

Rhode Island Jewish Historical

Notes



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130 Sessions Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02906-3444

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Front Cover

Jewish servicemen, many stationed at Providence College, ca. 1944. The three rabbis include Carol Klein of Beth Jacob, who is in the center.

Inside Covers

Windows: Harkins Hall, Providence College

Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association

130 Sessions Street

Providence, Rhode Island 02906-3444

email: info@rijha.org web: http://www.rijha.org

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With Childhood Painting

Editor's Comments

Given our Jewish community's modest size, I'm frequently amazed by how much world, American, and New England history is captured in these pages. Sometimes it seems that our community exists not on the edge of epochal change but at its epicenter. We are continually arriving, building, serving, questioning, learning, honoring, rejoicing, departing, and then beginning anew.

Perhaps our communal history is so fascinating because it is often perceptible in quite personal ways. We can literally see, hear, and grasp how individuals welcome, cope with, and are sometimes buffeted by change.

Thus, for example, we can begin to comprehend the Holocaust through the words of one survivor. Conversely, we can easily understand *gemilut chasadim* (acts of loving-kindness) through the embrace of two young survivors. While sharing the excitement of one Rhode Islander's decision to make *aliyah*, we can also empathize with the difficult consequences for her family.

Additional accounts of personal decisions and conundrums abound in this issue of *The Notes*. As explained by a senior architect, there should be nothing simple nor esoteric about designing a synagogue. Similarly, how two esteemed congregations interact with each other

may be fraught with legal and financial difficulties. The relationships between a distinguished Jewish professor and his impressionable Jewish students may also stray from conventional expectations. Yet, when Jews gained entrance to a local Catholic college the consequences were surprisingly beneficial for many students and professors alike.

Our pages may be particularly accommodating for writers eager to tell personal stories of growth, wonder, infatuation, and achievement. In the act of storytelling, some writers may unintentionally but inevitably embellish feelings as well as facts. Ironically, the results may be more memorable and believable.

The biographical sketches presented as obituaries are always intended to be accurate and truthful. Although some lives seem more accomplished than others, all seem to complement each other. Such an impression supports our belief that every life is endowed with dignity, meaning, value, and purpose.

Thank you, dear colleagues, members, and benefactors, for enabling us to remember and say so much about our relatives, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances. By honoring them, I think that we brighten our future as well as our past.

George M. Goodman

Romek's Odyssey, Part IV: *Austria, Germany, and New York*

Ray Eichenbaum

This is the final installment in the author's epic story, the longest ever published in our journal. This installment too has been edited to accentuate key turning points.

Most of the events recounted here took place when Ray was only 15 or 16 years of age. But an epilogue brought his story closer to his final decade. Alas, Ray died in 1993, at only 64 years of age. Despite his nearly indescribable suffering and loss, he remained, somehow, a good, loving, and grateful man. Also, a proud, resilient, and humble Jew.

Melk

In February or March, 1945, I found myself alone in another concentration camp, Melk, a small place on the Danube River in Austria. It was dominated by the presence of *Schloss Melk*, a beautiful, 16th-century castle on a picturesque bend of the Danube. Our camp was built on the other side of the river, amongst marshes and low shrubs. It was part of a *Kaserne*, old First World War army buildings full of Hitleresque inscriptions about Teutonic heroes and other Nazi propaganda.

The living quarters for us, the slaves, were in makeshift bunks. The novelty here was that one had to share his bunk with two other workers, who were on different shifts. The working places were underground stalls, part of the Hermann Goering Werke, an armament factory. We were making parts for Hitler's cannons. The food and accommodations were better than in Mauthausen, and we started to notice that Nazi officers were slowly being replaced by older *Wehrmacht* men whose behavior was more soldierly and much less brutal.

I was the recipient of a very lucky break in Melk. During our initial muster, I was recognized by an S.S. man who was with us in Rydultau. He was the same Silesian-*Volks Deutsche S.S. Sturmband* officer who had kicked me so severely in the butt during one of his drunken tirades. I don't know why or wherefore, but when it came to selecting some workers for the kitchen, I was the first one to go to that group. Call it a happy coincidence, but it sure was a lucky break for me. Not

only was I spared from working underground, in very badly ventilated bunkers, but I was assigned to living quarters in the main building of the camp – the *Kaserne* – because the kitchen crew had to get up 30 minutes before the rest of the camp. From my first day there, for a period of about nine weeks, I would trudge about 6:00 AM into the large kitchen, sit in front of large vats containing washed potatoes, and peel them. The work was hard but bearable. We sat most of the time. I became a champion peeler. To this day, my wife, Alice, and my sons, Howard and Cary, are full of wonderment at how fast, clean, and thin-skinned I can peel a potato. I also became very adept at stealing a few potatoes and bringing them to my friends in the evening, and we would stealthily boil them.

The camp at Melk remains in my memory with the first notion that there is another life out there on the outside of our miserable condition. But I was still very much affected by the absence of my brother, Moniek. I felt so alone and desperate. For the first time in my life, I felt betrayed by the Almighty. I would find myself waking at night and sobbing uncontrollably. I was questioning God not so much as to why He took Moniek away from me, but as to why He was not taking me to him from all this loneliness and despair.

However, I became very resourceful and a leader. In about early March, a group of young Polish boys, perhaps seven or eight from age 11 to 15, arrived in the camp. They were from Warsaw, spoke only Polish, and I found out that they were children of some "Polish intelligentsia," who had been arrested by the Nazis, sent away to concentration camps or probably killed. The boys did not know what had happened to their parents or they were sworn to silence on the subject.

We soon became fast friends since I spoke Polish fluently and had many common interests, including sports, books, and movies. Some of them were also assigned to work in the kitchen. Thus I became a part of their group. They were for the most part smart and intelligent lads.

This group of Polish boys helped me very much at a time when I was so desperately missing Moniek. They sort of "carried" me along in all the activities and bustle of camp life. I wish I could remember their names. At night, I still slept in the Jewish end of the barrack.

The worst part of life in Melk was the constant fear of "selections" by the Nazi henchmen, who would almost weekly descend upon us from the main camp at Mauthausen. Any little sign of infirmity or loss of weight would soon find oneself

on the truck to the dreaded mother camp. I guess the stolen potatoes must have helped me.

Early in April, 1945, there occurred an unusual sight. Foreign dignitaries, some in strange military uniforms, entered the camp one morning. All of them had bands on their arms, with the Red Cross sign clearly visible. This was the first sign of possible liberation. But soon all of these notions were quickly dispelled. This was an international Swedish and Swiss Red Cross commission, who had herded together the Polish youngsters from Warsaw.

Soon a delegation of the boys came to me at work in the kitchen. They thought that I, being Polish and their leader, should come with them as well. I had to deliberate and make a quick decision because they would be leaving the next day. Should I go with them? It surely was enticing, although a degree of danger was also present. As I lay in my narrow bunk, I looked at my starving, slowly dying Jewish compatriots. Should I tear myself from this place of misery and despair and enter into an unknown future? The fact that I thought that Moniek was alive and working in a nearby camp also weighed heavily in my decision-making. Should I become a Pole and hide my Jewishness?

The unforgettable words of my beloved sister, Bronia, came into my memory. One evening at the beginning of our time in the ghetto, when we lived on Gesia Street No. 5 in Lodz, she uttered: "A Jew who was born a Jew, and a Jew he shall remain." This was the clincher. I decided to remain in the camp at Melk with my fellow Jews. Early the next morning I waved goodbye to my Polish friends who were leaving on Red Cross trucks. Why not me? The question persisted but it was not to be.

As the end of March, 1945 was nearing, we started to hear rumors that the front was getting closer and that the camp will be liquidated. What will they do with us? Might this be the end? Every change of status usually meant further deterioration of our shaky chances of survival. We were full of trepidation and fear.

Mauthausen

Sure enough, about the first of April, we were hurriedly marched out of camp and loaded onto trucks. After a short trip, we found ourselves in Mauthausen again, but this time in another part of the large concentration camp, in the makeshift *Zelt Lager*, the Tent City.

At this time, it appeared that the Nazis started to deport en masse the Jews of Hungary. Most of them went to Auschwitz for quick destruction, but a good number were sent to Mauthausen as well. The Hungarian language was funny to us, but they made up a large majority of the camp. Not that we did not learn quite a bit of Hungarian, which I know to this day. However, a great deal of animosity built up between them and us, the *Lengeles* (Polish Jews). What was the greatest bone of contention? The blankets they had been allowed to bring with them.

One sunny morning, we found ourselves on a march out of Mauthausen. Our destination was unknown. Into the ovens or a bright future? Time would tell.

Gunskirchen

After we passed Wells, we sensed that we must be coming to our final destination. But we marched on and passed one village and then another. After a while, there was a clearing in the woods and we reached a log camp of sorts, Gunskirchen, named after a nearby village.

The place was filled with Hungarians, and red mud was everywhere. The log houses were similar to those seen on postcards of Washington's Valley Forge winter camps during the Revolutionary War, but these were built in haste. No floors, only mud. One water pipe for each of two log houses. Then the rains came upon us, day after day. We established a non-Hungarian enclave in one of the houses.

The bread rations became skimpier from day to day, and the presence of the starving Hungarians with their fancy duds from home and that funny language created a macabre scene in my mind. No electricity at night. Darkness and dampness and lice, and my starving, dying comrades. Every day we lost two or three fellows. We could not help our condition, and each of us awaited the final blow. Will I be next? We heard the Nazis' whistles to fall out and be counted, but no one bothered any more. The end was so near.

On the eighth day of our stay at Gunskirchen, we heard shouts from the outside, at first in Hungarian but after a while in German. "The guards were gone; no more S.S.; no more *Volksturm*." I rose myself from my slumber in the mud, and I proceeded to go outside. I was carried by the mass of humanity, mostly Hungarians, out of the campsite and onto the road. I was surprised at how fast I could still walk. I ran faster and faster. Suddenly on my left, a large, tremendous van appeared.

It had eight or 16 wheels, but to me it appeared to have 100. On the side of the van were the markings of the U.S. Army.

I was liberated!

A feeling of exhilaration hit me for a brief moment, but it was followed almost immediately by great despair. Where was Moniek? Will I ever see Bronia again? I could not enjoy the great moment that I was awaiting across all these years.

When I look back upon the moment of my liberation, many different feelings overwhelm me. It was so different from what I had imagined it would be. Nowhere were the flags and the colorful bunting that I imagined. Not even a welcome or receiving place. No one came out to greet me, but that did not matter. I went towards the road and took a deep breath. I smelled the freedom.

When one regains the freedom of movement, it is not a simple happening. For quite a while, I would still look about as if in expectation that orders would be given to direct my next move. But there I was, absolutely free. If I had the chance to live it over once more, I would have made a point to be more conscious of this moment.

When I think about the whole episode of my life during the Holocaust, I feel that I was carried by some sort of whirlwind that ripped through space and time with my soul inside it. This demonic force held me while I was being forced through a hell-like labyrinth of suffering.

Forces were trying to tear me apart while I was in this wind tunnel. I was exposed to the worst human conditions this earth's existence can offer. The length of this exposure was trying to destroy any decent feelings or any outward hopes that I possessed in my soul. The demons were tugging at me to submerge my being in a quagmire of a low, underworld type of existence, but my upbringing and the sense of ethics that I always possessed kept me afloat. Other devilish forces were trying to bend my inherent, optimistic nature into a misshapen creature, begging for mercy. But my honorable, inherited, and acquired finer values kept me upright.

If one thinks that it was a piece of cake after liberation, it was quite the contrary. I sincerely state that it probably took divine intervention for me to survive after liberation.

As I stood next to the highway, the U.S. Army trucks passed by. They must have been part of the famed Red Ball Express. Most of the drivers were blacks. I looked at them in bewildered wonderment because, up to that time, the only black

person I had ever seen in my life was a juggler in the Saniewski Circus in Lodz before the war. A black soldier sitting besides the driver made him slow down his gargantuan truck. He threw me an American candy bar. It was a Fifth Avenue bar with an orange wrapper, my first contact with America!

Part of my salvation consisted of the fact that I did not eat meat and sugar. Somehow I crawled into a D.P. camp full of Yugoslavs. They gave me my first meal in freedom, a thick soup of noodles in milk. I devoured it and lived.

Wells

We eventually returned to the *Kaserne* at Wells, where we were examined and registered "to death." At all times of the day, different commissions were arriving, and everybody was interviewed without end. Although I was there no longer than 10 days, I must have been examined by 20 different doctors.

People started arriving and families, whoever survived, started to get together. At first I was very much hepped up, happy and participating in every reunion with verve. But as time went on, no one came for me.

My little friend, Peltek Przytycki, from Kamienna Street, in Lodz, showed up. I was so happy. At least I found a friend again. But somehow he was avoiding me. Then he came to me and gave me the news. He had been with my brother, Moniek, in Ebensee. My brother had died there about three weeks ago.

I don't know what happened after that. Everything goes kind of hazy when I examine my mind about those times. My mind started to slip. I remember everything happening but as through an impenetrable fog. I remember eating, sleeping, and getting up.

Once we went somewhere and it started to pour cats and dogs. But I was out there standing in the pouring rain. Everyone shouted, "Romek, Romek, come in with us. Get out of the rain." But I just stood there.

I must have had a nervous breakdown. The great disappointments had gotten the best of me. After overcoming the Nazis, I was succumbing to my jagged nerves.

Linz

In early July, 1945, I found myself in a mental institution near Linz, Austria. My illness bordered on schizophrenia, but essentially I had little desire to go on

living all by myself. Everyone who got in touch with me and spoke German I would call “Hitler.” I imagined that since I survived, I must be the son of God or at least his representative on Earth.

I don’t know where the place was in Austria, but I recall that a young doctor came often to talk to me. He was very instrumental in getting me out of my illness quickly. I recall that the food over there was very skimpy and bad tasting. Mostly bread and cheese.

I also remember that I wanted to end it all right there by attempting suicide. I remember throwing myself into a fountain on one of our midday walks. I drank some tepid water, got all wet, and they put me into a straight jacket for a few hours.

After that attempt, I got well very quickly. The doctors must have understood that one who prefers death to a lousy existence can’t be that crazy after all. Anyway, by the end of September, 1945, I was released from that place and brought to a D.P. camp near Linz. My inborn optimism was calling me back to life.

Bindermichl

I was then transferred to the D.P. camp at Bindermichl, on the outskirts of Linz. We would often go into town by bus. The housing was modern because U.S. troops threw out the Nazis and gave the modern, two-story dwellings to wandering Jews. My “rebirth” actually started there.

For the first time since I had left home, I felt that life in a normal society-without fear that any day might be your last- was beckoning me. I started to gather strength as well as regroup my intellect.

Our existence in the D.P. camp in Bindermichl was far from ideal. Nevertheless, a nice American lady working for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, a captain in the Women’s Army Corps, took an interest in me, an orphan with curly hair. By the way, we were allowed to grow our hair after a long period of compulsory Nazi shearings. I started to work in the U.N.R.R.A. store, a position that people envied since all kinds of food stuffs and clothing were distributed there, and workers invariably were privileged to obtain bigger and better parcels. Hence, in short order, I became an important person in our new family set-up.

I would bring K-ration packages, chocolate bars, and new items of cloth-

ing for everybody, and soon we all prospered. That is, everyone became involved in buying and selling items, which were available only on the so-called “black market.” We were smuggling cigarettes and chocolate bars into Russian-occupied Vienna, where one could make a three- to four-fold profit. There were some risks involved, but we managed to make money very quickly.

Here I was, 15 years of age, neither a child nor yet a man. To this day, I shall believe that some divine power kept me from becoming entangled in sexual encounters, which would have complicated my life very much. I recall situations where many opportunities presented themselves. All I had to do was actually jump into bed, and I was not cowardly at all. I really desired women at this juncture in my early life, but somehow it did not happen.

While working for the U.N.R.R.A., I had all the possessions that girls wanted and went for in those days. I was also good looking, though small in stature, with reddish-golden, curly hair for which I was constantly envied. Hence, opportunities were there, but for some inexplicable reason, I was always kept from them.

Thus we slid into 1946 living in a D.P. camp in Austria. Soon we had to declare ourselves and take a position of where we wanted to go. There were those who encouraged me to return to Poland and try to look for family, friends, possessions, and property. Somehow, I had no great desire to return to my homeland, and soon we got word that Jews returning there were being killed and mistreated. Mostly in my heart, I still believed that someone would appear looking for me.

Then there was the push to join *Aliyah* “B,” the movement that was smuggling Jews into Palestine through Italy. Also, my friend, the American W.A.C. captain, asked me if, when an opportunity arose, I would like to immigrate to America. She told me how beautiful, big, and interesting the land of America is. Not all people lived in New York and its skyscrapers. There were other things, such as the West, Niagara Falls, and the “good life.” I was torn and did not know what to do. In my heart, I was still waiting for Bronia to appear. But this was not to be.

Meanwhile, I retained my intellect and my morality as well. I saw many lowly affairs around me, but was not affected by them. Although I was ready for all influences, I developed a nose for rejecting the ones that would hurt me in the long haul.

When it came time for me to depart the D.P. camp in Austria, I was still

unspoiled and believed in the goodness that I might find in the people whom I would encounter in the future. After long goodbyes and tears, I departed for Munich on the way to the U.S.A.

Later, on many occasions, I tried to analyze why I chose the U.S. over Israel or other places. It was perhaps my curious nature. Since early childhood, I had a fascination for the skyscrapers of New York. As a six or seven-year-old, I would take a chair to reach the beautiful credenza in my grandmother's house, where postcards and letters were kept. They had been sent by some relatives already in the U.S.A. I would take down the postcards and sit on the floor and look at them for hours. My fantasy would run wild.

I had a premonition, somewhere in my bones, that going to Israel would be a continuation of my struggles. However, I am positive that if someone had made an effort to persuade me, he would have been successful. I was in such a passive and resigned state of mind that I would have followed anyone. Thus it was perhaps so destined that I would go to the U.S.

Munich

After the goodbyes and tears upon departing Bindermichl, I arrived at Funk *Kaserne*, in Munich, which was the reception and departure point of displaced persons going to America. This was a huge place, a former *Wehrmacht* recruitment and training center. As part of the U.N.R.R.A. children's transport, we were processed, interrogated, interviewed, and had to undergo a thorough medical examination. This was my first encounter with a large number of American consuls, doctors, nurses, and others. My knowledge of English consisted of two words, "O.K." and "sure." However, I liked what I saw.

Somehow, I got mixed in with a group of Finns. The food was good, and frequent dances were held in a large hall with live music. The dancing lasted into the morning hours, and I enjoyed this very much.

Somehow, I became very friendly with a Finnish fellow, and he became very friendly with a German girl across the hall from us, who was also going to America with her mother. Imagine my surprise and cowardly fear, when, one late night, Mama, who was in her late forties, attempted to seduce me in the presence of her daughter and my friend. I found myself in bed with her, but that was as far as it went. Somehow, I regained my composure and ran out of there in the nick of time.

I had many other opportunities for sexual encounters, but I passed them up.

Since there was very little to do between 8 AM and 5 PM, I saw many movies. The exciting time was in the morning, when everybody would run to the bulletin board to check if his or her name was on the list to go to Bremen and then proceed to the U.S.A. Imagine the joy and happiness when your name was listed, and the sadness and somewhat jealous feeling when your name was not there. This was also the time of the Nuremberg Trials. Although I felt very much interested, I was too absorbed with girls, movies, soccer matches and Ping-Pong games to follow these events thoroughly.

Bremen

One fine day in fall of 1946, after having stayed in Munich for about four months, I found my name on the list to depart for Bremen. I later found out that the reason for my long delay was a dark spot on my lung, which doctors held under observation. Although tubercular in nature, it apparently disappeared. The trip to Bremen was uneventful, except for the fact that we traveled in modified freight cars, not passenger trains.

Due to a lengthy shipping strike in the U.S.A., there was another long lay-over of about six weeks in quarters adjacent to the harbor. I learned to eat peanut butter and jam sandwiches, and I won a Ping-Pong tournament there. Again, the highlight of each day was checking names on lists hung on a bulletin board. By this time, I was getting really anxious to depart the shores of Europe. Then one day, in January, 1947, I found my name on the list for people departing the transit camp, and I boarded a ship, the S.S. *Ernie Pyle*, for the U.S.A.

I shall never forget the trip itself because it took 11 days instead of the usual seven to get to New York. We encountered a terrible storm. I got very seasick, vomited almost the whole trip, and stayed on the main deck to get some fresh air (rather than below where we had swinging hammocks). To this day, I don't understand how a little ship like ours could have withstood waves whose crests were reaching way above our highest decks. At some point, it appeared that the great depths of the ocean would swallow us altogether.

New York

On the 11th day, a calm set in, and I started to take some nourishment and

walk upright. The next morning we passed the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor. I looked up to the face of the beautiful lady, and I had tears. I was so exuberant and optimistic about my future that I forgot to cry.

As I set foot on American soil on February 11, 1947, and looked upon the city, I was mesmerized by the multicolored taxicabs. And then I spotted the skyscrapers. My dreams had come true. I was resurrected:

Epilogue

Suffice it to say that I managed to recover from my ordeals with intellect and curiosity intact. I shall be brief because I pride myself on being private on personal matters.

I am forever grateful to the kind American people who enabled me to continue my education through secondary school. Some of my less fortunate brother and sister war orphans had to go to work upon arrival in the New World.

Following school, I was drafted into the U.S. Army, where I served my two-year stint during the Korean War (1951-53). This made me eligible for the GI Bill, which became the ticket to my college education both in Austria and here in the U.S.A.

While in Austria, I met Alice Hendel, a pert brunette who was just graduating from the University of Graz with a Ph.D. in chemistry. We were married in Vienna in 1956. This was perhaps the luckiest break of my life! We have been together happily ever since, and we are parents of two grown sons, Howard Mark and Cary Bruce. I have been gainfully employed in industry as an organic chemist for almost 30 years.

Throughout my life, the Holocaust experience has exerted a profound influence. Initially, I was trying to forget my past and forget my memories. After I became a parent, I decided to speak publicly about the subject for the common good. I have been doing this for a number of years, speaking to selected audiences, preferably young people. My presentations are usually well received, for I attempt to be upbeat in my talks, despite the sorrowful and gloomy subject matter. I believe that my presentations have a message for mankind.

Overall, I consider myself an optimistic realist, although my dear wife, Alice, thinks of me as a worrier. Having seen so much made worthless by the fortunes of war, my eagerness to accumulate worldly goods has lessened.

The odyssey through horrible times in my life has left me humble and rich in my philosophical outlook about the human endeavor on this planet. To my last day, I shall believe that I survived the Holocaust ordeal by some degree of Divine Intervention. I believe this despite my scientific mind, which includes knowledge of all sorts of random happenings. Otherwise, I would have had to have been at the right places too many times, and I would have had too many lucky breaks. Be it what it may, I am grateful and humbled by the whole experience.

When my time comes to exit this world, I hope to be less fearful of this parting than others. I have lived with death's presence near me for a long stretch of my life. I have lived through interesting and unique times. I have given much of myself to others, and I have fought hard to maintain a high moral standard of human behavior. Therefore, do not lament my demise for I have lived twice!

The Girls, Part I

Ruth Goldstein



Marie, Ruth's
cousin Reva,
Ruth, Jeannette &
Ruth's sister Sally,
ca. 1946

Over a ten-year period, under the auspices of the Holocaust Education and Resource Center of Rhode Island, the author shared highlights of the following story with more than 6,000 students. To many of our readers, it will also be a revelation.

This reminiscence is not only about two Holocaust survivors, however. “The Girls” include the author and her older sister, Sally. The chronology may begin during the 1930s, but its scope is timeless.

Many of our readers may have known Ruth in her official capacity as Rabbi Wayne Franklin’s executive secretary at Temple Emanu-El, from 1984 through 1996. But she has been an active member of our community in numerous other ways. For example, she is a past president of Pawtucket’s chapter of Hadassah, a past president of Emanu-El’s Sisterhood, and is a life member of The Miriam Hospital’s Women’s Association and the former Jewish Home for the Aged. For many years, Ruth, a Rumford resident, was also a tutor in East Providence’s elementary schools.

The author is, like Michael Fink, a 1951 graduate of Hope High School. She also studied at Bryant College. For more than a decade, she served as office manager at Lincoln Controls, a manufacturer of hydraulic equipment in Pawtucket.

Ruth’s numerous interests include cooking, sewing, and needlepoint. A former pianist, she enjoys attending concerts of the Rhode Island Philharmonic. When not studying Holocaust history, she enjoys such mystery writers as David Baldacci, John Grisham, and Lisa Scottoline. And her favorite team is the Red Sox.

I would like to share a true story about two young sisters who survived the Holocaust. They are not related to me. In fact, the first time we met we were total strangers. Yet, they became my sisters.

Escape from Belgium

Marie and Jeannette Berkovic (originally Berkovicova) were happy, care-free children who lived in Antwerp with their parents, Ignace and Rose (originally

Ruzena). Their dad was Czech, their mom Hungarian, and they were Jews.

Early in their marriage, the Berkovics had lived in Lens, France, where Marie was born in 1931. Later they moved to Antwerp to be closer to relatives. That's where Jeannette was born in 1935.

As Hitler's regime rose in power and the roundup of people for death camps escalated, Europe became a very dangerous place, especially for Jews. Marie remembers many hushed conversations among her parents and relatives, but never knew what was being discussed. She also recalls that her parents had tried to get visas for the family to immigrate to England, but they were unsuccessful.

Ignace Berkovic had been studying to become a rabbi, but Rose was insistent that she did not want to become a *rebbetzin* (a rabbi's wife). Had Ignace become a rabbi, the family would have become prime targets for the Nazis.

To support his family, Ignace took a job in a textile mill, and Rose was a stay-at-home mom. The girls went to school, and Marie took violin lessons. Extremely talented, she had already performed alongside her teacher with the Antwerp Philharmonic. She had a bright future as a fine musician.

The Berkovics' lives changed on May 10, 1940, when bombs began to fall. Germany had invaded Belgium. Jeannette was only five and one-half, and Marie had celebrated her ninth birthday a few days earlier.

Marie was old enough to understand the danger facing her family. For Jeannette, though, it was very different. Everything that was happening- the noise, the explosions, the commotion- confused her. When she asked her dad why the family had to leave their house, he explained "because we are Jewish." But this was hard for a youngster to understand.

With bombs exploding all around them, the girls' parents quickly filled two small suitcases with clothing, bare necessities, a few important papers, and a handful of family photos. Then the family ran to the central railroad station.

Marie took her prized possession, her violin, but while running, she kept dropping its case. Each time that happened, her family had to stop and wait for her to pick it up. Finally, Ignace told her, "Leave it! I'll get another violin later." Marie remembers feeling angry at the time, but she obeyed her dad. Having left her violin on the ground, however, she would never play again.

The Berkovics managed to board an overcrowded train for France, but the trip was long and slow. At each stop more people climbed aboard. The journey was

also extremely dangerous because Nazi soldiers were also onboard.

This is when Marie and Jeannette learned basic lessons of survival. Of prime importance were: Do not cry; do not talk; do not attract attention in any way. The consequences would be severe.

Rivesalte, France

Upon reaching Toulouse, Ignace and Rose decided it was time for their family to leave the train. But the girls never knew why this city was chosen. So many questions from their past remain unanswered.

The Berkovics began walking away from the city to find safety. Totally by chance, Ignace knocked on the door of a farmhouse and explained his family's plight. The kind, Christian family living there put their own lives in danger and hid all four strangers in the root cellar. Neither girl can remember the number of days they were hidden there. However, memories of darkness, dampness, and silence remain.

Safety, however, was short-lived. When German soldiers found them, the Berkovics were thrown onto the back of an open truck and transported to a camp, Rivesalte, in the southern French town of Perpignan. Considered a deportation rather than a concentration camp, Rivesalte held captured Jews until their shipment to Auschwitz, in Poland, or to other death camps in countries under Nazi control.

Ignace was immediately separated from his wife and daughters, but Rose and the girls didn't know where he was sent. Similarly, the fate of the kind Christian family who had hidden the Berkovics was unknown.

As Marie would explain, "Rivesalte was the little hell before the big hell. The camp was very big and very bad." Each overcrowded barrack was lacking beds, heat, plumbing, and privacy. The toilet was a bucket in the center of the room for everyone to use. Because so many people were crowded together on the straw floor, it was impossible to turn over while sleeping. Rats, mice, fleas, and lice infested the straw.

Food was minimal. Once a day each person was given a bowl of watery soup and a piece of bread. Marie remembers seeing her mother trade one of her slips for a crust of bread. That experience left such an indelible memory that, more than 70 years later, she will not throw out a piece of bread. Every crumb is used somehow.

Rivesalte, where Rose and her girls were always cold and hungry, was their home for nine months. They still didn't know where Ignace was.

But some news trickled into the camp through the underground network. Rose, whose utmost concern was her daughters' survival, learned that some partisans had been able to reach Perpignan. Using a route established by the underground, these men were able to smuggle some children to a safe place. It became known that children were not counted because, it was assumed, that parents would have included them.

Escape to Vence

Very late one night, when the camp was quiet, Rose woke Marie and Jeannette and cautioned them not to make a sound. She took them to a dark, secluded area of the camp, where she was able to slip beneath the barbed wire fence with her girls.

The girls were of course terrified. When they realized that their mother would not be going with them, Marie and Jeannette pleaded to change her mind. But Rose couldn't. She knew that if she wasn't back at camp for roll call the next morning, the Nazis would learn about their escape. If captured, all three Berkovics would probably be shot on sight.

Once out of Rivesalte, Rose ran with Marie and Jeannette to a prearranged meeting place, where she gave them to a partisan, a complete stranger, and then returned to the camp. This man smuggled them eastward, across southern France, to Vence, where he took them to a Christian boarding school, *L'Ecole Freignet*. Its owner and operator, Josef Fisera, was a Czech active in the French resistance. In 1988, 17 years before his death, Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust Memorial Authority, recognized him as a "Righteous Among the Nations."

The Berkovic girls were not the only Jews among the school's students. Jeanette recalls that it was particularly remarkable that she and Marie were able to play safely outside- in daylight.

When the Berkovic girls arrived, they were terribly frightened, badly malnourished, and quite sick. The kind people at the school comforted and cared for them, and they soon learned French in addition to Flemish and Yiddish. Marie and Jeannette even learned to swim in the school's small, outdoor pool.

Nobody knows how much time had passed, but Ignace, who was awaiting

shipment to Auschwitz, managed to escape. Once again with help from the underground, Rose had also slipped out of Rivesalte. Somehow, they were reunited, but with Vichy police in pursuit, they too fled eastward, across southern France, to Nice, where they were hidden in a home. There they learned the whereabouts of their daughters and were able to send them notes through the underground.

After three months in hiding, Ignace and Rose risked everything and ventured westward from Nice to Vence to be with their daughters. When the girls saw their dad, they were absolutely shocked because he looked like a walking skeleton. The Berkovics' reunion was very short-lived, however. After a brief time together, Ignace died in his wife's arms with his daughters at his side. Rose never explained, so the girls did not know what in particular had caused their father's death. Having learned all too well one of the lessons of their survival, Marie and Jeannette were unable to shed a tear.

Ignace's family wanted to bury him in a Jewish cemetery, but this would have placed his survivors in mortal danger. To keep her girls safe, Rose consented, against her religious beliefs, to an alternative. Through the resistance, Josef Fisera was able to obtain a set of false documents stating that Ignace's surname was Bizek, and he was thus eligible for a Protestant burial. Marie still remembers riding to that cemetery with her mother and sister on a horse-drawn wagon, which carried her father's coffin.

Escape to Creuse

Rose remained hidden at the school with her daughters, but as the war worsened and Nazi soldiers closed in on the area, the Jewish children and adults were forced to leave. With assistance once again from the underground, they left in very small groups. Marie and Jeannette traveled with a gentleman, and Rose followed a day or so later. These groups were taken to Vence's railroad station, where children were cautioned to be on their very best behavior and, under no circumstances, were they to have any conversations.

The groups traveled for several hours aboard various trains to the small, mountainous region of Creuse, in central France. Each group was taken to a remote chateau near Saint-Agnant-près-de-Crocq, whose owners turned it into a safe haven for Jewish children and adults. Rose was able to remain with Marie and Jeannette as a caretaker. The children were housed together dormitory style, and adults

slept in the chateau's tower.

Danger seemed so remote that children were free to run, play, and wander in the countryside. As part of their reprieve from previous horrors, they were also taught folk songs and dances.

Three years had elapsed since the German invasion of Belgium and the Berkovics' escape, but the girls' lives were about to be torn apart once again. In August 1943, Rose learned that Nazi soldiers were in nearby towns, continuing to search for Jews. Again she faced the agony of having to send Marie and Jeannette away, but this time she would be able to explain why and where they were going. She did so the night before the girls' departure, when they were allowed to stay in her room. Rose's was a heart-wrenching decision, which, she prayed, would enable her children to survive.

Ignace Berkovic had a married sister, who had fled with her husband from Antwerp to Barcelona. The couple hired two men to travel to the chateau and bring the girls back to Spain. How Rose had been able to communicate with her relatives still remains a mystery. But the girls were told once again that there would be no crying, no talking, and absolute obedience.

Escape to Portugal

The two men and two girls took a train south and disembarked in the foothills of the Pyrénées. They were going to walk the remaining miles, across the mountains, to the Spanish border! As they began their long trek, the men sternly reminded the girls to obey the rules. Nazi patrols were so close that they could hear gunfire and even German conversations.

Before leaving the chateau, one of Marie's friends had secretly given her a copy of the *Sh'ma* with the hope that it would help keep the girls safe. Marie hid the prayer in a seam of her coat, but she knew that, if caught by German soldiers, it would mean a death sentence for them all. So, in order not to desecrate the prayer, Marie dug a small hole, buried it, and marked the spot with a rock. In a sense she made a *genizah*, a burial place within a Jewish cemetery for holy books and documents.

There was snow in the mountains, and the girls weren't properly dressed. Most days the group hid behind rocks, within haystacks or in safe barns. Marie remembers that some days were spent in holes they dug in the ground. At night,

to cast the smallest shadows, they walked single-file. The danger of frostbite was so great that the men massaged the girls' feet with wine. For additional warmth, rags and paper were wrapped around their feet. The girls' outgrown shoes had to be forced back on.

One night, as the group was walking, Jeannette was extremely tired, very cold, and badly frightened. She wanted the comfort of holding Marie's hand, but the men insisted that she remain in single-file. Within seconds, as the younger sister began to cry, the men taped her mouth shut. Needless to say, she was absolutely silent the remainder of the journey.

At one stop, the girls were given warm food and glasses of milk. They were also able to sleep for several hours in soft beds with white linens and soft, down comforters. It had been so long since they had enjoyed any luxury.

At the Spanish border, the men and girls boarded a train for Barcelona, but they did not have travel papers. If stopped, they did not know how the Spanish authorities would react.

Upon reaching their destination, their aunt and uncle met Marie and Jeannette, but Jeannette did not remember them. For almost six months, the girls lived with their relatives in Barcelona while the family awaited Canadian visas. The adults were granted theirs, but the girls were never registered (or not permitted to register) as their children. Consequently, after months of haggling with Spanish authorities, Marie and Jeannette were made wards of the U.S. Committee for the Care of European Children. (Led by Eleanor Roosevelt, this organization was known as USCOM.) Like their aunt and uncle, the girls were granted "alien" visas (Jeannette's name was Joanne), but their relatives' destination was restricted to Canada. Thus, the girls, who were identified both as aliens and as "refugees," faced yet another family separation upon reaching America.

Voyage to America

The four relatives traveled by train from Barcelona to Lisbon, where on March 23, 1944 they boarded a small Portuguese ship, the S.S. *Serpa Pinto*, which was bound for Philadelphia. (Originally a British ship launched in 1914, it made numerous crossings during World War II to Rio de Janeiro, Philadelphia, and New York City.) There were refugees from many European countries as well as some Americans on board.

Transatlantic voyages during the war, even those belonging to neutral countries, were of course extremely dangerous. In fact a U-boat (a Nazi submarine) stopped the *Serpa Pinto* while the girls and their relatives were passengers. The stated purpose was to inspect travel documents, which, evidently, were satisfactory.

A two-week, spring crossing was also treacherous because of rough seas. Marie became so seasick that she was unable to leave her cabin. The ship's food supply also ran low, so a huge supply of pineapple was taken on board at one port. To this day, Marie has never been able to take another cruise, and it was many years before she could eat pineapple again.

The *Serpa Pinto* landed in Philadelphia on April 6, 1944, one month shy of four years since the Berkovics' ordeal had begun. Marie was almost 13 and Jeannette nine and a half. After their aunt and uncle were required to depart for Canada, the two youngsters were totally alone, clinging to one another for comfort. Strangers in a strange land with a strange language, they did not know what the future would hold.

Members of the U.S. Committee for the Care of European Children welcomed the sisters. They were then escorted to Newark, where they were placed in an orphanage while awaiting a foster home. They were briefly kept in isolation to insure that they carried no communicable diseases. The girls also received some badly needed medical care, but, to this day, the sisters have health problems that originated in Rivesalte.

Asylum in Rhode Island

Thanks to assistance provided by Jewish Family Service, Marie and Jeannette were the first refugee children, uprooted by the Holocaust, to reach Rhode Island. A family in Pawtucket agreed initially to take both youngsters as foster children, but only for the duration of the war.

Just a short while after settling into their new home, however, Jeannette, for the first time in her life, was separated from Marie. She was sent to live with Edith and Ben Matusow, in the heavily settled Jewish neighborhood of South Providence, where the couple owned and operated Ben's Bakery on Prairie Avenue.

The Matusows had no children of their own, but welcomed Jeannette with open arms. They became "Auntie Edith" and "Uncle Ben." Very much a take-charge lady, Edith became a lioness as far as protecting Jeannette. Ben, who was a quiet

gentleman, also made her feel protected. For the first time in years, Jeannette felt safe, loved, and wanted. Indeed, for the remainder of their lives, the Matusows absolutely adored her.

Nevertheless, a sense of sadness has remained with Jeannette throughout her life. Several years ago Jeannette told me that, as a child, she always felt that nobody ever wanted her. As a result, she always felt that she was being given away. It has taken over 50 years for her to speak about her past. Anyone having the good fortune of being her friend knows, however, that her friendship will last a lifetime.

When the war ended in 1945, Marie was 15 and joined my family. My parents were Morris and Sarah Goldstein, and we lived at 2 Wilcox Avenue in Pawtucket's Oak Hill plat. My *zaide* (grandfather), Jacob Goldstein, lived with us. I had an older sister, Sally, who was 13, and I was 11.

Having left Russia by himself at age 14, my dad certainly knew what it was like to come to America alone. Upon his arrival, he knew nobody and spoke no English. Soon he learned the language, supported himself through odd jobs, became a citizen, and lied about his age to join the Navy during World War I. He was wounded and earned the Medal of Valor. Later, as a civilian, having bought a horse and wagon, Dad collected and resold rags on his way to building a textile business. Years later, he owned a large mill on Barton Street in Pawtucket and had numerous employees manufacturing yarn from reprocessed wool. Dad was decades ahead of today's recycling efforts! As he prospered, he brought all of his family from Russia and made sure they had housing and jobs. A kind and gentle man, my father believed that *zedakah* should be given from the heart – with no accolades necessary. He helped many needy people; whenever he donated to charity, his gift was anonymous.

Although my mother was born in America, she also knew how unexpectedly life could change from good to bad. Her parents, Samuel and Fanny Tregar, had fled from Poland to Sweden before coming to the United States. Her father, a blacksmith, had died suddenly when she was 10. This left her mother with four young children to support. So Mom learned early how hard struggling to survive could be.

Our home was always a safe haven for any relatives who became ill or who had fallen on hard times. They would move in and stay with us as long as necessary. Mom seldom knew how many would be sitting down at mealtime. She loved to cook and enjoyed the challenge.

Fortunately, Mom didn't have to work outside the home, but because of a health condition, she always had somebody to do housekeeping chores. Mom became active in various Jewish women's organizations. When the president of one such group asked people to sign up as foster parents for refugee children, it was very natural for my mother to volunteer. She knew that Dad would totally agree. So her name followed the president's.

In preparation for Marie's arrival, our home had to be inspected by the fire department. My folks also had to get a rooming house license. A small, upstairs den became her bedroom.

Marie arrived at our home with one small suitcase just before *Shabbat*. Ours was a traditional home, where all manner of work stopped from Friday at sundown through Saturday at sundown. To usher in the day of rest, Mom lit the *Shabbat* candles before we all sat down to dinner. Our family belonged to the Pawtucket shul, Ohawe Shalom, and I attended its religious school for only a few years.

My folks became Marie's "Aunt Sarah" and "Uncle Morris," my grandfather her *zaide*. Nevertheless, Jewish Family Service remained in charge of the sisters' welfare. Joseph Galkin, its director, and Gertrude Marcus, a social worker, monitored Marie and Jeannette's care and progress. Through the years Miss Marcus would drop by our home unannounced so often that she almost became a favorite aunt to all of us. It would be several more years, however, before the girls were naturalized.

At first, consideration was given to moving Jeannette to our home to be with Marie, but because she had been so traumatized, the decision was made to let her remain with the Matusows. Jeannette was happy there and loved them.

A Bright Ray of Sunshine

After her initial shyness, Marie blossomed. She was like a bright ray of sunshine entering our lives. If ever I wanted to be like someone, it was Marie. In spite of all she had suffered, she was bright, pretty, warm, and caring. And, she had a bubbly personality that drew people to her. What a wonderful role model Marie was for me during my very formative years. I adored her then and still do today.

Marie lived with my family for almost five years- the best years of my youth. She spoke minimally of her life in Europe. It wasn't until my children, Stephan, Lisa, and Michael, were grown that I really began to learn what had happened to the sisters during the Holocaust.

With my natural sister, Sally, it was a bit different. She had been the first grandchild on my mother's side of the family. To say that she was spoiled is an understatement. Sally was a redhead with a fiery temperament to match. She and I were direct opposites, like oil and water. I was a scrawny, shy bookworm who always got straight As in school. Although bright, Sally would just manage to get passing grades. She liked sports and having fun. If any mischief was afoot, Sally was usually at the root of it. Although there were stretches of time when we got along, more often than not, we locked horns. Frequently, to keep peace, we would ignore one another.

Marie was all the things Sally wasn't. She was petite, very feminine, and wore her hair and clothes with flair. Sally was a tomboy who, because of her weight, was always on a diet. Her hair was unruly, and most of the time her clothes looked like she had slept in them.

Marie's outgoing personality attracted many friends at school. Sally's outlandish antics attracted mostly rebels. The dynamics among the three of us were interesting, to say the least. We girls shared some good times as well as some trying times. Marie always deferred to Sally to keep problems from escalating. I, however, never hesitated to take on Sally, especially if I felt she was being unfair to Marie. Of course, any of those altercations were never within eyesight or earshot of my folks or *zaide*.

