical Society and Dr. Selma Lewis for a job well done. ☆

Thoughts

Continued from Page 3

transition from my desk to a bookstore.

Most people who have read the book seem pleased to have the information it contains in print. For those who lived through some of the periods covered, it provides a nostalgic journey back to former times. My hope is that it will prove to be useful in the future to people interested in history.

I also hope it will stimulate collection of memorabilia: letters, documents, pictures, clippings, to help future historians. For the most part, I had to rely on oral sources, which were always interesting, but which present a different perspective from that obtained from written sources. So, please identify and save them, and if you do not have a safe place to store them, give them to the Memphis Room at the Memphis Public Library, the library at the University of Memphis, or the JHS archives presently located at Temple Israel, where they will be kept in a proper environment and will be available for the use of researchers.

I regret that I did not insist upon editing the Epilogue myself. It has many typographical errors, and at least one grammatical one that careful editing should have caught. But spending one sleepless night, when I first saw it, was enough. It is too late to do anything about that now.

Unlike Virginia Woolf, who went into a deep depression with the publication of each of her books, you have all made it a truly wonderful experience. Thank you for the elegant party at the Jewish Community Center; for the first corsage I've had since college dances; for the clever cake and decorations that reproduced the cover of the book; and most of all, for your gracious reception of this book. I am really appreciative. ☆

Selma Lewis

LADIES' HEBREW BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

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Meets monthly at Strauss, Lehman & Co.'s.

A page from the Memphis City Directory. (1859)

CONTRIBUTED TO THE PUBLICATION OF THIS HISTORY



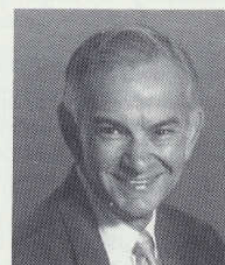
David Schneider
1991-93



Stephen Biller
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Dr. Tom Stern
1995-97



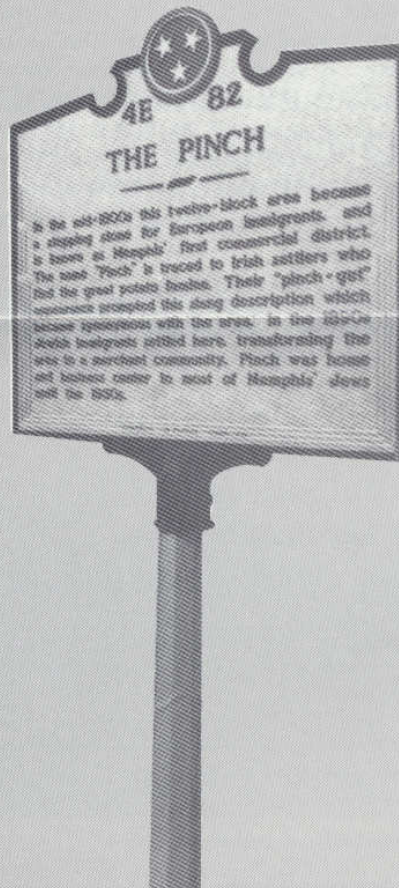
Sumner Levine
1998

The experience of Memphis Jews before they reached the United States made it difficult for them to feel totally secure, however. Like most American Jews, they did not take a public stand against German atrocities in the 1930s and 1940s. Not until World War II, full knowledge of the Holocaust, and establishment of the state of Israel, did they have the courage to go against majority opinion. Their involvement in the civil rights movement in Memphis, the sanitation strike, and their responses to the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. demonstrated the coming of age of the Jews of Memphis.

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Bookjacket designed by Mary Frances Burt

A Biblical People in the Bible Belt



As both a historian and a member of the community about which she writes, Selma S. Lewis tells the lively story of Jewish life in Memphis, Tennessee. She poignantly describes the origins and development of a healthy, respectful relationship between her own "biblical people" and the people of the Bible Belt. It is a hopeful story of a Southern city that surprisingly turned out to be "a favorable place for Jews to live."

For a variety of reasons, Jewish Memphians suffered little overt prejudice and managed to take care of their own needs while attending to those of the community as a whole. As a result, from the outset of their residence in Memphis, Jews held positions of municipal leadership, were active supporters of Memphis's cultural and philanthropic activities, and aided in the course of racial integration.

Narrating the life of Jews in Memphis from the antebellum period through the 1960s, Lewis artfully blends discussions of the Jewish community's proactive impact on the city's development with its reactions to events local, national, and international. She vividly highlights their roles in and responses to the Civil War, late nineteenth-century immigration, Zionism, the world wars, the Holocaust, and the civil rights movement. The result is an important work of Jewish, American, and Southern religious history.

Selma S. Lewis received degrees from Vanderbilt University and the University of Memphis. She is coauthor of *The Angel of Beale Street* and author of *The Metropolitan Interfaith Association*. She was commissioned to write the history of Jewish life in Memphis by the Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid-South.

You Can Give History A Helping Hand

by Shirley Feibelman

Do you still have a picture taken when your mother-or even your grandmother-was confirmed here in Memphis? Or maybe you've got a newspaper clipping about a family marriage, or a death notice-maybe it's only 50 years old, or even less. Do you hate to throw out programs from special events in the

Jewish community?

Well now you can safely hand them over to the Jewish Historical Society Archives. You may not have known about our Archives which is one section of a wonderful room brimming with stories about the Memphis Jewish community and is presently located in a secure area of Temple Israel.

Shirley Feibelman and Ruth Kahn

clip and save everything they see in the paper-everything they get from the dozens of organizations involved in the social life of Memphis Jews, because they're on a million mailing lists-and they need your help to fill in all the yesterdays.

If you have a basement or an attic with boxes of things you and your

Please see *Helping Hand*, Page 8

Waldauer

Continued from Page 1

European Jewry was urgent, Waldauer used his considerable political influence to rescue as many as he could. He became a member of the Society for the Aid of Refugees, Scholars, Rabbis, and Doctors. A bill was introduced in the Tennessee Legislature to prohibit the practice of medicine by foreign immigrants, even though in many cases that was what the immigrants were equipped to do. At that time, Dr. Justin Adler was on the staff at Western State Hospital at Bolivar, Tennessee, and called, greatly disturbed at the bill. Waldauer called Governor Gordon Browning and told him: "If that bill passes, you had better close up every mental institution operated by this state, because you do not have adequate number of America doctors . . ." The bill was withdrawn.

Waldauer was appointed the Collector of Customs of the Port of Memphis and a Trustee of the Henry George Foundation of America; he was a member of The Egyptians, a local literary society, and a vegetarian. His wife Dorothy shared his interest in scouting and in Zionism. Together they made significant contributions to many facets of life in Memphis. ☆

Helena

Continued from Page 8

In 1880 a brick Temple was dedicated. As the Jewish population grew, in 1915 (5675), a new impressive Temple was built during Rabbi Piper's tenure and Joseph L. Solomon's presidency. In 1920 there were in Helena 125 Jewish families. Helena, like the entire State of Arkansas, has had a very small Jewish population.

Our visit started at Temple Beth El. We were welcomed in the sanctuary and all the present members of the congregation were introduced. After a lovely lunch hosted by the entire congregation, and an occasion to socialize with them, we were gathered in the Sanctuary and heard four presentations about the rich history of the Jews from Helena made by David and Miriam Solomon, Ed Grallman and Ethel Gates. Each one of them stressed the acceptance and friendship of the local population and the efforts to maintain Judaism in this small Arkansas town. The Jews from Helena worked hard and brought many contributions to the development of the city. They succeeded in agriculture, commerce, law, banking, shipping, cotton and timber and became active in civic, cultural and political life. Jacob Trieber (1853-1927) became the first Jew in America to be appointed by President William McKinley as a Federal Judge. He understood the struggle for justice, fought against racial prejudice and for human rights for all people.