So that Marie and Jeannette were able to see each other as often as possible, we four girls would be together frequently. Weekends, holidays, and school vacations found us either at the Matusows' or at our home. It was as though our two families blended together. However, the very best part of all was that I had two more sisters.

I liked going to the Matusows' because Jeannette would always take us to the bakery. It was like being in heaven. In the back room, Aunt Edith and Uncle Ben would allow us to help ourselves to whatever we wanted.

When Jeannette came to our home, she joined in whatever we were doing. Dad owned and kept horses in Central Falls, so on some weekends we would ride a short distance along city streets to Lincoln Woods and then follow the trails there. Dad liked to fish, so we would often be found at Galilee or Jerusalem out on the rocks with lines dangling in the bay. Swimming was at Narragansett or Scarborough Beaches. We would cook in the backyard. Whenever it was very hot, we would

don our bathing suits, drag out a hose, and romp around the yard in the cool water.

I have always been amazed at Marie's ability to master so many languages. When she entered Pawtucket's West High School (later known as Shea), she stayed with the French teacher for a month or so. That's where she began to learn English. After she came to our home, my folks engaged a tutor for her. Once a week after dinner, Marie and I would walk to and from her lesson. We talked non-stop, going and returning.

At school, Marie joined the swim team and excelled in the breast and butterfly strokes. I couldn't even float. When ice-staking, Marie glided gracefully. I was a klutz. After my folks bought Marie a bicycle, we were on even footing. Wonder of wonders, cycling I was able to master.

Mom, who made most of our clothes, taught us to sew and cook. Although the housekeeper did our laundry, we were each responsible for ironing our own clothes, which we did on Sunday evenings. On one occasion we nearly burned down the house by using three radios and an iron in one socket. Mom and Dad arrived home just as we were getting quite a lecture from the firemen who came to the rescue.

Most of each summer was spent at Camp JORI, which had been established for the Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island, in Point Judith. As the number of Jewish orphans dwindled, however, other children were allowed to attend as paying campers. Refugee children were allowed to attend JORI at no charge. So all four of us girls went together. As the years passed, Marie and Sally became

Marie in high school



counselors-in-training and then full-fledged counselors.

Not long after Marie started living with my family, some of her health problems worsened. For many months she needed an oxygen tank to deliver medication through her nostrils. When there was no improvement, Marie went through difficult surgery in Boston. For all the years I have known her, Marie still has health problems from the Holocaust years.

My parents allowed Marie to begin dating at age 16. She was also allowed to wear lipstick. Although Mom and Dad always gave her a curfew whenever she went out, they trusted her and never waited up. For some unknown reason, however, *zaide* took it upon himself to monitor Marie's return. His bedroom was at the top of the stairs. First thing in the morning, he would report to my folks the exact time Marie had come in. We would all quietly chuckle.

Marie and *zaide* did have a good relationship. Frequently, they chatted in Yiddish. Very often Marie asked his advice and always respected his opinion. He wasn't pleased with the boys she dated – until Melvin Silverman, a Hope High graduate and handsome 20-year-old, came along.

Marie and Mel had met on a tour of Brandeis University with a group from Brown University Hillel. She still attributes the dress she was wearing for attracting his attention. Mom had made it for her. It was a beautiful, light blue, corduroy, which matched her blue eyes perfectly. The dress also had a matching beret! *Zaide* liked Mel immediately and quickly told Marie. However, what really alerted us that Mel was "the one" was the friendly response by our little cocker spaniel, Rusty, a normally aggressive animal that Dad had rescued.

A few months ago, Marie and I were reminiscing about the times we shared as youngsters. She told me, "It was at our house that I was 'fixed.'" I understood what she meant. Although she would never forget the trauma that she had suffered, she was finally able to go forward and find happiness.

Jeanette & Marie, 2009



Leo Tobak and His 1933 Letter from Palestine

James W. Tobak



Julius Nass with Gussie and Leo Tobak, perhaps in Palestine, ca. 1935

A native with enduring ties to Newport, Jim attended its local schools, was a bar mitzvah at Congregation Ahavas Achim (though Touro clergy officiated), and graduated from Rogers High School in 1964. He majored in American studies at Lehigh University and graduated Phi Beta Kappa.

Jim earned graduate degrees in law and American history at Stanford in 1972. Although he and I lived in Stanford fraternity houses at the same time (he as a resident assistant, I as a rabble-rouser), we did not meet each other. This would occur in 1990, when I taught a course on Frank Lloyd Wright at Brown Learning Community, and he and his wife, Jill Fox, a future president of Temple Beth-El, were my best students. Indeed, they were instrumental in persuading their East Side neighbor to sell her Wrightian bungalow to Betsey and me more than 20 years ago. The four of us have grown ever closer.

Jim, who taught business law at Lehigh, has practiced law in Rhode Island since 1984. Currently of counsel to the office of Paul S. Cantor, he specializes in personal injury law. He is a former vice president of our Association.

My friend, neighbor, and indefatigable historian of all things Jewish and Rhode Island, George Goodwin, came upon a letter published in the *Newport Mercury* on Friday, August 4, 1933 by my biological father, Leo Levy Tobak, who was visiting Palestine. (I've been fortunate to have had two other men fulfill this paternal role in all the important ways: a wonderful stepfather, Ed Goldberg, and an equally wonderful uncle, Harold B. Werner). Twenty-one when he wrote this letter, I can only assume that my late father's odyssey was a college graduation interregnum before starting law school. Besides the obvious reportorial skills, what strikes me as significant is the well honed opinions of a still young man from Newport. Also of interest is how my father and his family had the resources during the height of the Great Depression to send him on a trip of this magnitude (the devalued U.S. currency aside).

Leo Tobak had been born in Newport on March 26, 1912, the son of Charles ("Charlie") and Gussie (Nass) Tobak. He died in the city he loved on May

8, 1946, when I was only a few weeks old.

Growing up in a predominantly Irish neighborhood, Newport's storied Fifth Ward, Leo attended local schools and graduated from Rogers High School in 1929. He ventured off Aquidneck Island for Providence and Brown University, where he received a degree in economics in 1933. From there it was Harvard Law School, graduating in 1936 and hightailing it right back to Newport, where he clerked for a prominent local firm before establishing his own practice.

Shortly after Charlie and Gussie Tobak sold their ice cream parlor and small soda factory in the Fifth Ward, they moved to 29 Everett Street, coincidentally a few doors up from 21 Everett, the home of my maternal grandparents, Herman and Virginia (Engel) Werner, their two sons, Jack and Harold, and a daughter, Florence Rosalyn, the woman destined to be his bride. If they weren't already acquainted, I can only imagine that changed rather quickly.

According to an article in the March 28, 1941 issue of the *Newport Mercury*, my father was given a bachelor party by about 30 members of the Newport County Bar Association. It was cochaired by a close friend, Julius Schaeffer, and the cousins, George and Alex Teitz (affectionately known, if without a trace of irony, as "Big" and "Little" George). On the 9th of Nissan, 5701 (April 6th, 1941) Leo and Florence were married in the Werner family home. Their *ketubah* was signed by Rabbi Morris Gutstein of Congregation Jeshuat Israel (Touro Synagogue), with Rabbi Heinrich Katz of Newport's Congregation Ahavas Achim participating in the service.

Of note, and redolent of a certain – too obvious to be named – 16th-century play depicting an ill-fated romance between two young Italian aristocrats with feuding families, my parents came from, if not warring, at least very different Jewish family backgrounds. That Leo Levy Tobak and Florence Rosalyn Werner surmounted these differences to form their union remains a mystery, certainly to their son.

On my mother's side were the Engel-Werners, German Jews, who, following a near hundred-year "sabbatical," formed the first wave of Jews returning to Newport in the late 1800s. My great grandfather, Julius Engel, was prominently involved in establishing Congregation Jeshuat Israel both before and after it became the congregation of Touro Synagogue. I believe he was the first president of the



Leo (undated)

nascent congregation and, according to his obituary in the *Newport Daily News*, he was thought to be the first person buried in Touro's cemetery in "modern times" (which was 1921). Of interest today, he was one of three signatories on behalf of the congregation to the 1903 and 1908 leases with North America's oldest Jewish congregation, the Sephardic Shearith Israel of New York City.

On the Nass-Tobak side, my father's family was of Russian-Polish-Austrian origin, depending as one might expect on the fluidity of those national boundaries. Included among a second wave of Jews resettling in Newport, and mostly of Eastern European and Russian stock, was my paternal great-grandfather, Julius Nass. There was a certain level of distaste, maybe even arising to animosity, between the German Jews arriving earlier in Newport and their later arriving Slavic "cousins."

In dramatic contrast to Julius Engel, Julius Nass was instrumental in establishing a rival congregation, Ahavas Achim, which was chartered in 1915. Julius was its first president. Unlike Jeshuat Israel housed in Touro Synagogue, Ahavas Achim was in need of a new building, so Julius was prominent in raising funds.

Although I never had the opportunity to know my father, I grew up with the impression, frequently confirmed by his clients, friends and old-time Newporters, that he was highly regarded and well respected both as an attorney and a member of the community. On the day of his death the local paper of record, the *Newport Daily News*, carried a front page obituary: "LEO L. TOBAK DIES, PROMINENT ATTORNEY." The obituary goes on to extol some of his civic and political activities, including being a candidate for the Representative Council as a Republican (this gives me pause, but boy have times changed). He had been a member of the Chamber of Commerce, the Newport Bar Association, the Lions Club, and a leader of Ahavas Achim (where, for example, he had been secretary of the campaign in the 1930s to raise \$50,000 for a new synagogue on Central Street, where I would become a bar mitzvah).

Sometime after the death of his first wife, Miriam, in 1929, Julius Nass

made *aliyah*. Palestine was not only the final stop on my father's 1933 grand tour; very likely a visit with his grandfather was its *raison d'être*.

Here are my father's words from the *Newport Mercury*:

To the Editor of the News:

I have just traversed the European continent via the Southern route. It would be a vain attempt on my part to describe all I have seen. The American tourist is rushed through these countries so rapidly that he sees only the most important landmarks in each locality. At the present time the dollar dropping here as it is, there is a great advantage in being literally dragged through these places, where, as a zealous, patriotic American tourist remarked, "The American dollar is not respected." Seriously, however, I would appreciate having some one tell President Roosevelt that unless he maintains those "funny little green pieces of paper" at some sort of a par, Charles Tobak's little boy will be forced to repeat Mattern's Siberian experience¹ way out here on the desert wastes of Arabia. In this connection it may be of interest to Will Rogers and Rev. Magoun² to know that several staunch Democrats, now in Europe, have pledged themselves to vote Republican unless something is done in the immediate future to restore the "purchasing power parity of American currency." The landmarks of France, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece have been described many times by people much more observing than I. It is not so long ago that Rev. Magoun gave us his excellent and vivid impressions of the European continent. Every American observer is fascinated and impressed in very much the same way.

I am now traveling, however, in a section of the world that is not frequented by Americans in such large numbers. This country – Palestine – is of interest for various reasons to all the people of the world. The Biblical significance of Palestine is overpowering. The various Hebrew and Christian landmarks in Jerusalem, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, Jericho, Nazareth, Galil, the Dead Sea and the River Jordan – all these are awe-inspiring, to say the least. It sends a cold chill down one's spine to stand on the very spot where Christ was born or to stand on the rock from which Moses saw the promised land. I myself am not a fanatic believer, yet, I stood speechless as I observed the tomb where Abraham and Isaac lie buried. Such is the significance of Palestine as a whole.

Palestine has another – more specific – significance. It is now fast becoming the National Jewish Homeland. The city of Tel Aviv, where I am staying, is an outstanding example of the transformation that is taking place. This city in 1921 was little more than an Arab wilderness. Today only 12 years later it is a modern flourishing city of 80,000 people; in fact it is made modern in construction and anticipation

than most American cities. Tel Aviv is unique in still another way- it is 100 per cent Jewish. Every stone, every building, every street has been laid by Jewish labor and capital.

At present there is going on here a land and real estate boom such as would be the envy of Florida. Unlike Florida, however, the boom here is a natural one prompted by necessity. Jewish occupation of this territory has been so recent and so steady that building operations have lagged behind settlement. As a result prices and rents are outrageously high. My countrymen here have the nerve to charge from \$45 to \$50 per month for two rooms. What is more spectacular to a disinterested observer such as I is that others of my compatriots pay these prices without even twitching an eyelash. What a difference a few thousand miles make in real estate values. But then I suppose it will all turn out for the best here because this is God's country and we're God's chosen people. The only difficulty as far as the capitalist is concerned is that God only knows what will eventually happen.

In case you American capitalists and real estate owners, if I may recall ancient history, are not already green with envy, I would also like to inform you that 1st price mortgages bear 12% interest and that the banks do not accept new deposits for interest because they already have too much spare capital on hand. It is an irony of fate that in America such a similar phenomenon should be accompanied by depression while in Palestine it signifies unprecedented prosperity.

After thousands of years of wandering, the Jews have finally been forced to realize that Palestine is really their Homeland. It is a sight to behold thousands of young men and women tilling every available piece of soil not merely for (money?) but as their contribution to the building of a united Jewish National Home. These people are real pioneers. They have done great work. It is little wonder that every day brings hundreds of new settlers to this land which bids fair to become one of the great countries of the future. It is significant that Palestine with all its rich Hebrew tradition should once more become occupied by a new race of Jews who are not unmindful of the heritage of their forefathers.

Leo Tobak

Tel Aviv, Palestine

I think that I can say with confidence, tempered by sadness, that the great joy of my father's life was being married to my mother and having a beautiful baby daughter, Helen Ruth Tobak Weisman (1942-2010), whom he adored. I only wish that I had gotten to know him and learn more about the wonderful adventure that

Florence, 1941



Leo and Helen, 1942



brought him to the Promised Land.

I would like to believe that his trip revealed to him the grit, ingenuity, and determination of a people, our people, and that their dream could move them toward a reality. One can only hope that the 1933 impressions that so inspired the twenty-one year old Leo Tobak of Newport will indeed someday be fully realized.

Editor's Notes

1

Jimmie Mattern (1905-1988), an American aviator, tried to break the world record for circumnavigating the globe. On his second attempt, in June, 1933, he crash-landed in Siberia.

2

Roy N. Magoun, an Episcopal priest, was superintendent of the Seamen's Church Institute in Newport from 1919 to 1945.

Views of Palestine from the 1930s: *Postcards from the Archives*

Geraldine S. Foster

Jerry, a past president of our Association, has written or co-written nearly 25 articles for our journal. She claims that she has retired, but I won't allow her to become a contributor emerita. (Similarly, Fran Ostendorf, editor of *The Jewish Voice*, expects a frequent column from her.)

Jerry always has something worthwhile to tell us or teach us. But seldom, if ever, does she boast about her own considerable legacy and accomplishments. Is it merely a coincidence, for example, that Jerry and Warren's son, Harold, is, like his grandfather, Beryl Segal, a thoughtful and hardworking officer of our board?

Flying from New York to Israel today takes 12 hours. Sailing from New York to Palestine in 1935, on such a ship as the Italian line's *Conte di Savoia*, required a minimum of 12 days. The cost of today's plane ticket, however, is twice as much as was a round-trip cabin for two in upgraded tourist class. During the 1930s, visitors could not legally enter Palestine without a British visa, which required the presentation of a duplicate affidavit and the deposit of 60 pounds (approximately \$300) at a British consulate.

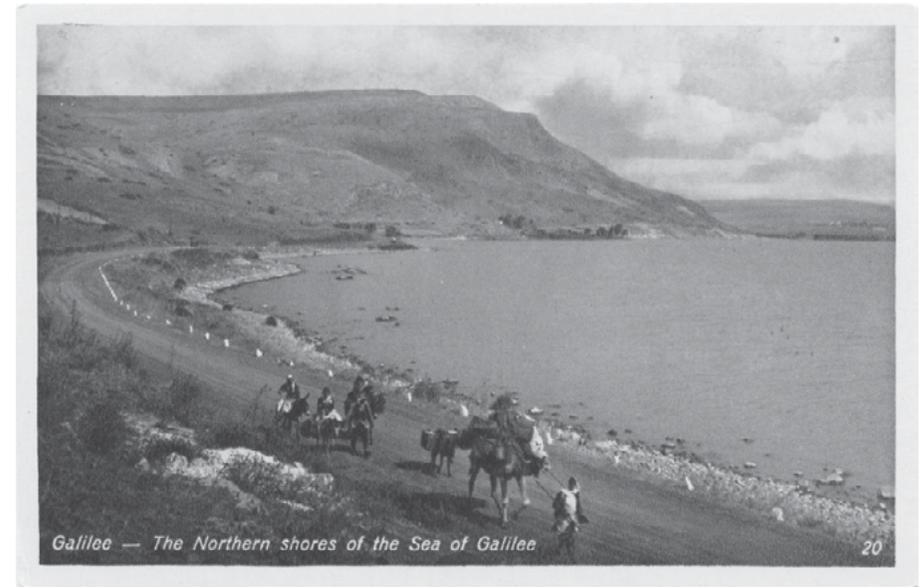
To undertake such a voyage also required a very high degree of dedication to the dream of Jewish renaissance in the Promised Land. Only a few Rhode Islanders made *aliyah*, but others who supported the Zionist cause were curious to see the *Yishuv*, the new Jewish community arising in the ancient land. Among these curious Rhode Islanders were Mrs. Isaac Woolf, Milton Scribner, and Mr. and Mrs. Saul Feinberg.

Betty Woolf (1872-1946), who had family living in Haifa, kept a diary of her experiences on her fourth-month trip to Palestine in 1938, following her husband's death. (The large home they had built at 321 Hope Street still stands.) An article about her trip was published in the 1999 issue of our journal.

Milton Scribner (1912-2010), while still a student, was influenced by David Ben Gurion and Golda Meir's Labor Zionist vision. In the year following his 1934 graduation from Brown University, he worked as a *halutz*, a pioneer on a kib-



Tiberias, founded in the first century C.E. on the western shore of the Galilee, was considered one of Judaism's four holy cities under Ottoman rule of Palestine. [Scribner Collection]



Jerusalem's Ben Yehuda Street, constructed by the British, has been a major thoroughfare since the 1920s. [Feinberg Collection]

[Above] The Galilee (or Kinneret), fed by the Jordan River, is the lowest freshwater lake on earth. [Scribner Collection]

[Opp./top] Rishon LeZion, a sandy area south of present-day Tel Aviv, was established by Russian Jews in 1882. [Scribner Collection]

butz. After returning to Providence, he remained actively involved in Zionist organizations.

Sarah Feinberg (1911-1993) was a stalwart of Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America. She was eloquent in her appeals in behalf of its hospital in Jerusalem and other social services. Not only president of Hadassah's Providence chapter, she served as vice-president of the organization's New England region.

The list of communal agencies to which Saul Feinberg (1901-1958) gave his time and talents was long and varied. For example, he was president of Providence's Jewish Community Center. Over a decade, its summer campers had sweet memories of his frequent visits. He distributed treats from Candy Mart, where he was secretary and treasurer.

Mr. Scribner and Mr. and Mrs. Feinberg left a legacy

of their travels through gifts of their postcard collections to our Association. These commercial images, which were printed in Palestine, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, and Italy, capture moments of history – places as they once were. This group represents a selection.

Tel Hai, a kibbutz in the Upper Galilee, memorializes eight Jews, including Joseph Trumpeldor, the commander of the local militia, who died resisting an Arab incursion. [Scribner Collection]



Warren and Libby, ca. 1975



Our Daughter Made *Aliyah*

Geraldine S. Foster

This article builds on Shai Afsai's important study of *aliyah* in our previous issue. Through words and photos, he portrayed numerous young people, mostly educated at and inspired by Providence's Congregation Beth Sholom, who built new lives in Israel. No doubt, members of many Rhode Island synagogues have followed and fulfilled their dreams by settling in the Jewish homeland.

Jerry's daughter, Libby, is not the only alumna of Temple Beth-El who has built a new life in or near Jerusalem. But her story seems quite unusual, if not unique, for it has allowed and encouraged her mother to participate in two quite special ceremonies.

"I've been accepted to the Hiatt program!" The excitement in Libby's voice was almost palpable. "I'm going to Israel!"

Libby, our third child and a Judaic studies major at Brandeis University, would thus be spending the next semester at the Jacob Hiatt Institute in Jerusalem. The Institute afforded students the opportunity to study Israel's political and social institutions, Jewish history, and contemporary Hebrew.

In 1977, directly after finishing her exams, Libby packed her duffel bag and suitcase, said good-bye to her family and friends, and boarded an El Al plane for Israel.

In glowing terms Libby wrote of her studies, her fluency in Hebrew ("almost accent-less"), and the joy of being in Israel. Though technically not able to work, she still managed to find a temporary job, where she could make use of her Hebrew, Spanish, and of course English. Later, with great difficulty, Warren and I persuaded her to return home to finish her senior year at Brandeis, which she did in 1978. Libby then earned a master of arts degree in teaching English as a secondary language, but it was obvious that she was marking time until she could return to Israel.

Armed with her new degrees, Libby officially made *alyah* in 1981. We had a large number of close family members in Israel – aunts, uncles, and a host of

cousins, some living on *kibbutzim* or on a *moshav*, others in the Tel Aviv area. All welcomed Libby and opened their homes and hearts to her, but she was not drawn to the countryside in the north or the cityscape of Tel Aviv. It was the mystique of Jerusalem— its history, its many cultures, its colors— to which she responded and where she decided to make her home.

Libby had a host of friends – Israeli and American, Jewish and Arab. Her letters described her adventures traveling about the land and exploring her city. Soon, however, the romance of her independence met the harsher reality of finding employment. Her American degrees did not meet the requirements for teaching in Israeli schools. The number of private English tutors far exceeded the demand. Once again, thanks to her fluency in languages, she managed to find a succession of part-time or temporary positions as a secretary, a waitress, and a tutor.

Warren and I watched from afar with mixed emotions. We wanted her to follow her dream and succeed in her choice, but at the same time we wanted her here. Each time we heard or read about terror incidents anywhere in Israel, we were nagged by a nebulous sense of fear. In subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) ways, we tried to persuade her to return to the United States. Libby ignored our efforts.

About two years after her arrival in Israel, two conversations changed the arc of her life. In the first, with a friend from Abu Ghosh, whose mother was a school principal, Libby spoke of her problems finding a teaching position. He suggested, “Why don’t you apply for a position as a bank teller? The pay scale is the same as a teacher, and you know languages.” The friend’s advice led to a 20-year career in banking and international finance at Bank Leumi. The second conversation involved a young man named Miko, a conversation that continues to this day.

Miko (Meir) Agai is a sabra, the youngest of 12 children. After serving in the Army, he spent time in the United States with the idea of making *aliyah* to this country, but the pull of family and Israel were too strong. He returned home with a limited knowledge of English and memories of Los Angeles.

Miko’s parents, while still in their early teens but betrothed, were part of a large group of Persian Jews from Shiraz who had left their homes during the 1920s for Palestine. Posing as a nomadic Arab clan, they walked for four years, pausing here and there on their way to earn money for necessities, always on the lookout for marauders. Miko’s mother was 17 when they finally reached Safed, the final destination for most of the group, but she insisted that her destination was the

Holy City of Jerusalem. There she would build her home and raise her family. She prevailed.

When Miko introduced Libby to his family, she did not receive a warm welcome, particularly from his seven sisters. “She was too different,” was one comment. “She would not fit in. She does not cook like we do. She is too American, not Mizrahi Orthodox. Was she even Jewish? Was she going to lure Miko back to America?” After several meetings, Miko’s parents took a second look and reached out to Libby, as did two of his sisters and two of his brothers. The others later followed suit.

Initially, Miko did not feel comfortable with Libby’s Canadian cousins, who had made *aliyah* and were living in suburban Tel Aviv. This was a world away from Nachlaot, where he grew up. Though all of Libby’s cousins were fluent in Hebrew, they tended to lapse into English when among themselves. Their education, their politics, their attitudes, and their expectations were foreign to Miko’s experience. Besides, he did not (and still does not) like most Ashkenazi or American inspired foods. He felt more comfortable with our relatives living on *kibbutzim*, but they lived too far away for more than very occasional visits.

Undeterred by these differences, the “interfaith” romance blossomed. I met Miko on one of my annual trips to Israel, which began in 1980. He was somewhat shy but we soon developed a comfort level between his halting English and my halting Hebrew. (He no longer has problems with English, but I cannot say the same for my Hebrew.)

The time came in 1984 for us to meet the prospective in-laws. This time Warren came with me, and we were invited to their home for dinner. The assemblage, crowded into the parlor, included Miko’s parents, Rosa and Nissan, ten of his siblings and their spouses, plus a number of cousins. The cousins wisely retreated quickly to the courtyard and the shade of the lovely pomegranate tree, while most of the women withdrew to the kitchen.

The Agai family members spoke little or no English. Warren did not speak Hebrew and, as I have said, my grasp of the spoken language was tenuous, certainly no match for their rapid-fire delivery. Mostly we smiled at each other, with Libby and Miko acting as translators when a bit of conversation seemed imminent. Mostly the Agai family conversed among themselves, and we smiled.

Then came the dinner early in the afternoon. Long tables were set up in

the parlor, and folding chairs were put out. All the male members of the family took seats. Warren was given a place of honor next to Miko's father, and I was to be next to him. Two or three of the older sisters sat to one side. The others were busy serving the men. Out came platters loaded with food – "cigars," grape leaves, *kubbeh* (a meat dish), Persian rice, and roasted meat. Warren ate with gusto, savoring every dish placed before him, which totally endeared him to the family.

Despite the obvious cultural differences, we did establish a rapport. The family was most hospitable, and we appreciated and enjoyed the afternoon. In time, even with the lack of a common language, we became quite close with Rosa and Nissan and several of Miko's brothers and sisters. With the best interests of our children in our hearts, we can overcome major difficulties.

Libby and Miko chose their wedding date, September 5, 1984. The wedding had to take place in Jerusalem or it would have been impossible for Miko's family to attend. In truth, we had more close family living in Israel than we did in the United States. I decided that I would have to go to Israel in June to plan the event.

Because Libby was not born in Israel, I had to bring proof that she was Jewish. No problem, I thought. My mother, Chaya Segal, had my parents' engagement contract, which had been written in a beautiful script by my paternal grandfather, Aaron Isaac Segal, a Torah scribe. (My parents' *ketubah*, a betrothal contract, had been lost.) That worked for me, but, I was informed, it did not apply to my daughter, according to an Orthodox rabbi we knew. Because this rabbi had known my parents, my aunt and uncle, and Warren and me, I asked if he would write one of the two required testimonies. "No," he replied. Warren and I had been married in a Reform synagogue, Providence's Temple Beth-El, by a Reform rabbi, Meir Lasker (because Rabbi William Braude was ill), so this matter had to be brought before a *bet din* (a rabbinic court) in Boston. That had not been on my to-do list.

As it happens, Rabbi James Israel Gordon, ordained by Yeshiva University's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Seminary, had signed my *ketubah*. He was also the nephew of my aunt, Anna Katze Segal, so he gladly supplied one of the needed testimonies. Rabbi Sholom Streicher, who was dean of Providence Hebrew Day School at that time, wrote the other. He knew of my involvement in Jewish education. He was also aware that our youngest child, Harold, had been a student at Providence Hebrew Day School. So Rabbi Streicher had no problem providing the needed statements.

Armed with proof of Libby's Jewish heritage, I flew to Israel to help plan the wedding. I was confronted with a totally new situation, however. Where was I to begin? Options were limited. Renting a wedding hall? The ambience was not very inviting. I was also told that guests, while seated at the tables, talked and smoked during the wedding ceremony. Not our idea of decorum. Caterers? No recommendations. It depended on the wedding hall. Florists? Mainly they were flower and plant sellers. Hotels? "Too pricey or too shabby," I was warned. Besides, the number of guests was only 200, too small for some to consider, too large for others. "Do not even try," I was told.

Fate intervened when we finally decided to try the Jerusalem Hilton. There I met Sue, a friend of my nephew Alex Hockman, in the hospitality department. She was a godsend. Sue walked me through menu options, floral arrangements, and seating arrangements. She took care of details after I had returned home. The warning about hotels proved wrong in this case at least.

I found one custom, involving invitations, completely foreign. They were not to be mailed, but personally delivered by Libby and Miko. No RSVP card would be enclosed. It was taken for granted the recipients would attend.

On September 5, 1984, in the presence of family and friends, Libby and Miko were married in the garden of the Jerusalem Hilton with a lovely, not lavish, reception and dinner followed. And the band was not too loud.

The newlyweds were able to purchase an apartment across the street from a little park and a school in Abu Tor, a Jerusalem neighborhood overlooking the Old City. Many residents, including mothers and children, Jews and Arab, frequented the park. Boys played soccer in the schoolyard. It was coexistence on a positive level.

We kept in touch with our family through weekly phone calls and annual visits either to or from Israel. On one memorable visit, in 1989, Libby and Miko came with their infant son, Dov Avraham, so that my mother, no longer able to travel, could meet and hold her fifth great-grandson. A decade later, Deana joined the family circle.

The divide of distance could not be overcome even with the introduction of Skype and Whatsapp. On too many happy occasions, and sad ones as well, Libby and her family were sorely missed, as we were at theirs. We had to be content with descriptions of events or secondhand news. Each *Pesach*, when I take out our silver



**Agai Family: Miko, groom
Dov, bride Maya, Libby &
Deana**

Thirty-Six Years

Libby Foster Agai

Fortunately for us, Jerry invited her daughter to add some of her own brief but heartfelt comments.

Kiddush cups, each engraved with the Hebrew name of a family member, I take out the four that belong to Libby's family, polish them, and put them back in their resting place. Perhaps next year...

In June of this year, Libby's siblings (Judith, Vivian, and Harold), their spouses, two of her nephews, and her happy mother arrived in Israel to attend the wedding of my grandson, Dov Avraham, and his lovely fiancée, Maya Bergal. Her parents had emigrated from the Ukraine when she was very young. Did she have to prove her Jewish roots? It was most likely settled back when her parents, Stella and Boris, applied for Israeli citizenship. Unlike our situation, Dov's parents and Maya's spoke common languages, Hebrew and English. Both sets of parents hosted the wedding, this time with the assistance of an event planner to take care of details. But the invitations were still delivered personally to guests living in Israel.

The festivity brought together guests from Ukraine, Belorussia, Canada, Israel, and of course America, all 450 of us. This was a large wedding even by Israeli standards. Not all were family. A good portion were friends as well as Miko's business associates.

Twenty-five years earlier, he had left his job at Egged, the public bus line. With minimal funding and no business experience but with a willingness to learn and a network of friends ready to help, he founded a tour bus company, *Alumah*. His gamble worked well for his family.

And so we gathered on June 8 at Hahuza, an event space on a farm maintained by the Israeli government. It was a lovely evening. A light breeze played around the edges of the chuppah. The bride was lovely, the groom all smiles. The ceremony was meaningful. With the crack of the breaking glass, a cheer went up as the bride and groom's friends pressed forward to wish them *Mazal Tov*.

I grew up in a Zionist family. Israel was an integral part of our lives: from the blue Jewish National Fund box on the kitchen windowsill; to reacting to the news – good and bad – that transpired there; to the stories of our family who were among the pioneers who settled the land. My *Zaidie*, Beryl Segal, dreamed of being such a pioneer, but the realities of a wife and two young children cut short such dreams. Unlike two of his brothers, he remained in the United States.

When the opportunity arose for me to study in Israel during my junior year in college, I naturally jumped at the chance. I arrived in Jerusalem and was met by my cousin, Alex Hockman, who was also studying there. Together we set off on foot to explore the city.

Jerusalem in the late 1970s was so foreign, so exotic. I fell in love with the sounds, the sites, and the smells. It was so different from anything I knew, but it immediately felt right. I felt part of it.

At the end of my semester in Jerusalem, I called my parents to tell them exciting news: I had been accepted at Hebrew University to finish my degree. Only after much cajoling did they manage to persuade me to return to the States. They knew, as I did, that it was only a matter of time before I would pack my bags and return to Israel.

I made *aliyah* in my early twenties, at an age when one is sure that all is possible and when home is only a plane ride away, reachable whenever one wants. Soon, however, the realities of life crept in: a job, a husband, a mortgage, and a family. It is no longer one ticket home, but four. It couldn't be "whenever," but during school vacations and when the pressure of work would allow.

As I was settling down, life was also happening to my brother and sisters. They too married and began raising families. Just as they missed seeing my children

grow up on a regular basis, so I missed seeing my niece and nephews grow. I missed many of their milestones, both big and small. Although I loved my life, there was always a pang inside, a longing for home and family.

I was lucky to be accepted completely by my husband's large family. Holidays were huge, festive affairs, but somehow they were always bittersweet. They made me homesick for my family, our inside jokes and stories, special food, and togetherness.

Israel is my home as America is also part of me. I am proud of being an Israeli but also of being an American. Through all the years – 36 in October – I have never regretted making *aliyah*, and never for a minute have I thought of returning to the USA for more than a visit.

I proudly wore my New England Patriots sweatshirt when the team won the Super Bowl. Just as proudly, I wore my *HaPoel* Jerusalem shirt when it won the basketball championship this year.



Libby and Geraldine

A Clarification:

The 1889 Masonic Cornerstone Ceremony at Temple Beth-El

Shai Afsai

Shai knows plenty about the history of Freemasonry – in Rhode Island and beyond. If you have any questions about this fascinating fraternal order, he's your man.

Fortunately, Shai is not reticent about defending his scholarship or his independent point of view. Thus, with this article, he has not only called me to task, but demonstrated that I was wrong.

As for his next article in our journal, Shai plans to break new ground! He will write about another of his distant Jewish travels- far beyond Israel or Africa. Indeed, during 2018, he plans to return there as a pilgrim for a third time.

In my article, “Jews and Freemasons in Providence: Temple Beth-El and Redwood Lodge,” published in the 2013 issue of *The Notes*, I explained that Rhode Island's Masonic rituals, lectures, and orations have had – and continue to have – much overtly Christian content.¹ The Reform Jewish founders and early members of Providence's Redwood Lodge No. 35, constituted in 1878, could not have avoided perceiving at least some of this content. Evidently, they were not overly concerned about such Christian references, even those occurring within their own Masonic lodge.

In 1877, having affiliated with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Sons of Israel and David became only the second Reform congregation in New England. Between 1877 and 1883, members of this congregation (which became informally known as Temple Beth-El in 1911) rented the small chapel on Richmond Street that belonged to St. Paul's Evangelical (German) Lutheran Church. The extent to which Redwood Lodge's founders and early members sought and gained acceptance within the primarily Protestant social fabric of Rhode Island became evident in 1889, after Sons of Israel and David had purchased land and moved forward with plans to construct Providence's first synagogue. Equally evident was the extent to which Rhode Island Freemasonry played a part in that



Freemasons Hall, Providence,
built in 1886

successful integration.

As reported in *The Providence Journal*, on September 23, 1889, “with the substantial co-operation of friends of other [that is, Christian] religious denominations,” an elaborate Masonic cornerstone ceremony was conducted for the congregation by the Grand Lodge of Rhode Island. (When the completed structure was dedicated in an elegant ceremony on December 7, 1890, several current and former government officials as well as Protestant clergy participated.)

A procession set out from Freemasons Hall, the Grand Lodge building then located on Dorrance Street, and made its way to Sons of Israel and David’s recently purchased land at the corner of Friendship and Foster Streets. Members of Redwood Lodge acted as an escort to the Grand Lodge, and Redwood’s by-laws were among the Masonic documents placed in a box beneath the synagogue’s cornerstone.²

According to *The Providence Journal*, the Masonic cornerstone ceremony included Christian prayer and invoked the patronage of Christian saints. The newspaper account described how, after a brief address about the congregation’s history, its president, Alexander Strauss, requested that Grand Master George H. Kenyon lay the cornerstone. Strauss proclaimed: “Most Worshipful Grand Master of Masons of the State of Rhode Island: The Congregation Sons of Israel are about to have this structure erected for the purpose of worshipping God the Almighty, and perpetuating our faith, and in their behalf I most respectfully request you to lay the corner-stone, according to the ancient rites and usages of Free Masons.” Grand Chaplain Alfred Manchester “began the office,” commencing a call and response of Biblical verses. He then said, “Let us pray,” after which “the Grand Chaplain and the people united in the Lord’s prayer.” Rabbi Morris Sessler gave an oration and led other exercises. Finally, “[t]he Grand Master approached the stone, and, striking it three times with his gavel, said: ‘To the glory of God, under the patronage of the Holy Saints John the Baptist and the Evangelist, I declare this stone to be well formed, true and trusty, and laid by us in ample form.’” The cornerstone “exercises were concluded with the benediction by the Rabbi, with response by the choir.”³

The Providence Journal’s account raises the question of whether or not Providence’s early Reform Jews were as indifferent to Christian Masonic rituals being carried out in connection with their synagogue as they were in connection with Redwood Lodge. I left that question unanswered in the version of my article,



Synagogue of the Sons of Israel and David

“Jews and Freemasons in Providence,” which I first submitted to *The Notes*. I wrote: “Whether or not the Grand Lodge slightly modified its cornerstone ceremony in consideration of the Sons of Israel and David, the aspiration of the Jews of Redwood and the members of Providence’s Reform congregation to integrate into the surrounding Christian society and to affiliate with an established and respected non-Jewish fraternity had in great measure been fulfilled that day.”

After I submitted my article, George Goodwin, the editor of *The Notes*, sought to alter the above sentence. He suggested: “It will never be known whether or not the Grand Lodge slightly modified its cornerstone ceremony in consideration of the Sons of Israel and David. It is known, however, that on that September day Jewish members of Redwood Lodge and Reform congregants largely fulfilled their yearning to become accepted and integrated within the surrounding Christian society.” I opposed that editorial change, however, as I considered it wrong to essentially assert that there were no existing historical documents that could offer answers to the question of whether or not the ceremony had been modified. In fact, I hoped I might revisit the subject of the cornerstone ceremony at a later date when my research would be less constrained and I would have access to additional resources- and perhaps arrive at a firm conclusion. I certainly saw no wisdom in making bold pronouncements on what “will never be known” about the past.

The editor settled on the following sentence in the published version: “It remains uncertain whether or not the Grand Lodge slightly modified its cornerstone ceremony in consideration of the Sons of Israel and David.”⁴ I acceded to that sentence, though I felt the phrase “remains uncertain” was more conclusive than my original sentence and still too definitive.⁵

In the years since the publication of my *Notes* article, I have had the opportunity to study additional Masonic periodicals relating to the cornerstone ceremony. The following conclusions are drawn from my latest research.

Word of Sons of Israel and David having had a Christian Masonic cornerstone ceremony soon circulated beyond Providence, eliciting widespread opprobrium. Some of the commentary in Masonic publications touched on the pronounced difference between English and American lodges when it came to accommodating Jewish Freemasons. In February, 1890, for example, the editor of *The Freemason’s Chronicle*, a weekly published in London, declared in a front-page article, “Judaism and Freemasonry,” that American Freemasons would do well to emulate their English brethren and de-Christianize American Freemasonry:

An instance has recently occurred...proving that it is absolutely necessary to sometimes adopt our ritual to circumstances, rather than to maintain a rigid observance of the actual letter of our ceremonies. It appears the corner stone of a new Synagogue was to be laid at an American town, and the Masonic Order was honoured in being asked to perform the ceremony with Masonic rites, the Grand Master of the District himself undertaking to conduct the work. All went well, observes one of the Jewish journals, “until the presiding official came out with the following declaration: – ‘To the glory of God, and under the patronage of the holy saints – Saints John the Baptist and the Evangelist – I declare the stone to be well formed, &c.’”

. . . Freemasonry is essentially free to all classes and conditions of men, and in admitting all sorts it is distinctly understood that in its ceremonies there is nothing which in any way interferes with the peculiar religious views of the members. All that is required is a belief in a Supreme Being, and . . . on this basis then it must be wrong to associate in our ceremonies the name of any saint, or anything that cannot be acceptable to all classes alike. Of course it will never be possible to wholly disassociate the names of the two Saints John from Freemasonry, but it is possible to reduce reference to them to a minimum – also to a vanishing point – such as is the system adopted in England, a system that might well be followed in some parts of America and other quarters of the globe.⁶

A second criticism of the cornerstone ceremony, “Contemptuous treatment of Jews by American Masons,” was published in *The Freemason’s Chronicle* in mid-March, 1890. In his letter to the editor, a Jewish Bostonian, Jacob Norton, who had lived in London and had been made a Freemason there, contrasted what he considered to be the gentlemanly conduct toward Jews in



George H. Kenyon, M.D., Grand Master in 1891

He laid the cornerstone of the Sons of Israel and David's synagogue in 1889. He maintained that the Masonic cornerstone ceremony had been slightly modified in order to 'make it conform to the Jewish faith.'



Henry W. Rugg

His contributions to Rhode Island Freemasonry included serving as Grand Chaplain, editor of *The Freemasons Repository*, and Grand Lodge Historian.

English lodges with the insulting conditions he found in American ones:

Outside of a Masonic gathering the American Jew, when associating with any kind of decently behaving Christian society [in America], is treated as gentlemanly as the Jew is treated in similar good society in England. But in a Masonic Lodge the Jew receives a very different kind of treatment in America to what he receives in an English Lodge. In my younger days I imagined that a Masonic Grand Lodge was a focus of wisdom and justice. I have, however, long since found out my mistake. I am now a firm believer that in America at least a Grand Lodge is a compound of credulity and Jesuitism. Hence, under the pretence of 'ancient landmarks,' they assume a right to insult a Jew in a Masonic Lodge, which they would not dare to do when not decorated with a Masonic apron, Square, Compasses, &c. Here [that is, the cornerstone ceremony for the new synagogue in Providence] is an instance or case in point.⁷

Norton, who wished to know what Providence's Jews thought and said about the cornerstone ceremony, promised to look into the matter and update *The Freemason's Chronicle* on his findings.

Meanwhile, Henry W. Rugg, the editor of *The Freemasons Repository*, a Masonic monthly published in Providence, responded to the February *Freemason's Chronicle* editorial with his own "Judaism and Freemasonry." Though identically titled, Rugg's editorial was palpably different in tone and approach. Rugg, employing the editorial *we*, avowed that Christian language had indeed been used in the cornerstone ceremony, but that this was of no consequence, as the proper response for Jews was not to be insulted by such seeming-tactlessness:

Our Jewish Brethren, belonging to a people ever faithful to the religion of their ancestors, must not be quick to take offence where none is intended. They must expect, as we know some of the most intelligent of the Hebrew Masons do expect, that in a Fraternity where the Christian element constitutes so considerable a majority there will be some expressions occasionally in form, ritual, prayers, or special services, to which under other circumstances they would take objection. For their own peace of mind they will do well not to be over sensitive or over critical regarding allusions to the distinctive Christian features supposed by some to attach to Freemasonry.