*Ed Grallman welcomes the JHS Group
in the sanctuary of Temple Beth El*

Today there are twenty Jewish families that belong to Beth El. They don't have a permanent Rabbi. The services for Shabbath and High Holidays continue to be conducted alternatively by two lay leaders, David Solomon and Ed Grallman. A community Passover Seder - a long tradition in Helena - continues every year. The Jewish life goes on.

Our visit to the Temple was very inspiring. A superb neo-classical building with Corinthian columns, Palladian windows and a stain glass dome with the Star of David was well kept and has been for eighty three years a place for worship, learning and social activities for the Jews of Helena.

For a member of our group Temple Beth El brought back fond memories. Helen Wax, the wife of the late Rabbi James A. Wax, recalled with nostalgia their visits to Helena. After Rabbi Wax retired from Temple Israel, he conducted during 1978-1989 the High Holiday Services in Helena. On Yom Kippur, October 6, 1989, he offered his last sermon at Beth El, speaking about the right of all the citizens, especially the poor and the elderly to receive decent affordable health care. He died on October 17, 1989. Rabbi Wax was fondly remembered and Helen Wax was warmly received by the Congregation during this trip.

The group continued its visit to the Jewish Cemetery, dating from 1875. The resting place is well kept; the graves, monuments and grounds are nicely maintained. Our last stop was at the Delta Cultural Center, a place that tells the story of the Arkansas Delta people. Through exhibits, videos, documents and artifacts, we explored this fascinating American region. Across the street from the center in the Harbor of Helena, we had a nice view of the Mississippi River.

Our group enjoyed the southern Jewish hospitality of the Congregation Beth El, that made our trip a pleasant experience. As a token of appreciation, Sumner Levine the President of the Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid South presented the Beth El Congregation with a copy of the book. "A Biblical People in the Bible Belt". The volume was autographed by Selma Lewis, who attended the trip to Helena. Gil Halpern, the organizer of the trip, was responsible for its success. ☆

parents couldn't bring yourselves to throw out, Shirley and Ruth will gladly include them in the memoirs of the community. We are interested in such things as personal correspondence, birth and marriage records, old wills, deeds, pictures with names, dates, places and occasions—even menus for special dinners.

Each week Shirley spends one day at home sorting, and on Wednesday of each week she's at our Archives filing and labeling and cross-filing.

When the first Jews came to Memphis 150 years ago, they built a synagogue and a cemetery. They became citizens and sold clothing, groceries, and anything else there was a market for. Their trials and tribulations make up the fabric of an everlasting tapestry that depicts the life of the Memphis Jewish Community. Help us with your treasured keepsakes.

If you have a photo or clipping you don't want to give away, we'll be happy to accept a copy. We can keep it protected from heat and humidity. One special item is a beautiful gold-trimmed black cane presented to Lew Wexler on December 25, 1869 by the Congregation.

Also among the treasures are books and correspondence given to us by the widow of the man who, among other things, left the land, which is now Gaisman Park. Gaisman was an inventor who held more than 84 patents as an executive with Gillette.

Now that most of you have received Selma Lewis's great history of the Jews of Memphis, I am sure you can appreciate the great importance of historical data of all types. If everyone contributes to our Archives, we will have a research facility that will be of tremendous help to future historians. A few of the recent items, which have been given to our Archives, are: two early drafts of Selma Lewis' book, "A Biblical People in the Bible Belt"; a framed picture of Dr. Gilbert Levy; the Chapter of the Year Award, 1989-90, Memphis Region of Hadassah; Bound volume of "Southern Jewish Heritage, 1987-93".

More Copies of Our Book were sold
at the JCC Book Fair
than any book - ever!!

"Blacks and Jews in Memphis"

by Dr. Abe Krieger

Professor of History, University of Memphis

The Society's first program of the year was held on October 18, at the Jewish Community Center, where an informative panel discussion about Blacks and Jews in Memphis was followed by audience participation. The panel consisted of Marvin Ratner, Judge Russell Sugarmon, Rachel Shankman and Sheri Lipman. Each recounted their personal experiences, which cumulatively extended over the last five decades, and shared insights about race relations in the community.

Marvin Ratner recalled his participation in the civil rights movement and his involvement in the formation of the South's first integrated law firm, Ratner and Sugarmon. Its purpose, he observed, was not to establish an integrated law firm as such, but to provide services that were sorely needed in overcoming racial discrimination in housing, employment, and education. Mr. Ratner recounted the difficult but morally compelling choice he made to walk away from a lucrative practice as partner in a prestigious law firm in order to provide his legal expertise in business matters for a segment of the community that had previously found such access exceedingly difficult. He attributed his record of community involvement, his high regard for education and dedication to social justice to his Jewish heritage and to the conviction that one should do something useful with one's life.

Judge Russell Sugarmon, who was asked specifically to comment on his perception of the Jewish community, recalled his impressions as a child and young adult, his college experience at Rutgers and involvement with a Jewish fraternity, the establishment of Ratner and Sugarmon law firm, and the efforts to obtain foundation funding. While Ratner and Sugarmon was the first interracial law firm in the south, its example was swiftly followed in several cities across the region. Participation in the firm, Sugarmon observed, was among the most satisfying and exhilarating achievements in his career.

The presentations by both Marvin Ratner and Russell Sugarmon were peppered with amusing anecdotes,

perhaps the most memorable of which was the formers recollection of his partner's observation some years ago, that so vividly reflected the firm's unique situation: Where in the world but in the lobby of the building that housed the Ratner and Sugarmon office could one encounter both Jack Goldsmith and Sweet Willie Wine, waiting for their respective lawyers?

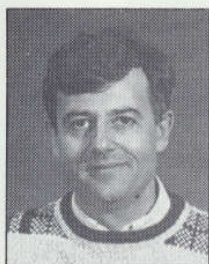
Rachel Shankman, regional director of Facing History and Ourselves, remembered episodes from the late forties during her childhood in Nashville through her experiences at the University of Memphis in the sixties and subsequent residence in Los Angeles that contributed to her growing awareness of America's racial divide. She discussed how her reflections about Jewish identity and her attempt to derive meaning from Jewish history have encouraged her participation in Black-Jewish dialogue.

Sheri Lipman, former Vice-President for Comprehensive Services of the Memphis Race Relations and Diversity Institute, spoke about her upbringing in a family that emphasized one's responsibility to those less fortunate, but acknowledged her discomfort with a tendency toward paternalism. Nonetheless, doubts about attitudes typically "Southern" were overcome by her experiences in a reputedly more liberal north during her college days in Michigan, law school in New York, and her career as a young lawyer in Washington. Her current participation in efforts to build a better community is all the more effective for the experiences that have given her a greater understanding of herself and for the recognition that paternalism doesn't work.

Several members of the audience contributed their own stories to a discussion that could well have continued for hours. There was little indication that tension between blacks and Jews on the national scene had made their way to Memphis. In any event, in response to a question from the audience, none on the panel evinced any inclination to dwell on such divisions.

From the Brick Yard to the Cattle Cars

by Dr. Daniel A. Lowy



Dr. Daniel A. Lowy is an Assistant Professor at the Chemistry Department of The University of Memphis. He was born in Romania and received his education in his home city: Cluj (Hungarian name: Kolozsvár), at Babes-Bolyai University (B.S., M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in physical chemistry). After he moved to the United States he earned a second Ph.D. degree in Analytical Chemistry, at West Virginia University in Morgantown. His domain of expertise is electrochemistry (electroanalytical sensors and electroorganic synthesis). He authored and co-authored over 30 research papers. Dr. Lowy remains faithful to his roots, to his home city and its slowly disappearing Jewish community. It is in the United States that he wrote a well-documented history of the mostly Hungarian speaking Jewish community of Cluj-Kolozsvár, with a special emphasis on its destruction during World War II. The book was published in late June 1998, and sold out in just a few weeks.