... we allude to this matter to make the statement that the Jewish Brethren gathered at that corner stone laying were not greatly troubled at the form of words used in the ritual, and the special allusion to the Saints. As one prominent Jew remarked in our hearing: "We knew that no offence was intended, and therefore did not feel insulted, scarcely annoyed, by the form used in placing the foundation stone of our new

Centennial
Announcement
of the Grand
Lodge of
Rhode Island, 1890



Synagogue.” This, we think, is the proper view to be taken by members of the Hebrew faith in all cases where Masonic teaching and services may not quite harmonize with their own ideas.⁸

About a month after he had first stated his intention to update *The Freemason’s Chronicle* on the cornerstone ceremony, Norton shared his findings in an article titled “Not so bad as at first supposed.” Based on information provided to him by a Jewish non-Mason who had been present at the cornerstone ceremony, Norton concluded that Christian terminology had not actually been used:

A ritual, printed in Rhode Island in 1886, for laying a corner-stone has in it, “under the patronage of the holy Saints John,” &c. And the same ritual was reprinted to be used at the laying of a corner stone of a synagogue on the 23rd of September 1889. The said ritual was printed in the local papers; the Jewish papers in New York naturally found fault, so did the editor of the *Freemason’s Chronicle*, and so did I. Upon further inquiry I was informed . . . that the printing of the ritual, without expunging the objectionable allusions to the Saints John, was a blunder of the building Committee . . . and the Grand Master had the good sense to act accordingly, and after the error appeared in the Jewish press the Rabbi of the Providence, R.I., congregation informed the Jewish editors in New York and Cincinnati that the Grand Master of Rhode Island did not use the objectionable part of the ritual.

Norton also discussed Rugg’s peculiar defense of an affront that had not been committed on that particular occasion, but which otherwise took place regularly within Rhode Island lodges:

Rev. Bro. Rugg, editor of the *Masonic Repository*, in Providence, Rhode Island, in the last issue of his publication, makes no denial whatever about the Grand Master having uttered the very words of the printed ritual when laying the corner stone of the Synagogue . . . He reminds them [that is, Jews] that since the Masonic revival [of 1717] *at least*, the Christian element has predominated in Masonic Lodges, and as it is of no use to reason with pious Christians about the case in point, then, for the sake of peace, harmony, and brotherly love, the Jew should not be too sensitive to the insults he receives in Masonic Lodges; the Jew should be broad-minded; and, in short, he should grin and bear with equanimity the treatment he receives from brother Masons.

. . . Bro. Rugg’s testimony certainly confirms the report that was circulated in the Jewish papers, that the corner stone was laid in accordance with the printed ritual. But,

on the other hand, my informant assured me that Bro. Rugg was not present at the laying of the said corner-stone.

. . . until otherwise proved, I shall indulge in the hope that good manners are not altogether extinct, even in the very pious Masonic Grand Lodge of Rhode Island.⁹

Norton's indulgence proved wise. In March 1890, Rugg – again employing the editorial *we* – informed readers of *The Freemasons Repository* that Christian language had *not* been used as part of the cornerstone ceremony:

We supposed the allegation in regard to a reference to the Saints John in a Masonic ritual used at the laying of the corner-stone of a Jewish synagogue, to be in accordance with the facts in the case.

We are assured on the best authority that no such reference was made in the ceremony — that the words alleged to have been uttered were not spoken by the presiding officer or anyone else taking part in the services of that occasion.¹⁰

Grand Master Kenyon also felt it necessary to correct the widespread misapprehension about aspects of the cornerstone ceremony over which he had presided. Acknowledging the potential tension between Rhode Island Masonic ritual and Jewish beliefs, at the 100th annual communication of the Grand Lodge in May 1890, Kenyon declared:

[O]n the 23d of September [1889] Grand Lodge was convened in Special Communication to lay the corner stone of the new Jewish Synagogue on Friendship street. Having received from the Committee of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel an invitation to perform that service the same was accepted, and on the day mentioned the corner stone was laid in ample form according to the ritual adopted by Grand Lodge, with only such slight modification as would make it conform to the Jewish faith . . .

I wish here to correct an impression which has been circulated extensively, and commented upon not only in the Masonic journals of our country but abroad, wherein we were represented as performing this ceremony in terms inconsistent with the religious faith of our Jewish brethren. Such was not the case, and all who were present and gave attention to the services can well remember the omission of the words which were said to have been used, and to have been distasteful to the people for whom we were laying the corner stone.¹¹

For a time, during 1889 and 1890, what exactly transpired at the Masonic cornerstone ceremony for Sons of Israel and David remained uncertain to numer-

ous interested parties in and out of Rhode Island. It may be concluded, however, that the Grand Lodge – in consideration of the members of Sons of Israel and David – modified its public ceremony for laying a cornerstone. The aspirations of Redwood's Jewish founders to integrate within Rhode Island's Christian society and to affiliate their congregation within the established, respected, and mostly Protestant Masonic fraternity had been visibly fulfilled that day in September, 1889 without an embarrassing compromise of Jewish faith.

(Endnotes)

1

Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes XVII (November, 2013), 417-27.

2

"Jewish Synagogue: Laying of the Corner Stone with Masonic Ceremonial," *The Providence Journal*, September 24, 1889, 6.

3

"Jewish Synagogue," 6.

4

The Notes XVII (November, 2013), 425.

5

I also added an endnote: "I tend to credit Grand Master Kenyon's account [that the ceremony was modified]. It is possible that The Providence Journal simply reprinted the written Rhode Island Masonic text commonly used for the laying of cornerstones, and did not record the precise words that were actually used during Sons of Israel and David's ceremony. Nineteenth-century Masonic leaders were quite open about the link between Christianity and Freemasonry in Rhode Island. More evidence is needed if one is to posit that Kenyon was unaware of Christian usage during the Sons of Israel and David's ceremony or was trying to cover it up" (*The Notes* XVII, 427). In my subsequent and lengthier "Freemasonry and Religious Accommodation in Rhode Island," *Heredom* 23 (2015): 137-70, I wrote: "Though outside the scope of this particular study, the extensive discussions of the synagogue cornerstone ceremony in Masonic journals, mentioned by Grand Master Kenyon, suggest an interesting area for further research . . . It is possible that The Providence Journal simply reprinted the published Rhode Island Masonic text commonly used for the laying of cornerstones, and did not record the precise words that were actually used during the Sons of Israel and David's ceremony. Again, this presents an interesting area for further research" (169). The current *Notes* article follows up on both areas of research.

6

"Judaism and Freemasonry," *The Freemason's Chronicle*, February 1, 1890, 1.

7

Jacob Norton, "Contemptuous Treatment of Jews by American Masons," *The Freemason's Chronicle*, March 15, 1890 (written 28 February, 1890), 11.

8

"Judaism and Freemasonry," *The Freemasons Repository* 29, 5 (February, 1890), 40-1.

9

Norton, "Not so bad as at first supposed," *The Freemason's Chronicle*, April 12, 1890 (written 28 March, 1890), 4.

A Conversation with Percival Goodman

George M. Goodwin

The architect of Temple Beth-El's third home, dedicated in 1954, was not only America's most prolific synagogue architect, but probably the most prolific in all of Jewish history. Goodman, born in New York City in 1904, had the privilege of working during the extraordinary postwar era, when scores of congregations departed central cities for suburbs and others sprung into existence.

But numbers alone are not important. Many of Goodman's houses of worship, study, and assembly are architecturally accomplished. Indeed, as indicated below, he considered Providence's Beth-El one of his best. And he was pleased to design a large addition for a sister congregation, Temple Emanu-El.

The following interview, Goodman's last, was recorded at his Upper West Side apartment on May 12, 1989. He was recovering from surgery, but I doubt that the architect was unusually outspoken. I eventually learned that, despite diplomatic overtures and gestures, he said whatever was on his mind.

Today it's evident that Goodman's approach to modernism was more subdued than radical. Indeed, as an idealist, he harbored deep respect for Jewish tradition. Ironically, however, this latter-day Bezalel never became an observant Jew. Or his observance was limited to what his mind could imagine, his heart could feel, and his hands could draw. What more could one ask? Perhaps "Percy" was also atypical of many modernists in that he grasped some of his own limitations. Thus, he always looked forward to his next commission, which might provide a fresh opportunity to improve, innovate or ponder the past.

This interview became central to my lengthy article about Goodman's Beth-El, which was published in the spring/ summer, 1993 issue of *American Jewish Archives* (and a shorter version in the 1994 issue of *The Notes*). Fortunately, the Goodman interview led to many others with such prominent architects as Philip Johnson, E. Fay Jones, Richard Meier, I. M. Pei, and Moshe Safdie. The Beth-El article led to others about synagogue architecture, which, you probably know, is one of my key concerns and passions.

Indeed, I have been privileged to belong to three architecturally distinguished synagogues in cities with religiously distinguished names: Los Angeles, St. Paul, and Providence. Having found rest, hope, and peace within these structures, I have no need to seek another. Then again, I have never tired of visiting Touro, North America's oldest extant synagogue and the first in Rhode Island that summoned Betsey and me.



G: Did any architectural ideas grow out of your first visit to Israel in 1948?

P: The first Saturday I was there – with my wife, an English architect, and his wife – we went to Mea Shearim at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. The Englishman was not Orthodox, but much more religiously oriented than I. He asked the ladies if they would mind staying out in the street. Not waiting for an answer, he grabbed my arm and took me into a doorway.

There was a room about as big as this sitting room. In the center was a table with a white tablecloth. Sitting all around there must have been two-dozen men with long beards and caftans. There were a couple of pews on the side, where we sneaked in. In the corner were a little light burning and a tiny ark. These fellows sat and then all began to chant. Then there would be a silence. A young man with a yarmulke came in with a big silver bowl, which was full of little fish cakes- hot and delicious. He passed those around and said a little prayer. That's as much of a religious experience as I've ever had.

G: What did it mean to you?

P: It meant that if I could have that kind of experience that I could accept all the nonsense that is connected to the 612 *mitzvot*.

G: But what did you feel that was religious? I don't quite understand.

P: You were not inside your own self. You suddenly got out of yourself. You were in some other self.

G: The self of the congregation?

P: Yes. I was very interested in reading that the Talmud frowns in fact on individual prayer. Praying in a community is considered to be necessary and worthy. That accounts for the *minyan*.

G: Aside from feeling close to the other men in the sanctuary, did you have some kind of experience of God?

P: No. I don't know what that means.

G: But you thought about it?

P: I thought about it a great deal.

G: I imagine that you have.

P: I feel very much about God the way Confucius felt about ghosts. Somebody said to the Master, “You have talked about all kinds of things, but I have never once heard you talk about ghosts.” Confucius said, “When I see a ghost, I’ll talk about him.”

G: Then how do you explain your devotion to synagogue architecture?

P: How to put this simply? In life you have a certain number of choices. Among those choices, you have a choice of an art, a trade, a profession, a skill. Something called “talent,” I imagine. If you do this, you’ll do it better. I would certainly rather study a mathematical equation than examine the tooth of a Pleistocene monkey.

In my case, as you know, I was lucky. I found the big slot- architecture. Now within that big slot, there are many slots. You could design office buildings or dog kennels. It turned out by the sheerest chance that here was a building type which answered a number of questions. For example, I have always felt if you can’t build with the best stone, use the best brick. If you can’t use the best brick, use the best granite block. This is what the Bible says. But you’ve got to do as good as you could do it. That seemed fundamental.

Now that was not fundamental doing office buildings. Doing an office building wasn’t doing as good as you could, but doing as cheap as you could. That seemed to me ethically unsuited to my kind of thinking. Secondly, in a world full of violence, there were buckets of blood spread all over the screen- gunshots. Somebody would take a hammer and bust heads in. Who wants that?

If you have a place where people don’t go to see or hear this kind of thing, it would be nice. If you’re given this kind of place, then it would want to be rather unlike the outside. The outside is busy, full of lights. You want something that is tranquil, restful, and thoughtful.

People don’t go to a place for no reason. Rarely does a person take a walk just for the walk. They have ulterior motives. So you need an ulterior motive of a reasonable sort.

If I look through the great literature, I can see Shakespeare. I can see the St. James version of the Bible – a beautiful thing, a beautiful English translation. For those who had to have physical things, you have a candlestick. Put a candle in it to say some words. But you don’t have to think them up because they’ve been thought up.

You realize that something like this was a kind of déjà vu through a corridor, which went on and on and on and on. That corridor of tradition.

It wasn’t really whether you were asking for God’s blessing. I don’t want his blessing. I don’t need his blessing. I don’t believe in his blessing. I’ve never seen his blessing. But traditionally, his blessing had been asked for many times. There was an aura about it. So you couldn’t question it. It’s there. How can I, living in this instant of time, question a thing that has been happening? Therefore, you ask what should be the atmosphere of a place like this?

G: I want to clarify this issue. Are you saying that, fundamentally, you are an atheist, an agnostic, or somebody who is searching for deeper meaning?

P: To say “atheist,” I think that means to be against. I’m not sure about that. I’m, not against. To say “I don’t know” is not true. In order not to know, I’ve got to know something.

G: So where do you fit theologically or spiritually?

P: It is perfectly clear to me that there is no future life. Shall these bones live? These bones ain’t going to live. Just ain’t going to live. Being so fond of my wife, I wish there was a future life. But the chance of our being together is utterly incongruous. The idea of eternal rest? You fall into a deep sleep until you wake up?

To imagine that there is a single, all-powerful personage- in our image, because that’s what it says – who, with 1,000 eyes, is seeing us and listening to this conversation! That there is one who punishes Job or has a Jonah eaten up by a leviathan! These things are just too childish for me. They have been necessary.

I’ve recently written 120 poems about the Greeks. The essential element was to demythologize the Greek heroes. I tried to explain in natural terms what in fact that did- what seemed reasonable.

I’m, I suppose, a naturalist. Put a seed in the earth, and it becomes a



flower. Ultimately, it's dead. I see no difference between me and it. I think there's an interesting and to me quite insoluble element of human life. That is the fact that we can think of the past, think of the future, think of the present, and project ways of changing what can be changed.

But as to religion as a whole, I feel that the greatest curse that has happened to humankind has been religion. It has created more hatred, more villainy, and does so to this very day. I find that too bad.

G: On the other hand, you are obviously a believer in an ethical system.

P: I believe in an ethical system because I don't think people can be civilized without a certain element of ethics. This has nothing to do with goodness, kindness, holiness, but simply has to do with civility, just getting along with each other. How can you possibly get along with the next person unless you can judge that what is coming out of his mouth is something like the truth he thinks it is?

G: Don't you think that, at least within Jewish tradition, the synagogue has played a positive role?

P: Oh, I don't question that all the religious movements have had their civilizing effect. I mean the great cathedrals are not to be looked at as nothing.

G: On the other hand, the buildings themselves are not the source of ethical guidance.

P: No, they are representations and not the source. But the fact that one would build such a building for no reason is like the walk- it has to have a reason.

G: How would you characterize your own thoughts about religion? Are you a pragmatist, a cynic, an optimist or essentially a spectator?

P: I'm surely not optimistic about the way people, if uninhibited, behave. I certainly am pessimistic about the ways in which they will behave.

I've designed, oh, 50 synagogues. It's nearer 50 than 40. They're in 14 states.

G: As far as I know, you have built more synagogues than anybody at any time.

P: That's right. That's right.

G: That's quite an achievement.

P: It wasn't on purpose.

G: Not even at a certain point, when you decided that it was truly meaningful to you?

P: No, I never said I wasn't a hedonist. I do what I enjoy doing.

G: Why did you enjoy building so many synagogues?

P: Well, because it was typically a project that included objects which didn't make me shiver to think of their use. So you have a classroom with kids. You have a chapel. Here 50 or 60 people come together. During that period, I presume for many, they're not what they're going to be a half hour from then. There's a banquet hall. Here you have all those tables and all this food laid out and all these people on the speakers' platform. You're hoping that the food and the speeches won't be too dry. You're hoping that it will be warm enough – but not too warm. That there will be some pleasant little jokes to wile away the time.

Then there's the sanctuary. There I can only presume that the people come as they have been for 2,000 years. That's how it is.

G: I'm a little surprised, Mr. Goodman. I think that, from my own observations, your synagogues work so well, in spite, perhaps, of your own reservations. They are peaceful and beautiful and lend themselves to reflection and introspection. They do reach people in a spiritual way.

P: If that's true, the possible reason is that I'm not using a hammer to drive home the point.

G: On the other hand, don't you think you have a gift for "setting the stage" so to speak?

P: Yes, yes. A painter is given a canvas. He divides that canvas in different ways. The control he has over that is only limited by what he has learnt. What makes him an artist is when the talent overtakes normal, compositional, academic skill. You feel what a space is.



G: This is all within human nature? It is something that is rational or at least comprehensible. The architect is a technician but nothing more?

P: No, no. I'm trying to say that there is what my brother, Paul, used to call "creative spirit." This "creative spirit," for lack of a better name, is the urge that you have to do a thing. The "creative spirit" has dictated a thought. Or you have pursued the "creative spirit."

I think of Stendahl. He said, "I wasted 10 years of my life waiting for the call of inspiration. I didn't realize that inspiration didn't call – you had to chase her."

G: This sounds like I'm the most spiritual person, which I'm not, but did you ever have the feeling that, in a sense, God was speaking through you? You were a medium, in a sense?

P: No.

G: Have you ever thought that certain of the synagogues create a purer spiritual experience than others?

P: Yes, that's right. I think that there are stronger spurts of the "creative spirit." It doesn't flow in a nice, even way.

G: Which ones do you think are exceptionally successful?

P: Of all the synagogues I've ever done, with the exception of the ark, which turned out to be a disaster, I like the Providence synagogue.

G: I'm pleased to hear that. Why do you single out Providence?

P: The clients. The site was okay. The time was right. I was in a good mood, so to speak. The program was loose enough so you could play with it. It sort of fell into place, as if it wanted to be that way.

G: At what point did you know that?

P: When it happened.

G: It clicked?

P: It clicked. That's it.

G: What went wrong with the ark?

P: I made a sketch very early on, which somehow got set aside. When I decided I wanted to use people like the sculptor Ibram Lassaw, instead of getting some hack to translate what I would do,

he didn't have the remotest notion of how to handle objects in space at that scale. I've always believed in giving my collaborators more string than I should have. So it never came out.

G: But what went wrong?

P: The general proportions and the relationship to the room.

G: On the other hand, what do you like in particular about the features of Beth-El?

P: I like the arched space. I like the windows on the sides. I like the entrance. I like the chapel, which I call "Rachel's Chapel," after my daughter. She was just about born then.



G: At that time in your career, were you influenced by particular sources?

P: One is always influenced by everything that is there.

G: Could you say that this shows your concern for “such and such,” while other synagogues do not?

P: Yes.

G: What in particular led to the treatment of the arched roof?

P: I started with that. This particular construction, which is called “lamella,” is a German construction. It’s used in bowling alleys. It’s never used any place else. I liked the simple utility, the functional quality of it. The fact that it had enough broken lines. The fact it was of wood, a material that added vibrancy. [Goodman stopped to draw the shape.]

G: What role, if any, did Rabbi Braude play in the design?

P: A very good role. He kept his mouth shut.

G: Is that unusual for a rabbi?

P: Sometimes.

G: Do you think that he understood what you were trying to do?

P: Rabbi Braude had no more visual sense than a blind bat.

[Goodman’s niece: Percy, you ought to be nice.]

G: Did Pen Braude seem more responsive?

P: Well, Pen is quite artistic, as you know. She did a wonderful job on the Torah covers. Beautiful. I think that, given an opportunity, she would have taken a bigger part. She was hesitant.

G: I know that you remained friends with the Braudes ever since.

P: Yes. As it happens, Naomi (my wife) and Pen get along very well together. Lillian and Mike Braude’s house (the rabbi’s brother), in East Hampton, is not very far from where we are. So we get to see each other at least once or twice a week.

G: On the other hand, did you become friendly with many of your former clients?

P: Not too many. They’re spread out, you see. It really depends. Pen did get down to New York. A couple summers we had a house up at Quanticatogue. We’d see people in Providence.

G: But you have been back to Beth-El a number of times?

P: Yes.

G: I know that you were at Rabbi Braude’s funeral.

P: Yes.

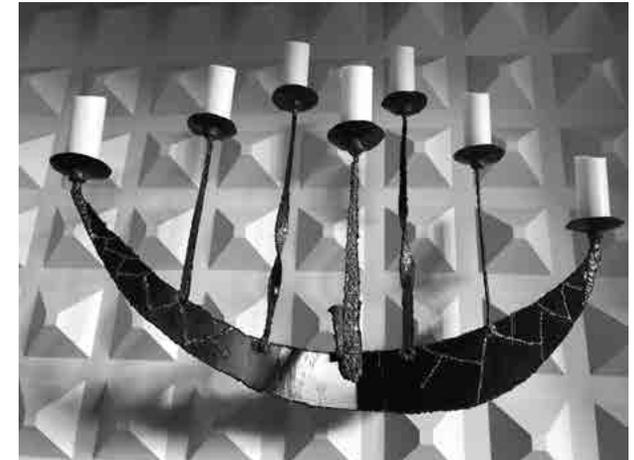
G: What do you remember about the Beth-El board of trustees and building committee?

P: Not very much. There was nobody nasty, so there was nobody to blame. There was enough money to begin with, so you didn’t have the usual hassle.

G: I imagine that the typical board of trustees is a very difficult group of demanding, high-powered businessmen.

P: It depends. It depends. It depends.

Like everything else, it depends on human relations: how you handle them



to begin with. I've always taken a very firm hand, and I've lost a great many projects. But I've always said in the beginning, "I'm running the job." I'm very anxious to hear everything they have to say. I'm writing questionnaires that you can fill out to the of time. But, in the end, I'm running the job.

G: On the other hand, I sense from reading the correspondence in our files that many of our board members and Rabbi Braude liked working with you. They enjoyed the experience.

P: Yes. Well, we hit it off. With some people, you just don't.

See, in New York City, for example, I've almost never had any luck. Because they're smart alecks. They think they know it all. The farther away you get from New York.

G: You mean a place like St. Paul, where they appreciate you?

P: That's the point. I found that New York City is just hard as rocks.

G: In addition to Beth-El in Providence, what are some of the synagogues which you think were exceptionally good?

P: I think that the largest one I ever did, Shaare Zedek in Southfield, Michigan, is a masterpiece of a kind, simply because it's so large and I solved the problem of such an enormous place. It had to seat 3,600 people at one service. That was the rabbi's request. I suggested all kinds of things – building a tent and so on.

G: Is it your boldest design?

P: Yes.

G: What's another one you like?

P: I like the Fairmount Temple in Shaker Heights, outside Cleveland.

G: I have to ask you about Eric Mendelsohn.

P: Yes.

G: Your paths crossed in certain places at certain times.

P: Yes. Eric and I met, as architects will. My first impression was, I think, my last impression. He was a very talented man and a faker.

G: Why?

P: When I was a boy, say 16, I used to go to a bookshop run by a guy named Joe Clem, on 8th Street in the Village. He had all kinds of things. I used to browse there. We got friendly. One day Joe said, "Hey, have you seen this?" I looked at it, a copy of *The Masses*. I opened it up. There were six or eight drawings by Eric Mendelsohn, which I thought were the most marvelous things I ever saw in my life. I said, "That's it." So, with my pennies, I bought the magazine, and off I went to study them. Well, that was when I was 16. I didn't meet Mendelsohn until after the Nazis and until after I went to Israel and after he came here.

We met in Cleveland. He was doing the Park Synagogue. I was doing the other. I thought his synagogue was lousy. I thought it a cold, nasty, clever design. I never told him that but he sensed it. He didn't like it very much, I must say. Of course he always thought of me as "the young man."

In St. Paul, I did Rabbi Raskas's place, Temple of Aaron, and he did the other one.

G: Mt. Zion.

P: It was typical of Eric. He got up at a meeting and waved his finger at one of the board members. He said, "You plumbers don't know anything – sit down." You can think that, but you don't say it.

I had a bad experience with Eric (in New York City). In about 1950, I designed, in a competition, a memorial for the Jews (of the Holocaust). I was asked to do this, as the architect, but I turned it down. I suddenly got bashful. I said, "It's too important a commission not to have a competition. I'll help with the competition, I want to be in the competition, and I hope I'll win the competition. But I can't tackle anything as important as this by myself." How foolish of me. It didn't make any difference in the end.

So I designed, after much heavy work, with Jacques Lipchitz, the sculptor. After we couldn't get along, then by myself. It struck me that Jews don't build war memorials. It's the essence of what a Jew doesn't do.



G: Why?

P: He just doesn't. There is none. Is that enough reason? They just don't build memorials.

G: They do now.

P: Yes, but they didn't then.

So I decided that there had to be some reason, which I didn't understand. The city had given a piece of property at 81st Street and Riverside Drive, which is marked to this day as set aside for that purpose. It's a flat thing over the tracks. Quite a nice piece of property with a beautiful view.

I decided that the memorial for the Jews should be a walk. The Jews who felt about the Holocaust should put a shawl over their heads and march down Fifth Avenue to 81st Street and cross over. There they would find a wall. This wall would represent the Warsaw ghetto. In front of the wall would be put up a platform. The

fellow who would be leading the march or procession or whatever would put the scrolls in the portable ark, like they used to carry in the desert. People would get up- blacks, yellows, pinks, blues, greens – and they would all make a speech for peace. Then the scrolls would be taken out. I had the passage from Leviticus that seemed suitable. It would be read. The scrolls would be put away. The *Kaddish* would be said. Everybody goes home.

In the meantime, there is a high pylon, and on top of it a seven-branched candlestick. This was gas-lit, so that the flames would be maybe 10 or 12 feet high. As the *Kaddish* was said, the flames would rise. At the end, they would die down. That would be the memorial.

There is no memorial. It would just be a setting for an occasion.

I won the competition. But, in my usual stupid way, I didn't realize that, in order to get anywhere in New York at that time, everything had to go through Robert Moses, the Parks Commissioner. He turned it down.

G: Why?

P: It would block traffic. He said, "For the Jews, they should make a copy of (Michelangelo's) *David*. That would be just the right thing for them." I was asked if I would change the design.

Mendelsohn placed second. There was only one prize. They offered him the job. He jumped at it. Instead of calling me up and saying, "What do you think?" which is what architects always do, Moses turned him down too. So the whole thing fell to pieces.

G: Other than the fact that Mendelsohn did build four American synagogues, worked in Palestine, and built some synagogues in Germany, did he have a Jewish identity?

P: No. He felt more German than Jewish.

I don't know how true it is, but I'm told that he was a Polish Jew.

G: That's true.

P: I didn't know that.

He clung to his eyeglass and all this crap because he didn't want to be taken for a salesman in a *shmata* shop.

But he did some very nice work. The work he did for Schocken in Berlin is very, very good.

G: Did you know Frank Lloyd Wright?

P: Yes. We became very good friends. In 1932, to be exact. They were planning for the 1936 Chicago's World Fair. They had a bunch of (jerks) on the committee. Lewis Mumford, Henry McBride, and I decided that this was really outrageous. If you weren't head of the commission or on the commission, then you should be given a building.

Wright used to come to New York and stay at the Hotel Bravoor, which was a very famous and wonderful hotel down on University Place in the Village. We thought we would surprise him and invite him for dinner.

He was delighted at the invitation. When we walked into the restaurant- with white floors, white walls, white furniture, white everything- much like a summer resort with lots of flowers on the table- Wright was overwhelmed. So we all sat down, and we offered a toast.

He said, "Gentlemen, I can't tell you what this means to me. Today happens to be my birthday." So from that time on, we were very good friends.

G: Would you see him in New York occasionally?



P: I would see him whenever he came to New York. I had him up at school (Columbia) on one of those occasions. He was a wonderful speaker.

I think I was the only Jew he ever liked, as a matter of fact. He was very anti-Semitic, you know.

G: I've heard that about his youth, but I thought he got over it.

P: Well, everybody got over it after World War II. Before the war, it was a lifetime. He was brought up in that kind of Wisconsin family where anything from the East dealt with stocks and bonds. Anything that dealt with stocks and bonds dealt with banks, mortgages, and Jews. That's why he was anti-Semitic.

One of my good friends was a student of his and Jewish. He said he never heard this.

G: Who was your friend?

P: Edgar Tafel.

G: He wrote the book, Apprentice to Genius (1979). By the time the Taliesin Fellowship was formed in the mid-1930s, you were already well into your career.

P: Yes.

G: There was never any opportunity for you to fall under Wright's influence?

P: Oh, no. Thank God. Edgar was a talented boy, about 15 years younger than I. When he came to me, he asked where he should go to school. I said, "Frank Lloyd Wright's." Wright wrote a letter to Taffel. It's in his book. "Yes, Mr. Tafel, you're accepted. My best to Percy."

G: Tafel stayed 10 years or so. What do you think of Wright's synagogue (Beth Sholom in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania)?

P: I think it's terrible. I never saw it, so it's not correct for me to say that. But it looks like a honky-tonk to me. It may not be.

G: You mean flashy?

P: Yes, sleazy.

You must have some understanding about a religion before you jump into designing for it.

G: He did two Unitarian churches.

P: Well, that's much more up his alley. I designed one Unitarian church.

G: Where?

P: In Garden City, Long Island.

G: Was it successful?

P: It was Unitarian.

G: Have you designed other churches?

P: I designed a cathedral that never got built. St. Jude on 168th Street and Broadway. St. Jude is the saint of last resort. So you just finish praying to St. Elizabeth or St. Christopher or St. Joseph, then you can finally turn to St. Jude. If he turns you down, you're kaput.

Monsignor Kent made a pile of money for his diocese out of bingo. They had a piece of thumbnail or something of St. Jude. They were made an apostolic church, but he wanted to build a cathedral.

I had a chief draftsman who was Roman Catholic. He spoke to the Monsignor about me. We agreed that I would design a temporary cathedral out of pipes. It thrilled the hell out of me because it was something I always wanted to do. I thought it was a quite handsome building- wrapped in nylon and plywood. I thought it would be great.

But then the poor old Monsignor died. The new guy said, "Nay, nay."

G: Which was the last synagogue you did?

P: In Franklin Lakes, New Jersey. 1980. It was designed for B'nai Jeshurun. I had designed a synagogue 25 years earlier for the same group on the edge of Patterson. At the end of 25 years, these buggers wouldn't go near Patterson. They wouldn't have their children go near it. My friend, the rabbi, said, "I have to close this place up or find ourselves a new site."

So 15 miles away, they spent a fortune buying an expensive site. They didn't have money to build with. So I designed a building with a very tight budget-

a very handsome building, I think. That was the last.

G: Did you have enough of synagogue commissions?

P: Oh, no. Oh, no.

G: If you had one today?

P: Oh, sure.

G: Are there any problems that you feel are not yet solved?

P: Oh, I think so. Yes.

The problem of the synagogue is the problem of every religious building. We're in a materialistic age, which is really in terrible trouble. Because in a time when we could be blown up, you would think everybody would get quite religious. Eschatology is damn more important than bricks and mortar. Instead of that, they're out there twirling the dreidel and accepting that things will go on forever.

So, in the meantime, the houses of worship are not being used. Yet they feel they ought to have them. Because, heaven knows, if they begin to drop some bombs around, maybe you have to call in to get your ride to heaven.

G: What do you think is happening in the world of architecture today?

P: It's a small question and a big question. I think the architects, like everybody else, are, in the pit of their stomachs, scared ---. With 50,000 nuclear warheads that could knock off maybe 100,000 Hiroshimas, we have every right to be scared to death. The fact of the matter is: we're not. We don't believe it. We honest-to-God don't believe it.

Yet, supposing it's so? This is the problem.

We're coming toward the year 2000. The fact is that in every millennium, there is some sort of religious rising. I wouldn't be surprised if these half-empty or three-quarters empty buildings are packed to the gills, beginning in the '90s. Simply because people are scared.

G: What do you think of the postmodern debate?

P: Postmodern architecture is just an announcement of giving up. If you can't think of a new idea, then you go backwards. In this time, when physics, biogenetics, and every field of science is advancing by leaps and bounds, you see the arts crawling along with their pieces of antique jewelry. It makes you sick to your stomach.

G: How do you feel?

P: I'm 85 years old, but I feel about 95 now. Six months ago, I felt like 60. This operation.

G: Your mind is sharp.

P: I hope it comes back. I'm having trouble. Ordinarily, I'm a very creative guy.

G: I can tell.

P: When I say "creative," I don't mean "great creative." I just mean I like to make things. Every day, unless I'm occupied, I write a poem. Every day I draw a picture. Every day. If I don't do that, I feel lost. I haven't picked up a pencil to make a drawing since February 7. I feel like a mother must feel when a child wants some milk and she would love to but can't.

G: Let's end on a bright note. Tell me about your wife, Naomi.

P: My wife is an angel. If Jewish women had halos, she would have them stacked up like Aunt Jemima's pancakes. She has been so heroic during these months.

The Blessing

Stephen Logowitz

Although this is Steve's third issue as our graphic designer, readers may recall that he and I began our editorial collaboration long ago – as seniors in college. So we've been friends, admirers, and critics for quite a long time. I continue to marvel at the fact that I have lived far longer in his hometown than he did.

Yet, after residing in Connecticut and Massachusetts for nearly five decades, Steve will always be considered a Rhode Islander. After living here for three decades, I never will be!

Readers may also recall that, before sharing his design skills with us, Steve wrote two fine articles for *The Notes*. The first, in 2011, resurrecting childhood memories, was "Three Vignettes." The second article, coincidentally three years later, consisted of "Mid-Century Memories." I hope that Steve will continue to share his wry humor and creativity with us.

It was a homecoming of sorts. I was returning to my childhood synagogue, my wife and new baby in tow, for the purpose of naming our new child. The "junior" rabbi, when I had last encountered him, was an eager rabbinical school graduate. Now presiding, he was a commanding 45-year-old. His predecessor – the *rebbe* – a man of tremendous scholarship, who had married my parents in 1938 and officiated at my bar mitzvah decades later in 1961 – was present as well, although now as a somewhat frail congregant. Still, he remained highly regarded and was clearly accorded great respect by all who were present that Shabbat evening.

The ceremony was brief – a few short steps to the bimah, a Hebrew blessing above the smooth little head of our drowsy infant – and the deed was done! Our daughter, who entered with three names, was now departing with four. A sweet moment.

Following the service, the entire congregation adjourned for an *oneg*, generously underwritten by my daughter's beaming grandfather, Kenneth. But this was no ordinary cookie-and-honeycake spread. In his zeal, my father clearly must have retained a caterer the likes of whom had not been seen on a Friday night at our shul for sometime, as the assembled worshipers dived in, marveling at the array



of meat, fish, legumes, and pastries.

At some point, amidst a scrum of well-wishers, I felt a hand on my shoulder. A serious-looking congregant was whispering: "It's the *rebbe*. He wants to see you. Immediately!"

My heart quickened. Was this it? The moment when I was to receive the ultimate benediction from the sage of my youth? Hastily, I made my way through the hungry crowd to the former religious leader, wheelchair-bound in one corner. Although he appeared smaller than I had recalled, he still had the bearing of a man of importance. I approached him reverentially – and stopped. He beckoned me closer. As I stepped forward, he gently pulled me down into his personal space, so that my ear was very close to his mouth. I waited... The *rebbe* took his time. With great deliberation, he then pulled me even closer. At last, the words came:

"I am... I am particularly fond of the salmon. Could you please arrange to have some wrapped so I could bring it home with me?"

Introduction to the First Circuit Opinion

Mel A. Topf

A specialist in writing, rhetoric, and composition, Mel is one of the most admired and senior professors at Roger Williams University. He is also a former department chair, provost, and president of its faculty senate.

Often persuasive without being argumentative, Mel is well known to readers of our journal as the chair of its publications committee. For three years, he has served as our Association's first vice president.

Mel, also an attorney, introduced Judge John J. McConnell, Jr.'s decision in the "Shul v. Shul" case in our previous issue. Now he helps us understand the appeal heard by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit and its decision.

It is not known at this time whether there will be a further appeal to a larger panel of the Court of Appeals or to the U.S. Supreme Court. Many observers hope that two of North America's oldest and most distinguished Jewish congregations will find ways to put aside their considerable differences and work toward mutual strength and benefit.

In August 2017 a federal appeals court overturned a Rhode Island federal court's decision in a contentious dispute between Congregation Jeshuat Israel, at Newport's Touro Synagogue, and New York's Congregation Shearith Israel, over ownership of a pair of valuable silver *rimonim* (Torah finials). The dispute arose in 2012 when the Newport congregation decided to sell the colonial-era *rimonim*, valued at more than \$7,000,000, to Boston's Museum of Fine Arts. The New York congregation, the oldest in North America, claimed that it owned the *rimonim*. In November 2012 the Newport congregation sued Shearith Israel in Rhode Island Superior Court, asking the court to recognize it as the *rimonim*'s lawful owner, and to restrain Shearith Israel from interfering with the planned sale. It also asked that the New York congregation be removed as trustee for Touro Synagogue and its land, and that Jeshuat Israel's board of trustees be declared trustee.

The New York congregation removed the case to federal court and asked the court to declare it the owner of the *rimonim*, to prohibit Newport from selling them, and to transfer their possession to it. It also asked the court to declare that it is the owner of Touro Synagogue, its land, and all property used by the synagogue.

In a victory for the Newport congregation, Federal District Court Judge John J. McConnell in May 2016 issued his decision after a nine-day bench trial (a trial without a jury). Judge McConnell ruled that "Congregation Jeshuat Israel is the true and lawful owner of the Rimonim, with full power to sell and convey them." He further ruled that the Newport congregation owns Touro synagogue and its land as "a charitable trust for the purpose of public Jewish worship." Shearith Israel, he wrote, is merely a trustee for Touro Synagogue and not its owner. He ordered that Shearith Israel be removed as trustee over Touro's charitable trust and that Jeshuat Israel be appointed trustee. Judge McConnell dismissed all of the New York congregation's counterclaims. (A large section of Judge McConnell's opinion appeared in the 2016 *Notes*.)

The New York congregation appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, which sits in Boston. In a striking reversal, the unanimous three-judge panel overturned Judge McConnell's decision, ruling in August 2017 that the New York congregation is the owner of Touro Synagogue and all its property including the *rimonim*, and that its ownership is free of any trust or other obligation to the Newport congregation. Justice David Souter, who wrote the opinion for the court, praised District Court Judge McConnell's "conscientious and exhaustive historical analysis," but said that this historical investigation unavoidably required immersion into doctrinal tensions between the two congregations, such as differences between Sephardic and Ashkenazi practices. The First Amendment, however, "calls for a more circumscribed consideration of evidence than [Judge McConnell's] plenary enquiry into centuries of the parties' conduct." The U.S. Supreme Court requires that when "property disputes reflect religious cleavages, courts should avoid entanglements with the doctrinal issues and hew closely to civil law."

In the Touro case, therefore, Judge McConnell's opinion should have considered only evidence that would be relevant in any property dispute, religious or not, such as contracts, leases, deeds, and charters. The First Circuit cited four such documents: two leases between the New York and the Newport congregations; a 1945 agreement between the two congregations and the Department of Interior for the care of the synagogue as a National Historic Site; and a 2001 agreement between the Newport congregation, the Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. All four documents, Judge Souter wrote, confirm that the New York congregation is the owner of "the Touro Synagogue

building, appurtenances, fixtures, and associated land,” as well as the owner of the *rimonim*.

The full opinion of the First Circuit follows:



Touro Synagogue

United States Court of Appeals For the First Circuit

No. 16-1756

CONGREGATION JESHUAT ISRAEL,

Plaintiff, Appellee,

v.

CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL,

Defendant, Appellant.

APPEAL FROM THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF RHODE ISLAND

[Hon. John J. McConnell, Jr., U.S. District Judge]

Before

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Lynch, Circuit Judge,

Souter, Associate

Justice,¹ and Baldock,

Circuit Judge.²

¹ Hon. David H. Souter, Associate Justice (Ret.) of the Supreme Court of the United States, sitting by designation.

² Hon. Bobby R. Baldock, Circuit Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit, sitting by designation.

Louis M. Solomon, with whom Colin A. Underwood, Nancy L. Savitt, John F. Farraher, Jr., Greenberg Traurig, LLP, Deming E. Sherman, and Locke Lord LLP were on brief, for appellant.

Gary P. Naftalis, with whom Jonathan M. Wagner, Tobias B. Jacoby, Daniel P. Schumeister, Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel LLP, Steven E. Snow, and Partridge Snow & Hahn LLP were on brief, for appellee.

August 2, 2017

SOUTER, Associate Justice. This case began as an action for declaratory judgment brought by Congregation Jeshuat Israel (“CJI”), which was followed by counterclaims on behalf of the defendant, Congregation Shearith Israel (“CSI”). The district court held that CJI was owner of rimonim used in its worship in the Touro Synagogue and that CSI was owner of the building and real estate subject to a trust for CJI as representing the practitioners of Judaism in Newport, Rhode Island. We reverse on the basis of the parties’ own agreements determining property rights by instruments customarily considered by civil courts. We hold that the only reasonable conclusions to be drawn from them are that CSI owns both the rimonim and the real property free of any civilly cognizable trust obligations to CJI.

I.

The district court made extensive findings of fact, of which the following, limited synopsis presents the background of this litigation. In the latter part of the 17th century, the Jewish population of Newport, Rhode Island, made up principally of immigrants from Europe, associated for religious observances and in the course of the following century became known as Congregation Yeshuat Israel, which worshiped largely according to the Sephardic (Spanish and Portuguese) Jewish tradition. In the mid-18th century, these observant Jews acquired land in Newport on which the building now known as Touro Synagogue was built. Self-assessments on the congregants funded the land acquisition, and the Synagogue was erected through donations. The members chose three men to serve in a trusteeship capacity over the Synagogue and its lands, though it is not clear that these individuals would

have been recognized as trustees by the civil law in the mid-18th century.

Close in time to the construction of the Synagogue, silversmith Myer Myers created the rimonim at issue here, a pair of finials with attached bells made of silver and gold and designed to surmount the shafts around which the Torah scrolls were rolled.

The rimonim were used in worship by Congregation Yeshuat Israel in Touro Synagogue.

In the course of the period running from the Revolutionary War through the War of 1812, the Jewish population in Newport virtually vanished. As it dwindled, movable personal property, including the rimonim, was transferred to CSI, a Sephardic congregation in New York. In the ensuing years, and for the better part of the 19th century, various individuals took it upon themselves to maintain the fabric of the Newport Synagogue, and CSI, too, helped care for the building, which it controlled and made available for occasional funerals. In the latter part of the 19th century, out of a new infusion of immigrants, a Jewish population grew again in Newport. To a significant degree, its religious character was of the Ashkenazic (central and eastern European) tradition, and its worshippers became known as Congregation Jeshuat Israel, though its name represented no formal connection with its predecessor. When the community was large enough to support a rabbi, Touro Synagogue was reopened, and CSI returned the rimonim to Newport.