Written in Hungarian language, the title work¹ deals with the tragedy of the Jewry of Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca, Romania) during World War II, a topic that has not yet been discussed in a systematic manner. The book focuses on the events that took place in Kolozsvár, prior to, during, and after the deportation. This study is based on virtually the entire available literature pertaining to the anti-Jewish legislation and destruction of the Jewry of Kolozsvár: a first hand review of books and book chapters written in English, Hungarian, and Romanian, and the local press of Kolozsvár from 1920 to 1948. As part of the living history of the city, literature sources are complemented by testimonies of survivors of the deportation and of forced labor service, and by statements of Christian eye-witnesses, as well. We believe that this approach to the tragedy of the Jewry of Kolozsvár, from both Jewish and Christian standpoint contributes to a better understanding of the recent history of the city and elucidates details that could not have been addressed during the after-war period.

Though not the largest Jewish community in Transylvania, the Jewry of

Kolozsvár is of particular interest for its exceptional cultural contributions. For centuries, Kolozsvár has had both a significant cultural and economic life both as traditional university center and the heart of the Hungarian literature in Austrian and Hungarian ruled Transylvania.

After the Peace of Trianon, Transylvania was placed under Romanian authority. Thus, the status of the Hungarian Jewry in Romania became that of a "double minority"; they were discriminated for both their so called race and their language. *Numerus clausus* was introduced in 1927 and blocked their access to higher education. In December 1927, extreme nationalists among Romanian students vandalized the Jewish community in Kolozsvár: they devastated several synagogues, destroyed most of the Jewish stores in the center of the city, and damaged important Jewish property. Ten years later, in 1937, the Romanian extreme right wing came to power and a series of anti-Jewish laws and decrees were introduced. The most drastic was the Statute of the Jews passed by the Romanian government on August 8, 1940. This prohibited mixed marriages and withdrew the citizenship of most of the Romanian Jews.

In late August 1940, following the 2nd Vienna Award, Northern Transylvania was returned to Hungarian legislation. Most of the Jewry awaited this transfer of power with hopeful anticipation. The greater their disappointment was, when, without delay, the Horthy-regime applied in the newly occupied territory the two Jewish laws that already passed the Hungarian Parliament. Shortly thereafter, they introduced a 3rd and the most severe racial law. Not only were the Jewish newspapers immediately outlawed, but all Jewish organizations, societies, and sport clubs were suspended (with the exception of the religious organizations). Starting the fall of 1941, *numerus clausus* became *numerus nullus*, which was enforced in both high school and college education, as well as in the economy. Practically speaking, jobs were no longer available to Jews and only a limited number of Jewish schools were newly authorized, their entire budget being supported by local Jewish organizations.

After the German occupation of Hungary, starting May 3, 1944, the Jewish populations of Kolozsvár and of

the communities in Kolozs County were removed from their homes by Hungarian gendarmes and police. They were concentrated in a ghetto established at the brickyard in the Iris quarter, at the north-eastern end of the city. The ghetto was overcrowded, had almost no sanitary facilities, and the people resettled there had to cope with a continuous shortage of food and drinking water. Their only "accommodation" was in the barns without walls, used as drying sheds for bricks and tiles. There was no hospital and very limited amounts of milk for children. The gendarmes established a "mint", a building where Jews were tortured into confessing their hidden valuables. Three weeks later, most of them were deported in six transports to Auschwitz. Only about 10% of these people survived the Holocaust.

Approximately 200 Jews of Kolozsvár fled to Romania by crossing illegally the Hungarian-Romanian border. Thus they survived to the war. In addition, a few Jews were successful in hiding in the city. Another 388 exempted Jews were included in the so-called "Kasztner-transport", which was sent via Budapest and Bergen-Belsen to Switzerland.