Around the turn of the 20th century, the relationship between CJI and CSI soured to a point in 1901 when CSI closed the Synagogue. After a year of closure, a group of the Newport Jews broke in and engaged in a limited occupation that lasted for another year, whereupon CJI and several individuals brought suit in equity against CSI in a Rhode Island court, claiming a right to the Synagogue and its lands. CSI removed the case to federal district court, which in January 1903 sustained CSI’s demurrer and dismissed the case. See David v. Levy, 119 F. 799 (D.R.I. 1903). The effect that the judgment standing alone might have today, if any, is not a matter of concern to us, owing to a series of contracts that we mention here and describe in greater detail below. In 1903, CJI and CSI made an agreement to settle their competing claims of interest in the real property, followed in the same year by a five-year lease of the Synagogue from CSI to CJI, which dealt with personal property as well as the real estate. The lease was renewed for another five years in 1908. Thereafter CJI continued to hold services in the building and in 1945 recognized

its own status as lessee when it joined an agreement that the two congregations made with the Department of the Interior, and it again recited its lessee status in a further contract made in 2001 by CJI and a supporting organization with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Although the leasehold relationship was thus acknowledged, CJI was a holdover tenant under the 1908 lease, and for much of the parties' recent history each took a relaxed view of CJI's nominal rent obligation, the district court having found only one annual payment since 1987. In the recent period of their relationship, a want of cordiality, if not acrimony, was brought to a pitch in 2011 by CJI's efforts to raise an endowment to provide reliable income to support its activity at the Synagogue. In that year it received an offer from the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston to purchase the rimonim for over seven million dollars, and it prepared to sell them. CSI objected, claiming ownership of the objects, and charging CSI with violation of the lease obligation to conform to CSI's version of Sephardic practice, which forbade disposition of such ritual objects.

The standoff between the two congregations precipitated the present litigation, begun by CJI, which filed suit against CSI in Rhode Island Superior Court in 2012. It sought an order declaring it to be the lawful owner of the rimonim and restraining CSI from interfering with the proposed sale to the museum. As a fallback, CJI asked for a judgment declaring that CSI owned the rimonim in trust for the benefit of CJI and authorizing the sale as being in CJI's best interests. CJI further requested that CSI be removed as trustee, to be replaced in a trust capacity by CJI's own board of trustees.

CSI promptly removed the action to federal court, based on diversity of citizenship, 28 U.S.C. § 1332(a), and then answered the complaint and counterclaimed. The counterclaims asked the district court to declare that CSI owns and has full legal and equitable rights to the rimonim. CSI sought a declaration that the sale of the rimonim would be contrary to the Sephardic tradition as maintained by CSI and thus unlawful under the governing instruments, and requested an injunction barring the sale to the Museum and ordering physical transfer of the rimonim to CSI, unless CSI should agree otherwise.³ As to the real property, CSI requested a

³ After trial but before the district court issued its decision, CSI amended its counterclaims to state that, rather than request the return of the rimonim to New York, it would stipulate to a long-term loan of the rimonim to any congregation worshipping at the Newport Synagogue in accordance with the conditions of the lease and subject to other terms satisfactory to CSI.

declaration that CSI owned and had full legal and equitable rights to the Synagogue and its lands. CSI also asked for a declaration that CJI had breached the terms of the lease with CSI and the 1945 agreement with the Department of the Interior by, among other things, attempting to sell CSI's property and attempting to treat the Synagogue as its own by installing an unauthorized plaque. CSI requested that CJI therefore be removed as lessee of the Synagogue and the related real and personal property. CSI went on to request that the district court direct CJI to honor its "obligations and duties under the contractual and long-standing obligations and protocols," including an obligation not to alter its bylaws. Finally, CSI sought an award of damages to be determined at trial, along with attorney's fees and costs.⁴

After a nine-day bench trial, the district court concluded that CJI was the rightful owner of the rimonim, with full power to sell them. It further found that the Touro Synagogue and its lands were owned in a charitable trust for the purpose of Jewish worship in Newport, with CSI as trustee. After determining that CSI had failed in its trusteeship duties, the district court ordered CSI removed as trustee and CJI appointed in its stead.

II.

The district court approached the competing claims for control of the rimonim and the Touro Synagogue's land and buildings by a conscientious and exhaustive historical analysis. It concluded that CSI's authority as owner of the Synagogue had evolved to that of trustee for the benefit of CJI as beneficiary standing for those who engage in Jewish worship in Newport. The court's findings traced a long path through the history of Newport Judaism, beginning in Rhode Island's founding century and passing through periods of historical obscurity, the most notable of which followed the decline of Newport's Jewish population beginning at the time of the Revolution and its disappearance after the War of 1812. The court confronted conflicting claims of bailment and trusteeship in the course of describing a basic sequence of events depending substantially on information found in the synagogues' respective records and correspondence.

⁴ CSI also alleged that CJI had breached a "standstill agreement" between the two parties by filing suit. CSI sought damages from the breach in an amount to be ascertained at trial. But the district court considered this claim waived on account of CSI's failure to argue it at trial, and CSI does not dispute that determination on appeal.

Much of that history reflected, albeit without directly addressing, the doctrinal tensions between the CSI congregation, committed to preserving Sephardic practice at Touro, and the later Newport congregation that emerged from the 19th century immigration, which included a significant Ashkenazic element. The district court was scrupulous in avoiding any overt reliance on doctrinal precepts, as forbidden by the Supreme Court's case law applying the religion clauses of the First Amendment. See, e.g., Jones v. Wolf, 443 U.S. 595, 602 (1979); Serbian E. Orthodox Diocese for the U.S. & Can. v. Milivojevich, 426 U.S. 696, 709-10 (1976); Presbyterian Church in the U.S. v. Mary Elizabeth Blue Hull Mem'l Presbyterian Church, 393 U.S. 440, 449 (1969). Nonetheless, the court's historical investigation was unavoidably an immersion in the tensions between two congregations that were not doctrinally identical, one of which clearly insisted that the other conform to some extent with a practice of Spanish and Portuguese Judaism as a condition of favorable treatment. In fact, CSI's insistence that its standard of religious practice forbade the sale of the ritual objects was offered as the basis for pressing its claim of ownership and authority to block the sale, which eventuated in this case.

These are circumstances in which we think that the First Amendment calls for a more circumscribed consideration of evidence than the trial court's plenary enquiry into centuries of the parties' conduct by examining their internal documentation that had been generated without resort to the formalities of the civil law. In implementing the religion clauses of the First Amendment, the Supreme Court has established a regime of limits on judicial involvement in adjudicating disputes between religious entities situated like the parties before us, when competing property claims reflect doctrinal cleavages. What the Court has approved as merely "marginal judicial involvement" by the civil courts in such circumstances, Presbyterian Church, 393 U.S. at 450, is aimed at avoiding, or at least minimizing, the twin risks presupposed respectively by the Constitution's Free Exercise and Establishment Clauses: compromising the degree of religious autonomy guaranteed by the former, and placing government in the position of seeming to endorse the religious positions of the winners, forbidden by the latter. See Presbyterian Church, 393 U.S. at 449 ("If civil courts undertake to resolve [church property disputes triggered by religious doctrine and practice] . . . the hazards are ever present of inhibiting the free development of religious doctrine and of implicating secular interests in matters of purely ecclesiastical concern."). These objectives are summed up in another

of the Court's aspirational phrases, urging resort to a methodology that allows courts, to the extent possible, to decide in ways that avoid "entangl[ing them] in matters of religious controversy," Jones, 443 U.S. at 608, by relying instead upon the application of "neutral principles of law, developed for use in all property disputes," Presbyterian Church, 393 U.S. at 449; accord Soc'y of Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Inc. v. Gregory, 689 F.3d 29, 4142 (1st Cir. 2012).

Although there is no simple template for locating the line of limited involvement when property disputes defy resolution by religious contenders themselves, the Court has made a point of instructing religious bodies on actions open to them in advance of controversy, to keep judicial intrusion within bounds. As examples, the Court has mentioned including provisions in deeds and corporate charters spelling out reversionary rights or express trust benefits, options available to religious organizations as readily as to their secular counterparts. Jones, 443 U.S. at 606. And there can be no doubt that contractual arrangements between the contending parties deserve the same preference as secular grounds for judgment. See id. at 603 n.3 (characterizing Watson v. Jones, 80 U.S. (13 Wall.) 679 (1871), as establishing that "regardless of the form of church government, it would be the 'obvious duty' of a civil tribunal to enforce the 'express terms' of a deed, will, or other instrument of church property ownership" (quoting id. at 722-23)). It is, after all, these common instruments for establishing ownership and control that most readily enable a court to apply the required, neutral principles in evaluating disputed property claims.

When such provisions of deeds, charters, contracts, and the like are available and to the point, then, they should be the lodestones of adjudication in these cases. And they are available here: three contracts entered into by the two congregations that establish ownership of the Synagogue and the rimonim, and a fourth agreement to which CJI is a party, which confirms the continuing vitality of the conclusions reached in the prior three.

The first of them is a settlement agreement made in the aftermath of the dismissal of the earlier action brought by CJI, David, 119 F. 799. On January 30, 1903, a committee of CJI executed an agreement with the trustees of CSI containing these principal provisions:

The Congregation, Jeshuat Israel, agrees to admit and recognize without qualification the title and ownership of L. Napoleon Levy and acting trustees [of CSI] to the

synagogue building, premises and fixtures.

. . . L. Napoleon Levy and acting trustees upon receiving the absolute surrender of said premises agrees [sic] to make a lease thereof to the Congregation Jeshuat Israel for five years from February 1, 1903, at the nominal rent of one dollar yearly; said lease shall be in form satisfactory to the landlord and shall contain such clauses as will obviate the necessity of any legal proceedings, so far as possible, by either party to enforce its rights thereunder.

While the signatories on behalf of CSI are designated “trustees,” there is no indication that they were understood to be trustees for the benefit of any entity but their own congregation, and a reasonable reading shows it to be highly unlikely that they were understood to have trust obligations to CJI. CJI accepted “without qualification” the CSI trustees’ title to the Touro Synagogue land, building, and fixtures. The contract contemplates CJI’s “absolute surrender” of the premises, after which the CSI trustees agree to lease them to CJI for five years at a dollar a year, “in form satisfactory to the landlord.” Acceptance without qualification of the title of trustees of an independent entity, to which absolute surrender is made in anticipation of a lease satisfactory to the landlord (without any reference to preference of the lessee) is operative language without a hint of possible trust terms or trust obligations running from the lessor landlord to the lessee.

The contemplated lease was expeditiously signed, on February 2, 1903, by a committee acting on behalf of CJI and by the CSI trustees. Its maximum term was five years, at the trifling annual rent specified in the preceding settlement. The nominal rent of course, expresses a hopeful, if not kindly, disposition on the land-

5 The condition to follow Sephardic practice does not disentitle the lease to consideration as an essentially secular document to be interpreted under neutral principles in determining the parties’ respective property rights. Some adversion to matters of doctrine or practice animating the relationship of two religious parties in controversy is probably inevitable, even on the restrictive concept of legal acts preferred as bases for determining the terms of ownership and control of property for religious purposes under the cited case law. In this instance citation to religious practice is of no significance. The reference to Sephardic practice in this customary instrument of a leasing transaction does not require a court to determine what that practice should be. The lease refers to Sephardic ritual an dcustom observed by CSI as of the time of the lease: that could require only a determination of practice in fact, not a resolution of contending views about what practice is or is not “true.”

lord’s part, but is not an acknowledgement of any obligation of legally recognized trusteeship. For that matter, the generosity was apparently offset by a duty on the lessee’s part to maintain the premises; there was no provision obligating CSI to pay for their upkeep, whereas CJI was obligated to surrender them in as good condition as when received, save only for reasonable wear and damage by the “elements.” Nor was property maintenance CJI’s only obligation. Even within the rented synagogue it had no discretion but to conduct “the usual and stated religious services according to the ritual rites and customs of the [Sephardic] Jews as at this time practiced” in CSI’s own synagogue in New York.⁵ And it was required to obtain CSI’s advance approval of “any Minister” who might “officiate” on the premises. For failure by CJI to pay the rent or for breach of conditions CSI was entitled to “oust” CJI from the premises.

In this litigation, two features of the lease are particularly notable. First, neither in stating the lessee’s obligations and restrictions, nor in setting out the lessor’s duty to provide quiet possession was there any mention of a trust obligation underlying or complementing the terms set out. Just as in any normal instance of a rental transaction, there was no indication that the relationship of the parties was to be governed by anything but the terms of the contract. Second, an interlineation in the typed text of the lease provided that it covered not only the real estate described, together with its appurtenances, but also “paraphernalia belonging thereto.” The notary for the signers on behalf of CJI attested that the interlineation had been added before they signed. We read “paraphernalia” to cover the rimonim, given the evidence that they were in use in Touro Synagogue at the time, as well as CJI’s argument here that they should be regarded as property historically associated with Jewish worship in that Synagogue.

Although the district court declined to read “paraphernalia” as encompassing rimonim, owing to a lack of affirmative evidence that the CJI signatories understood the term “paraphernalia” this way, we think no such specific evidence is necessary. Contracts are generally construed in accordance with the common understanding of their terms at the time of the agreement, and the common understanding in 1903 would have covered the rimonim associated with Touro under the term “paraphernalia.” See *Paraphernalia*, *The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia* (1903) (“Personal ornaments or accessories of attire; trappings; equipments, especially such as are used on parade, or for ostentatious display, as the symbolic

garments, ornaments, weapons, etc., used by freemasons or the like.”); *Paraphernalia*, Webster’s International Dictionary of the English Language (1900) (“Appendages; ornaments; finery; equipments.”); *Paraphernalia*, A Standard Dictionary of the English Language (1894) (“Miscellaneous articles of equipment or adornment; appendages; belongings; finery.”).

The third of the significant documents subject to judicial consideration is a 1945 agreement among three parties, CJI, CSI, and the Secretary of the Interior, for the care and preservation of the Synagogue as a National Historic Site. As in 1903, CJI acted by a committee and CSI by its trustees. Under the contract’s terms, public access to the premises was to be consistent with the Synagogue as a place of worship by CJI, and CSI and CJI agreed that in honoring the contract they would act “in accordance with and subject to their respective rights and obligations as lessor and lessee as heretofore established . . .”

In one respect, however, this contract is unlike the preceding ones in imputing trust obligations (unspecified) to CSI. Their supposed source was identified as “a [recorded] Deed of Trust dated April 27, 1894” said to have created “certain trusts in the Touro Synagogue.” A subsequent provision referred to “recorded deeds and declarations of Trusts,” (although the only document specifically identified was the one first cited).

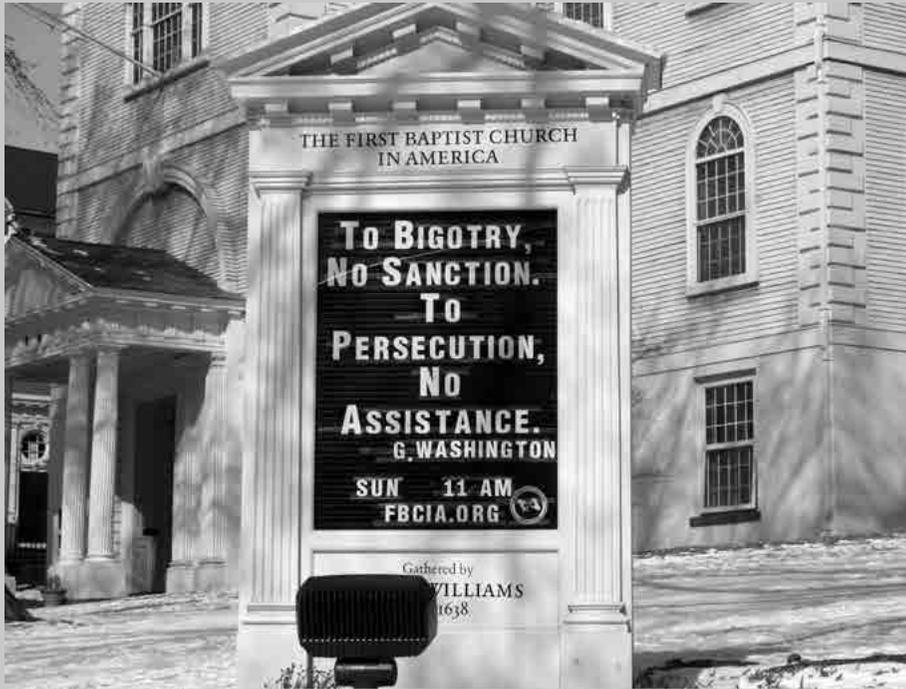
The consequence of this language is, however, less than meets the eye. The agreement included no explanation aside from the deed cited (and deeds alluded to) for speaking of CSI as being under a trust obligation to CJI, and that cited source failed to support any finding that it created a trust relationship. As the district court explained [Add 38, 86], CSI obtained the deed in question at its own behest, from an heir of one of the three original trustees of the pre-Revolutionary Congregation Yeshuat Israel. The deed purported to convey any interest that might have passed to the trustee’s descendants unbeknownst to them or to anyone else in the interim. The district court referred to eight additional comparably indeterminate deeds from other Congregation Yeshuat Israel trustee descendants, two of which the court described as purporting to convey their uncertain interests subject to a trust obligation. Like the district court, we conclude that the deeds lack any significance for this case.

To begin with, they contained no language that could include the rimonim. But even as to the real estate alone, we have no indication that the grantors

had anything to convey to which a trust obligation could attach by the acts of the minority of grantors who mentioned trust at all. At best, the deeds may collectively have had some rhetorical value for CSI in dealing with the tensions between it and the new congregation of CJI; as the district court noted, the deeds contained the first statements of what later became the lease condition that worship at Touro conform to Sephardic practice as observed by CSI. The upshot is that the record fails to show that the references to a trust obligation on CSI’s part to the worshipers at Touro were anything more than terms of empty conveyances. They are, moreover, unsupported by evidence of the sort preferred in applying neutral principles meant to keep a court from entanglement. Accordingly, we treat the trust reference in the tripartite agreement as having no legal significance in determining ownership of or authority over either the rimonim or the Synagogue.⁶

This conclusion is supported by a fourth contract open to consideration in harmony with *Jones*, 443 U.S. 595. In 2001, another agreement was made among three parties: CJI, a supportive organization known as the Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Its stated durational term was fifty years, and its objects were preservation of the Synagogue and provision of education for public visitors. CJI was described as having “possession of the site through a lease with Congregation Shearith Israel as owner.” That recitation was not qualified by anything referring to a trusteeship duty on the part of CSI, nor did any provision in the agreement raise any implication of such a relationship. It simply confirmed that the two congregations were bound as lessor and lessee and thus indicated that, however erratic the rent payments had become, CJI had no legal claim beyond that of a holdover tenant under the terms of the 1903 lease, as formally renewed in 1908. Although there was an allusion to personal property in CJI’S obligations to the other two parties to protect and conserve “the

⁶ The district court found significance in CJI’s favor in another item of legal character undoubtedly entitled to consideration as a matter of course under the Supreme Court’s model for dealing with religious property disputes. In 1932 the Rhode Island General Assembly enacted a statute exempting the Synagogue from property taxation. 1932 R.I. Acts & Resolves 427. The premises were described as “held in trust.” *Id.* The statute does not, however, reveal whether the trustees were those of CSI or CJI itself, let alone what difference it would make in this litigation. as being within any of the three categories, and nothing can be inferred from this provision about the ownership of the rimonim.



Sermon by Rev. Jamie Washam, delivered on Sunday, March 12, 2017 at the First Baptist Church in America, Providence. This refers to President Washington's letter to Newport's Hebrew Congregation written in August, 1790.

related collections in its ownership, possession or control,” no object was mentioned.

III.

We think the only reasonable conclusions about property title, ownership, and control that can be drawn from the foregoing evidence are that, as between the parties in this case, CSI is fee owner of the Touro Synagogue building, appurtenances, fixtures, and associated land as described in the 1903 lease; likewise CSI is owner of the rimonim in issue here; (c) in each case CSI's ownership is free of any trust or other obligation to CJI except as lessor to CJI as holdover lessee;⁷ (d) CJI's interest in the Synagogue building and related real property mentioned above is solely that of holdover lessee.

We accordingly **reverse** the judgment of the district court and **remand** the case for entry of judgment consistent with the conclusions set out above.

We recognize that the order of remand leaves a number of the counterclaim requests for relief without resolution. But owing both to the obvious consequences of the judgment outlined above, and to the phrasing of CSI's request for relief at the conclusion of its brief, we are uncertain of any present need for judicial action on the issues raised but not formally resolved here. The judgment we order will therefore be without prejudice to CSI to bring claims raised by it but not resolved here in a new action. CSI's request for counsel fees and costs, however, shall be heard by the district court on remand. Any new action, as well as the motion for fees and costs, shall be heard by a judge not already fatigued by this litigation.

Each party shall bear its own costs.

⁷ CSI's prayer for relief seeks a judgment that it owns the Touro Synagogue and its ritual contents "as charitable trustee." But CSI's counsel responded to a request from the court for clarification by subsequently filing a letter under Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 28(j) stating that it stands by its claim of ownership free of any legally cognizable trust obligation.



Sons of Providence: *The Education and Integration of Jews at Providence College, 1917-1965*

Jennifer Illuzzi and Arthur P. Urbano

Our journal has presented many articles about Jews and higher education. While the majority have dealt with Jewish students and professors at Brown and Pembroke, others have focused on Jews at Harvard, Yale, Rhode Island School of Design, University of Rhode Island, and City College of New York. Surprisingly, however, there has not yet been a study of Rhode Islanders' enrollment at or support of Brandeis University.

Profs. Jennifer Illuzzi and Arthur P. Urbano have broken new ground with their impressive study of Jews at Providence College. Not only did they dig deeply into archival and other institutional records; they interviewed more than two dozen alumni and attendees as well as some of these students' relatives. The results are astonishing, for they reveal that a large number of Jews studied at PC during its early decades and that many participated actively in its extracurricular life. Indeed, many interviewees expressed profound gratitude for the opportunities that the College provided.

Prof. Illuzzi graduated from Sacred Heart Academy in Hamden, Connecticut. While earning her bachelor's degree in foreign service at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in 1999, she took a course on Jewish mysticism and became inspired by Martin Buber's book, *I and Thou*. In 2008 she completed her doctorate in modern European history at the University of Minnesota. Her focus within social and political issues included diasporic populations and gender history.

Dr. Illuzzi began teaching in Providence College's history department in 2011, was promoted to associate professor in 2016, and a year later became the first recipient of the Faculty Service Award. Her book, *Gypsies in Germany and Italy, 1861-1914: Lives Outside the Law*, was published by Palgrave MacMillan in 2014, and she has written many other scholarly articles and reviews.

Prof. Urbano, a Classical High School graduate, earned his bachelor's degree in classics at Brown in 1995. Four years later, having focused on the New Testament and its Christian origins, he received a master's of divinity at Harvard Divinity School. After returning to Brown, he earned his doctorate in religious studies, with a focus on early Christianity, in 2005.

Now an associate professor in the theology department, he has taught undergraduate and graduate courses at Providence College for more than a decade. Dr. Urbano, who has been active in Holy Apostles Church in Cranston, became involved with interreligious dialogue when Rabbi Peter Stein led Temple Sinai in Cranston. Dr. Urbano's involvement has deepened as chair of his department's Jewish-Catholic Exchange Committee. He has also lectured at several Rhode Island synagogues and served as a board member of the Sandra Bornstein Holocaust Education Center.

As a specialist in Scripture and early church history, he has written a book on intellectual identity in late antiquity (published by Catholic University of America in 2013) as well as several articles, chapters in anthologies, and reviews. He has authored two entries in the forthcoming *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*.

This article is only a part of the authors' larger investigations, which include an online exhibition, a traveling photographic exhibition, and a documentary film. These projects should anchor more detailed studies about Jews at Providence College, studies about Rhode Island Jews at sister Catholic colleges and universities, and reminiscences by alumni and faculty alike.

Introduction: Questions and Method

In a 2015 interview, Bertram Forman, a member of Providence College's Class of 1952, echoed the sentiments of many Jewish alumni from the 1930s, '40s, and '50s. He explained:

I was born in Providence. I'll be 85 years old November 1. I came from a working-class background. My father worked hard. My mother, she worked. And I worked from the time I was seven or eight years old. Just went out to work. In fact, I was thinking this morning: It would have been better if I wasn't working. I could have gotten a lot more out of Providence College. And I got an awful lot out of it. Providence College is in my mind. I got a great education there. Fantastic.¹

Forman's story challenges a narrative of Jewish exclusion from higher education in the first half of the 20th century, which was well documented by Jerome Karabel in *The Chosen* and Dan Oren in *Joining the Club*.² While Ivy League and Seven Sister colleges often sought to limit Jewish admissions, Providence College (henceforth, "PC") accepted not only those who could pay tuition, but even some who could not. While Jewish students were certainly not free from discrimination, those whom we interviewed generally had very good memories of their time at the

College.

The history of Jewish enrollment at PC's sister Catholic colleges in New England and elsewhere has not been extensively studied.³ However, because PC placed students' religious affiliation on student transcripts through 1950, a fairly accurate research database could be amassed. Between 1922 and 1950, nearly 400 Jewish students passed through the gates of PC. Their enrollment leads to the following questions. Why did these students choose to attend PC? What was their academic experience compared to Catholic students? Were Jews involved in extracurricular activities? Did they face anti-Semitism during their time at the College? And how did their experience challenge the narrative of American Jews and higher education in the first half of the 20th century?

In order to answer these questions, we took a multifaceted and interdisciplinary approach to our research. Arthur P. Urbano, an associate professor of theology at PC, began the project in 2014 as an offshoot of his work in Christian-Jewish dialogue on campus. Anecdotally, many participants in these yearly seminars had mentioned that the College once had a significant number of Jewish students. Jennifer Illuzzi, an associate professor of history at PC, joined the project shortly thereafter, once its significant scope became clearer.

The project, supported by the Rhode Island Foundation's Bliss, Gross, Horowitz Fund and others, incorporated archival research with the cooperation of PC's Office of Enrollment Services, which granted access to student transcripts, and with assistance from the College's Archives and the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association.⁴ We also conducted extensive oral history interviews with alumni, family of alumni, faculty, historians, and a former president of PC.

Data on the number of Jewish students who attended PC came from consulting transcripts and enrollment statistics kept by the College administration. The transcript format changed several times over the years. The earliest transcripts had a space for a student's "Parish" (an assumption that most, if not all, students would be Roman Catholic). As the enrollment of Jewish and other non-Catholic students increased, College officials recorded religious affiliation in the space. Jewish students were categorized as "Jewish" or "Hebrew," but with no clear distinction between the two. Frequently, but not always, the names of synagogues were also recorded.

In the 1940s, a revised transcript included a space for "Religious De-

nomination” in addition to “Parish.” Enrollment data also tracked the number of students coming from local Catholic high schools. Three “other” categories were tracked through the end of the 1940s: Jews, Protestants, and Italians.

In 1950, a revision of the transcript eliminated the space for recording religious affiliation. This may have been in response to new anti-discrimination legislation passed across the United States following World War II.⁵ These measures were intended to eliminate the means by which educational institutions could discriminate against Jews and other religious, ethnic, and racial minorities.

Between 2015 and 2016, we conducted 29 oral history interviews. These were solicited in a number of ways: through direct contact with alumni still active in College activities, announcements at Rhode Island’s synagogues, advertisements in PC’s alumni magazine, and advertisements in the Rhode Island newspaper, *The Jewish Voice*. For the most part, the alumni interviewees were self-selecting; that is, individuals responded directly to the announcements and advertisements.

Because interviewees tended to be enthusiastic PC supporters, our data tended to reflect a positive image of the College. Nonetheless, a few of our interviews indicated changes on campus that altered the atmosphere for Jewish students by the 1960s. We address these issues in the conclusion. Additional interviews with historians, faculty, and former administration officials were also solicited directly by us.

For the sake of consistency throughout the period of data collection, we utilized two sets of interview questions: one for alumni, the other for faculty, staff, and scholars. The interview questions are found in the *Appendix*.

All interviews were videotaped and transcribed. With the permission of interviewees, they will be redacted and made publicly available as an oral history resource in the near future.

The goal of the present article is to present an overview of the data and to offer conclusions that pertain to the Jewish presence at PC between 1917 (the year of the College’s founding) and 1965. This year was chosen as a cut-off point because it was the year in which the Second Vatican Council issued *Nostra Aetate*, a groundbreaking document that radically reoriented Christian-Jewish relations.

We will demonstrate two parallel and possibly surprising phenomena. On the one hand, the Jewish experience at Providence College aligned with the historical, economic, and social contexts of this era. On the other hand, when compared

to the experiences of Jews at Ivy League institutions and in light of the historically turbulent relations between Jews and Christians, the Jewish experience at PC was quite an extraordinary and positive phenomenon.

The Origins of PC: A Roman Catholic College with Open Doors

The establishment of PC was the fulfillment of a dream of Rev. Matthew Harkins (1845-1921), the second bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Catholic immigrant communities in Rhode Island, in particular French-Canadian and Italian, established parochial schools.⁶ The Councils of Baltimore, which were national meetings of Catholic bishops in the United States, had recommended that every Catholic parish have an affiliated parochial school.⁷ Bishop Harkins pushed this policy in his diocese: between 1887 and 1921, 30 new parish elementary schools were opened. Several new Catholic high schools were also opened during his tenure reflecting “both growing prosperity of the Catholic community and the need created by the growing sophistication of business for workers with more extensive educations.”⁸

Harkins’ vision also extended to higher education. For a combination of reasons, Rhode Island had only a small number of private and public institutions. These included: Brown University, Pembroke (Brown’s college for women), Rhode Island Normal School (now Rhode Island College), Rhode Island School of Design, Bryant College (now Bryant University), and Rhode Island College of Pharmacy (now defunct). Like its sister land-grant institutions in New England, Rhode Island State College (now the University of Rhode Island), which was chartered in 1888 as an agricultural program, was located far from most city dwellers, in Kingston.

Thus, Harkins saw the need for a college that would serve the state’s Catholic, largely immigrant, population. In a petition to the Dominican Master General in Rome in 1915, he took aim at the area’s colleges and universities, stating, “secular universities present dangers of faith and morals to Catholic students.”⁹ Accordingly, Harkins and the Dominican Provincial, Rev. James Meagher, O.P., wished to provide a strong liberal arts education rooted in Catholic values, especially to counter Brown’s “secular” character.

Daniel J. O’Neill and Donna McCaffrey have chronicled in detail the history of events and delays leading to the founding of PC.¹⁰ On February 14, 1917, it was officially incorporated by a vote of the Rhode Island General Assembly, and

ecclesiastical approval from the Holy See followed shortly thereafter.

PC's charter was modeled on that of the St. Vincent de Paul Infant Asylum, a charitable institution established by the Sisters of Mercy in 1892 and devoted to the care of sick and orphaned children in Providence regardless of their national or religious background.¹¹ The College's charter also included a religious nondiscrimination clause modeled after those at Amherst and Tufts.¹² Section 7 of PC's charter stated: "No person shall be refused admission to said college as a student, nor shall any person be denied any of the privileges, honors or degrees of said college on account of the religious opinions he may entertain."

The openness to non-Catholic admissions may have been motivated by a desire for inclusivity, but there were other factors as well. Anti-Catholic political maneuvering in the Rhode Island legislature in the late 19th century led to the near loss of tax-exempt status for religiously affiliated schools, and thus, Providence may have included its openness to those of all faiths as a way to sustain itself against the political whims of the legislature.¹³ More than two years elapsed before the first incoming class of 21 men entered PC on September 18, 1919, with the Friars of the Dominican Order at the helm.¹⁴

The Earliest Jewish Students

On September 21, 1922, Joel Novogroski, the son of Max Novogroski, from Westerly, Rhode Island, was the first Jewish student admitted to PC. As a member of the school's fourth incoming freshman class, he enrolled in the College's two-year, premedical program. He took courses in biology, chemistry, English, mathematics, and physics. He was not required to take the "Christian Doctrine" course, a four-year, daily obligatory course for all Catholic students at the time. After only one year at the College, Novogroski transferred to the University of Pennsylvania. His PC transcript indicates that he died in 1968.

Over the course of the 1920s, the number of Jewish young men seeking admission to PC slowly increased. Through 1926, there were no more than five Jews in each incoming class, which numbered between approximately 200 and 260 freshmen. In 1927, 14 of 288 freshmen were Jews (nearly 5% of the class). The incoming classes of 1928, 1929, and 1930 included nine, 15, and 10 Jews, respectively.¹⁵ Most were from Providence's North End, East Side, and South Providence neighborhoods; others were from Pawtucket, Newport, Fall River, and eastern Massachusetts.

A few more came from Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey.

The first Jewish student to receive a PC certificate was Benjamin Burr Levin from Pawtucket. He entered in 1924 and received the premedical certificate two years later. Benjamin's brother, Isadore Irving Levin, was admitted to the premedical program in 1929.

The first Jewish student to receive a four-year degree was Siegfried Arnold, from Providence, in 1930. Having concentrated in philosophy, he received the Bachelor of Philosophy (Ph.B.) degree. The philosophy courses offered at this time, based on the scholastic philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas, included courses in logic, metaphysics, and cosmology. This was true of PC's curriculum in general, which was "the Scholastic system, adapted from Aristotle and the Ancient Greeks, Christianized by Thomas Aquinas and Albertus the Great, and successfully carried out by the Order of Preachers [i.e., the Dominican Order] for seven centuries to the great universities in Europe."¹⁶

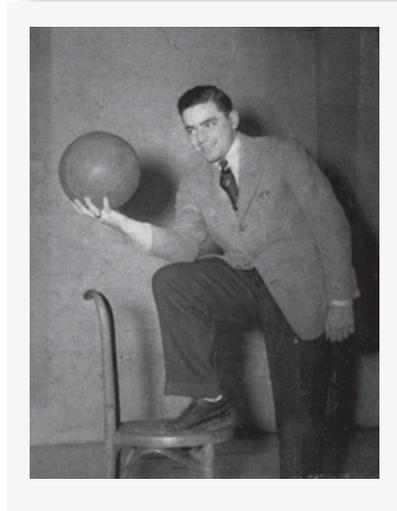
The 1930s and '40s: Peak Jewish Enrollment

In September 1931, the incoming freshmen class saw a dramatic and notable spike in the number of Jewish enrollees. Of 240 freshmen, 39 were Jews



Harkins Hall

Like many Jewish students, Jerome Tesler '42 was very active in campus life, serving as manager of the basketball team.



(16.25%), the highest percentage in the College's history. The vast majority were from Providence. Throughout the 1930s, the percentage of Jewish students fluctuated between 4% and 11% of incoming freshmen. Before America entered World War II, the number of Jews remained under 6% of incoming freshmen. Nevertheless, the impression of some Jewish alumni who attended in this period was that the total number of Jews at the College was significant, seeming even as high as "25% of the [student] population."¹⁷ It should be noted, however, that the statistical numbers reported here are based on the number of incoming freshmen, not on graduating seniors. During this decade, PC's attrition rate was quite high overall, not only in respect to Jewish students. In the 1930s, it was sometimes as high as 70%. Many students left the College after one or two years.¹⁸

After America entered the war, scores of PC students – Catholics, Protestants, and Jews alike- enlisted or were drafted. Abraham Smith, a Jew who played basketball and acted with Pyramid Players during his only year, 1941, at PC, was killed in Germany in 1944. Like so many PC heroes, his name is engraved on the War Memorial Grotto in front of St. Dominic's Chapel.

Jerome Tesler '42 recalled that exactly a month after his graduation, on June 7th, he enlisted, and spent much of the next 38 months in the Pacific theatre.¹⁹ Albert Resnick, also '42, explained that because the College operated year-round, he was able to graduate within three years before joining the military.²⁰

A second spike in the number of incoming Jewish freshmen occurred in 1943, when they accounted for 15% of the incoming class. But these were 10 out of only 66 incoming freshmen. So diminished was enrollment during the war years that the College's existence was placed in jeopardy.

Thus, as Brown welcomed units of the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps and pre-meteorologists in the Army Air Force Technical Training Detachment, PC hosted more than 500 young soldiers in an Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP).²¹ Many of these young men were Jews. Fay Rozovsky '73 – one of the first women to attend PC and a former president of the Alumni Association – was a niece of Alfred Samdperil '44. She researched the "lost class of 1944," which in March of that year was sent to Europe. Many of these soldiers fought in the Battle of the Bulge. Regrettably, 37 members of the ASTP were killed in action, and none of the survivors returned to PC to complete his studies.²²

Why Jewish Students Chose PC

German and other Western European Jews began settling in Providence in the 1830s, and in 1849 they established their first communal institution, a cemetery on the southern outskirts of the city. By 1915, approximately 8,000 Eastern European Jews lived in Providence (comprising 6% of the population).²³ By 1924, the Jewish population of Rhode Island reached 25,000, with the greatest number concentrated in Providence.²⁴ Many of the Jews who lived in the North End, and belonged to Orthodox congregations such as Sons of Jacob and Sons of Zion, chose PC because it was their neighborhood school. Nevertheless, Jews from other parts of Providence also attended PC. These would include congregants of Temple Emanu-El (Conservative) and Temple Beth-El (Reform), among others. Many could walk, take a trolley or hitch a ride to campus.

Like struggling Catholics, Jews were also attracted to PC because of its quite modest tuition. From 1927 to 1930, the yearly tuition fee was \$150. From 1931 through 1938, during some of the worst years of the Depression, it was \$200. Tuition reached \$240 in 1939 and \$290 three years later. In 1944, it was raised again, most likely because of the financial difficulties caused by the war, to \$340.²⁵

Jerome Tesler '42 told us, "Within a few days after my application to Providence, I received, 'yes you can be a student here.' I think my mother was dancing with joy, and my father, of course, was pleasantly surprised because the tuition was within his means at that time, because in '29, there was a tremendous explosion of finances. People jumping off the buildings, trying to recoup. So the monies were kind of tight, and I think my father was quite happy that Providence College accepted me."²⁶

Henry Levin '51 reported, "I spoke to Father Dillon and told him what my state was, I didn't have enough money to go to school. His answer to me was: "You're going to school. You forget about the money."²⁷

In addition to the accessible location and the affordable cost, PC was also building a strong reputation. Rev. Lorenzo McCarthy, O.P., who served as president from 1927 to 1936, sought accreditation for the College from the appropriate regional body and in 1931 obtained it from the New England Association of Colleges.²⁸ To this end, he called for a reorganization and expansion of the curriculum. In May 1931, *The Pawtucket Times* reported on the "drastic changes" coming to the College. These included: the addition of eight professors with Ph.D.s, a new building in the planning, modern foreign languages taught by native speakers, a new department of political science, a general modernization of the liberal arts curriculum, and strengthening of the sciences.²⁹

Jewish students enrolled in all of the College's degree programs. The most popular majors for Jewish students included biology, business, education, and social science. In the 1920s and '30s, many enrolled in the College's two-year premedical program. Interestingly, the names of some Jewish alumni who became doctors or dentists – Paul Cohen '34, Hymen D. Stein '35, and Theodore Gorfine '43 – are listed on a plaque in the rotunda of Harkins Hall. These graduates were donors to a fund to decorate the building's exterior with statues of saints.

Maurice Greenstein '48 was the College's first Jewish valedictorian. Josiah Sacks '51 graduated second in his class. Robert Krasner, his classmate, also graduated in the top 15% of his class. In 1958 Krasner became an assistant professor in PC's biology department and retired as a full professor 50 years later. He passed away in 2014 and is fondly remembered by many alumni and colleagues.

Edward Gentile '74 spoke about the experiences of his father, Herman, who attended PC's premedical program from 1931 to 1933. He explained: "Providence College... became a school to go to if you wanted to go to medical school, law school or dental school. It had a very high rate of its graduates getting into those professional schools, and that reputation persisted even through the time I went to school there."³⁰

Anti-Semitism

Beginning in the 1920s, Jewish quotas were established at America's most presti-



Rev. Lorenzo McCarthy, president of Providence College from 1927 to 1936, served on the executive committee which organized the interreligious Seminar on Human Relations in 1931. The Jewish population at PC spiked during his tenure.

gious private universities and at others, including Brown, which aspired to join their ranks.³¹ Even Jews who were admitted to these institutions often encountered barriers to participation in student life.

As American involvement in World War II approached, many young Jews from greater Providence chose PC because anti-Semitism still limited their educational opportunities elsewhere. Morton Hoffman '44, for example, acknowledged that he chose to apply to PC after he learned from a Brown dean that the yearly quota of Jews had already been filled.³²

Many Catholics were inclined to welcome Jews to PC because of their own extensive experience with discrimination. Rhode Island's long history of nativism, as reflected in property-based voting restrictions against immigrant populations, was not fully lifted until 1928.³³ Throughout the 1920s, the Rhode Island Ku Klux Klan grew and engaged in anti-Semitic, racist, and anti-Catholic activities. On November 6, 1924, for example, the Klan burned a cross near PC's campus.³⁴

In the 1920s and the '30s, however, there had also been a significant surge of anti-Semitism among Rhode Island's Italian-American community. This was often expressed through *L'Eco del Rhode Island*, the Italian newspaper. Before disbanding in 1935, the Khaki shirts, a national fascist and anti-Semitic organization, recruited 1,500 members in Providence.³⁵

Throughout the 1930s, Rev. Charles Coughlin's immensely popular Sunday radio broadcasts attracted up to 30 million Catholic listeners. In a 1930 broadcast, for example, he asserted, "We have lived to see the day that modern Shylocks

have grown fat and wealthy, praised and deified, because they have perpetuated the ancient crime of usury under the modern racket of statesmanship.”³⁶ Despite his increasingly virulent anti-Semitism, many Catholic families still listened to Coughlin’s weekly broadcasts.

Many PC students at the time were probably familiar with his name. An article in *The Cowl* (the weekly student newspaper) from January 1938 asked various students what they thought of Coughlin’s return to the radio. A prelaw senior, John H. Fanning, noted, “Father Coughlin, if he uses moderation in his addresses and refrains from emotional appeals and name calling orgies, has great potential influence in correcting the social and economic abuses so prevalent in the United States today. He has the necessary ability and knowledge and, I think, the confidence of many Americans – Catholic, Protestant and Jew alike.”³⁷ This student seemed prepared to downplay Coughlin’s blatant anti-Semitism and view him as a positive force for promoting economic change within American society.