In contrast to the official government position, the Christian population of Kolozsvár showed a moderate attitude toward Jews. Despite the totalitarian system introduced after the German subjugation, many Christians of the city tried to hide, to save, or to provide help to their Jewish friends, colleagues, or neighbors. Four citizens of Kolozsvár have been recognized as Righteous Gentiles. Priest Andor Járósi, Minister of the Evangelic Church in Northern Transylvania, hid the daughter of theater director Imre Kádár and issued several fake baptismal documents. Notable was the attitude of several medical professors, such as Drs. Imre Haynal, Dezső Miskolczy, and Dezső Klimkó, heads of different clinics of Kolozsvár, who interned several Jews in their hospital, throughout the critical period.

This work has been written in the United States with the financial support provided by the O. & J Winter Fund of the Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies at the City University of New York. Significant credit goes to the editor of the book, well-known poet Géza Szőcs, and to Zoltán Biró, the Production Editorial. Abstracts in Romanian and English allow more insight in the content of the book for the non-Hungarian speaking readers. An English edition is planned. ✽

¹Original title: Dr. Daniel A. Lowy, *A téglagyártól a tehervonatig* (From the Brickyard to the Cattle Cars), Erdélyi Szépművészeti Céh, Kolozsvár, 1998 (ISBN 973 98374 2 5)

At the Rivers Edge

A Visit to Helena, Arkansas

by Leonid Saharavici

In the last few years, the Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid South has organized interesting and educational field trips to Brownsville, TN and Clarksdale, Ms. I have attended both trips and have accumulated a great deal of information from the history of two small Jewish communities that once were flourishing and today are slowly disappearing.

I was anxious to go to Helena when the trip was announced. Several years ago a friend from High School that I have not seen for forty years, invited me to attend a concert in Helena where he was performing with the renowned "Choir of Israel". I couldn't make it because of an unusual winter day with dangerous, icy roads.

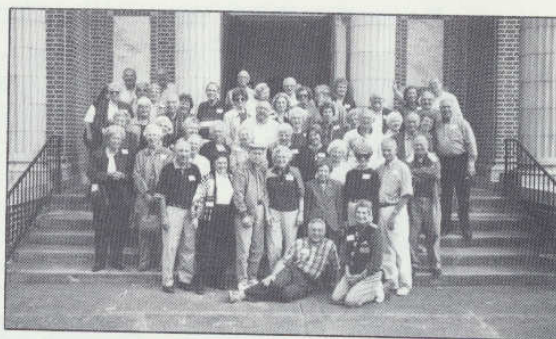
Last year in Jerusalem where I attended my 50th anniversary of High School graduation, I was reunited with my friend Dr. Joseph Herling, a chemist and a singer, who reminded me that by not coming to Helena I missed one of the fine "Warfield Concerts" that took place in the Lili Peter Auditorium, located in Helena, a small and hospitable Jewish Community with a beautiful Temple that is worth visiting. My expectations were high.

We heard about Helena from a lecture offered to our society by Carolyn Gray Le Master and from her masterful research, the book of great value, "A corner of the tapestry. A history of the Jewish experience in Arkansas, 1820-1990's". But reading and listening to lectures is different from seeing with your own eyes, talking to those who created and witnessed the history of Helena and getting the feeling of this community.

Helena is located on the Mississippi River, not far from Memphis (one hour and a half) on the lower end of Crowley Ridge. Mark Twain said that "Helena occupies one of the prettiest situations on the Mississippi River". It was formed around 1820. A farming community in a beautiful surrounding where Jewish pioneers settled before and after the Civil War. The city grew and became the county seat of Phillips County. Together with its sister city, West Helena, they have today a population of 18000 people.

In 1867, sixty-five Jews formed the congregation B'Nai Jeshurun (Sons of Israel)- United Hebrew Congregation- who later took the name of Beth El (House of God). In 1875 a Hebrew Benevolent Association was organized, and they purchased a burial ground. The Congregation held the first Confirmation Class in 1878.

Please see Helena, Page 7



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