Generally speaking, Jewish alumni whom we interviewed did not dwell on direct experiences of anti-Semitism on campus, but, as the above article shows, there were some incidents when prejudices against Jewish students led them to be treated differently by their Catholic peers. For instance, in 1948, *The Cowl* conducted a St. Patrick’s Day prank in which some Armenian, Jewish, and Italian students were asked how they expressed their Irish pride. An interviewee named “Dennis Patrick O’Feldberg” responded, “*Was hockt mir a tscheineck?* [Roughly: “Stop bothering me”] (English translation: *natch!*)”³⁸

But earlier, there were far more serious concerns. For example, in November 1935, a Jewish student (identified only as D.J.) wrote to *The Cowl* to protest its editorial position that Americans should participate in the Berlin Olympics. He asked, “What is a pledged word to a man who thinks that he can legislate out of existence the Eternal God, and who wants to supplant the great Christ with pagan Siegfried, simply because Christ was a Semite and Jew?”

The editor, Joseph P. Dyer (who was fairly snide to all letter writers!), responded, “That’s your opinion, though you sound pretty convincing,” adding, “With your ‘line’ you should be able to sell anything. Try selling some *Cowl* ads for us. Seriously, do the Jews of Germany want us to go over? Say no to that if you can.”³⁹ Dyer here seems to be accessing the anti-Semitic trope of the Jewish merchant to “kid” his Jewish interlocutor, and minimize the threat to Jews from Hitler.

A month before Pearl Harbor, Louis Rosen, who would eventually become editor-in-chief of *The Cowl*, warned his fellow students of the great danger posed by Hitler. Rather than being a jester, the German leader now “sits laughing at a world which once smiled amusedly at his wild jestures [sic] and maniacal utterings, fed him prize tid-bits from the head table, patted him sympathetically when he whined— until he threw off his fool’s cap, upset the banquet table, and seized the crown! It was only then that the world learned that not every jester was a fool.”⁴⁰

The letter by “D.J.” and the editorial by Rosen indicate that while some students on campus were not alarmed by Hitler’s racist stance, Jewish students tried to raise awareness and sound alarms. It is of course unknown how effective they were.

In our interviews with Jewish alumni (and non-graduates), we noticed a distinct split between those who reported no experiences of harassment, discomfort, or anti-Semitism (generally those who attended in the 1930s and ’40s) and those who did (generally those who attended in the 1950s and ’60s). The former group tended to agree with Bertram Forman ’52, who told us, “Nothing ever, ever, ever. Not one word. No jokes. No this. No that. See, you’ve got to remember most of the people when I went to school, they were working too. That was the days when it wasn’t lush. The family needed help. We all worked.”⁴¹

Leonard Sholes, who attended Providence College from 1932 to 1934, asserted, “No. No one said ‘Jew’ to you or nothing. In the public school they would, but in Providence College, never.”⁴²

Some interviewees from the later periods reported negative experiences. One interviewee who graduated in the 1950s noted that a particular priest made him feel “uncomfortable” because he was Jewish.⁴³

Edward Feldstein ’64 noted an incident when he was running for vice president of his class. He explained, “I was walking through the dorms and my opponent was in one of the other rooms talking to the other people in the dorm. I overheard him being asked, well, ‘Who’s running against you?’ and he named me and said, ‘That Jewish kid from the East Side.’”⁴⁴

Jeffrey Blum ’68 recalled, “My roommate and myself, we added a third roommate. All of the rooms had a huge cross hanging from molding at the top of the ceiling. That cross was always put over my bed by my roommates thinking that it would help me – as kind of a joke. It never bothered me. I remember them put-



Edward Feldstein '64 served as president of the St. Thomas More Club for prelaw students. He has been a prominent community leader in Providence.

ting it there a couple times. They didn't hang it correctly and it fell into the bed."⁴⁵

Despite some instances of anti-Semitism, Jewish students had many reasons to attend Providence College, especially in the 1930s and '40s. As a neighborhood school with open doors, it admitted those who could pay the affordable tuition and, especially during the Great Depression, those who could

not. Also, within 20 years of its opening, PC gained a reputation as a quality school that prepared young men for a future in the professions, particularly in medicine and dentistry. Young men could also live at home, work outside of the classroom to contribute to family income, and encounter professors who genuinely cared about their future. For immigrants, PC provided a stepping-stone to an American future.

Religion and Philosophy Requirements

PC's earliest liberal arts curriculum was modeled on the centuries-old educational approach of the Dominican Order, emphasizing the philosophy of Aristotle and the theology of Aquinas. The 1932 *Bulletin of Providence College* stated that at the heart of the curriculum was "the principle that every human being... is primarily obligated to the realization of perfection or fullness of life according to the specific and individual capacities" of each person. In the earliest decades, courses in philosophy (21 credits) and Christian doctrine (16 credits) were required; theology courses were prescribed for all eight semesters.

Although Jewish students at PC were immediately introduced to a Catholic liberal arts education, they were not consistently required to take courses in Christian doctrine. For example, the 1920-1921 student catalogue stated that "non-Catholic students are under no obligation to follow these courses, but may attend as

auditors."⁴⁶ The 1925-1926 catalogue stated, however, that "attendance" of Christian doctrine courses was "obligatory for all students."⁴⁷ According to the transcripts of the 27 Jewish students enrolled between 1922 and 1927, only one took the Christian doctrine course. Of the 24 Jewish students enrolled between 1928 and 1929, only nine took the course as freshmen, and none continued during their sophomore year. Between 1930 and 1939, the transcripts of only about two dozen of 212 Jewish students record enrollment in the Christian doctrine course, and this was usually for two semesters in their freshman year.

Nevertheless, transcripts are not an accurate measure of how many Jewish students attended religion courses. Samuel Nelson '42, for example, explained that although religion classes were "optional," "I wanted to go to them because I was interested." In these classes he was sometimes asked about Judaism, so he and other students were able to make comparisons between Christianity and Judaism.⁴⁸ However, there is no record of this course on Dr. Nelson's transcript. Nelson's classmate, Jerome Tesler, reported that he was required to attend religion classes but, as an auditor, he was not graded.⁴⁹ Many interviewees described these courses as fruitful experiences of interreligious learning.

Through 1946, transcripts indicate that Jewish students were enrolled in religion classes only sporadically. Some were enrolled in "Religion 101" or "Theology 101," a course based on Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*. A revision to the Student Bulletin in 1947-48 once again stated that non-Catholic students were required to attend religion classes as auditors.⁵⁰

During the 1948-49 academic year, both the College's Committee on Studies and the newly established Department of College Theology discussed establishing separate classes for non-Catholic students.⁵¹ Yet, no consistent policy resulted. One course named as a possible substitute for theology classes was "Philosophy 2: The History of Religious Influence," which may have been intended specifically for Jewish and Protestant students (and which, incidentally, is not listed in the course catalogue). Though they did not recall the name of a course, several interviewees recalled being in separate religion classes.

While the Committee on Studies and early discussions in the Department of Theology favored separate courses (and possibly the substitution of courses), by May of 1949, the Department of College Theology voted unanimously that the Catalogue be changed to state that non-Catholic students be required instead to

take the *current* theology courses for at least three years.⁵²

A revision to the 1949-50 College Catalogue stated that theology courses were “required of all Catholic students,” but nothing was stated about the obligation of non-Catholic students. Nevertheless, of the Jewish freshmen enrolled in the fall of 1949, only one took “Theology 101” and “102.” Some Jewish students, however, took courses on biblical literature in the English department.

Several Jewish graduates took up to 13 philosophy courses over four years, including “Philosophy 1: Philosophy of Religions” and “Philosophy 302: Advanced Religious Problems.” Herbert Leshinsky ’52, who entered in the fall of 1948 under the G.I. Bill and became an accounting major, took a required theology course, specifically on Aquinas’ *Summa* in his sophomore year. Robert Krasner ’51 took a course on Aquinas’ *Summa*, “Theology 302,” in his junior year as well as “Philosophy 2” in his senior year. The latter included a unit on Buddhism.⁵³

Similarly, Henry Levin ’51, who took “Philosophy 2” in his senior year, recalled learning about Shintoism in a class with other non-Catholic students. He explained, “I remember in my class we had a lot of Jewish boys but when we took religion we took it with the Protestants. So it was, the classes were always filled.” Dr. Levin also stated that he never felt Catholicism was pushed on him.⁵⁴

Jewish students enrolled in a four-year bachelor’s program were required to take the same philosophy courses as their Catholic peers. These were never exempted. They vividly recall taking courses in theodicy, cosmology, metaphysics, ethics, and logic, all of which are rooted in the Christian philosophy of Aquinas. Jerome Tesler ’42 remarked: “By process of osmosis, St. Thomas Aquinas’s philosophy was in my head. The Jewish philosophy, such as it is, was in my head. And I always had a penchant for wherever I was, trying to get ideas about other religions and philosophies of other religions and combine them.”⁵⁵

According to the 1951 edition of the *Student Handbook*, course requirements changed remarkably. It stated: “Every Catholic student is required to take the course in Catholic Theology, and non-Catholic students must take equivalent courses approved by the Dean of Studies.”⁵⁶ Because transcripts after 1949 no longer recorded students’ religious affiliations, it is not possible to determine with accuracy which courses were taken by Jewish students. Therefore, interviewees from this period were asked about their personal experiences.

Howard Lipsey ’57 reported that, in place of theology courses, he, like

other Jews and some Protestants, took philosophy classes with religious themes. He explained: “There was a priest, of course, in charge of it and while it wasn’t theological there were many theological discussions that we had. They were very interesting but we were not required to take them.”⁵⁷

Mario DiNunzio ’57, a Catholic who is now an emeritus professor of history at PC, remarked on the unintended consequences of exemptions for non-Catholic students. He recalled that when Catholic students learned about exemptions, “there was a parade of students marching, this is literally true, marching to the dean’s office swearing that they were no longer Catholic... You had to go to the dean’s office and swear that you were not a Catholic and then you could get exempt.”⁵⁸

This exemptions policy was in effect when Edward Feldstein ’64 enrolled in the new honors program. He opted out of theology and took an additional philosophy course instead. He explained that he was exposed to theology instead through the new liberal arts honors program.⁵⁹

Religious Activities and Customs

There was no obligation for Jewish students to participate in religious activities on campus. For example, they were excused from the annual spiritual retreat, which was obligatory for all Catholic students (and resulted in severe penalties, including suspension for a year, if missed!).⁶⁰

Some interviewees attended religious services on campus, though it does not seem that they were required to do so. Leonard Sholes, who attended PC from 1932 to 1934, recalled: “Every day they’d have a religious service, and we attended it. We sat and listened, but when they kneeled, we just sat in our chairs.”⁶¹

Interviewees reported that the Dominican administration and faculty in general respected Jewish religious sensitivities and practices. For example, Jewish students were often excused from classes during the High Holy Days.

Although all classes began with a prayer, Jewish students were not required or compelled to participate. Herbert Leshinsky ’52 reported that he made it “abundantly clear” that when the class prayed the “Hail Mary,” he would recite the *Sh’ma*. It was “no big problem.”⁶² Several interviewees who took German also reported that when their class was assigned to translate the “Lord’s Prayer” into German, they were allowed to translate the *Sh’ma* instead.

During graduation ceremonies, the bishop of Providence, who was seated on the dais, handed out diplomas. Students were expected to kneel and kiss his ring. Several interviewees reported that they were unaware of this tradition until they were in line.

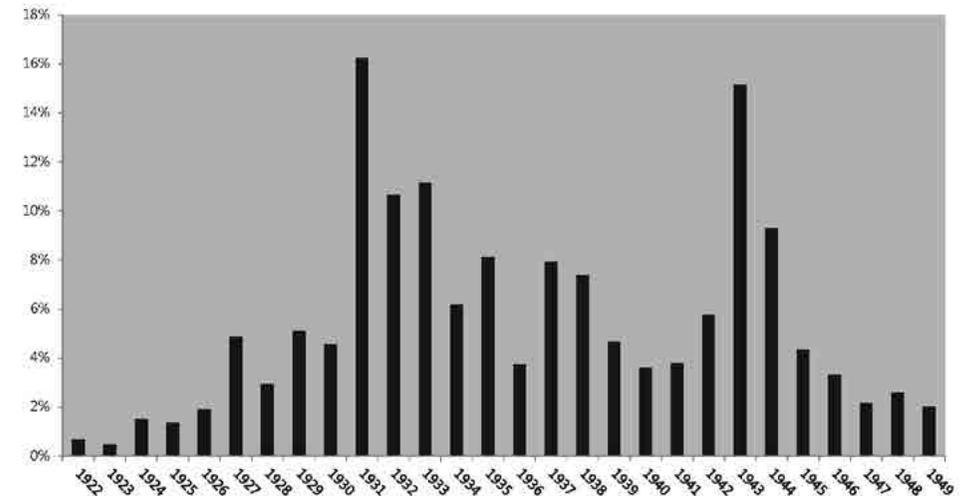
One interviewee reported that he felt uneasy when he realized what was happening. To his surprise, when his name was called, Bishop Francis Keough (1934-1947) extended his hand and said, “Mazel tov!” He was not obligated to offer the Catholic signs of respect. On the other hand, another interviewee did follow the custom, after he was caught unawares.

Extracurricular Involvement

One of the most remarkable ways that Jewish students at PC challenged the dominant narrative of exclusion in higher education is through their high integration in extracurricular activities. At Yale, for instance, while Catholic students increasingly participated in extracurricular activities in the 1920s and ‘30s, Jewish students were only well represented in the orchestra and debating societies. No Jews were elected to the most senior and exclusive societies, like Skull and Bones, before 1930. Similarly, at Harvard, the low participation of Jews in athletics, social clubs, and other extracurricular activities was used by its administration to suggest that Jews, particularly immigrants or children of immigrants, did not “fit” the Harvard character. But such low levels of participation were almost certainly the result of anti-Semitic hostility and exclusion.⁶³

At PC, from the 1920s up to 1950, when the tracking of students’ religious affiliations ceased, Jewish students participated in at least 28 extracurricular organizations on campus, including the Friars Club (a club founded in 1928, and still in existence today, promoting scholarship and Judaeo-Christian values via the unique Dominican tradition).⁶⁴ Jews competed on the following teams: aquatics, baseball, basketball, bowling, boxing, fencing, football, softball, and table tennis. Jews also participated in the following geographical clubs: Boston, Fall River, Metropolitan, Newport, and Carolan (for resident students). They wrote or edited for such publications as: *The Cowl* (student newspaper), *Veritas* (yearbook), and *The Alembic* (literary magazine). Jews performed in such groups as glee club, orchestra, and Pyramid Players (theater), and they voiced their opinions through debate club, student government, prom committee, and cap and gown day committee (for se-

Percentage Jewish Students per Incoming Fall Freshman Class



niors). Jewish students also explored curricular and professional interests through: Albertus Magnus club (biology/ premed), Le Pleiade (French club), Phi Chi club (physics/engineering), philosophy club, and St. Thomas More club (prelaw). As a result, Jewish students contributed with their Catholic and Protestant peers to PC’s character and ethos.

Some individual Jewish students stand out. By 1928, Edward (Eddie) Wineapple, a native of Salem, Massachusetts, and a star athlete his freshman year at Syracuse University, was elected vice-president of the sophomore class. In the 1929 basketball season, he became the nation’s second highest scorer (278 points in 20 games) and the first Jewish athlete selected as an All-American. Also a star baseball player at PC, he was recruited to play for a major league team, the Washington Senators, but pitched only one game. Wineapple was the first person elected to PC’s Sports Hall of Fame.⁶⁵

Another notable Jewish athlete was Irving Katznelson ’34, who played on the football team. Sam Shapiro ’35, from Lynn, Massachusetts, played varsity basketball for three years. Only a year after *The Cowl* began publication, Israel (Izzy) Siperstein ’38 served as a sports writer and later sports editor. Beryle Sacks ’41 was

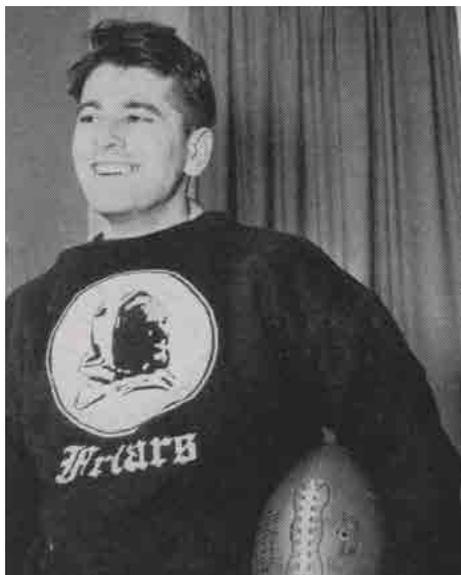
a member of Pyramid Players, captain of the basketball team, and chairman of Carolan Club's winter festival.

Several Jewish members of the Class of 1942 were particularly prominent. Willard (Will) Golby, from New Jersey, was recruited to play football, was active in Carolan Club, and was elected secretary of his senior class. Jerome Tesler was manager of the basketball team and a founding member of the softball club.

Aaron Slom, also '42, managed both the baseball and the football teams, was treasurer of both Monogram Club (athletic boosters) and Newport Club, and participated in intramural basketball. As an alumnus, he hosted basketball players in his Newport home. Peter Slom '78 recollected that Father Begley, PC's athletic director, took such a liking to his father that, during his senior year, he was given a free room to stay on campus.⁶⁶

Morton Hoffman, who entered PC in 1941, was a debater and served as junior class secretary. He recalled his involvement in Pyramid Players with special fondness:

I was the first freshman accepted into the dramatic club. You never got the key until you were a senior, and I was the first one who ever got it. I think I still have it...
December 7th, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, we were rehearsing for a



Aaron Slom '42, served as the basketball, football and baseball manager during his time at Providence College, and remained deeply involved with the athletics program for the rest of his life.

play, *The Fall Guy*. It was way ahead of its time because it was all about drugs, heroin and other stuff. The moderator of the club was a Fr. Freal, and if anybody looked like a friar, he did. He looked like Friar Tuck, but he was a good man. On December 7th, when we were rehearsing, he said, 'The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.' Where's Pearl Harbor? Nobody even knew where it was. So, the next day, 20 of us went down and enlisted, and I enlisted in the Air Corps.⁶⁷

Louis Saul Rosen '42, from Cranston, was assistant editor and then editor-in-chief of *The Cowl*. He also wrote for the *Alembic* and was active in Pyramid Players. As a senior, he served on the *Veritas* yearbook and the cap and gown committee.

Howard Lipsey '57 wrote for *The Cowl*, was on the *Veritas* staff, and belonged to the debate club and St. Thomas More club (for prelaw students). After serving as a member of Student Congress for three years, he was elected president in 1956. He recalled:

The last thing I ever thought of was running for president of the student government, particularly as I was running against a guy with an Irish name. The fellows from the Veterans' Club came and said, 'We want you to run for the president of the Student Congress. You did us a really good deed, you stood up for us, and you belong as president.'⁶⁸

Edward Feldstein '64 was elected president of St. Thomas More Club (for prelaw students) his senior year. He explained that, because every meeting began with a prayer, "I would turn the meeting over to one of the Catholic students to lead the prayer."⁶⁹ Like so many of his Jewish contemporaries and predecessors at PC, Feldstein experienced few barriers to participation in the College's vigorous extracurricular life. He and many others later had successful careers and became prominent community leaders.

Broader Interreligious Relations

Yet another remarkable feature of PC's history is the extent to which the College became a pioneer in Christian-Jewish relations between the 1930s and '60s. It reached out to its Jewish friends and neighbors as a national interreligious movement was slowly emerging and before an international Catholic movement occurred.⁷⁰ While the subject of interreligious relations merits its own study, we wish

to highlight some of the key aspects of this cooperation in Providence.

On May 3 and 4, 1932, a conference of the Rhode Island Seminar on Human Relations was held on the campuses of PC and Brown. Rev. Lorenzo McCarthy, O.P., the College's president, was a member of the executive committee, as was Clarence Barbour, the University's Baptist president. In addition to other Protestants, the committee included two Jews: a philanthropist, Max Grant, and Rabbi Samuel Gup, the rabbi of his congregation, Temple Beth-El in Providence.⁷¹ Everett R. Clinchy, a founder of the National Conference of Christians and Jews (NCCJ), also participated in planning the conference, which featured Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant speakers on such topics as: religious tolerance, differences and similarities between Judaism and Christianity, and university quotas.⁷²

In December of the same year, Father McCarthy was one of eight non-Jews honored by *The American Hebrew and Jewish Tribune* for his "promotion of better understanding between Jews and non-Jews."⁷³ His presidential successors, Rev. John Dillon, O.P., and Rev. Robert Slavin, O.P., remained active in the activities of the NCCJ and the Seminar on Human Relationships through the 1940s.

Beginning in 1962, the Second Vatican Council, under the pontificate of Pope John XXIII, took up questions of Christian-Jewish relations. Receiving the approval of Pope John's successor, Paul VI, the council issued the "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" (*Nostra Aetate*) on October 28, 1965, a document that encouraged a new era of "mutual understanding and respect" between Christians and Jews.

Two years prior to *Nostra Aetate*, on November 17, 1963, however, Rev. Vincent Dore, O.P., PC's president from 1961 to 1965, convened a Conference on Catholic-Jewish Understanding in collaboration with the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. When serving as chancellor of the College, Father Dore was instrumental in organizing a second conference, which was held just days after the publication of *Nostra Aetate*, on November 11, 1965.

Thus, it was one of the first duties of Father Dore's successor, Rev. William Haas, O.P. (president of PC from 1965 to 1971), to preside over the conference. Subsequently, Father Haas hired Rabbi William G. Braude, Ph.D., of Providence's Temple Beth-El, to serve part-time on the PC faculty. He became the first rabbi to hold such a position. In 1969, Haas was honored with a Humanitarian Award from the American Jewish Committee and, a year later, with the Bronze Brotherhood

Award from the Southern New England chapter of the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

Both Father Dore and Father Haas strengthened ties between the College and the local Jewish community through the 1960s. Several prominent members of the Providence Jewish community served on the newly formed President's Council, including Robert Riesman, Joseph Ress, and Max Alperin, among others.⁷⁴

In later decades, though the numbers of Jewish students diminished, these ties to the community would remain. There was also a small increase in the number of Jewish faculty members.

Conclusion

Jewish and Catholic immigrants alike- in Providence and beyond- shared a heritage of discrimination in the 19th and 20th centuries. Despite that shared experience, a long history of Catholic discrimination against Jews also led to tensions between the two populations. Surprisingly, however, we have discovered that in Providence College's formative decades, administrators and students worked together to create a campus culture that, on the whole, welcomed and encouraged young Jews alongside the majority of Irish and Italian Catholic men.

Although the College stopped tracking the religious affiliations of its students in 1950, we interviewed some of our faculty colleagues and a few alumni who graduated after that date. Quite surprisingly, especially in the years *after* the 1965 promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*, the number of Jewish students on the PC campus dropped significantly. Anecdotal evidence indicated that Jewish students began to feel a sense of difference more acutely. As the question of the "Catholic character" of the college became more of an issue to Catholics in the 1960s and '70s, and even through the '80s, we sensed that Jewish students and faculty often felt more distanced from the community.⁷⁵

Lee Krasner, whose husband, Robert, was both a 1951 graduate and a 50-year faculty member, spoke a great deal about the changes they saw on campus.⁷⁶ When Robert attended PC, Father Dore ensured that, even with four other siblings at home, he could attend without worrying about tuition. Father Dore also ensured Robert's successful application to a doctoral program in biology at Boston University. By the late 1960s, however, Lee asserted that PC's more "conservative" orientation was less open to non-Catholic points of view. Accordingly, a smaller number of

Jewish students enrolled.⁷⁷

Lee's comments are consistent with an assertion made by a graduate from the 1960s, Austin Sarat '69: "There'd be some religious service in a grotto, and I wasn't going to go to it. So that I remember this sense of not being a member of a fraternity... But I don't ever recall anyone ever saying, 'Oh, you're Jewish, how'd you end up at Providence College or why aren't you saying the prayer?'"⁷⁸

It is difficult at this point, based on a small amount of admittedly anecdotal evidence, to explain the change in admissions trends and the comfort levels of Jewish students and faculty after the mid-1960s, but it is a good question for further research. Jewish students from the late '60s, '70s, and '80s recalled being among only a few on campus. This trend reflected not only the changing character of the North End neighborhood and the College's character, but the dispersion of Rhode Island's Jewish community and greater educational opportunities for young Jews elsewhere.

It should also be noted that, by the mid-1960s, as New England's most prestigious colleges and universities were forced to become ever more meritocratic, they also began to distance themselves from their Protestant foundations. For example, compulsory chapel attendance at many institutions, including Brown, was abolished. And soon, in a further yearning for meritocracy and equality, men's colleges would open their doors to women and some women's colleges would also become coeducational. Formal admissions quotas on Jews also eventually disappeared, although informal restrictions, harder to document, may have continued into contemporary times.

As researchers, we were captivated by an unknown and untold story of PC in its early years. Jewish students came to PC because of its location, its affordability, its lack of quotas, and its academic reputation. They actively participated in academic and extracurricular life, and many went on to highly successful careers locally and nationally. Regardless of why the College inserted a religious non-discrimination clause in its charter in the first half-century of its existence, it sought to live up to the spirit of those words.

The Jewish alumni we interviewed and our archival research demonstrate that young Jewish men were woven quite deeply into the fabric of the early Providence College community. These young Jews strengthened and reinforced a vision of a college founded in the Catholic and Dominican tradition, which simultaneously

accepted every man, no matter what "religious opinions he may entertain."⁷⁹

Appendix:

Semi-structured Interview Questions

Questions for Alumni

Where were you born? Where did you grow up?

Why did you decide to attend Providence College?

What did you have to do to be admitted?

What do you remember about your first days on the campus? In classes?

What kinds of classes did you take?

Were you involved in any sports, clubs, or other extracurricular activities?

Do you have any anecdotes about any professors/classes?

Can you describe your experience with the Dominican friars?

What was it like being a Jewish student on a Catholic campus?

Did you feel comfortable?

Did you ever experience any discrimination?

Did you attend a local synagogue?

Do you know other Jewish alumni who might be interested in talking with me?

Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your time at PC?

Questions for PC Faculty/ Staff/ Scholars

How long have you been a member of the Providence College Community and in what capacity?

What was the admissions process to Providence College?

What was the rate of admission?

What was the retention rate?

What was campus life for students like in the 1920s/30s/etc.?

What were the popular clubs?

Were most students involved in a sport or other extra-curricular activity?

Were there mandatory religious activities, such as Masses, prayer, other services?

What do you know about the admission of Jewish students to Providence College?

Did Jewish students require accommodations for holy days or religious observance?

To what degree were these honored?

How was the relationship between Jewish students and professors?

Did Jewish students ever hold any leadership positions on campus?

Were there ever any reported anti-Semitic incidents on campus in this period?

What do you know about the Seminar on Human Relations interfaith conference that took place at Providence College in 1932?

Did this have any impact on Jewish-Christian relations at the College?

To what extent was the College administration (particularly the College president) aware of and involved in the educational and personal experiences of Jewish students on campus?

Was there ever opposition to having Jewish students at the College?

(Endnotes)

- 1
Bertram Forman. Interview, July 21, 2015.
- 2
Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2005). Dan Oren, *Joining the Club: A History of Jews and Yale*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). See also: George M. Goodwin, "The Class of 1896: Three Pawtucket Lads at Harvard," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* 16, no. 1 (November 2014): 611-29; Goodwin, "Michael Fink's Predecessors: The Earliest Jewish Rhode Islanders at Yale," *RIJHN* 17, no. 2 (November 2016), 270-6.
- 3
For a brief treatment of the first Jews at Boston College, see James M. O'Toole, "Nostra Aetate in Boston," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 11, no. 1 (2016): 1-10, esp. 8-9 (doi.org/10.6017/scjr.v11i1.9327; <https://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/scjr/article/view/9327>). For a firsthand experience of a Jewish student at Holy Cross, see, Sheldon Kaplan, "A Jew at a Catholic College," *The Catholic Digest* (July 1954): 109-12.
- 4
For complete acknowledgements for this project, see: <http://scalar.usc.edu/works/sons-of-providence/acknowledgements?path=welcome>.
- 5
For example, the Fair Educational Practices Law in Massachusetts "addressed the issue of applicants for admission to an educational institution." Karabel, 194-5.
- 6
Joel Perlmann, *Ethnic Differences: Schooling and Social Structure among the Irish, Italians, Jews, and Blacks in an American City, 1880-1935* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 18-19.
- 7
Rev. Robert Hayman, *History of the Diocese of Providence* (2015), 15. <http://www.dioceseofprovidence.org/documents/2015/10/History%20of%20the%20Diocese%20of%20Providence.pdf>.
- 8
Hayman, 16.
- 9
Donna McCaffrey, *Providence College: From the Beginning* (Providence: Providence College Press, 1992), 8.
- 10
Daniel J. O'Neill, "Providence College – Its Origins and Development," master's thesis (1927) and "Providence College: Like it Was; Like it Is; Like it Will Be," *Providence* 6, no. 1 (Dec. 1968): 2-5. Donna McCaffrey, *Providence College: From the Beginning*, and *The Origins and Early History of Providence College through 1947*, doctoral thesis, (1985).
- 11
Hayman (historian, Diocese of Providence), interview, July 8, 2015.
- 12
Dr. James O'Toole (historian, Boston College), interview, June 17, 2016.
- 13
Perlmann (1988), 55
- 14
While PC is the only college in the United States run by the Dominican friars (i.e., male members of the religious order, both priests and religious brothers), several other colleges were founded by the Dominican Sisters, for example, Aquinas College (Grand Rapids, Michigan) and Dominican College (Orangeburg, New York).

- 15
Data collected from student transcripts.
- 16
Arthur Hyacinthe Chandler, O.P., 1939, cited by McCaffrey (1985), 142.
- 17
Morton Hoffman '45, interview, July 12, 2015.
- 18
It was common for students to stay at the College for only one or two years. Some transferred to other institutions, while others simply could not continue for a variety of economic, personal, and academic reasons.
- 19
Tesler interview.
- 20
Albert Resnick, '42, interview, July 13, 2015; McCaffrey (1985), 411-13.
- 21
McCaffrey (1985), 411-25.
- 22
Fay Rozovsky '73, interview, August 17, 2015.
- 23
Judith Smith, *Family Connections: A History of Italian and Jewish Immigrant Lives in Providence, Rhode Island, 1900-1940* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), 16.
- 24
Ellen Smith and Jonathan D. Sarna, "Introduction," in George M. Goodwin and Ellen Smith, eds., *The Jews of Rhode Island* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2004), 6.
- 25
McCaffrey (1985), 238, 402-3.
- 26
Jerome Tesler '42, interview, July 12, 2015.
- 27
Henry Levin '51, interview, August 3, 2015.
- 28
McCaffrey, 251.
- 29
Pawtucket Times, May 18, 1931, p. 1; McCaffrey (1985), 245-51.
- 30
Edward Gentile '74, interview, August 13, 2015.
- 31
Karabel, 86-109; Amy Sohn, "Probing Brown's Dark History," *Forward* November 10, 2006. <http://forward.com/culture/8366/probing-brown-s-dark-history/>
- 32
Morton Hoffman '44, interview, July 12, 2015.
- 33
Dr. Evelyn Sterne (historian, University of Rhode Island), interview, July 9, 2015.
- 34
Hayman interview. See also: "Three Fiery Crosses Are Burned By Klan," *The Providence News*, November 7, 1924.

35
Stefano Luconi, "'Italians Don't Hate Jews!' Some Evidence to the Contrary from Prewar Providence," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes* 13, no. 4 (November 2002): 509-26.

36
Father Charles Coughlin, cited in: <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005516>.

37
"Inquiring Reporter," *The Cowl*, January 14, 1938.

38
Erenman, "Are you Proud to be an Irishman?" *The Cowl*, March 17, 1948.

39
D.J. "Swastika," *The Cowl*, November 22, 1935.

40
Louis Rosen, "Alas, Poor Yorick," *The Cowl*, November 7, 1941.

41
Bertram Forman '52, interview, July 21, 2015.

42
Leonard Sholes, interview, August 18, 2015.

43
We wanted to protect the identity of the interviewee and the instructor. Interestingly, another Jewish alumnus recalled the same instructor with great fondness.

44
Edward Feldstein '64, interview, July 14, 2016.

45
Jeffrey Blum '68, interview, August 6, 2015.

46
Providence College Annual Catalogue, 1920-1921, p. 18, Providence College Archives.

47
Providence College Annual Catalogue, 1925-1926, p.19, Providence College Archives.

48
Samuel Nelson, '42, interview, August 17, 2015.

49
Jerome Tesler '42, interview, July 12, 2015.

50
Student Bulletin, 1947-1948, p.120, Providence College Archives.

51
College Theology Departmental Meeting Minutes, February 1948; Committee on Studies Meeting Minutes, February 28, 1948, Providence College Archives.

52
College Theology Departmental Meeting Minutes, May 26, 1949, Providence College Archives.

53
Lee Krasner (wife of Robert), interview, May 7, 2015.

54
Henry Levin '51, interview, August 3, 2015.

55
Tesler interview.

56
Student Handbook, 1951-1952, p. 18, Providence College Archives.

57
Howard Lipsey '57, interview, July 30, 2015.

58
Mario DiNunzio '57, interview, August 13, 2015.

59
Feldstein interview.

60
"Official," *The Cowl*, April 3, 1936.

61
Sholes interview.

62
Herbert Leshinsky '52, interview, July 28, 2015.

63
Karabel, 55-6.

64
This data is based on yearbook entries and student publications.

65
See: Peter S. Horvitz and Joachim Horvitz, *The Big Book of Jewish Baseball* (New York: S.P.I. Books, 2001), 188; Roger Coren, *Providence College Basketball: The Friar Legacy* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 15. Wineapple's niece is the distinguished literary critic, cultural historian, and editor, Brenda Wineapple.

66
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"2-Day Seminar on Religion to Open Tuesday," *The Providence Visitor*, April 29, 1932, p. 1. For more on Grant's interfaith efforts, see: Adam J. Skolnick, "Creating a Civil Judaism: Max L. Grant and Jewish Communal Philanthropy," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, 13, no. 1 (1999): 17-38.

72
For more on Clinchy's involvement in the foundation of the NCCJ and the Jewish-Catholic-Protestant tours, see: Victoria J. Barnett, "'Fault Lines': An Analysis of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, 1933-1948," doctoral dissertation (George Mason University), 2012.

73
"Judge Joslin, Fr. McCarthy Noted in Jewish Who's Who," *The News-Tribune*, December 6, 1932.

74

Feldstein interview.

75

DiNunzio interview. He mentioned the debates and discussions on the College's "Catholic character," which emerged in the 1960s and '70s.

76

Lee Krasner, it should be noted, became only the second woman president of Providence's Temple Beth-El.

77

Krasner interview.

78

Austin Sarat '69, interview, July 25, 2016. The grotto was an outdoor prayer space built to memorialize the war dead on campus.

79

For more information on the project and access to primary sources, please see our online exhibit: <http://scalar.usc.edu/works/sons-of-providence/index>



Morton Hoffman '45, center, starred in "A Fall Guy," before he left to fight in WWII.

My Mentor, Prof. Jacob Neusner

Joel Gereboff

The author or editor of more than 900 books and countless articles, Prof. Neusner (1932-2016) was a giant in the field of Judaic and religious studies. Before 1968, when he joined Brown's department of religious studies, courses in Judaic studies had been offered to undergraduate and graduate students by regular faculty and many prominent visiting professors, including some Israelis. Building on the foundation laid by the late Prof. Ernest Frerichs, Prof. Neusner soon began to transform the program, and in 1975 he was named the first Ungerleider Distinguished Scholar in Judaic Studies.

After serving 20 years on the Brown faculty, however, Prof. Neusner chose early retirement. As he explained in a tirade published in the *Brown Daily Herald*, he thought that the university's faculty fell far short of his lofty expectations and that students, as a result, were shortchanged. Prof. Frerichs resumed directorship of the program in Judaic studies, and Prof. Neusner briefly held a faculty appointment at the University of South Florida, in Tampa. In 1994 he joined the faculty of Bard College, in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, where he cofounded the Institute for Advanced Theology and remained active until his death.

Beginning several years ago, I invited several scholars who worked with or studied under Prof. Neusner to contribute an article about him to our journal. "Ernie" Frerichs was indeed interested, but his poor health made this impossible. I also discussed Prof. Neusner with the late Prof. Maurice Glicksman, who, as Brown's provost and dean of the faculty, had helped facilitate his early retirement. Alas, none of Prof. Neusner's former colleagues in Judaic studies remains. Several of his former doctoral students expressed interest in writing profiles, but they advised me that they could not do so until after his last book was written. One such protégé was Prof. Judith Wegner, who sadly passed away this year.

Prof. Joel Gereboff of Arizona State University, in Tempe, is in many ways an ideal choice to help our readers understand Prof. Neusner on somewhat personal terms. As he explains in his article, Joel is a Providence native who participated widely in its Jewish communal life and still has close connections here. No doubt Joel is also a kind and generous person, for he has chosen to emphasize his gratitude. Such a positive outlook was no doubt transmitted to the many rabbis he helped educate while serving as a visiting professor at the Los Angeles campuses of Hebrew Union College and at the Academy of Jewish Religion. For nearly 20 years, Joel and his wife Barbara, herself a Jewish educator, have made their home in California.



Jacob Neusner, 1985

I first met Prof. Jacob Neusner during the spring of 1971, before I enrolled as his graduate student at Brown. Needless to say, I was most appreciative and excited to have the opportunity to pursue graduate studies under the mentorship of this scholar, who was at the cutting edge of research on early Rabbinic Judaism and was in fact reshaping the academic study of Judaism more generally. Additionally, by studying under him, I was also allowed to “come home.”

Early Education

I was born and raised in Providence, where I received a fine Jewish and general education at Providence Hebrew Day School, the six-hour-per-week Hebrew High School sponsored by the Bureau of Jewish Education, and Hope High. My parents, Maurice and Caroline, were very active in supporting the Hebrew Day School, both as volunteers and, in the case of my mother, working in its office. They instilled in both my older brother, Murray, and me a deep interest in Judaism and the importance of being Jewishly knowledgeable and living an active Jewish life.

My knowledge of Judaism, which of course contributed to my undergraduate and graduate studies, was supplemented by attending weekly services at Congregation Anshe Kovno, where Rabbi Moshe Drazin exposed me to Yiddish and to the richness of Hasidic life. I also participated in various youth groups, including: Boy Scouts at Temple Beth David, National Council of Synagogue Youth at Congregation Mishkon Tefiloh, and Young Judea, which met at the JCC. Somehow, while in high school, I also managed some part-time jobs, so I learned to sleep relatively few hours.

I also benefitted from the legacy of my *zayde* (grandfather), Meir Gereboff (1878-1945), who passed away five years before my birth. I learned something about him from adults who put out their hands and showed me their knuckles. They would say, “Your *zayde* hit me with his ruler when I was not paying attention in his *cheder* (Hebrew school) at Sons of Zion, the Orms Street shul.” These anecdotes helped underscore early on in my life the importance of mastering Jewish texts.

I should also add that my *zayde* and *bubbe*, Charles Gordon (1897-1969) and his wife, Frances (1900-1986), better known as *Frumah*, whom I was fortunate to have in my life until my twenties, also shaped my interest in Judaism. When I was a kid, my family would stay for Pesach Seder at my grandparents’ home on Daboll

Street in South Providence. This was a short walk from Shaare Zedek, so I would also go there. Charlie, or *Chazqel* as he was known, served as the *ba'al tefilah* at Congregation Linat HaZedeq, on Prairie Avenue, which was more of a *landsman-schaft* (a social welfare organization) than a shul. He also attended a Talmud class at Mishkon Tefiloh, on the East Side. *Chazqel's* father, *Yisrael Nofach*, after whom I was named, raised him in the good Litvak tradition, in Europe, to be fluent in Hebrew and be knowledgeable about Torah.

I mention all this because while our family was affiliated with an Orthodox synagogue, I was fortunate to grow up during a time when there was an easy interaction among different kinds of Jews and an appreciation of their diversity. The Day School, then led by Rabbi Akiva Egozi, had students from all types of Jewish backgrounds. Were it not for the support of local leading rabbis, such as Eli Bohnen of Temple Emanu-El and William Braude of Temple Beth-El, both of whom treasured Jewish learning, it is far from clear whether PHDS would have survived the economic challenges of its early years. Spending seven summers at Camp JORI, under the leadership of Leo Weiss, who turned out to be my guidance counselor at Hope High, also provided a sense of the various ways Jews integrated into American society while developing different ways to express, preserve and grow their Jewishness.

Murray, who was Class of 1968 at Brown, had been a commuter, but I wanted a full collegiate experience, so I studied philosophy at New York University's small liberal arts campus in the Bronx. I also took classes in Judaic studies at its Washington Square campus. While an undergraduate, I took additional classes, three days a week, as a non-matriculating student at the Jewish Theological Seminary, adjacent to Columbia University, on Morningside Heights. Without much effort, I learned to study while riding the subways.

On the advice of my professor at JTS, Lee (Israel) Levine, who, like Neusner, had written his dissertation at Columbia under Morton Smith, I applied in the fall of 1970 to Brown's doctoral program in the History of Religions with the intention of concentrating on Judaism in late antiquity. I suspect that several factors contributed to my acceptance: the breadth of my Jewish general education, the quality of my undergraduate major at NYU, and my commitment to learning, which was further demonstrated by finishing my bachelor's degree in three years.

But graduate school at Brown was not my only choice, for I was also ac-

cepted at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. I also considered applying to the rabbinic program at JTS, but I knew that I wanted to pursue an academic career instead.

Meeting Jack

I cannot remember when, in private conversation, I began calling Prof. Neusner "Jack," but nobody ever called him Jacob. In the spring of 1971, when I let him know that I would be in Providence and would appreciate being able to meet with him, he invited me to visit, in his attic study, at his home at 70 Vassar Avenue. I would spend many hours there over the next five years.

Jack asked me to have my fiancé, Barbara Ehrenhaus, who was raised in Fall River, join us for that meeting. She and I had met through Young Judea and began dating in high school after attending a convention in Woonsocket. We considered making *aliyah*. Like me, Barbara had decided to finish her undergraduate studies at Simmons College, in Boston, in three years. And she too would receive a fellowship to begin a doctoral program in sociology at Boston University.

We planned our wedding for July 4, 1971, just before commencing my studies at Brown. We were both 20, but because Massachusetts law required a groom be 21, my parents had to sign a notarized document saying that they gave their approval.

In many ways, our marriage was also a homecoming for Barbara. Her parents, Abraham and Marilyn, had been Brown undergraduates, and they were married at Temple Beth-El by Rabbi Braude. Barbara's grandparents had also belonged there.

My first impressions of Jack? Boy, could he type fast, and he had a most impressive library. Coming up the stairs to his third floor, one usually heard him typing away on his Smith Corona Selectric. He shared with his students one reason he could produce work at such a quick pace and focus upon several writing assignments simultaneously. As a child, he had assisted his parents, the owners of Hartford's weekly newspaper, *The Jewish Ledger*. Thus, on a given day, Jack would be writing books on Rabbinic Judaism, commenting on American Jewish life in op-ed articles, and sending letters to countless colleagues. He enjoyed debating issues with and sending good wishes to many; to others, he occasionally sent his notorious "drop dead" letters.

I do not recall much of what we discussed at that first meeting, but after

Barbara and I left, she turned to me and said, “Did you get it? He was interviewing me. He wanted to be sure that I would be a good match and collaborate on insuring your success in the program.” In truth, I missed that dynamic. But that meeting underscored that Jack was not merely a teacher, but an educator who wanted to shape and expand his students’ knowledge. Committed further to serving as a mentor, he sought to mold his students into future academic leaders and also as human beings. Thus, his students were not merely protégés but apprentices within an academic guild.

Jack also made clear that a student, when beginning doctoral studies, should either be in a steady relationship or forget about dating and a social life. Except for Judith Wegner, who enrolled a few years after I, all his students during my years at Brown were men. And she was of course married to Peter, a Brown professor of computer science. So Jack was happy that I was about to marry someone who would collaborate with him, share his goals, and also contribute to my personal development.

A further insight into Jack’s goals was not yet evident at that first meeting, however. I came to learn about it in due time. Jack wrote much to draw a distinction between teaching about Judaism in a secular university and teaching of Judaism in Jewish institutions of higher education. Accordingly, the latter approach was designed to produce knowledgeable Jews, who would often serve as Jewish communal leaders. The former approach was meant to educate scholars irrespective of their religious identities and involvements. But virtually all of Jack’s doctoral students (as opposed to undergraduates) were Jews. Nevertheless, in my estimation, Jack at times saw himself as his Jewish students’ rebbi or rabbinic guide. This may seem doubly ironic because Jack tended to have a condescending attitude toward the scholarly standards of rabbinic seminaries.

Weekly Seminar

Jack’s method for educating his doctoral students was most evident from how he conducted his weekly seminar. I had occasion to describe those experiences in a contribution to a festschrift published on his 80th birthday, in 2014. There I wrote:

Jacob Neusner’s students at Brown University enrolled in his graduate seminar. Each week throughout the year, we would gather in Jack’s study on the third floor of his

home and would take turns presenting work related to our dissertations, receiving feedback from Jack and fellow students. There was great value to be working on our dissertation from the time we entered the program. But of equal importance was what transpired at the beginning of each weekly meeting. Jack would often reflect on recent developments at Brown or in the academy in general, and in particular would share with us stories about publications, invitations and lectures he had recently given, as well as reactions to his scholarship. These reports and reflections played a critical role in molding each of us into an academic. The stories conveyed the tasks and challenges of academic life. The accounts suggested not only the type of scholarship we might pursue and the way we ought to teach but, first and foremost, the type of people we should aspire to be.¹

When I applied to Brown I knew only of Jack’s major, five-volume study, *History of the Jews of Babylonia*, and little of the new and discipline-changing direction his work was taking. I knew nothing about his character and his approach to training students. But within weeks of starting my program, I quickly learned much about all these matters.

Let me start with a few comments about his role as mentor. In 1971, as noted in my remarks above, Jack assigned his students topics for their dissertations. While one could negotiate with him, most of us did not. Only a tiny number of students may have dropped out of the program. The vast majority of us saw ourselves in many ways as being part of what is quite typical in the sciences: students focusing on a component of a large-scale project under the direction of a head researcher. Thus, when I entered Brown, Jack was analyzing the development of various traditions, stories and sayings by and about early rabbinic sages. Some of my fellow students were assigned to write about Rabbi Ishmael or Joshua, for example. I was assigned Rabbi Tarfon.

Most people had never heard of Tarfon, and in truth Jack assigned him to me thinking that he was a relatively minor sage. A revised version of my dissertation ran nearly 500 pages, so he was not so minor after all. Tarfon is perhaps most famous for the saying attributed to him in *Pirke Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers): “You are not required to finish the work, but you cannot desist from it.” Every year at our family’s Passover Seder, when we read the section of the Haggadah about the

¹
A Legacy of Learning: Essays in Honor of Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 82.

gathering of sages that lasted all night, Barbara or one of our kids has to note that I wrote about Tarfon. So we're not required to finish every detail!

Collectively, Jack's project transformed what had been the conventional approach to such sources. He sought to produce a historical biography of an individual and, cumulatively, a portrait of the earliest stages of the rabbinic movement that had emerged in the wake of the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE.

Jack's approach demonstrated that these documentary accounts generally reflected the interests of editors over a vast period: from the early third to the ninth centuries CE. In brief, this way of analyzing rabbinic sources, which had been quite typical of research about the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible, was not the conventional method in rabbinic studies. This new approach stood at the center of what in academic circles became known as the "Neusnerian revolution."

Let me elaborate on two aspects of Jack's seminar. First, we met in his home, not in a classroom at Brown. I do not know whether other Brown professors routinely scheduled their classes in this way. But in some ways Jack's choice of location conveyed not only his sense that in some ways "we were joining a family," but also may well have expressed Jack's efforts to distance himself from his colleagues. Of course, we students were part of the larger doctoral program in religious studies, so we were encouraged and required to take courses with other professors. Over the years, however, Jack found himself in increasing disagreement, on particular points, with some of his colleagues. Ultimately, he felt alienated from and by the university, and he also severed ties with some of his own graduates.

A second feature of Jack's seminar was that it met throughout the year. Success in our studies meant there was no place for an extended winter break or a very long summer recess. Not only were classes scheduled throughout the year, but some met on holidays such as Thanksgiving and New Year's day. He was communicating that "our full-time job" was to be graduate students, training to be lifelong scholars and professors. Taking off extended periods of time- perhaps even a day- was detrimental to that goal.

The requirement to be available throughout the year also meant that we were not allowed to take on additional small jobs to supplement our Brown stipends. The money we received to support our studies may have been sufficient for nine months, but it was a stretch for an entire year. Nevertheless, during our first year of graduate studies, Barbara and I were able to rent a large, two-bedroom,

first-floor flat in a three-story home near Pawtucket for \$800 per month. Our first car was an old police cruiser. My dad, who owned a gas station, kept it running and filled its tank. My parents and Barbara's always had us over for meals. Indeed, their love and support assisted us in innumerable ways.

Jack did help us financially in some ways, particularly by giving us copies of his books that were quite costly. They remain in my library, and I appreciate having them at hand.

As for libraries, I should point out that for many years, before Brown's Judaic studies collection grew tremendously, some doctoral students used scholarly materials that Rabbi Braude had collected for Beth-El's library. Despite his quite complicated relationship with this scholar, Jack was also known to have used some of these resources as well as others in Temple Emanu-El's library.

Theoretical and Comparative Approaches

My first weeks in the doctoral program at Brown were exciting and challenging and also set the tone for my time there and beyond. Jack met with each of us and suggested to us what courses we should take. Even though the doctoral program emphasized the study of Judaism during the first centuries of the Common Era, he was fully committed to the notion that he was training us to be scholars of religious studies, to be able to bring data about Judaism and about the experiences of Jews to bear on a broader understanding of religion. Thus, he saw the study of religion as part of the study of the humanities whose goal was to learn about people as well as social and cultural processes. Jack's conviction, now shared by many in the discipline, was that religion has been central to human collective and personal life.

In light of his vision for what a future professor of Judaism should know, Jack also advised us to take a required graduate course, "Theories of Religion," and a course on "19th Century Religious Thought." Both of these have also served me well in my academic career.

Jack worked hard to situate the study of Judaism as a key element within a broader study of religion. During the early 1970s, many departments of religious studies were still built around a Protestant seminary model, which included professors of Bible, history of Christianity and Christian theology. Perhaps one professor worked on Asian religions, and in some departments there was a scholar of Judaism.

Being realistic, Jack imagined that, at best, most academic units would appoint one person to teach the entirety of the Jewish experience. This person would be a *kol bo* (perhaps conveniently translated here as a “Jack of all trades”) who could teach *mitanakh ad palmach* (about biblical matters until the formation of the state of Israel and perhaps beyond). But Jack’s goal was not for us to become dilettantes, to pretend to know all these things. Thus, he formulated the doctoral program so that we took courses and doctoral exams in each of the key periods in the history of Judaism. Jack’s vision was in fact realistic. In my case, for many years, I was the only professor in religious studies and in all of Arizona State University with formal training in the academic study of Judaism.

Jack worked tirelessly beyond Brown to shape the academy to foster his holistic approach. For example, he was elected president of the American Academy of Religion (the academic society dedicated to the academic study of religion) and was a founding member of the Association of Jewish Studies. Others have written about his impact on the academy²

Personal Behavior

As noted previously, Jack’s mentorship also related to forming us as people. During my first few weeks at Brown, I learned one way he communicated his directives on such matters. A student would find a typed letter in his mailbox at 59 George Street, which housed religious studies. One quickly learned not to look forward to such missives.

I received a few. I remember once walking west on George Street while Jack was walking east, up from the Rockefeller Library. I stopped, waved, and said hello, and then went on my way. To my surprise, the next day I found a letter instructing me that a student should cross the street and greet his professor face-to-face. I had thought that I was fine by simply not ignoring him. But, in a way, both academic proprieties and Jewish notions of *derekh erez* (proper comportment) required otherwise.

A second letter commented on proper dress for graduate students. I was told that only polo and button-down shirts were acceptable- even just to walk

²

See Aaron W. Hughes, Jacob Neusner: *An American Jewish Iconoclast* (New York: New York University Press, 2016)

around campus. T-shirts were unacceptable. Ironically, though Jack of course wore a tie and jacket when he taught, I do recall him meeting graduate students in “The Rock” for a discussion one summer. He was wearing a button-down shirt with shorts.

At Arizona State, hardly anyone wears a tie, especially during warm weather, which lasts much of the year. For years, when teaching undergraduate classes in summer school, I wore shorts. Blue jeans are fairly conventional these days. Times and standards do change.

As previously mentioned, beyond being a mentor, at times Jack took on the role of *rebbe*. As he has written about himself, he was raised in what he called a “typical” Reform home of the 1940s. Although parents strongly identified with being Jewish, they knew little about Judaism and had no familiarity with Jewish texts in their original language or much knowledge of them even in translation. While an undergraduate at Harvard, Jack was exposed to Talmud, and he decided to enroll at the Jewish Theological Seminary to study rabbinic texts and seek ordination as a Conservative rabbi. Simultaneously, he pursued doctoral studies in religious studies at Columbia.

Perhaps inevitably, a third letter from Jack involved a reference to me as rabbi. I had helped officiate for a few years at services at Temple Beth David (as I would do for two decades at my congregation in Phoenix). An advertisement in *The Jewish Herald* inaccurately identified me as clergy. So Jack scolded me for this confusion.

From what I know, though Jack belonged to Temple Emanu-El and had a particularly close relationship with Rabbi Joel Zaiman (who also taught Talmud classes at Brown), Jack did not enjoy attending services there. At some point he began attending Shabbat morning services at the Hebrew Day School. He enjoyed the pace of *davening* and found interest in some of the rabbis’ teachings. The school’s leadership and those attending the minyan always treated Jack respectfully.

One year, at evening services for Simchat Torah, Jack attended, as did my parents, my wife, and I. When I came into the men’s section, I immediately walked over and greeted Jack and then sat with my father. When I returned to Brown after the holiday, I found still another letter in my mailbox criticizing my behavior. Jack informed me that, in accordance with the rules of Mishnah, one’s teacher (a person’s *rav*) takes precedence over one’s father. I was somewhat taken aback for Jack,

so I made clear- at least in my own mind- the distinction between rabbinic-school training and that of a secular university. I doubt that I shared this letter or my response with my father.

Generally speaking, Jack did not set standards for how his Jewish students should live. He attracted Jews of all backgrounds, including students ordained by various seminaries as well as others with no formal Jewish education. Over time, a number of non-Jews also enrolled in the doctoral program. Consequently, our seminar no longer met on Christmas day.

Other Aspects of Mentorship

Jack's mentorship was manifested in other ways. For example, he moved our careers along by encouraging and facilitating the publication of our own research. My first articles, originally written in Jack's seminar, appeared under my name in a book he edited, *The Modern Study of the Mishnah* (1973). A fallacious and perhaps malicious accusation leveled against Jack, perhaps to account for his extraordinary productivity, is that Jack "stole his students' work" and published it under his own name. Nothing could be further from the truth. Jack went out of his way to foster our scholarship. He always emphasized clear, concise writing with a precise thesis supported by all relevant data subjected to detailed analysis.

In my case, shortly after beginning the program, Jack saw that I needed much assistance with my writing skills. He found a tutor to work with me.

Jack also encouraged, if not required, that we doctoral students attend presentations and meet with all scholars visiting Brown. I fondly recall a day I was chosen to host an eminent scholar of religion from Sweden and drive him to Boston. After stopping for a drink at 10 AM on our way to the Museum of Fine Arts, I marveled at his ability to read ancient Near Eastern tablets in Akkadian and medieval Islamic miniatures in Arabic. After more drinks, I also marveled at his ability to carry on a coherent conversation during our drive back to Brown. On Friday afternoon, however, before going to Jack's for Shabbat dinner, I declined to stop at the Biltmore Hotel's bar. Jack invited not only out-of-town guests but graduate students for Shabbat dinners with his wife, Suzanne, and their children. He was always most gracious in this way.

Jack's concern for his students' careers manifested itself while they studied with him at Brown and after they accepted university positions. For example, Jack

felt that I needed to fill in some areas of my knowledge, so he encouraged me to spend a year as a graduate student at Hebrew University in Jerusalem with support from the Lady Davis Foundation. I know that he wrote a strong letter of recommendation for me, even though he had had several serious intellectual disagreements with Dr. Ephraim Urbach, the head of the academic board supervising that foundation. Later, Dr. Urbach was most gracious when inviting Barbara and me for tea on Shabbat afternoon at his home. She was also able to take some classes at Hebrew University and worked on her Hebrew. By the way, we lived in a one-bedroom apartment with no central heat and a stove without an oven. Nevertheless, we had a fun and wonderful experience.

Jack encouraged his students to explore areas of study beyond our focus on early rabbinic Judaism. Brown's department of religious studies had much strength in comparative religious ethics, for example. I took courses with all the faculty working in ethics, as well as with faculty in other units, and had the pleasure to serve as a teaching assistant for many semesters with Prof. John Reeder. The dual training I received in rabbinic Judaism and in Jewish, Christian and secular ethics has found expression in my teaching and research throughout my academic career.

After Brown

When I was completing my dissertation and began applying for academic jobs, Jack again was very involved. He wrote letters for his students, encouraging them to apply for certain jobs while seeing others as not up to what he saw as appropriate academic standards. Unless a student sought employment in a rabbinic seminary, Jack was most concerned that appointments for a scholar in Jewish studies carried no additional expectations. For example, a professor should not be required to spend time working with Hillel students. It was not that Jack opposed what Hillel did- indeed, he saw it as valuable and important – but he was committed to the view that an academic's purpose was to serve as a scholar.

My first appointment was in the religious studies program at York University, in Toronto. A few months after beginning my job, Jack sent me a note indicating that he had been invited to speak at a local synagogue. I do not know whether he went out of his way to be invited, but his invitation allowed him to check up on me and see how I was doing. I recall meeting him at his hotel, and after he got off the phone with his stockbroker- something he did nearly every day because he was

a serious investor- we spoke about my work at York. I was being treated well, and I enjoyed my colleagues, my students and my teaching. But Jack was concerned that my tenure-track position was not fully underwritten by university funding. Accordingly, he encouraged – might I say directed me – to start looking for a new position.

Fortunately, Arizona State University, which was at the earliest stages of forming a department of religious studies, advertised a position for a person with expertise in both the history of Judaism and in comparative religious ethics. Previously, a local rabbi had been teaching some Judaic studies course. I was fortunate to have been offered the position and am now in my 40th year in what is one of the largest programs in religious studies at a state university. But of course Jack checked in on me early in my career there as well.

To gain national visibility, our unit sought to inaugurate an annual lecture in religious studies. My colleagues, not at my suggestion, proposed having Jack as the first speaker. They recognized his central role in shaping the development of religious studies and articulating a vision for departments focused on this area of inquiry. So, within a year of my arrival at ASU, Jack was there to speak but also to check up on how I was doing. Looking back, I know that he was pleased with the type of academic unit in which I was located.

Jack and I kept in touch from time-to-time over the years, and I was pleased to be able to contribute to his Festschrift. He wrote back an appreciative note, acknowledging that I had read through his extensive publications on rabbinic narrative. I had become interested in that topic while writing my dissertation, and my ongoing interest in genres of rabbinic texts has been central to my research and teaching about religion in general.

So what did I learn from Jack? When asked that question I often respond, “I learned so much.” Most of what I came to understand was positive – what studying religion entails and why it matters; the importance of training students to analyze writing and human behavior; and to communicate one’s insights in clear writing. I assimilated the idea that one should be approachable to students and help them grow. Then again, I also learned, from my perspective, some ways not to treat students and others. There is a fine line between setting high expectations and standards and bringing people to tears and sending them nasty letters.

From my parents and from the *Pirkei Avot*, I learned that “one should judge people always with a positive disposition.” I hope this reflection conveys my

deep appreciation for Jack Neusner: his taking me on as a student, the hours he spent educating me, and the professional concern and care he exhibited. May his memory be for a blessing.



Graduation: Joel, Barbara and her Parents, 1977



Joel today

My Dinner(s) with Jack

Rob Goldberg

The author, who was an undergraduate at Brown, provides another set of recollections about Prof. Neusner. Rob, whose concentration was in religious studies, became active in Hillel, and this experience, among many, led to his distinguished career in Jewish communal service.

Proud of his Reform Jewish upbringing in Buffalo, Rob served as the dynamic executive director of Providence's Temple Beth-El from 1984 to 1995. Initiating and executing countless tasks on behalf of clergy, fellow staff, and volunteer leadership, Rob considered himself "a facilitator of holiness." He and I became close colleagues and dear friends when helping plan and implement the celebration of Beth-El's 135th anniversary, during Bruce Sundlun's presidency, in 1989 and 1990. This ambitious endeavor resulted in numerous historical projects, including the creation of the Bernhardt History Gallery, the organization of the Temple's archives, and the production of a documentary video. During the same time, Rob was earning an MBA at Bryant University and was helping his wife, Shira, care for three young children (one of whom became a Brown alumna).

During this time, Rob also served as board president of Brown Hillel, which led to his next career transition: executive director of the major Hillel chapter at Washington University in St. Louis. In turn, Rob, while based in Washington, DC, served for 15 years as a vice president of Hillel International. He also traveled widely, including participation in a dozen Birthright trips to Israel.

Three years ago, Rob returned to his roots in Buffalo, becoming chief executive of its Jewish Federation (and serving, with other alumni, as an interviewer of Brown applicants). He and Shira are active in several congregations, including Temple Beth Am, where he grew up. When his hectic schedule allows, he enjoys biking, swimming, and golf. I'm not sure if he continues writing a journal, which, as demonstrated here, was important during his student years.

The 1981 comedy-drama, "My Dinner with Andre," provides a revealing backdrop to my four years at Brown. I graduated the same year as the film's debut, one that the critic Roger Ebert described as "wonderfully odd." He said, "It should be unwatchable, and yet those who love it return time and again, enchanted."

And so it was with my many Shabbat dinners, eight to be exact, with Brown's professor of Judaic studies, Jack Neusner, and his family. I was deeply



Brown, 1978

introspective in those days, writing almost daily in a journal, and captured many moments of those “wonderfully odd” dinners at the Neusner home. I recently found those musings, and see them today as a memorial of sorts to the iconic (and iconoclastic) Jack, who died last October at 84 years of age.

I came to Brown as a starry-eyed, naïve 18-year-old. I had never imagined I would land in Providence, figuring that I would attend University at Buffalo (UB), just miles from our family home. My Dad, who was an alumnus, had even sweetened the pot, proposing that if I went to UB he’d buy me a car.

Brown was my stretch, the only highly competitive school that I found attractive, but one that my guidance counselor had discouraged me from even considering. And so when I was accepted we were all stunned, except perhaps for my Dad. When I asked him how we would be able to pay for such an education, he just smiled and said that we’d figure it out.

My relationship with Prof. Neusner began that same spring. When I told my hometown rabbi, Dan Kerman *z”l*, that I was heading to Brown, he immediately took me into the tiny library of Temple Beth Am, our suburban Reform congregation my parents helped to establish. He pulled down two books on the Talmud and told me that a scholarly giant and Brown professor, Rabbi Jacob Neusner, had penned them. Rabbi Kerman implored me to take his classes, saying that it would be a privilege to learn from Dr. Neusner.

Five months later, I found myself sitting in a large hall off the College Green for Neusner’s popular “Intro to Judaism” course. I listened nervously to the great professor lecture, in a Socratic manner, challenging us when we least expected it and demanding that each of us put pen and paper away and just listen. I soaked up every minute, relishing the collegiate ambience and the opportunity to learn at the foot of such an esteemed scholar. And I relished my visits to Neusner’s office, on George Street, where I asked questions that in retrospect were so puerile, but he was gracious and kind.

In January of freshman year, while home on break, I received a letter from Prof. Neusner. I tore it open and read a glowing evaluation of my class work. I passed his course “with distinction.” I was proud and smitten and couldn’t wait to take another Neusner course.

But then along came Doug Raitt, a Brown senior and friend of the family, who sat me down a few months later at the foot of the grand statue of Marcus

Aurelius behind Sayles Hall. “Stay away from Neusner,” he cautioned. “He’ll control you. He’ll tell you what classes to take, where to live, and even whom to date. He’s dangerous.” I pushed back, telling Doug that he was way off, that his description was not the Prof. Neusner I had experienced.

Doug persevered, sounding the alarm by describing story after story of students whom Jack had tried to ruin. While I had heard some of those stories as well, until this moment with Doug, I had tuned them out. In the end, I heeded Doug’s advice but also connected with Jack in a different way, as the co-advisor of the United Synagogue Youth group at Temple Emanu-El. Through USY I got to know Jack’s sons: Samuel, Eli, and Noam. And as it happened, I often bumped into Jack on the Green or at Faunce House midday (his grad students always in tow), and he would shout: “Goldberg, Shabbat dinner this Friday. My house. 5:30 sharp.”

At first, those dinners were idyllic. I’d walk more than two miles to his charming East Side home, sit in the small living room before dinner with other guests, and we’d all listen to the boys and their sister Margalit perform on the musical instruments they were studying. It was sweet. After dinner, I would find myself playing Ping-Pong with the boys in the basement while Jack would hold court upstairs with the other guests, a graduate student always among them. He’d then curtly shoo us out around 8 PM, and we’d trek back to campus.

And then the worm began to turn. Dinners at the Neusner home grew ugly. I experienced vile hatred toward the campus Hillel, its staff, and Reform Judaism, the stream of Jewish experience I knew and loved. There was one pre-dinner tirade I’ll never forget. Jack was railing on the Hillel director, Rabbi Rick Marker, with wild claims about the director’s egregious behavior. Our host actually got a few of us so worked up about Hillel’s failures and lack of moral leadership that we stormed back to Hillel House, on Brown Street, and shared our concerns (which were Jack’s) with Maxine Kronish *z”l*, the assistant director.

The next Monday, I received a note from Rev. Charles Baldwin, head of the Office of Chaplains, requesting we meet. Charlie, as he asked to be called, gave me background on why he believed Dr. Neusner was “out to get Rick.”

All of this was overwhelming to me, now a religious studies concentrator with ambitions of entering the rabbinate; I left Charlie’s office dizzied. Jack’s attacks on Hillel, his vitriol aimed at people I cared about, and an exposure to infighting between campus organizations had awoken my sensibilities. Perhaps this wasn’t the

world for me; perhaps I needed to revisit becoming a high school English teacher or, better yet, an accountant back home in Buffalo working alongside my father and grandfather.

In the early weeks of my senior year, I made my way to Shabbat dinner #7 at “the ever-controversial Mr. Neusner’s,” as I had recorded in one of my journals. I wrote: “Like in the past, we had a meal made unpleasant by a slew of cutting remarks, this time aimed both at Rabbi Cathy Felix, a new Reform rabbi who joined the Chaplaincy, and Reform Judaism.” I penned these words uttered by the great Neusner: “God doesn’t love Reform Judaism. He feels sorry for it.”

“He is cruel and heartless...irrational and shot through with paranoia,” I continued. “Why must he continue to cut people down with assumptions and gross generalities? He hurts too many kind people only to bolster his own wavering self. He has made my Shabbat that much less beautiful.”

I write now during the month of Elul, a time of introspection and taking stock, of looking back before focusing forward. And as I reflect on my undergraduate years, I realize that my many encounters with Jack filled me not only with stories but also with life lessons. He taught me that rabbis, whom I had always feared and elevated perhaps too high, are human just like the rest of us. And ironically, his challenging behavior prepared me for bumps along my own journey, in particular, how to deal with difficult people. Such lessons have served me well throughout my career working within the Jewish community— from my years at Temple Beth-El to my tenure as a Hillel professional and now as the CEO of a Jewish Federation.

Interestingly, I have a relationship with Jack’s youngest son, Noam, a brilliant writer and marketing entrepreneur, who served as President George W. Bush’s principal economic and domestic policy speechwriter and as an award-winning financial journalist for *U.S. News & World Report*. Noam and I crossed paths in Washington, DC, while I was a vice president at Hillel International and his company, 30 Point Strategies, worked as one of our consultants. I love following Noam on Facebook and see him as the best of Jack’s legacy.

And I still have Jack’s books, dozens of them, albeit in a taped-up box in my basement. Even the two on the Talmud that Rabbi Kerman pointed out that spring day in 1977, after I learned that I would be heading east to Providence for what would be among the most “wonderfully odd” and “enchanted” years of my life.



Rob today

Getting from There to Here: *My 43 Years as a Rabbi in Rhode Island*

James B. Rosenberg

For an article in our 2005 issue, Anne Sherman determined that only seven rabbis had served Rhode Island congregations for 30 years or more. Thus, Rabbi Rosenberg's tenure at Barrington's Temple Habonim, lasting one-third of a century, has been quite unusual. Yet, if his article resembles one by a predecessor, it is probably Rabbi William Braude's, which was published in our journal in 1982. He had looked back on his even lengthier tenure at Temple Beth-El.

Rabbi Rosenberg downplays many of his considerable accomplishments, suggesting that they were somehow quite natural. If there were disappointments and struggles, he does not dwell on them. Largely as a result of mutual trust, he felt rewarded by his congregation. Thus, as he had hoped and imagined, the rabbinate became far more than a fulfilling profession and continues to be a calling during his retirement.

Rabbi Rosenberg does point out that, inevitably, tensions arise between clergy and their congregations. When congregants' needs become unrelenting, a clergyman's family is bound to suffer. But, given his optimistic outlook, Rabbi Rosenberg does not sound angry or bitter.

Before inviting him to write this article, I had met Rabbi Rosenberg and heard him speak on only a few occasions. Although I have appreciated his column in *The Jewish Voice* for many years, I was unfortunately unaware that he has been a regular contributor to the *Barrington Times* for a much longer period and that he also writes poetry. Yet, after reading this insightful and humble article, I feel that I have known and admired him for quite a long time.

“Ben Zoma says: Who is a rich person?
One who is happy with his lot.” (*Pirke Avot 4.1*)

By Ben Zoma's standards, I am a rich man. I have been a rabbi in Rhode Island for 43 years— 33 years at Temple Habonim in Barrington. On balance, Temple Habonim and I proved to be a “good fit,” getting along with very few bumps in our relationship of more than three decades. The town of Barrington, along with the synagogue, provided a nourishing environment within which my wife Sandy



and I raised our two children, Karen and David.

Since my retirement on July 1, 2007, I have had every reason to continue to be happy with my lot. I have been blessed with a superb successor, Rabbi Andrew Klein, who has led Temple Habonim in new, vibrant directions—reaching out to diverse constituencies and helping them find comfortable places within the growing synagogue community.

As rabbi emeritus, I have been freed from the day-to-day demands of congregational life; yet Sandy and I, though living now in a condo on the East Side of Providence, still feel part of the Temple Habonim family, attending worship services and involving ourselves in the joys and sorrows of many of its longtime members. I have grown old with a number of men and women in the temple family; I visit them in the hospital, with great sadness participate in their funerals, and attend *shivas* to honor and remember them. In addition to such pastoral activities, since the fall of 2010, I have had the privilege of delivering a sermon every Yom Kippur morning.

We retired people often quip that we are busier now than during our working lives – a partial truth, at best. Yes, my wife and I have plenty to do. As my mother used to say, “The house doesn’t take care of itself.” And Sandy and I take great delight in our three granddaughters and two grandsons, whom we see frequently, since they live relatively nearby – in Cambridge and Natick; it goes without saying that they do keep us busy. Nevertheless, retirement frees us to be flexible.

As rabbi at Temple Habonim, my time was not my own; in addition to the demands of nearly 200 families and the unyielding calendar of Shabbat and holy days, I was principal of our religious school until the last of my 33 years, when Linda Levine took over with admirable professionalism. Sandy had even less flex-time as a reading specialist in the Barrington Public School system; most schools, of necessity, run on rigid schedules.

The gift of time afforded by retirement has enabled me to contribute to the Rhode Island Jewish community through my biweekly column in *The Jewish Voice*, which I have been writing since the fall of 2008. In addition, I have continued my monthly column in the *Barrington Times*, which I began almost 20 years ago. While writing three columns a month engages a relatively rational area of my brain, working on my own poems and translating Hebrew poetry bring me to the music of both the written and the spoken word.

During my retirement, no longer feeling that I need to redirect my attention to my rabbinical tasks, I have had the opportunity to read widely and deeply: Shakespeare’s tragedies, literary criticism, Judaica, politics, and a variety of fiction. It is as if I have had the privilege of returning to that time of intellectual exhilaration that I first experienced during my four years as an undergraduate at Columbia College (Class of 1966). I have especially enjoyed listening with Sandy to novels on CD by authors ranging from Thomas Hardy and Ernest Hemingway to Ann Patchett and Alice Hoffman.

My eleven-year relationship with Moshe Laufer, the Chabad rabbi in Barrington, has been yet another satisfying dimension of my retirement. We try to meet every week, probing Hebrew texts by the Lubavitch *Rebbi*, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, as well as such Biblical classics as the Psalms. As a result of my relationship with Moshe, I now try to turn to the Psalms every night before I go to bed, so that the last words I encounter before falling asleep are from this sacred collection of poetry. Even more enriching than our seeking inspiration in the written word is the sharing of our deepest selves; though we often differ profoundly on the many meanings of Torah in its broadest sense, we have come to discover that we do indeed share worlds!

This past April, George Goodwin, longtime editor of *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, invited me to write a piece for this journal. Among the many questions he asked me to consider are: “Why did you come here, what kept you here? ...What may have been disappointing, frustrating, or impossible to achieve? ...How has the larger Jewish community changed for better and for worse? ...How has your understanding of the rabbinate changed over the decades?”

To answer Goodwin’s first question: what brought my wife, our infant daughter, and me to Barrington in the summer of 1974? I accepted the position at Temple Habonim—known as Barrington Jewish Center until March, 1975—because I was at the end of my three-year contract as assistant rabbi to Rabbi Roland Gittelsohn at Temple Israel in Boston. This had been my first rabbinical post after my ordination, on June 6, 1971, at the New York campus of Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion. I wanted our family to remain in New England and was looking for a synagogue that was appropriate for someone my age and with my level of rabbinical experience.

In 1974 Barrington Jewish Center was based in a small white house at 147

County Road, across the street from Chellel's Market, a relatively small independent supermarket and a town landmark known for its high quality cuts of meat. The synagogue stood in striking contrast to Temple Israel, an 1,800-family congregation housed in a huge, easy-to-get-lost-in facility. I was one of two rabbinical assistants to Rabbi Gittelsohn. In addition to the three rabbis, by the time I left Temple Israel at the end of June, 1974, the staff included a cantor, an educational director, a temple administrator, numerous teachers, secretaries, and janitors to keep the well-oiled machine running.

My new staff consisted of a part-time secretary, Marjorie Blowers, who eventually became a full-time administrative secretary; during my 33 years at Temple Habonim, Marjorie was the indispensable "Ma," while I was the "Pa" of our warm and welcoming synagogue family. In addition to Marjorie, we had a handful of dedicated teachers for our religious school – one of whom, Donald Solomon, remained our first grade teacher until my retirement. Over the years, many members of Temple Habonim joined our teaching staff and greatly enriched the education of our students. Hardworking temple officers and board members saw to the smooth running of our temple, while additional volunteers kept our building in decent repair.

When I first came to the little wooden house at 147 County Road, Marjorie and I had small adjacent offices on the second floor. Our office equipment was basic: a mimeograph for producing mass mailings— more specifically, anything demanding 40 or more sheets. To use this hand-cranked machine, we needed to carefully cut stencils that would yield reasonably clear black and white copies. Our ditto machine was easier to use; however, it could yield only a limited supply of somewhat blurry purple on white sheets— adequate but by no means ideal for the classroom. Since we had no electronic copiers, we used carbon paper to keep a record of our correspondence.

Especially in the beginning, I was also the chief cook and bottle washer; over the years I came to know more about the plumbing, wiring, and heating systems of our buildings at 147 County Road and later at 165 New Meadow than any rabbi should permit himself to learn. It is no accident that my first purchase from my very modest rabbi's discretionary fund was a plunger to ensure the toilets kept flowing during school hours. Yes, I did use it...often!

During my time in Barrington, the congregation benefited greatly from

two individuals who served as part time cantors, co-leading the worship at our High Holy Day services, at bar mitzvah and bat mitzvah celebrations, as well at selected other synagogue events. Remmie Brown co-officiated with me for almost six years, while Dr. Daniel Marwil shared the *bima* with me during the following 27. Both men brought strong, sonorous, and sensitive voices to our worship. Even more important, both men remain exceptionally caring and compassionate individuals— each a true *mensch!*

In June of 1980, Cantor Brown and I, carrying Temple Habonim's two Torah scrolls, led the congregation out the front door of 147 County Road, down the porch steps, proceeding east on County Road, then north on New Meadow Road, along the east bank of the Barrington River to our present address: 165 New Meadow Road. Our new home was originally a 19th-century schoolhouse. Later expanded into an administration building for Barrington's public schools, it was finally remodeled as a synagogue with several classrooms for our religious school. In 2003, Temple Habonim expanded yet again – enlarging and beautifying its sanctuary and adding several additional classrooms.

In today's Temple Habonim office, you will find no mimeograph, no ditto machine, not even a single sheet of carbon paper; but you will find a fancy copier that seems capable of doing everything, a computer that talks to other computers in the building, a printer, and a sophisticated phone system. Most communication to congregational members is via email blasts. *Tempus fugit!*

My wife grew up in the Bronx; I grew up in a New Jersey suburb— 45 to 90 minutes from Times Square, depending upon traffic. When we arrived in Little Rhody, we were not sure what to make of our state's provincial quirkiness. After asking directions, for example, we were told, "Make a left where the Almacs used to be." This seemed more than a little odd. However, Rhode Island's quirkiness has grown on us; today Sandy and I trumpet the pleasures, great and small, of our state to all who will listen.

At first, Sandy, having always lived in a big city, had more trouble than I adjusting to no-sidewalk suburbia. When we arrived in the summer of 1974 at our home at 3 Old Chimney Road in the Hampden Meadows section of town, where we were to live for more than three decades, Sandy had primary responsibility for our six-week-old Karen. I threw myself into meeting as many members of the congregation as possible, planning for the opening of our religious school, and preparing

for the High Holy Days.

With the passage of time, both Sandy and I became more and more drawn to the physical beauty of Barrington – the ebb and flow of the tides of the Barrington River, the town’s sandy beach, lapped by the gentle wavelets of Narragansett Bay. As an avid fisherman, I took special pride in bringing home for dinner flounder or tautog that I had just caught in local waters. The completion of the 14-mile East Bay Bike Path some years ago was an additional plus. Because Barrington is located midway between Providence with Bristol, I have ridden many hundreds of miles upon it. To this day I keep my ancient three-speed Raleigh in a congregant/friend’s garage in Barrington so that the two of us can share the beauty of the path. I confess that I need a 24-speed Trek to tackle Providence’s hills.

One of Goodwin’s most penetrating questions is: “What may have been disappointing, frustrating, or impossible to achieve?” I turn to my colleague, Rabbi Edwin Friedman (1932-1996) to provide some perspective on this complex issue. In 1985, he published *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: Guilford Press). His central thesis is that married clergy – rabbis and Protestant ministers- must learn how to juggle the conflicting demands of their three competing “families:” their nuclear family, the extended family of church or synagogue, and the church or synagogue family in crisis.

Speaking personally, during my 33 years at Habonim, I was frequently torn between the needs of my wife and young children and my expanding congregational family; even if I had possessed all the skill and energy in the world, I still could not be in two places at once. Just as I had figured out how to rearrange my schedule at the temple in order to see my daughter’s play or to watch my son’s ball game or to spend a rare night out with my wife, the phone would ring: a member had just died. On those all-too-few-times when I said NO to Habonim in order to say YES to my nuclear family, it would take little time until I heard from disgruntled congregants.

Almost every married rabbi and minister I have met over the decades has had to live with this same tension: by responding professionally and compassionately to a family in crisis, he or she precipitates a crisis of failed expectations for spouse and children. Add to this the disruption to a long-scheduled program at the church or synagogue. The successes and failures in my rabbinical career reflect the degree to which I have been able to negotiate among the conflicting needs of my

three competing “families.”

Unfortunately, I have found this central conflict impossible to resolve. I estimate that during my 33 years in Barrington I missed at least 50 major events in the lives of my extended family and close friends – weddings, graduations, bar mitzvahs, bat mitzvahs, significant birthdays, even funerals – because of prior commitments to the synagogue. At one time or another, I have disappointed or angered one or two of these “families” in order to meet the needs of the third. For better and for worse, the consequences of the many choices I have had to make have remained with me to this very day. As one of my longtime congregants likes to say, “You can’t put the toothpaste back in the tube.”

In addition to these intrinsic conflicts faced by all married clergy, I had to face the reality of being the rabbi of a relatively small congregation in the smallest state in the union. While Temple Habonim did have the resources to occasionally supplement our programming by bringing to our community outstanding speakers– among them, Rabbi Harold Kushner and Rabbi Eugene Borowitz – we have needed to accept the reality of living within the constraints of our budget. Moreover, while Temple Habonim is filled with creative and energetic men and women, our most active members have had to learn how to pace themselves, lest they suffer from the burnout so common in smaller communities.

Paradoxically, a major reason that Sandy and I chose to remain in Barrington is that the size of the synagogue proved to be more of an asset than a liability. As I used to tell prospective members, “Temple Habonim is a growing institution that refuses to become institutional.” It is no exaggeration to state that our synagogue continues to function like a warm and welcoming extended family. It is hard to fathom the depth of my joy when officiating at the wedding of a man or a woman at whose bar mitzvah or bat mitzvah I had officiated– and the added joy of seeing their children become students in our religious school. The lay leadership and other volunteers at Temple Habonim have made our synagogue a truly caring community; I would suggest that our relatively small size– about 220 families today – has contributed to this shared sense of belonging.

As satisfying as I found my work in the synagogue, I looked for and found additional fulfillment in the larger community. It did not take me long to realize that as rabbi of Temple Habonim, I was also a rabbi to the Jewish community of greater Rhode Island. Over the decades, I have participated in a large variety of

statewide events; I have also enjoyed the wisdom, encouragement, and companionship of my rabbinical colleagues in Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts. I owe a special debt of thanks to the late Rabbi Saul Leeman, with whom I studied Talmud on a weekly basis for about ten years. Under his guidance, I closed a gap in my seminary education; Rabbi Leeman helped me gain a deepening sense of my own rabbinical authenticity.

It seems to me that today's Rhode Island Jewish community is considerably more open to the airing of diverse viewpoints than when I came to Barrington more than four decades ago. A single example speaks volumes. On Yom Kippur morning, 1975 (5736), my second High Holy Day season with my new congregation, I suggested in my sermon that the time had come for us American Jews to hold a conversation amongst ourselves regarding the Israeli settlements in the wake of the '67 and '73 wars. *Note:* I did not advocate taking our discussion beyond our Jewish community. No op-eds in *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*. Just American Jews talking to American Jews. While I considered my sermon a rather innocuous opening gambit, within an hour or two I was receiving angry "How dare you?" complaints from a small but vocal number of synagogue members. Within a couple of days, I was hearing criticism from some of the leadership of the Jewish Federation. In the fall of 1975, public discussion of Israel's settlements – even when kept within our Jewish community – was strictly taboo.

How much healthier is the Rhode Island Jewish community of today. For quite some time now, we have been engaged in a lively discussion regarding the Jewish state. I myself have been roundly criticized for my views on Israel; and I have not been afraid to criticize the views of those with whom I disagree. For the most part, this has been a *machloket l'shem shamayim*, "a controversy for the sake of heaven." While some have felt that this ongoing debate is a sign of an increasingly polarized community, I would argue that it is a sign of our growing maturity; for we are now willing to wrestle earnestly with the very nature of our Jewish identity.

From my earliest days in Barrington, I quickly became involved in a variety of interfaith activities. Before my retirement in the summer of 2007, I was involved in three principal forms of continuing and overlapping dialogue with fellow clergy: the Barrington Clergy Association; a statewide group of rabbis, Protestant ministers, and Catholic priests; and a monthly, bilateral rabbi-priest discussion group, which was held at Temple Emanu-El in Providence.

Back in 1974, my understanding of organized Christianity was unsophisticated, to say the least. My mindset at the time was that Barrington was a town of few Jews and many Christians. To my way of thinking, there could be few significant differences between Catholics and Protestants because they are all Christians. Needless to say, it did not take the local Protestant and Catholic clergy long to disabuse me of my naïveté.

While I would never presume to take sides on issues that divide Catholics and Protestants, I have not hesitated throughout the decades to highlight four matters that cry out for dialogue between Christians and Jews. To begin with, there is the obvious theological divide concerning the meaning of Jesus: while Christians, in one way or another, understand Jesus to be the Christ, the Messiah, we Jews see Jesus as a mortal, albeit a mortal who has played a major role in Jewish and world history.

The issue of proselytism, though not significant in Rhode Island, continues to be a sore point in Jewish-Christian relations. To this very day, some Christians insist that they are actually doing us Jews a favor by trying to bring us to Christ and eternal life; the Jewish response to such attempts at conversion, no matter how well intentioned, is: STOP!!

A third area of concern is the differing approaches that Jewish and Christian traditions take toward the notions of "law" and "love." Over the years, I have formulated what is almost a mantra of mine: *For the Christian, love makes law unnecessary; for the Jew, law makes love possible.* While I admit this is an overgeneralization, I have found that my formulation is useful for launching a discussion. To be more specific, at least in some of his letters, Paul, the apostle, argues that love – *agape*, not erotic love – supersedes and renders superfluous the need for law, especially certain religious laws such as circumcision. By way of contrast, for the Jew, religious and moral law provides a reliable structure that, despite the inevitable ebb and flow of emotion, enables love to flourish and endure.

By far the most emotional and tension-filled interfaith discussions in which I have been engaged center upon the State of Israel. Despite our sometimes angry and even ugly internal disagreements regarding Israel, the vast majority of the world's Jews feel a deep connection with Israel; we are connected with Jewish Israelis by bonds of faith and fate. Beginning with the Six Day War, however, much of the Jewish community has felt misunderstood at best, abandoned at worst, by

some of our Christian neighbors, who are unable to comprehend our complex and intimate involvement with a small, distant nation on the eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea. As painful as this aspect of the Jewish-Christian dialogue has been, is now, and is likely to be, it is a dialogue that must be pursued.

My decades of participation in interfaith dialogue have been informed by the metaphor of the mountain of faith: I see each religious community camped at the base of a towering mountain. We Jews are in one camp. Catholics are next to us on our left, and Protestants are besides them. The Muslim camp is on our right. We can't see Hindus or Buddhists because they are encamped on the other side of the mountain.

The mountain's peak, capped with snow, represents ultimate religious "Truth," but this peak is so high, so remote, that it remains forever beyond human reach. That is to say: no one religious tradition is in possession of "The Truth." Ultimate religious "Truth" is not attainable because of the indisputable fact that we are not God; the finite cannot grasp the infinite. My vision of the mountain of faith infuses me with a theological humility, which defines my approach to the rabbinate in general and to my interfaith work in particular.

From the fall of 1980 through the spring of 1988, I was an adjunct instructor in the religious studies department at Connecticut College in New London. During those years I taught five courses: "Introduction to Judaism," "Jewish Religious Thought," "Jewish Mysticism," "Zionism," and "The Holocaust." While my college teaching required some serious juggling to meet my obligations at Temple Habonim, the synagogue leadership was supportive of my need for continuing intellectual growth. My experience at Connecticut College enriched my work at Temple Habonim just as my congregational work enriched my teaching at the college.

During the 1980s, Temple Habonim's social action committee became increasingly involved with the plight of Soviet Jewry. With the support of my colleagues in the northeast region of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the generous backing of the synagogue, I visited Leningrad and Moscow in November, 1988. My colleague, the late Rabbi Cary Yales of Temple Isaiah in Lexington, Massachusetts, and I visited several refusenik families in both cities. While we had many adventures and misadventures, we were deeply gratified that all of these families eventually found refuge here in the United States or in Israel.

It was also in the 1980s that I began to write poetry after a hiatus of many years. In addition to working on my own poems, I oversaw the publication of four poetry chapbooks, containing poems written by Temple Habonim members: *Nutmeg and Clove* (1987), *My Great-Grandfather Never Died* (1988), *What the Song Will Sing* (1989), and *On the Use of Lines* (1990).

As I was working on my poetry, I began to spend more time working on my prose as well. In the spring of 1998, Don Abood, the editor of the *Barrington Times*, asked me to write a monthly column for the weekly paper; I have been doing so ever since.

I will be forever grateful to the extended family of Temple Habonim for encouraging me to pursue my multiple involvements in the larger community as well as encouraging me to develop my skills as a writer. Because of their understanding of my need to continue to grow as a person, I was able to help them continue to grow as a synagogue. Though I spent my rabbinical career in a relatively small synagogue in our smallest state, my opportunities to transcend myself have been very large indeed.

I thoroughly enjoyed my work at Temple Habonim. Ninety per cent of the time I felt that I was being paid to do what I love to do, paid to do what I would willingly do for no pay at all. On the other hand, I was beginning to sense small signs of dissatisfaction from families with very young children. For example, they wanted me to lead a regular "Tot Shabbat" service, which would involve my getting down on the floor to be on the level of their little ones; I explained that while I would have no difficulty getting down on the floor, I would certainly need help getting back up again.

During a dinner in the early spring of 2005, my wife Sandy said to me, seemingly out of the blue, "Jim, I think you should tell the temple board that you are moving your date of retirement back from July 1, 2009, to July 1, 2007. By then you will have just turned 63." After a mere moment's reflection, I responded, "You're right." And that was that.

I immediately grasped both the appropriateness and the momentousness of Sandy's suggestion. During our 50 years of marriage, most significant decisions have required weeks or months of give-and-take, of deep thinking and even deeper rethinking before we arrive at a satisfactory resolution; yet, in this case of moving up my retirement date by two years, I knew and—equally important—Sandy knew

that for us the timing was ripe, ready, and right.

Dor holech v'dor ba, writes the Biblical Kohelet, "A generation goes, and a generation comes." As Temple Habonim's rabbi for 33 years, I learned to be sensitive to the stern discipline of generations. I buried many members of Temple Habonim as well as their relatives. I lead services at their *shivas*. But I also officiated at numerous weddings, *brisses*, baby namings, and bar mitzvah and bat mitzvah celebrations.

Speaking personally, during my years at Temple Habonim I experienced the deep sorrow of burying my mother, my father, my sister, and my father-in-law. Yet, my years at the synagogue also brought Sandy and me great family joy: the birth of our son, David; Karen's bat mitzvah; David's bar mitzvah; Karen's wedding; David's engagement; and the births of the first and second of our five grandchildren.

Having climbed the mountains and walked through the valleys of the human life cycle, on both a community and personal level, I have learned that the fullness and joyfulness of life defeats the darkness and devastation of death. It is no accident that when we Jews lift up our glasses to make a toast, we say *L'chayim*, "To life!"

Sandy's mother had died at age 51; and as we entered our 60s, we grew increasingly aware of the meaning of mortality, *our* mortality; nobody lives forever. Now that we are well into our 70s, we are reminded almost every day of the fragility of people in our age bracket; the phone calls and the emails come: our friend who was "doing fine" just yesterday is no more.

I did not decide to retire "early" at the age of 62, then, because of unhappiness with my work. Rather, I made the decision with Sandy's help so that both of us could have the time, the energy, and reasonably good health to pursue other interests. Of course, our five grandchildren take up much of our physical and emotional space. Indeed, this past August 12 we had the supreme joy of witnessing Lucy, our first grandchild, celebrate her bat mitzvah.

But we are not only grandfather and grandmother. Sandy now sits on the board of Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island, which serves refugees and immigrants in our state. As long as I have known her, Sandy has had a pressing desire to help the less fortunate; given the anti-immigration bias in Washington, Sandy's ongoing involvement with Dorcas has proved to be especially fulfilling for her.

As for me, I have had the time to throw myself into my writing with a certain degree of abandon. I spend many hours a week— sometimes several hours a day— working on improving my craft. In addition, I am looking to bring to my writing some expression of the artist within me— an effort that fills me with both joy and frustration. I thank my editors and in particular my wife for encouraging me to continue to grow as a writer.

So far, retirement has been good to us. We reached the milestone of our 50th wedding anniversary this past December 24. By the standard of Ben Zoma, Sandy and I can consider ourselves rich, happy with our lot.

Of all the questions George Goodwin asked me to consider in preparing this essay, the following has been by far the easiest to answer: "If starting over, would you be attracted to a congregation like Habonim and a place like Little Rhody?"

My answer: YES!



Lady Michael

Before Lady Michael

Michael Fink

Mike is passionate about so many topics- family, friends, former and current students, Judaism, literature, cinema, nature, Providence, and the past- that readers may have overlooked a key omission in his numerous articles. Yes, we have read hints here and there, but he never fully addressed the young ladies and femmes fatales who have graced, bewildered, and haunted his life.

Perhaps the timing had to be right. His youngest child and only son, Reuben, was married this past summer. But there may be a better explanation: as the decades have passed, Lady Michael has meant ever more to Sir Michael. She reaffirms and redefines his understanding of another of his favorite topics, destiny.

“**H**ow did you two meet?” People ask couples this question at cocktail parties. I have a choice of answers.

Here’s one version. Oh, I was canoeing on the Seekonk River one early spring afternoon in 1964 and asked a boy to help me carry and lift my canoe to the roof of my aqua-colored, “baby” Renault. He went home and told his mom to invite me to the family’s next cocktail party, which was only a block from my East Side homestead, on Creston Way. His sister stepped down the stairs to meet the stranger, me. It turned out that she babysat for my niece two doors down from their place. I became something of a regular at these occasional gatherings and brought along my current dates.

That early June, one of my graduating students at RISD asked me to take care of a campus canary, but I was also going to travel after commencement. So I gave the beautiful golden bird with the fountain of melody in its heart and head to the young lady of the hospitable household. She was studying violin in college, and the bird joined in her practice sessions. What a marvelous and reassuring greeting for a guest arriving at the vestibule. I was charmed by this couple, warbler and woman.

Here’s another version of how we met. It takes a village for a duet. Was it my sister-in-law, my then baby niece, my future brother-in-law, or the yellow bird in a gilded cage that brought us together? The Yiddish word of course is *besheret*,

which means your Chassidic destiny. The young lady and I shared the same name, Michael, and in Hebrew we even had the same paternal name, *ben* or *bat Moshe*. I thought she looked like a portrait by Leonardo. She might stroll by the brick stoop of my gabled house 'round the corner, where I sat at twilight and kept company with passersby. My mother, Betty, had died in 1965 in this house, and for some seasons my father, Moe, and I, the youngest son, shared it.

After a number of rendezvous about town, Michael told her mother, Florence, about our sudden engagement. She called her own sister, Sylvia Rosenthal, to ask her opinion. She said, "Good, *Mazel Tov*" or words to that effect.

One day I asked my dad to give me a cigarette and join me before the brick fireplace within whose grate I had built a low fire. "Michael and I are getting married next month. May we hold the *chuppah* right here for the ceremony?" I was worried about his possible response; he didn't always approve of my dates, or even my buddies, and made his opinions quite clear. But my *Moshe* puffed and put out his Camel, and began to polish the silver and the floors and wash the champagne glasses, a gift from his own wedding an epoch ago.

On May 4, 1974, Lady Michael and I broke the crystal goblet and set forth upon our life together. I cherish a few snapshots of the big smiles on the faces of the guests at the wedding *chez moi* and the reception at the house on Dexterdale Road, *chez elle*.

I cannot pretend that the following memoir, going back decades into my dating history, is anywhere near complete. Rather, it is only an attempt to suggest the nature of my search. So I apologize to any lovely and lovable lady I do not include, for it is not my desire to evade or avoid any episode but only to evoke a special length of time and place, aptly named Providence.

I include mostly the symbolic and suggestive persons who lead, like stones on a garden path, to the central figure, my beloved wife and life's companion, Lady Michael. I hope too that there may be a kind of logic in a Chassidic sense and in Shakespeare's words from "Hamlet" (Act 5, Scene 2): "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, Rough-hew them how we will."

My memoir begins with the Hope Street butcher's pretty daughter, Betty Stone, who wrote in our high school yearbook, "To my first boyfriend." In my Providence public school life, your romantic career started in right after your bar mitzvah. In my case, even a bit earlier. I liked Rhoda in sixth grade, but a jealous

classmate wrote in our autograph book, "Roses are red, Violets are blue, Rhoda stinks, and the Yankees do, too." I didn't care about ball games, but I liked New York better than Boston. Later in life, Rhoda dated my elder brother, Chick, which took her out of my league altogether.

It was then a custom to go out with girls a year or two younger and also to mimic the GIs recently back home from the world's battlefields. Thus, in Hope High School we would get all dressed up in the latest fashion, which was somewhat influenced by Harlem, but also by the Ivy League's preppy look, and maybe with a touch of Providence's Outlet Company as well. So, on a Saturday evening, we would find a friend with a license and a car, phone a likely lass, and head for The Farm or The Ranch House or perhaps over the border into the nearby Attleboros or even beyond, to Lake Pearl in Wrentham, to dance and sip fancy cocktails and smoke Lucky Strikes or Chesterfields perhaps to the band music of Vaughn Monroe.

One day at the Jewish Community Center, on Benefit Street, I saw a shy, pale, slim girl walking down the staircase. Her name? "Selena." Her entrance reminded me of a scene from a movie – so graceful and somehow inviting. Plus: her father was the liquor commissioner, which meant I could probably get served one of those postwar "poetic" cocktails with fancy names. My favorites were the more classic Old Fashioneds or Manhattans, but I went down the list Saturday after Saturday to try them all, from Pink Squirrels to Brandy Alexanders. This moon goddess lasted a few school semesters, but youth is fickle. Hers or mine?

I saw a young lady with black hair named Ann with a last name, Bassow, which struck me as Italian. Maybe I could take her to the nearby Celebrity Club, an integrated jazz club on Randall Square, or get served red wine at Camille's Roman Gardens or the Old Canteen (both on Federal Hill), or even just the bar at Sullivan's Steak House, attached to Howard Johnson's on North Main. My father's cousin, Ben Kauf, played a gypsy fiddle there, and he would come over to my table and play "Golden Earrings" for us. I was a baby-faced boy, but I did smoke and drink like a vet. While wearing one of two identification bracelets from my bar mitzvah (one with Gothic letters, the other Roman), I made so bold as to "borrow" my eldest brother, Eddy's, highly polished dancing shoes. Her parents' home on Blackstone Street had a fine rose garden in the front yard. I think her mother knit her outfits. I found her exotic and hoped for a lasting romance; more of that when I leave Hope

for Yale.

Well, like my pal, Larry Gordon, I called many, many girls in search and quest of the perfect person. I can summon up the memory of each date, and later in this chronicle I can tell the tales of how a few of them reentered my social life. There were many adventures and misadventures. Sometimes a maiden would bring a chaperone. On occasion, I relied on my Moe as my chauffeur. Or even the trolleys before they came to an end.

High school likewise comes to an end with the senior prom and the escape from your home as you pack your valise and head to the campus for the next act and chapter of your life. In those days, long, long before the computer age, you didn't take much with you. All you needed was a change of underwear and socks and a pencil and a pen you got for your bar mitzvah. I borrowed my eldest brother's typewriter while he was off to the Korean Conflict. I used my trusty thumb to go home for school breaks or back to Yale through western Rhode Island and into Connecticut.

I previously wrote about this glamorous, mock-Gothic world. You may recall that I never fully fit into its courtly realm until my senior year. So for my freshman prom I had asked Ann Bassow to take the bus to New Haven. Well, she seemed more distracted than delighted, and she didn't look like my classmates' dates in their cashmere, understated outfits. She rather resembled Carmen or something from another world! I also recall George and Harry's Lounge, near the football stadium, with an early snow falling over the colorful steel shapes in its sculpture garden. A week later, my mother sent me the announcement of Ann's engagement, in *The Jewish Herald*, to a lad a year or so my junior. People married right out of school, if not college-bound. Time for me to move along.

Oh, there was Judy, a cousin of the local Halperts. I met her at a Howard Johnson's, in Casco, Maine, which was located on a lake. She sent me a watercolor sketch of our tryst, which I perhaps still hoard in my cluttered garage crammed with boxes and trunks. She married while I was studying abroad at the Sorbonne during my junior year. He was a fellow with strangely similar interests and ambitions: a devotion to cinema and to French culture. So, what next? My interludes in Paris merit a separate story.

Yale may have been all male, but there was one female on campus, a student in the Music School, and her name was Aviva. She liked me, of all surprising

things, but I somehow felt cornered by her, rather than liberated from my solitude. But wait! The chronicle has a later chapter.

My roommate for senior year, Joel, drove a crimson convertible and took us to mixers at various women's colleges. At Vassar, I took over a grand piano and played the classic piece all students learn by heart, Beethoven's ode to his beloved, "*Für Elise*" (bagatelle No. 25 in A minor). A face and form that seemed like a dream embodiment of the piece appeared before me. Again, a black mane and dark eyes. Let's call her "Elise."

Although I was always a loyal Jewish boy anxious to please family, I never suspected that this Elise was Jewish – not at Vassar in those days. She sent me some fine records and illustrated her letters with charming drawings in purple ink. She could dance as well as draw and play both piano and violin. She visited me one time in Providence and dined with us. My car had a flat tire on the drive back into New York, and our friendship also went flat. "She's not for you," said her younger brother (who now lives in Paris with his wife and surprisingly young children). He was right about that. She has turned, for me, into a symbolic figure, as her actual musical career soared.

One day, long after my Michael and I were married and had our three children, our son, Reuben, called me downstairs. "Mom said there's something you ought to see." This was an interview on the tube with Elise. She had become an item on the pages of magazines and newspapers and a face on television – not so much as a pianist or a violinist, but as the creator of Young Concert Artists, an organization for the discovery and development of musical talent. I remember the line she spoke after each audition, alone in a vast auditorium: "Thank you very much." This meant, of course, "No." Lady Michael said, "She would have made your life miserable." And she was right. Perhaps strangely, her face once appeared in *The Providence Journal* with the history of her Young Concert Artists.

There are two lines from old songs that nevertheless suggest my mood from those bygone moments of nostalgia: "New York's a ghost town" and "spring will be a little late this year." They both mean, of course, "She said no."

Sometimes after my graduation, in 1955, I returned to New York to visit a fellow alum. I went to a party and there was...Aviva! For a few weeks that summer we were a couple, and then we went our separate ways.

Providence was a magnet that drew me back, into my true, inevitable,

and enviable fate. Before the RISD faculty established a code of ethics forbidding a teacher from dating a student, a lady colleague fixed me up with Marci, a transfer student from her class, not mine. She and I became a 1960s couple. When my first nephew, David, was a toddler (he now has five children!), I took him to visit her studio. When he saw a landscape of dead flowers in abandoned vases, along with unfinished canvasses, he burst into tears. He was accustomed to an orderly routine. Me too!

Marci came into and went out of my life, but she did indeed meet my future lady, Michael. It was a prophetic encounter in my own parlor, fraught with future meanings. No, the artist's noisy and messy world did not suit me. Yes, there were encounters during and among those seasons in my genuine pursuit of the happiness of rational, personal, and spiritual guidelines, but they led to dead ends, so far in my review.

Often in life you make a friend or find a romance that pops like a balloon and vanishes, leaving little in its wake except a passing phantom thought. You could snap a shot of the bird or the butterfly, but this was not my style nor custom. I wait for fate, but when I am low, I guard my keepsakes as reminders that I was once high on a pedestal of pride and promise. I can cherish both the winning and the losing. Not too many years ago, while attending a senior event at the then "new" Jewish Community Center, on Elmgrove Avenue, I was accosted by a woman. "You don't know who I am, do you? You went out with my daughter, Selena, and dropped her!" I replied, "No, I think it was she who let me go!" It was the mother of the moon-girl I had met at the JCC on Benefit Street so very long ago, but not so very far away. Just over Hope Street and along Benefit. That was the girl whose father had been the liquor commissioner.

Ann, whom I had taken to the Celebrity Club and various places on Federal Hill, also came back to me. I met her mother at a concert at Temple Beth-El. How come the mothers seem to figure in my report? "She's not happy in her marriage," I was told. The phone rang, and I recognized her voice. We met again. As with Aviva, sometimes you have a second chance.

Fortunately, some other girls whom I knew and enjoyed six decades ago have come back into my life. In the winter of 2017, Beth (Goldstein) and her friend Roberta (Abedon) heard that Lady Michael and I were invited to Frenchman's Creek, in West Palm Beach, for a visit with Lady Michael's *Moshe*, her father, Morris

Weintraub, and his companion, Joan Gelch. Well, Beth and Roberta, seasonal residents of that area, showed up at the "13th Hole," the breakfast bar of Frenchman's Creek, to check up on us and to reminisce about their lives and careers. They also shared souvenirs of dates and parties from our youth and our occasional encounters on the sands of Narragansett Beach.

I had once asked our hostess, Joan Gelch, if I might invite another friend from a brief encounter, if not quite a romance. Paulette had been a Holocaust survivor and an orphan. I had met her at a rooftop cocktail party at the Boston residence of Linda Logowitz, a dear friend and ally from our Brown University days. (Linda had been an undergraduate while I was a grad student.) I can recall that Paulette, a Brandeis student, was wearing a plaited white skirt. Having received reparations from West Germany for the loss of her parents and grandparents, she spent some money on a crimson coupe convertible and some on travel and cruises. Believing that her remaining funds had been stolen, she successfully sued the Scientology movement. Books have been written about the case. Paulette and her husband, Paul Noble, did indeed visit us at Frenchman's Creek, a rendezvous that remains both memorable and marvelous, at least from my perspective.

Really, my romantic past pales compared to many friends' from each decade of my life. Freedom and opportunity come from adolescent experiment and search, but also youthful pursuits in both directions: the pursuer and the pursued. Even until the end of the book of life, there are souls and bodies that eternally return, until one day you make a choice. You can find a song that tells your own tale.

For the purpose of this article, I want to keep within or near the borders and byways of Rhode Island's Jewish community. But I'll make one exception. I had a neighbor, Minter, again only a street away. She was the dropout from a family of Mayflower and D.A.R. descendants, wealthy scions from farmland to factory. Minter, who biked by Summit Avenue, took a strange liking to me, but it was never a romantic bond. There was something other and else that we shared. Not a "modern" friendship, but merely an eccentricity. We did date, but she was far wilder than I could handle. Upon my mother's death, Minter came to the *shivah* and told me, that when she was drunk, Betty, my mom, would invite her in, give her soup and challah, sober her up somewhat, listen to her woes and worries, but never say a word to me! My magnificent and magnanimous mother was afraid, as she had been upon one other occasion, that I might make a choice I would regret. Minter has

vanished from my Rhode Island realm, but I think of her when I drive, as I so often do, along Fifth Street, near the former Royal's Drugs.

Once before during my bachelor days, I had pursued a girl with whom I shared a past and, briefly, a present. This was Doris, whose nude portrait was proudly presented at the Art Club on Thomas Street. She had been my student in a required class on world literature. Her mother, Bernice Bergeron, had rented a space in my parents' furniture store building in East Providence. Doris's family had followed a parallel immigration route, from Montreal to Providence. Nevertheless, my parents would not have approved of a yoking of our destinies. Doris disapproved of the ancient draperies in my parlor – "It looks like a funeral home!" she declared – but she DID visit us, lady Michael and me, after our marriage. One's past seldom entirely goes away.

There was an evening with another neighbor, "Edith." We double-dated with my brother, Chick. I kissed her goodnight and then....decades later, a renowned and prize-winning author asked me to a literary luncheon. "You don't remember me, do you?" asked the noted writer. "You never called me again." I answered, "I was a fool then and now as well." Again, the eternal return.

I recently visited Edith Pearlman in her majestic tower apartment in Brookline. She was like an elegant queen in her wheelchair. She signed the books of her superb short stories that I had brought with me to show off that I was collecting her works.

And then, there was a one-evening event with some touch of local lore about it. I made so bold as to dance with Roz, a tall, stately, fine lady. There were only a few swirls and whirls at a jazz and blues place in East Providence. Her husband twisted my arm to break up our embrace! She became Roz Sinclair and has often asked Michael and me to dinner or for nightcaps. We also shared a short dip in the sea at the once exclusive Dunes Club in South County.

Such anecdotes may amuse one's acquaintance in idle conversations. But the emotions, half-hidden, persist!

When Michael and I were wed, I took some fabrics that Michael's mother had acquired in Japan, when she performed in concerts there, and had them framed by Bernice Bergeron, Doris' mother. This was intended as a gesture of mixing the interiors of our dwellings, like the genes of our futures. I believe that there is a shape, resembling an oval pathway, which links each moment, day, and season in a

couple's life: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow.

I find myself declaring to my RISD students, inappropriately probably, the statement: "I am a happy person; I have everything I have ever desired; I find my joy now in the details of the day." Maybe I always did: the chirp of a sparrow, the zigzag of a butterfly or the sudden light of a summer firefly. A kind word, a friendly smile.

Mostly, though, I know that I have found- in the lyrics of my generation's song, "Just in Time!" – the right person to trust and to treasure.



wedding, 1974

To Remember and Cherish: *My Life as a Museum*

George M. Goodwin



Selection of folk art

Do I think I'm Pharaoh, preparing to savor treasures in an afterlife? Or, as a Jew, do I have a faulty understanding of what matters? Or am I merely a hoarder?

Other questions follow. Has my collecting mania only worsened with age? What will be the consequences for Betsey, our kids, and our community? When will I seek treatment?

A conscientious person may save a dozen years of tax returns. I have at least 40 years. Doesn't everybody keep 60 registers of canceled checks in a desk drawer? How about all the desk calendars I ever owned? A collection of 700 refrigerator magnets? Guilty once again.

Old toys? I still have my first teddy bear, "Brownie," who's old enough to collect Social Security payments. Then again, perhaps all my tens of thousands of keepsakes are things to be toyed with. I may not often touch them, but I'm constantly rearranging them in my mind (as my memories play with me). Only a few possessions are listed on my homeowner's insurance policy, but I consider the vast majority irreplaceable and priceless.

Of course it's easy to blame my parents, Madeline and Eugene, for cultivating my attachment to things. Days or weeks after my twin brother, Theo, and I were born in Los Angeles, never imagining the calamitous consequences, they began assembling a book of mementos. In addition to snapshots, it contains a hospital bill, birthday party invitations, report cards as well as religious school and camp commendations. Not quite resembling a Christian reliquary, this album lacks hair or teeth, which I could use right now.

Childhood Art

While no longer possessing any childhood clothing, I do have a great deal of childhood art, which Mom and Dad saved for themselves and, presumably, for me. Yes, there's a terra-cotta imprint of my favored left hand, probably made in nursery school. There are many tempera paintings, which I made at age eight or

nine under the tutelage of a professional artist in her studio. These clearly demonstrate that I was a prodigy!

My parents framed one painting, a still life of birds of paradise, which I later reframed and presented to Betsey. It has embellished all four of our homes. Contrary to the predilections of today's youth, the still life suggests that I could look closely and patiently at something. I could also create something fresh, colorful, and fun. How ironic: as a kid I could just go make a painting, when, throughout my adult years, I have struggled to figure out what every painting means. By the way, I still have the copper pitcher that held the flowers.

In 1975, partially as a joke, I hung some of my childhood paintings in my office at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. But I no longer joke about the joy conveyed in children's art or by adult artists who may lack formal training. Great art may owe much- or nothing- to technical prowess!

In high school, I became an editorial cartoonist. Paul Conrad, the Pulitzer Prize-winner of *The Los Angeles Times*, inspired me, and I had the pleasure of meeting him. I completed a few drawings a week, and my American history teacher

hung them above his blackboards. So I saved many of these, including the one about the evils of segregation, which Mr. Lee told me to submit to *The New Yorker*. Alas, this brilliant image was politely rejected.

As a senior, I drew a caricature of every classmate for our yearbook. Though no harm was intended, I later understood that, by imitating Al Hirschfeld's imagery, I had often been unflattering and occasionally cruel. I saved only a few of these drawings, but I still have a cache of yearbooks, including my mother's from her senior year of high school and her mother's 1917 yearbook from the University of Cincinnati. I believe that saving her sister's 1914 yearbook from Smith College was a special mitzvah because she was childless.

During my senior year of high school, when taking my first art history course, I sculpted several terra-cotta heads. A few ended up in my parents' garden, but I was quite surprised when my father chose a tormented bust of a bearded athlete, derived from an ancient prototype, to adorn a shelf in his law office. As if unearthed from Pompeii or Herculaneum, it now resides in my sister and brother-in-law's tranquil garden, behind the home where we siblings grew up.

While studying art history in college and then again after graduate school, I spent several summers taking drawing and painting classes, many with a favorite professor. I saved a few dozen of these somber pieces, but most were discarded due to various household moves.

Fortunately, Betsey and I have saved scores of Molly and Michael's drawings, paintings, posters, and dioramas. Isn't everything they made precious? A large cache of their childhood ceramics recently inspired us to fund a new art studio at the Dwares JCC, and a framed ceramic portrait of Betsey hangs in our living room.

Stamps, Postcards & Letters

As a child, I never cared much about rocks, seashells or insects. By age ten, however, I became quite intrigued by postage stamps. Dad, having gone on a business trip to New York City, brought me a few sheets of stamps from the United Nations, which, during the Cold War, stood as a beacon of hope and world peace. Soon thereafter, I began writing to its post office several times a year to obtain examples of each new issue. After filling an entire U. N. album, I began subscribing to a weekly newspaper for stamp collectors.

Then my philatelic interests expanded to include American "plate blocks,"



Magnets from many locales

especially the numbered corners of four stamps found on sheets of commemoratives. While focused on new issues, I visited post offices quite often. On Saturday mornings, religious school teachers often scolded me for missing the first few minutes of class.

I'm guessing that a philatelist's compulsion for order and completion contributed to my adult collecting mania. Perfection may also be a part of it, for I sought stamps in only pristine condition.

Occasionally, I bought older stamps from a neighborhood dealer. One purchase led to some ethical considerations, for a stamp that I coveted cost \$13. Thinking that this was an exorbitant amount, Dad thought that I should take a few days to think about it, especially if he had to augment my meager savings. He did approve of the purchase, but his advice not to spend lavishly on oneself, a Jewish lesson, stuck with me.

I encouraged Michael to follow in my footsteps as a stamp collector, but he soon discovered his own collecting mania. One such interest is foreign-language editions of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's novel, *The Little Prince*. He has perhaps 40 volumes from countries where he has lived or visited. My favorite edition is in Maltese.

As a kid, I filled at least two large shoeboxes with picture postcards, which my grandparents and other older relatives sent from their far-flung travels. As with stamps, these mementos taught me a fair amount about geography, history, and biography. It's probably only a coincidence, however, that some of my relatives were enamored of Italy and I spent part of my junior year in Florence.

I'll blame my parents, especially my mother, for saving letters. And I'm not referring only to letters that I wrote from camp, boarding school, college or graduate school. I'm talking about every letter that Mom wrote from Camp Vega to her parents and every letter she and Dad wrote to each other during their engagement. There are also letters that Mom wrote to her future in-laws and letters that they sent to her. Indeed, there are many other categories of letters, including those written to her by a smitten soldier during World War II, before she met Dad.

My archive of family letters is vast – approximately 1,200 items – representing four generations! I've organized the correspondence by senders, recipients, and key topics, but never attempted to read even a majority. Alas, many of the letters written during the 1960s and '70s are quite troubling. They deal not only



with disappointments, illnesses, and deaths, but assassinations, protests, and the draft. Letters seem especially valuable to me because so many closed with the same word, "Love." Unfortunately, we seldom used it in ordinary conversations. Too much was taken for granted.

Jewish Heirlooms

As a Jew, nearly all my treasures, gathered from many corners of the world, feel in some sense Jewish. But I have several objects that carry a liturgical or an institutional meaning. The most obvious example is the silver kiddush cup from my 1961 bar mitzvah at Wilshire Boulevard Temple. But I also saved the speech (typed on notecards) that my parents helped me write, an audio recording of the ceremony, a photo album showing all the guests, and even a mailing list of everybody invited to the ceremony! Sorry, but I mislaid the fountain pens.

Another explicitly Jewish memento is a panoramic, black-and-white photo of my 1964 Confirmation class. Portraying 200 kids (as well as our three rabbis), it has become an amazing record of American Jewish history.

Theo kept our family's oldest Bible, printed during the late-19th-century, which records the names and dates of our oldest, German-born maternal ancestors, who settled in Ohio and West Virginia. Another family heirloom is an 1895 edition of the *Union Prayer Book*, which belonged to a maternal great-grandparent (who probably never heard the word *siddur*).

Betsey and I proudly display the paper-cut *ketubah* that we commissioned in 1983 for our wedding, and we have the first of many *hanukkiot* that we purchased for our homes. Betsey has another treasure, the white gown in which her

paternal grandfather, David, was circumcised! Then there's the lace tablecloth that her maternal grandmother, Leah, crocheted; it helped adorn the magnificent *chuppah* at Molly and Adam's Temple Beth-El wedding.

Let's turn to jewelry. My paternal grandfather, Isadore (better known as Mike and hence our son's namesake), was an engraver. He learned his craft as a boy in Romania. Mike was small, but he had powerful hands and an ironclad sense of determination. He made initial rings for all three of his Connecticut-born sons (but not his oldest child, a daughter). Dad wore his ring for at least 40 years, until he was robbed outside his hotel on a visit to Colombia. Thank God, neither his finger nor hand was severed.

Around the time of bar mitzvah, Grandpa made an initial ring for each of his seven grandsons. I have been wearing mine ever since. It serves as a daily, loving reminder of him and all that he was able to accomplish.

I cannot fail to mention another religious heirloom, which was made by Marion, my maternal grandmother, whom I loved as intensely as all my grandparents. A third-generation American Jew, she was also a knitter, who crafted a similar item for each of her six grandchildren. Believe it or not, this was a Christmas stocking, each decorated with the child's "Christian" name. (We never received Hebrew names, so I chose one for my wedding. Because I was born in 1948, *Yisrael* made perfect sense.)

My family never celebrated Christmas, which happened to be my paternal grandmother, Sadie's, birthday. So we never displayed Marion's stockings, and Betsey continues to keep mine hidden. This stocking, another treasure of American Jewish history, belongs in Philadelphia's National Museum of American Jewish History (where my voice can be heard on a video about synagogue architecture).

Clothing

In 1977, a year before his passing, my grandfather George purchased a custom-made, blue suit, but he never found an opportunity to wear it. Fortunately, one arose six years later, when Betsey and I were married at her family's congregation, Temple Emanuel in Andover, Massachusetts. Although I've grown a lot wider, this gorgeous suit has never shed its considerable meaning. It would be a miracle for me to wear it at a grandchild's bar or bat mitzvah or wedding!

Dad and I were approximately the same size, so decades ago he gave me

one of his old tuxedos. I enjoy wearing it during the High Holy Days as an usher at Beth-El. After Dad passed away seven years ago, Mom invited Theo and me to select all the garments we wanted. Being a better fit, I ended up with many beautiful suits, sports jackets, and overcoats. As if he too could somehow enjoy them, I wear them often and proudly. I hope that Michael will also want to wear some of these classy heirlooms.

I enjoy collecting and wearing hats, including a few that belonged to my father. Although it's too fragile to wear, I still have the floppy straw hat from my honeymoon in Jamaica. On the Fourth of July, I usually wear a boater that I purchased in Minnesota. It has come to symbolize our former home.

I continue to acquire and wear unusual caps, t-shirts, and neckties representing our travels. For example, in November, 2016, when visiting the site of Frank Lloyd Wright's demolished Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, I wore an appropriate Wright tie that I had acquired at the Guggenheim Museum. This design with concentric circles is mirrored in a set of Wright dishes that Betsey and I acquired at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.

Coincidentally, Wright built a faculty home on the Stanford campus in 1936, and I earned my doctorate there nearly 40 years later. Likewise, his favorite color was "Cherokee" red, and the university's color is cardinal. Though it would defy Jewish tradition, I have considered wearing my flamboyant Stanford cap, gown, and hood to my own funeral!

Chronometers, Furniture & Furnishings

Theo and I decided to share trusteeship of another of Grandpa's artworks,



Bookcases with art

a wooden clock that he made for Mom and Dad's wedding. In place of numbers, its copper face is decorated with the letters of their first names. In retrospect at least, the clock may resemble a three-dimensional *ketubah*.

Theo and I inherited two of Dad's watches. Too valuable for daily use, mine resides in a safe deposit box. I suspect that Theo, a lawyer, seldom wears his, which Dad's law partners presented it to him on his 50th birthday.

I did wear another watch for decades. My uncle Bill and aunt Shirley Goodwin gave me this faceless Bulova "Accutron" for my high school graduation. Long after it stopped working, it still resides in a place of honor in a dresser-drawer.

Still another handcrafted heirloom is the fraternity paddle that Mike carved for Dad in 1931, when he pledged Zeta Beta Tau at UCLA. Quite prominent are the raised Greek letters, skull, and crossbones. But Dad never got to use the paddle because he couldn't afford the fraternity's dues. I cherish it as a symbol of many other dues that Dad paid, a great many for my benefit and my siblings'. Resting near Dad's paddle in my home office are two of my college heirlooms: a manufactured fraternity paddle and the felt beanie I wore during freshman orientation.

Let's now consider another category of heirlooms, furniture. After spending nearly ten years at boarding school, college, and graduate school, I returned to my parents' home, in Los Angeles, to enjoy some quiet, comfort, and delicious meals while trying to launch my art historical career. I don't think that I got too much in the way, but my generous parents soon began losing their patience. Then my grandfather George passed away, and he left a condo full of fancy furniture. Why sell or give it away?

So my first, quite modest, one-bedroom apartment in Sawtelle, a Japanese-American neighborhood, overflowed with an array of antiques and historical reproductions. These included, for example, a Chippendale dining table and eight chairs, a floral-patterned sofa and wing chair, end tables supporting china lamps, and a gracefully tapered chest of drawers. There was also a framed, octagonal mirror, which had been a gift to my grandfather from his sister and brother-in-law, Evelyn and Rabbi Edgar Magnin of Wilshire Boulevard Temple.

After Betsey and I were married and she moved to my West L.A. condo, we lived quite happily amidst all these gorgeous amenities. We have continued to enjoy many of these pieces after 30 years in Providence. Yes, we have acquired other pieces and our tastes have gradually evolved, but how can we dispose of some of George's

heirlooms? It would be like patricide!

Fortunately, we have also enjoyed many pieces of furniture from Betsey's family. For example, her maternal grandmother, Leah, shipped us her huge, French baker's rack, which adorned our breakfast room for many years. We also have many wonderful examples of needlepoint and crewelwork- primarily pillows and carpets- that Leah crafted.

For my cozy home-office, I acquired a second desk from my father-in-law, Norman. Years earlier he had presented us with two smaller, wooden souvenirs from his boyhood: a miniature rocking chair and a bookshelf that he had made in junior high school.

For our wedding, Betsey and I received many beautiful pieces of china, glass, stemware, and silverware. Most are too lovely to use on a daily basis, so we often admire them through the glass-covered cupboards in our diminutive pantry. Another quite special wedding gift was a watercolor view of Florence painted by my mother's second cousin, Nancy Rosenthal.

Over several years, Mom also presented us with several sets of china and silver that had belonged to her, her mother, and her great aunt, Evelyn Jacoby. Meanwhile, Betsey and I have become quite keen collectors of handmade pottery. Some quite recent examples are majolica plates from Siena and nearby Deruta, Italy.

Books

As long as we can remember, Betsey and I have been bibliophiles. Indeed, she once considered becoming a librarian. Although I saved only a few volumes from my childhood, we still have scores of Molly's and Michael's books and even some that belonged to my maternal grandparents and a great-grandparent. Over the years, we have donated hundreds of books to our alma maters, especially when we moved from city-to-city and from home-to-home. Having also given books to Temple Beth-El, we are proud to have recently established an endowed book fund there. But please keep in mind that we still have books shelved in our living room, breakfast room, all three bedrooms, sewing room, several closets, and my office. My sister Betty wrote several about Los Angeles.

Since beginning my art historical studies, I have saved nearly all of my textbooks and key references, including the 1959 edition of Helen Gardner's *Art Through the Ages*. Interpretations may wax and wane, but photos seldom fade.

Thus, beginning in the late 1960s, I began acquiring a 30-volume series, “The Great Museums of the World.” Fortunately, over the decades, Betsey and I have been able to visit nearly two-thirds of these institutions on three continents.

My oldest art book, Thomas Craven’s *The Rainbow Book of Art*, was published in 1956, when I was eight years old. I proudly wrote my name, telephone number, and address in it. The book’s last photo, showing Frank Lloyd Wright’s legendary “Fallingwater” (actually identified as “Falling Water House”), epitomizes modernism. This structure, commissioned by a Jewish family, always will.

Craven’s book would be remarkable even today for including a photo of a synagogue. This was not Wright’s Beth Sholom, in suburban Philadelphia, which was still under construction, but Erich Mendelsohn’s B’nai Amoona, in St. Louis, which Betsey and I visited when Michael attended Washington University. Somehow, Craven’s primer anticipated my deep professional interest in American synagogue architecture. Indeed, Betsey and I belonged to St. Paul’s Mount Zion, the last synagogue that Mendelsohn designed.

Oral History Recordings & Genealogical Files

Remember reel-to-reel cassettes? Since my initial efforts as a doctoral student, I have never stopped conducting oral history recordings. For several years I worked part-time in UCLA’s Oral History Program, interviewing artists, art collectors, and museum officials. Still later, for my thesis research at Hebrew Union College, I also undertook numerous interviews of prominent Jews. In Providence, I built oral history collections for Temple Beth-El and Trinity Repertory Company. I have also interviewed numerous former clients and leading architects for the Wright Archives.

Ironically, I never considered interviewing my own family members until the bicentennial year, in 1976, when my father made the brilliant suggestion. Fortunately, it was not too late to learn a great deal from both my grandfathers, and I later engaged my parents and other relatives.

Perhaps needless to say, these interviews led to extensive genealogical research, long before it became relatively effortless through on-line sources. I believe that I discovered as much as I possibly could by reading microfilm at the New England branch of the National Archives (in Waltham), corresponding with offices of state and local governments, and mailing inquiries abroad. My obsession with

Jewish records led to many other searches, including an examination of every grave in Hartford’s Zion Hill Cemetery, where I quite miraculously found the resting places of Samuel and Miriam Feingold, my paternal great-great-grandparents!

Photos

Many of our family photos are hung on walls or displayed on tables, cabinets, and dressers. Some were taken on special occasions, others on merely happy ones. Mom’s older brother, George, a professional photographer, took some of the best portraits during the 1950s. Dad’s photos of travels with Mom were not nearly as impressive, but she had fun assembling them in brightly colored albums. Eventually, she created dozens.

Although never deeply interested in studying the history or art of photography, I began surrounding myself with photos while still an undergraduate. Beginning in 1969, when I studied in Florence, I also purchased slides of works of art I saw in museums and churches. For example, every sculpture by Michelangelo! Before even applying to graduate programs in art history, I knew somehow that I would need these slides when teaching. Then, around 1978, when I actually began teaching, I also started taking many of my own slides, particularly of outdoor sculptures and buildings. Eventually I built a collection of perhaps 25,000. Even after my teaching career ended, I continued taking slides.

I’d be happy to give these carefully organized and stored images to an alma mater, but slides became obsolete long ago. Indeed, I may have Rhode Island’s last slide projector. Try finding a spare bulb!



After meeting Betsey in 1982, I began taking scores of prints. On one memorable occasion, I shot an entire roll. While wearing a bright yellow sweater under an equally bright sky, she was doing practically nothing.

Inspired by my mother, I began assembling prints into photo albums. After my honeymoon, it became difficult to stop. I'm still at it! My major subjects, in descending order of importance, have been: every step and stumble in our children's lives, our travels, special events, and the changing seasons. The result is more than 80 albums, but they have grown in size from only 25 to 100 pages and from only three or four photos per page to six or seven. Now approximately 600 photos fit within an album! So I must have close to 20,000 photos mounted in albums. By the way, I don't slip photos into plastic sleeves; each page is custom-designed and protected by tissue paper.

Because my albums portray countless blessings, I often think of them as "books of life." I would also like to think that my photos somehow suspend time, but as each album thickens, I record time's disappearance.

Only a small number of relatives and close friends have ever seen my albums. As a harsh judge of my own work, I don't feel a need to seek others' opinions. My album-making may be a purely selfish pastime, for I do what I want, when I want, and how I want. Yet, never being able to let go and relax, I'm driven!

Some day all my framed prints and photo albums will face a reckoning,



the kind that Theo, Betty, and I sadly faced after our parents' passing. Only on a far larger scale! Of course my siblings and I took all of Mom's albums that we possibly could, but there was simply not enough space in our homes or hearts for everything. Yes, I still feel ashamed because many albums were tossed out. Although I fear that a similar fate awaits many of my treasures, I understand that life is meant to be lived – not documented.

Art

In addition to love, learning, and responsibility, my childhood home in Los Angeles was suffused with beauty. Mom and Dad had an early interest in American antiques, such as Bennington and Rockingham pottery, but compared to Uncle George and Aunt Jean Rosenthal, in Cincinnati, they were not yet serious collectors.

With only the rudiments of formal training (or perhaps because of this), George developed a profoundly intuitive attraction to the European and American avant-garde. Soon the young Rosenthals acquired key paintings and sculptures by such artists as L g r, Arp, Jawlensky, Dubuffet, Man Ray, Albers, Pollock, DeKooning, and Bertoia. Perhaps their most daring acquisitions were 15 collages by Schwitters.

A favorite family story revolved around George's purchase of a Warhol soup can, *Pepper Pot*, in 1962, at the New Yorker's first one-man exhibition, which happened to have been held at the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles. That small oil, now worth millions, cost \$300, and many of our relatives were appalled! More than a decade earlier, my gifted uncle had founded and briefly published *Portfolio*, a seminal journal of graphic arts designed by Alexey Brodovitch of *Harper's Bazaar*.

Uncle George, who also worked as an art dealer, encouraged my parents to purchase things they liked. Although I cannot precisely explain the reasons, which probably stemmed from her innate generosity and goodness, Mom was attracted to paintings by "primitives." Such artists are now more properly regarded as "self-taught." Isn't that how most of us pinball through life?

Mom, who was attracted to scenes of peace, play, and plenty, would have loved a painting or two by Grandma Moses, for example, but refrained from such extravagance. Instead, she found two other notable women painters: Helena Adamoff, a Russian expatriate living in Paris, and Grandma Mary Bruce Sharon, a Cincinnati native known to her brother George. She also acquired several paintings



by a Los Angeles artist, Streeter Blair, a transplant from Kansas, who, like Warhol and early Popsters, had also exhibited at the Ferus Gallery. I introduced Mom to a third woman painter, Malcah Zeldis, whose whimsical portrayal of an Orthodox bar mitzvah hangs near my computer desk, beneath a framed needlepoint of a brick schoolhouse, which Mom had stitched three years earlier, in 1976.

Even more pivotal to Mom and Dad's evolution as collectors was George and Jean's quite early fascination with Canadian Eskimo soapstone carvings. Around 1960, a casual – if not chance – encounter with these mysterious but compelling objects in Montreal led my uncle and aunt to fly with their three children to remote Frobisher Bay, where they purchased hundreds of pieces, including a veritable flock of birds, by the carver Josie. So Mom and Dad became early enthusiasts for what we now call "Inuit" art and began buying bears, seals, walruses, whales, and hunters. She also crafted needlepoint pillows and a footstool covering using Inuit imagery (which I had drawn).

Meanwhile, based on many trips with Mom to Britain, Dad was becoming a fervent Anglophile. He was initially attracted to "Spy prints," caricatures of aristocrats, ambassadors, members of Parliament, and other celebrities, including many lawyers, published in *Vanity Fair* magazine. He bought dozens, framing some for our living room and others for his office. After Dad's passing, Theo, Betty, and I gave 250 of his "Spy prints" to the RISD Library for the study of costumes and manners.

Following detours into Dunhill pipes and miniature whiskey bottles (which he left unopened), Dad became fascinated with antique scales and weights.

Originally, these may have harbored some kind of legal symbolism, but he eventually moved on to postage scales and industrial scales, for example, and some pieces made far beyond America and the U.K. India, for example! As an Anglophile, Dad had also collected Jaguars.

During the 1930s, while traveling in Europe, my grandparents, George and Marion, had befriended an Austrian-Jewish artist, Max Pollak, and helped bring him and his wife, Friedl, to America. He drew pastel portraits of the Rosenthals in Cincinnati and continued to produce colorful etchings after relocating to San Francisco. Many belong to the Oakland Museum, where, coincidentally, I interned while a graduate student. Mom always enjoyed Pollak's landscapes and cityscapes, and she shared many with Theo, Betty, and me.

Despite his initially tepid embrace of modernism, grandfather George, a bon vivant, eventually acquired fanciful prints by L g r and Mir  and Surrealist paintings by Man Ray and Victor Brauner. So, in time, my grandparents' collection also nurtured me.

James Byrnes, a retired art museum director whom I interviewed extensively for UCLA's Oral History Program, was another of my modernist mentors. He and his wife, Barbara, who lived in a Richard Neutra house high in the Hollywood Hills, in addition to German Expressionism and American Abstraction, were deeply interested in tribal art, especially African. So I soon acquired a few wooden masks and figures from local galleries. Jimmy and Barbara also owned some Oceanic pieces, and in 1977 I purchased my first New Guinea carving from the actor William Holden, after meeting him in a gallery.

I had already bought a few examples of contemporary Mexican folk art, but Jimmy and Barbara discovered some bizarre terra-cotta figures from the remote Oaxacan village of Ocumichu, so I had to have some too. After moving to my first apartment, Mom also encouraged my Mexican meanderings when she gave me a set of 15 brightly painted (not glazed) ceramic *mariachis* on horseback, which I placed atop grandfather George's Chippendale table. Contemporary Mexican folk art was far more affordable and upbeat than tribal art, so, after befriending a few L.A. dealers, I became hooked. Very soon I cared as much about quantity as quality. Betsey is fond of describing to friends her first impression of visiting my condo. Gasping at the abundance of Mexican skeletons, devils, and monsters, she thought that she had only minutes to live. Eventually, I too grew somewhat weary of scary

figures, often created for Day of the Dead, so I refocused on animals, musicians, and dancers.

Although I inherited my family's enjoyment of Inuit art, I decided to go in a somewhat different direction. So I began purchasing silkscreen prints and appliqué wall hangings, many from the settlement of Baker Lake. Such pieces reminded me of Matisse's cut-outs. In 1983, when Betsey and I visited Montreal, we purchased a splendid wall hanging to adorn our bedroom. (The next day a sales lady in a department store remarked, "You were just married." When I explained, no, we were just engaged, she replied "*Mazel Tov!*")

When Betsey and I honeymooned in Jamaica, we discovered a self-taught artist with the wonderful name of Albert Artwell and acquired two of his biblical paintings. Mom later acquired a much larger example, showing Moses and the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. On our next big trip, to Greece, we purchased a woven wall hanging in Rhodes and terracotta tiles in Delphi. Thus, we established a tradition of bringing pieces of the world home to us. But the world has also included Deerfield, Massachusetts, where we discovered a contemporary potter, Lester Breininger, who happily reinterpreted Pennsylvania Dutch red ware.

One might logically think that, after relocating from L.A. to St. Paul and later to Providence, we would have abandoned our fascination with Mexico.

Twenty years ago, however, after having accidentally discovered Cool Jewels, a funky shop in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, we became disciples of a new genre of carved and brightly painted figures. Five years later, through an Internet search, I found still another Mexican gallery in Southern California, which we included on frequent trips to see my family. Betsey and I have also traveled to Oaxaca, so we have acquired literally hundreds of Mexican folk pieces (or they acquired us). I dare say that we have built one of the best collections in New England.

Occasionally, I have wondered if I have been drawn to folk art because it's inexpensive. I doubt it. Far more important: it speaks to me! Besides, I don't mind paying a premium for a topnotch piece. Indeed, good frames cost more than many paintings. But buying sculptures also supplants the need for frames!

Some readers will be curious, but I'd rather not discuss what all this folk art cost. Suffice it to say that our budget has seldom exceeded \$1,000 per year. Considering what some of my contemporaries spend on athletic equipment, sporting events or country club memberships, this does not sound like much. Indeed, our art expenditures are probably far more economical and effective than the cost of psychotherapy!

Betsey and I are proud to report, moreover, that we have never neglected *tzedakah*. Indeed, we gladly support numerous causes and organizations locally, nationally, and in Israel.

As a proponent of the modernist axiom, "less is more," Betsey eventually persuaded me to exhibit only a fraction of our Mexican pieces at one time. But these happen to include some gorgeous pillows for sofas and easy chairs that she made from hand-stitched coverlets. We also usually



eat on fancifully decorated plates by Gorky Gonzalez, of Guanajuato, whose work we somehow discovered in Portland, Maine. As if to outfox Betsey's aversion to clutter – an impossibility – I have hung 15 Mexican plates on a basement wall near our washer and dryer!

Both of us thought that a few rows of handmade Mexican tiles might look nice as a backsplash in our galley-sized kitchen. So we started acquiring samples with blue, yellow, and white patterns. For once I was a timid about making too bold a statement, but the result, thanks to Betsey and a masterful tile setter, is a knock-out: approximately 50, diamond-shaped tiles covering about 25 square feet. Olé!

Partly as a reflection of Judaism's universal yearnings, Betsey and I have harvested art from still more cultures. While living in Minnesota, for example, we became enamored of Hmong textiles. We framed some pieces, wore others as aprons, and also draped our dining room table. Though we have never been to Haiti and have no plans to visit there, we have also acquired a few dozen papier-mâché masks, some painted metal reliefs, and some paintings. Part of the credit for this foray belongs to Michael, who, as a kid of six or seven, spotted some masks in a shop window while we were driving around Newport. Fittingly, this gallery was called *Cadeaux du Monde*.

But if Rhode Island deserves special credit for further broadening and enriching our home and lives, then still another category of collecting must be considered. Before 1992, when I noticed some startling creations in the window of Linda Fain's shop on North Main Street, Betsey and I hadn't thought much about carpets. Yes, we had been to a carpet show for tourists in Istanbul, but, not knowing techniques, styles or values, we were afraid to buy. But Linda's quite unusual pieces, with serendipitous scenes of houses, trees, animals, and children, reminded me of enormous, 18th-century American samplers. They rung an entirely different bell, though one for which I happily provided the clapper.

I rushed to get Betsey, and she too was amazed. We took home a large "Azeri," one of a series of new Turkish carpets produced under the watchful eye of a former Peace Corps volunteer, George Jevremovi . Although he had known next to nothing about Turkish artistry, he sought a way to keep rural people attached to their land. So he helped them resurrect lost ways of producing wool and dyes and encouraged weavers (almost all young girls) to experiment.

Betsey and I regret that we bought only one "Azeri" (an invented word for



"tradition") that day. But over the next decade, largely as a result of moving into a new home, we bought five more Azeris and then many more carpets from Linda and other dealers. Although we do not consider ourselves carpet mavens, we have acquired wonderful pieces - in a multiplicity of sizes and textures – from Afghanistan, China, India, Iran, Mexico, and Morocco. Lots of places where Jews once lived or have struggled to endure! I'm eager to buy more carpets, but we long ago ran out of floor space. So, anticipating when Molly and Michael will have larger apartments, we stashed some in our overflowing closets.

Home

Having described so many dimensions of my collecting mania, I should now pay closer attention to the structure that protects it. It too evokes a long story, but suffice it to say that, while renting a comfortable home on the East Side for many years, Betsey and I searched fruitlessly for what we wanted. Then, almost by accident, I discovered the Arts and Crafts bungalow, built in 1920, always meant for us. Yes, a rather modest structure, but one quite unusual in Rhode Island. A disciple of Frank Lloyd Wright could have designed it! We soon acquired a plaque from the Providence Preservation Society, which acknowledges the first owner, Mary Crossly.

Betsey and I are the third. For many years, ours was the city's youngest "plaque" house, but now there are a few from the early postwar years.

On my first visit to the house, I had of course been astonished to encoun-

ter the seller's immense collection of quite early Dale Chihuly sculptures. (She had been his first bookkeeper, and he could not afford to pay her.) But I was also drawn to the whimsical tile mural, depicting fish and bathers, some in high relief, adorning the downstairs shower. This too was the creation of local artist, Connie Leslie, who, quite sadly, succumbed to poisonous dyes.

Betsey and I have lived in our never-large-enough home for 21 years, and Molly and Michael spent most of their childhood years here. The two of us can't imagine living anywhere else.

But if and when the time comes for downsizing, what will we do with our treasures? As my parents had decided for my siblings and me, our kids will be welcome to whatever they want. We hope that they will want many pieces. But practicalities will also govern Molly's and Michael's loyalties and longings.

Consequently, Betsey and I have eagerly considered some gifts and bequests to Rhode Island museums, libraries, and archives. (Upon departing Los Angeles, we donated several wonderful Mexican pieces to UCLA's extraordinary Museum of Cultural History, which, to the best of our knowledge, never displayed them.) For example, we would be thrilled to present the RISD Museum with many favorite pieces, but Frank Robinson has been the only director, more than 25 years ago, to express any interest. Indeed, he borrowed a 40-piece Nativity group- Mexican of course- to display one December. It didn't belong in a basement children's gallery, however.

Yes, our art easily appeals to kids, but it can charm, bedazzle, and astonish children of all ages. Consequently, Betsey and I have considered donations to a few other museums, such as the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem and the American Museum of Folk Art in New York City, but we would prefer a Rhode Island institution.

During the 1970s, as a young art historian dedicated to teaching, I had also aspired to spend my career in museums (the subject of my dissertation). By necessity, happenstance or good fortune- probably all these factors- I have instead succeeded in building my own. True, it is a different kind of museum than anybody- especially I- could have ever imagined. And I have spent far more than a career within it. Indeed, my homemade museum reflects and magnifies my countless curiosities, wanderings, and blessings. How could I not be grateful for all the joy that it embodies?



Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association

63rd Annual Meeting

President Ruth Breindel chaired the meeting held on April 23, 2017 at Temple Beth-El. More than 100 members and their guests participated in the lively event sponsored by the Arline Ruth Weinberg Memorial Fund.

Ruth made numerous important announcements. For example, thanks to a grant from the Helene and Bertram Bernhardt Foundation, the Association's website will be redesigned. During the coming year, the Association plans to move to a newly renovated space within the Dwares Jewish Community Center. Formerly occupied by the Holocaust Resource Center and located near the building's rear entrance, this space will house the Association's archival collection, library, study area, and office. RIJHA members were encouraged to contribute to the forthcoming capital campaign enabling the move. Ruth also reported that the Association plans to hire a part-time office manager to assist our executive director, Joshua Jasper, with administrative tasks. Ruth mentioned several upcoming programs and thanked the Association's intern, Eli Forstat.

Treasurer David Bazar reported on the Association's stable finances and the cautious use of endowment income to help cover operating expenses. He encouraged participation in the upcoming capital campaign, which he will lead.

Mel Topf, chair of the publications committee, was unable to attend the meeting, so he submitted a brief written report. New writers for *The Notes* are always welcome, as are fresh topics. Unfortunately, due to a paucity of strong submissions, the Horvitz Prize for an outstanding article by an undergraduate or graduate student has not been awarded in several years.

Ruth installed the continuing slate of officers and a new board member, Lauren Motola-Davis. Susan Brown will continue as a presidential appointee, and a new appointee is Dr. James Waters.

Dr. Cheryl Greenberg, the Paul E. Raether Distinguished Professor of History at Trinity College in Hartford, delivered the David C. Adelman Memorial Lecture. Her topic, based on her numerous publications, was: "A History of Black/Jewish Relations and Why It Matters Now." Many challenging questions and answers followed, as did a festive collation.

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth Breindel, Acting *Secretary* [in Maxine Goldin's absence]

In Memoria

November 2, 2016 - November 1, 2017

Baxt, Gussie, born in Providence, was a daughter of the late Rose and Samuel Weinberg. She was predeceased by her husbands, Joseph Chusmir and Victor J. Baxt. She resided in Providence, Newport, and Palm Beach.

Mrs. Baxt, the matriarch of her family, was also devoted to her friends, the Jewish community, and the people of Rhode Island. An ardent philanthropist with her husband Victor, she helped support the Jewish Alliance, Dwares Jewish Community Center, Miriam Hospital, Temple Beth-El, and Camp JORI. Among numerous other organizations, she was a benefactor of the University of Rhode Island, its Fain Hillel Center, the Rhode Island Philharmonic, and its Music School.

Mrs. Baxt is survived by her sons, Robert and Michael Chusmir.

Died on July 19, 2017 in Providence at the age of 93.

Bazar, Joseph S., born in Providence, was a son of Banice and Beverly (Wishnevsky) Bazar. He was predeceased by his daughter, Dayna.

Mr. Bazar served in the Army and was stationed in Germany. He was the owner of Bazko, Inc., which sold supplies to military post exchanges worldwide.

Appointed by Vincent “Buddy” Cianci Jr. to the Mayor’s Crime Commission in 1976, he served for more than 40 years. He befriended hundreds of police officers, many of whom attended his funeral at Temple Beth-El. Indeed, it was one of the few times in the congregation’s history when a police bagpiper played for arriving mourners. Whether dining out in Providence or vacationing at resorts, Mr. Bazar had a gift for befriending total strangers.

He is survived by his parents, his wife Ann, and their children, Kerri Brennan and Todd.

Died on October 10, 2017 in Providence at the age of 76.

Feldman, Prof. Walter S., born in Lynn, Massachusetts, was a son of the late Hyman and Fannie Feldman. He began his art studies at Yale before enlisting in the Army during World War II. Having been wounded at the Battle of the Bulge, he was

awarded a Purple Heart.

Prof. Feldman earned his bachelor of fine arts degree at Yale in 1950. He studied with the renowned painter Joseph Albers and earned his master of fine arts degree a year later. Although initially a representational painter, Prof. Feldman also studied independently with another renowned abstractionist, Willem de Kooning. In 1953, after teaching for two years at his alma mater, Prof. Feldman joined the Brown faculty. Even after his retirement in 2007, he continued to serve as the John Hay Professor of Bibliography and as the publisher of Ziggurat Books. In 2005 the Walter Feldman Book Arts Studio, a repository for more than 300 volumes created by the artist and his protégés, had been dedicated in the Hay Library.

Feldman’s bright presence on College Hill was further exemplified by his portrait of President Barnaby Keeney, commissioned in 1961, and his designs for the guidebook to university courses, created over 30 years. His last exhibition, consisting of 18 paintings at the Providence Art Club, occurred in his 90th year.

Although primarily a painter seduced by color, Prof. Feldman worked in numerous other media, such as collage, printmaking, and sculpture. His work is found in more than 150 public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art and London’s Victoria and Albert Museum.

Prof. Feldman beautified several of Providence’s Jewish communal institutions. In 1957, following his Fulbright Fellowship in Rome, he created several circular, mosaic pavements- both inside and outdoors- for Temple Beth-El. In 2000, perhaps evoking Byzantine traditions, he completed a much larger and bolder wall mosaic for Beth-El’s foyer.

In 1960 Prof. Feldman had executed a large mosaic mural over the outside entrance to Temple Emanu-El’s Alperin Meetinghouse. In 1968 he completed an even more ambitious commission for the meetinghouse’s interior: a painted mural, consisting of 32 panels, interspersed among the windows. In 1961 he had explored still another medium, stained glass, when he designed seven windows for the Sugarman Sinai Memorial Chapel. In 1996 he created a mosaic medallion for the lobby

of the Miriam Hospital.

Whether employing abstraction, representation or a combination of the two, Prof. Feldman investigated themes for and symbols of Jewish history, Holocaust remembrance, American patriotism, and written language. He seemed at his best when most unpredictable and joyous.

Prof. Feldman was a member of Temple Beth-El and a life member of our Association. He is survived by his wife, Barbara, and their sons, Steven and Mark.

Died on May 20, 2017 in Providence at the age of 92.

Glicksman, Prof. Maurice, born in Toronto, was a son of the late Max and Fanny (Lachowitz) Glicksman. Based on his autobiography, he wrote about many of his childhood and adult experiences, as well as his lifelong love of stamp collecting, in several articles for our journal.

Having been a gifted student at the Collegiate Institute in St. Thomas, Ontario, Prof. Glicksman studied engineering physics at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, where he was also active in Hillel. Foregoing the completion of his bachelor's degree, he earned his doctorate in high-energy physics at the University of Chicago in 1954 under the Nobel laureate, Prof. Enrico Fermi.

Rather than immediately pursuing a university career, he joined the prestigious research staff of RCA's Sarnoff Laboratories in Princeton, New Jersey, as a specialist in semiconductors. This led to his four-year directorship of RCA Laboratories in Tokyo, where, from 1963 to 1967, he mentored numerous Japanese colleagues. Meanwhile, Maurice and Yetta, who had met as teenagers in St. Thomas and had married in 1949, became American citizens.

Having joined the Brown faculty in 1969 as a University Professor, Dr. Glicksman taught a rich variety of undergraduate and graduate courses in engineering, physics, and the history and theory of science before his retirement in 1994. Between 1974 and 1990, under three Brown presidents, he held numerous administrative positions, including: dean of the graduate school, dean of the faculty and academic affairs, and provost. He was the first Jew to shoulder many of these responsibilities.

In addition to writing numerous scholarly articles and speaking at academic conferences, he served on several scientific, research, and library boards, including chair of the board of overseers at the Fermi National Accelerator Labora-

tory in Batavia, Illinois. He also consulted widely.

Prof. Glicksman was a leader of two congregations: the Princeton Jewish Center and the Jewish Community Center of Japan. In Rhode Island, he served on numerous boards, including: Temple Emanu-El, Brown-RISD Hillel, and the Bureau of Jewish Education.

His most significant Jewish communal service in Rhode Island was demonstrated by his chairmanship of the Miriam Hospital (which, following its merger with Rhode Island Hospital, led to the creation of Lifespan) and his presidency of the Jewish Seniors Agency (which, following the closure of the Jewish Home, led to the creation of Tamarisk Assisted Living Residence).

Somehow, Prof. Glicksman also found time for such favorite leisure-time pursuits as travel, bridge, and discussing current events. He no longer played the violin, which he had studied as a youngster.

Prof. Glicksman is survived by his wife, Yetta, and their children, Howard, Roslynn, and Marcie.

Died on May 26, 2017 in Warwick at 88 years of age.

Grant, Edith B., born in New York City, was a daughter of the late Isadore and Sonia (Kittas) Engelson. She was predeceased by her husband, Harold, and their son, Donald.

Mrs. Grant was a graduate of Julia Richman High School and New York University. She also studied at the University of Chicago and earned a master's degree in library science at the University of Rhode Island. She made her home in Cranston for a half-century.

Although Mrs. Grant taught history and English and also managed the office of her husband's manufacturing business, she was far better known as the librarian of Temple Sinai for more than 25 years. At Sinai she also taught the Confirmation class for more than two decades, served as a vice president and on numerous committees, and edited the book published for the congregation's 25th anniversary. Mrs. Grant also served as a volunteer in the Bureau of Jewish Education and was an indispensable member of our Association's publications committee. In addition to reading, current events, and travel, she enjoyed bridge, crossword puzzles, and Trivial Pursuit. As a young person, she had excelled in swimming, canoeing, and tennis.

Mrs. Grant is survived by her son, Michael, whom, she often pointed out, was Temple Sinai's first Eagle Scout in 1971.

Died on December 26, 2016 in Riverdale, New York, at the age of 93.

Herman, Dr. Barry E., born in Newport, was the son of the late Louis and Helen (Kravetz) Herman. He spent his youth in New Haven.

Dr. Herman was a teacher, principal, and administrator in New Haven schools and served on the Hamden Board of Education. The author of numerous educational studies, he also taught at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven and at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield.

In 1976 Dr. Herman cofounded the Jewish Historical Society of Greater New Haven and later served as its president. He was an editor of its occasional journal. Dr. Herman was also president of New Haven's Ethnic Heritage Center. He was a member of Congregation Beth Israel in New Haven.

Died on August 7, 2016 in Branford, Connecticut, at the age of 81.

Jagolinzer, Rabbi Marc S., born in Providence, was a son of the late Harold and Hinda (Tesler) Jagolinzer, who survives him. A graduate of Hope High School, he earned his bachelor's degree at Columbia College, studied at The Jewish Theological Seminary, and was ordained at Brooklyn's Marbeatze Torah Institute in 1975.

Rabbi Jagolinzer spent the rest of his life in Rhode Island. He served Temple Shalom for 41 years, one of the longest rabbinic tenures in the state's history, before becoming its spiritual leader emeritus. Rabbi Jagolinzer helped build the congregation in Newport before helping establish its new facility in Middletown.

As much as he loved teaching students of all ages, Rabbi Jagolinzer derived considerable satisfaction through interfaith cooperation and understanding, especially among neighbors on Aquidneck Island. For example, he helped create and sustain a communal Thanksgiving service for more than 40 years. He served as president of the Aquidneck Island Clergy Association, wrote a column for *The Newport Daily News*, and was active in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rhode Island's Child Protection Board. In 2015, as a friend of the diocese, he received its Lumen Gentium Award. He was also the first rabbi to preach from the high pulpit of Newport's Trinity Episcopal Church. Rabbi Jagolinzer served as secretary of the board of

Newport Hospital and chaired its ethics committee.

A former president of Rhode Island's board of rabbis, he chaired the Bureau of Jewish Education and its principals' council. Rabbi Jagolinzer was a chaplain at two universities, Roger Williams and Johnson & Wales, as well as chaplain of the Middletown police department. He was an adjunct faculty member at Salve Regina University and, for more than three decades, taught Hebrew at the University of Rhode Island.

In appreciation of his significant dedication and service, Rabbi Jagolinzer received awards from the Navy, the National Conference for Community and Justice, the Women's Resource Center, Jewish Federation, and posthumously from the Newport County branch of the NAACP. But he was also well known for his sense of humor.

In addition to his mother, Rabbi Jagolinzer is survived by wife, Barbara, and their children, Charles, Sarah Kabat, and Jonathan.

Died on October 22, 2017 in Portsmouth at the age of 68.

Klyberg, Albert T., born in Hackensack, New Jersey, traced his ancestry to Michael Collars, a fifer and drummer who served in the Pennsylvania militia in 1777. Mr. Klyberg, a member of the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, was otherwise a down-to-earth and soft-spoken person.

After majoring in history at Ohio's College of Wooster, Mr. Klyberg pursued doctoral studies at the University of Michigan. One of his earliest publications, in 1964, was: *The Huguenot Settlement of Schraalenburgh: The History of Bergenfeld, New Jersey*. It demonstrated his lifelong belief that the past's presence is found everywhere.

For five years Mr. Klyberg was an assistant in Michigan's distinguished Clements Library, and in 1967 he came to Rhode Island as librarian of the Rhode Island Historical Society. Having soon become its executive director, he served in this capacity for 30 years. He was our Association's dear friend for half a century. Mr. Klyberg's mandate was to revitalize a sleepy institution largely devoted to the state's distant and oligarchic past. He succeeded in numerous ways. For example, he was largely responsible for updating and increasing the Historical Society's facilities, which included John Brown House on College Hill, the library and research center on Hope Street, the administrative offices and galleries in Aldrich House on

Benevolent Street, and the new Museum of Work and Culture, now 20 years old, which is a partnership with the city of Woonsocket.

Mr. Klyberg did not neglect Rhode Island's roots, however. He was responsible for the publication of *The Correspondence of Roger Williams* (two volumes) and *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene* (13 volumes) and expanding vantage points within the Historical Society's scholarly journal, *Rhode Island History*. Mr. Klyberg also led a project to microfilm all of the state's newspapers, and he built a similarly ambitious collection of television news films. To further strengthen the Historical Society's library, he obtained significant increases in state funding.

In 1976 Mr. Klyberg and Prof. Patrick T. Conley of Providence College were responsible for the concept and implementation of the Rhode Island Bicentennial Commission's Ethnic Heritage Program (which included Jewish history). Three years later the two activist-historians helped organize the Foundation for the Promotion of State Cultural Heritage. Beginning in 1986, the duo began searching for a site for a new history museum.

In 1998, after examining every issue of *The Notes*, Mr. Klyberg lectured to our Association about the journal's importance. In his own article, published that year, he characterized it as "a true Thanksgiving Feast."

A year later the Narragansett Electric Company donated its South Street Power Station to the newly formed Heritage Harbor Corporation. Our Association, one of three founding partners with the Historical Society, planned to relocate its archives and office to an enormous new museum within the power station, and significant funds were raised. Unfortunately, this highly ambitious project was unsuccessful. Heritage Harbor's more modest plan for a museum within Dynamo House, a commercial development, was also unsuccessful.

In 2017, under new ownership, the former power plant became home to Brown University administrative offices and a cooperative nursing program. This year Heritage Harbor Foundation, a successor to the museum project, made its first round of grants for local historical projects.

Mr. Klyberg, a natural teacher and tour guide, lectured at the University of Rhode Island, Providence College, Bryant University, and Rhode Island College (which awarded him an honorary doctorate). In 1981, President Carter appointed him to the National Museum Services Board. Locally, "Al" served on such boards as Rhode Island Council for the Humanities and the Blackstone Valley Historical

Society. His own home overlooked the Blackstone.

Mr. Klyberg is survived by his wife, Beverly, and their children, Kimberly and Kevin.

Died on January 10, 2017 in Lincoln at the age of 76.

Losben, Dr. Stephen J., born in Philadelphia, was a son of the late Edward and Eleanore Losben. He graduated from Albright College in 1968 and Hahnemann, the Medical College of Pennsylvania, four years later. Dr. Losben spent three years as a dermatological resident at Brown University Medical School and then entered private practice. He specialized in treating geriatric patients and did so until his final days.

Previously a member of Congregation Beth Torah in Philadelphia, he was active in Congregation Shir Ami in Newtown, Pennsylvania. Dr. Losben, a life member of our Association, was a supporter of the Jewish Chautauqua Society and the Yiddish Book Center. He enjoyed theatre and reading.

He is survived by his wife, Andrea, and their children, Rabbi Emily Losben-Ostrov, Joshua, and Samantha.

Died on December 14, 2016 in Holland, Pennsylvania, at the age of 70.

Markoff, Florence, born in Attleboro, Massachusetts, was the daughter of the late David and Molly Shapiro. She was predeceased by her husband, Henry.

A 1937 graduate of Emerson College, Mrs. Markoff was inducted into its Radio Hall of Fame in 2014. Three years earlier, she had been inducted into the Rhode Island Radio Hall of Fame. As a pioneering woman in broadcasting, Mrs. Markoff regularly appeared on such stations as WJAR, WEAN, and WPRO. Her shows included "There's a Word for It" and "Rhode Island Portraits in Sound." Having also spoken to numerous organizations around Rhode Island, her voice was easily recognized by strangers whom she casually encountered.

Mrs. Markoff spoke to our Association on several occasions, and she recorded numerous oral history interviews for our archives. She also spoke to the Jewish Alliance and at Temple Emanu-El, where she was a lifelong member. One of her latest projects was a book, *You've Said a Mouthful*, about the origins of food-related words.

Mrs. Markoff is survived by her sons, Dr. Joseph, Ronald, and Gary.

Died on July 18, 2017 in Providence at the age of 99.

Orson, Barbara, born in New York City, was the fourth and youngest daughter of the late Jonah and Rebecca Tuschner, who would lose many relatives during the Holocaust. Throughout her life, she enjoyed singing Passover's four questions in Yiddish.

Mrs. Orson began her acting career at three years of age at the University Settlement House on the Lower East Side. She appeared in numerous productions before studying as an adult in The New School's Dramatic Workshop.

Mrs. Orson's extraordinarily versatile professional career was launched in 1950, in New York, with soubrette roles in Gilbert & Sullivan operettas. As a gorgeous ingénue, she later appeared with repertory companies in Philadelphia, Washington, DC, and Los Angeles.

After settling in Rhode Island with her husband, Dr. Jay Orson, she continued performing in local productions as well as in the choir of Temple Emanu-El. Meanwhile, a group of theatre enthusiasts, led by Milton Stanzler, began performing at Providence's Jewish Community Center. In 1963, the group organized the Foundation for Repertory Theater of Rhode Island, and it approached an up-and-coming New York director, Adrian Hall, to strengthen its productions and consider forming a professional repertory company. Initially known as The Repertory Theatre in the Square, it began performing in the auditorium of Trinity Union Methodist Church on Broad Street. (The group later became Trinity Square Repertory Company and then Trinity Repertory Company.) During its first full season, in 1964-65, Mrs. Orson, one of the company's founders, appeared in Jean Anouilh's "The Rehearsal" opposite Richard Kneeland.

Over the following quarter-century, throughout Mr. Hall's stunning and stormy tenure, Mrs. Orson, a beloved company member, performed more than 100 leading and supporting roles. Some of the most memorable included: Madame Ranevskaya in "The Cherry Orchard," Lady Audley in "Lady Audley's Secret," Ethel Rosenberg in "Angels in America, Part I," and both the Ghost of Christmas Past and Mrs. Fezziwig in "A Christmas Carol."

Mrs. Orson performed with Trinity Rep at the Edinburgh Festival in 1968, and her talent helped earn a Tony Award in 1981, when the company was named "outstanding regional theatre." She performed on numerous other stages, including:

A.R.T. in Cambridge, Dallas Theatre Center, Williamstown Theatre Festival, and Yale Rep.

Mrs. Orson, a member of Temple Beth-El and an excellent cook, is survived by her husband, Jay, and their children, Beth, Diane Orson Moran, and Ted.

Died on July 19, 2017 in Lincoln, Rhode Island, at 88 years of age.

Robbins, Donald M., born in Woonsocket, was a son of the late Robert and Nancy (Medoff) Robbins. He was a 1953 graduate of Classical High School, earned a bachelor's degree at the University of Michigan, and completed Boston University Law School in 1960.

Mr. Robbins practiced on his own and later with Merolla & Temkin in Providence. He was a senior vice president and general counsel of Hasbro, Inc. from 1968 to 1995.

Mr. Robbins, president of Temple Emanu-El from 1981 to 1984, also served as president of the Rhode Island chapter of Israel Bonds and of Big Brothers of Rhode Island. He was a vice president of Jewish Federation and served on the boards of the Miriam Hospital, Brown University Hillel, and the Bureau of Jewish Education.

A music lover, Mr. Robbins was president and treasurer of Boston Chamber Music, board clerk of Boston Lyric Opera, and an overseer of Huntington Theatre. He also ran marathons.

Mr. Robbins is survived by his wife, Esther, and their sons, Jeffrey and Benjamin, and two "Little Brothers" whom he mentored.

Died on March 13, 2017 in Providence at the age of 81.

Sholes, Leonard J., born in North Attleboro, was the third son and the eighth child of the late Morris B. and Nellie (Levingston) Sholes. He was predeceased by his wife, Anna R. (Kohn) Sholes.

Mr. Sholes, who had homes in Cranston and Boca Raton, Florida, wrote extensively about his life and career in his richly illustrated autobiography, *Always Something Going On*. Excerpts were published in the 2013 and 2014 issues of our journal. He was a 1932 graduate of Pawtucket High School, attended Providence College from 1932 to 1934, and was a graduate of Boston University Law School. He entered his family business, which included the ownership and operation of

several roller skating rinks. The best known, on Post Road in Warwick, which the family advertised as “the world’s finest,” was Sholes Hillsgrove Country Club. Mr. Sholes later operated the rink with his sons, and it continued as a center of wholesome family and date-night fun until its bittersweet closing in 1999. When this property adjacent to the former Hillsgrove State Airport became too valuable, the rink was demolished and replaced with a hotel. At various times the fun-loving Sholes family also operated bowling alleys, rinks, and dance halls in Central Falls, Cranston, Oakland Beach, and Rocky Point; Dorchester, Massachusetts; Salisbury Beach, New Hampshire; and Willimantic, Connecticut.

Mr. Sholes grew up at two congregations: Agudas Achim, which his father had cofounded in 1911 in Attleboro, and Ohawe Shalom in Pawtucket. While president of Providence’s Temple Beth Israel, from 1966 to 1969, he was instrumental in several construction projects. During his second presidency, which coincided with the congregation’s 50th anniversary in 1972, he and Mrs. Sholes, world travelers, led a mission to Israel. Mr. Sholes was also a board member of Cranston’s Temple Torat Yisrael.

He was also a board member and honoree of Providence Hebrew Day School and an honoree of Israel Bonds. He donated a prayer garden to Lincoln Park Cemetery.

Mr. Sholes belonged to numerous fraternal organizations, including the Masons, Shriners, Knights of Pythias, and Touro. He is survived by his sons, Richard, David, Andrew, and Steven.

Died on January 17, 2017 in Cranston at the age of 102.

Spunt, Jerome B., born in Providence, was the son of the late David and Reva (Riscin) Spunt. A member of the debate team at Hope High School, he followed his father, Class of 1918, to Harvard College, where he was also a debater with Melvin Zurier in the Class of 1950. The two Providence natives and Smith Scholars also graduated together from Harvard Law School in 1953.

Mr. Spunt received his naval commission in Newport and served in the Philippines. Having begun his legal career at Letts & Quinn in Providence, he was later a partner with Letts, Quinn & Licht. Subsequently, he shared an office with Donald M. Robbins.

Mr. Spunt was a lifelong member of Temple Emanu-El and was active

at the Jewish Community Center. Even after serving as president of our Association from 1969 to 1971, he remained involved with our board for decades. Always formally attired, he wore a suit and a tie to programs and meetings. Mr. Spunt also served on the board of the Providence Center. A talented pianist, he enjoyed attending concerts in Boston and Providence.

For many years, Mr. Spunt faithfully cared for his sister, Barbara Bernstein, and he was devoted to other family members.

Died on April 30, 2017 in Providence at the age of 88.

Wegner, Prof. Judith Romney, born in London, was a daughter of the late Joseph and Minnie (Marks) Romney. She was predeceased by her son, Simon.

Prof. Wegner wrote extensively about her Anglo-Jewish girlhood in the 2006 issue of our journal. She began her studies at an Anglican school in the village of Park Street, near London, before gaining admission to an elite, state-sponsored institution, North London Collegiate School (for girls), in the London suburb of Wembley, where she excelled. She began studying and later taught Hebrew at Wembley Synagogue. As a member of *Habonim*, a Zionist youth group, she visited Israel, her first trip abroad, in 1951.

The following year, Prof. Wegner entered Cambridge’s Newnham College (for women), where she earned an undergraduate degree in law (though she would have preferred Judaic studies). She participated in Cambridge’s Jewish Society, ultimately becoming its president. At Cambridge, she met her future husband, Peter.

In 1957, a year after their marriage, the Wegners moved to the United States. A dozen years later, when he joined the Brown faculty, the family settled in Providence. During the late 1970s, after earning a master’s degree at Harvard Law School, Prof. Judith Wegner practiced law as an assistant attorney general in Rhode Island.

Subsequently, she earned her doctorate in Judaic studies at Brown under Prof. Jacob Neusner, the first woman to do so. Her 1986 dissertation, published two years later by Oxford University Press, was *Chattel or Person?: The Status of Women in the Mishneh*. Considered a pioneer of feminist studies within the field of rabbinic literature, she also developed expertise in the comparative study of Talmudic and Islamic law. Prof. Wegner published numerous scholarly articles and taught at several colleges in New England.

She was a member of Temple Emanu-El, where she also taught and lectured. For many years, she was an editorial advisor to the Federation newspaper, *The Jewish Voice*.

Prof. Wegner was briefly survived by her husband, Peter, and is survived by their sons, Mark, Jeremy, and Michael.

Died on February 2, 2017 in Providence at the age of 83.

Wegner, Prof. Peter, born in St. Petersburg, was the son of Austrians, Leon Weiden and Hermine Wegner, who were admirers of the Soviet Union. As he explained in an article written for the 2009 issue of our journal, his father was murdered by the secret police in 1937. A year later, Peter and his mother fled to Vienna, in time to witness the *Anschluss and Kristallnacht*. Sent by *Kindertransport* to the United Kingdom, he was able to escape the Holocaust and reunite with his mother (leaving behind his maternal grandmothers, who were subsequently deported and murdered).

Thanks to the generosity of London's Jewish Refugee Committee, Prof. Wegner spent nine years (1939 to 1948) as a boarding student at Bunce Court School, primarily in rural Shropshire. He and his mother were able to visit each other, but she died in 1949. By this time, he was completing his second year of studies at London's Regent Street Polytechnic.

Though not yet a British citizen, Prof. Wegner received a full scholarship to attend the University of London's Imperial College, where he helped organize the Philosophical Study Group and graduated in 1953. There being no master's or doctoral program in computer science anywhere in the world, Prof. Wenger earned a postgraduate diploma in numerical analysis and automatic computing at Cambridge University. He was among the first group of three students to earn such a diploma in 1954. In 1968, on the basis of his book, *Programming Languages, Information Structures, and Machine Organization*, he received his doctorate from the University of London.

Prof. Wegner then served as a researcher in computer science at Manchester University and Israel's Weizmann Institute. After moving to the United States in 1957 with his wife Judith and their older sons, he continued his research at Pennsylvania State University, M.I.T., and Harvard. Beginning in 1961, he lectured for three years at the London School of Economics.

Prof. Wegner taught at Cornell before joining the new computer science department at Brown in 1969. He taught numerous courses, including: programming languages, software engineering, and theoretical computer science. He continued writing long after his retirement, coauthoring *Interactive Computation: The New Paradigm* in 2008. For more than a decade, he had also been coeditor of the *Brown University Faculty Bulletin*.

Prof. Wegner was a Fellow of and received the Distinguished Service Award from the Association for Computing Machinery. In 2007 he received the Austrian Medal of Honor for Science and Art, 1st Class. He also was a guest professor in Israel at Hebrew University and Technion.

Prof. Wegner was a member of Temple Emanu-El and a speaker for the Bornstein Holocaust Resource Center.

He was predeceased by his wife, Judith, and their son, Simon. He is survived by their sons, Mark, Jeremy, and Michael.

Died on July 27, 2017 in Providence at the age of 84.

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