Notes

RHODE ISLAND
JEWISH HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 18 NUMBER 2
NOVEMBER 2020

Notes

Rhode Island Jewish Historical

Notes

Volume 18 Number 2 November 2020

The Association is grateful to the
Harold A. Winstead Charitable Foundation Trust
for its generous support of *The Notes*

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Providence, Rhode Island 02906-3444

The Library of Congress National Serials Data Program (NSDP), Washington, DC 20540, which operates the US Serials Data System, has assigned the following International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) to *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes,* a publication of the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association: ISSN 0556-8609

OUTSIDE FRONT COVER:
Hans-Joachim Feibelmann's visa, issued December 19, 1935

INSIDE COVERS:
The Cave of the Ancestors, Hebron, Jordan, Friday, June 9, 1967, one day after its liberation. The photo by Alvan Kaunfer shows his American friends, David Resnick and Joel Smith, and a representative of the Religious Affairs Department, as well as Israeli soldiers.

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Editor's Comments

For many years, particularly during the High Holy Days, I have enjoyed serving as an usher at Temple Beth-El. I like greeting friends and strangers with a smile, a handshake, and a hearty *Shanah Tovah* or *Shabbat Shalom.*

It has occurred to me that, for a variety of reasons, many other congregants may not seek such a responsibility or honor. Too many Temple members arrive late to services, are shy about reciprocating greetings or want to leave as soon as possible. For me, even wearing a flower on my tuxedo or suit's lapel feels like a reward or a blessing.

It only recently occurred to me, however, that my roles as an usher and an editor overlap. Indeed, they probably complement each other.

No, I don't get a thrill by telling congregants where to sit (or sometimes when it's appropriate to stand or remain silent). Similarly, I quite seldom tell writers what they can or cannot write or when an article is far too long or too short. Rather, I enjoy a sense of freedom, if not spontaneity. Come early, get a good seat, watch the sun break through the clouds, and think about what a service will mean to you and others. Savor the moment! What if you are unable to attend next year or next week?

Like an usher, I will help you become acquainted with a writer and possibly suggest why an article is unusual or unique. Rather than insist that you read an entire issue, I'll trust you to find your own way and not complain too loudly if you find an error.

Alas, during this past year there was no need or opportunity for me to serve as a Zoom usher. Similarly, our Association members could not enjoy a remote annual meeting or other educational programming. But I once again feel quite fortunate and happy to serve as your host and guide to the following pages. Enjoy and please turn off your cell phone!

George M. Goodwin

Eisleben, Germany, May 1945

The World War II Letters of an American Veteran of the Spanish Civil War, *Part II*

David E. Cane

The author selected and annotated the following 16 letters and a telegram, which were written by his father, Lawrence (1912-1976), to his mother, Grace (1920-2012), between August 1942 and October 1945. As David explained in the first part of his article, these letters represent nearly 350 from World War II that Grace saved. Remarkably, David did not learn about their existence until 1996, two decades after his father's passing.

President Vartan Gregorian of Brown urged David, a distinguished professor of chemistry, molecular biology, cell biology, and biochemistry, to publish Lawrence's letters. Through a collaboration with Prof. Judy Barrett Litoff, a distinguished historian at Bryant University, this was accomplished in 2003. Their volume, consisting of about 200 letters, was published by Fordham University Press as: F*ighting Fascism in Europe: The World War II Letters of an American Veteran of the Spanish Civil War.*

Lawrence Cane believed that he was the only American veteran of the Spanish Civil War who landed on Normandy's beaches on D-Day, June 6, 1944. This possibility is quite likely, though impossible to verify. But what would be accomplished by doing so? Lawrence was, without question, an extraordinary person.

Virtually every aspect of his military service was heroic. His letters home, so journalistically accomplished, make abundantly clear that he was able to survive, endure, and persist through his patriotism and his empathy, especially for the suffering and oppressed, including his fellow Jews. Though Lawrence did not perceive himself as a religious person, a Protestant chaplain was quite certain that he was.

Needless to say, Lawrence's greatest love was for his family, especially his young wife and their infant son, David, whom he had not yet seen nor touched. His profound yearning to be reunited as a family surely helped keep him alive.

As was mentioned in the first part of David's article, Lawrence and Grace never lived in Rhode Island. Yet in his letter from England written on May 31, 1944, he remarked ironically: "My greatest desire now is that Providence will be kind to me and

permit me to spend our fifth anniversary together again, safe and sound." They were able to celebrate their sixth together.

Co. B., 1229th Reception Center
Fort Dix, New Jersey
28 August 1942

Dearest Grace,

I'm snatching a couple of minutes after noonday chow to write. Here's hoping I'm not interrupted by the goddamn whistle. Every time I try to do anything, the whistle blows, and I've got to run like a madman to line up with the rest of the men.

When I waved goodbye to you from the foot of the stairs in the station, we entered the train. We waited there about twenty minutes and then pulled out. All along the line up to New Brunswick N.J. people waved to us. At Newark we took another batch, and at New Brunswick we were treated a real moving-picture farewell to the boys from that town.

The whole town was jammed on the station platform and the streets below. The local scout troop and the high school band was there. The mayor was there and all the mommas and poppas and sisters and brothers and sweethearts and wives and kids. There wasn't any rah-rah stuff, not much cheering- just waving and quiet smiles with a catch-in-the-throat and tears-in-the-eyes. I was deeply moved.

We arrived at Fort Dix at 2 P.M., were lined up and marched off to eat (good sense that). After that we were lined up again and marched to a barracks for injections and clothing. First thing there, we stripped naked and had the old short arm inspection. Then, still naked, in single-file, we passed by three medicos. One smallpox vaccination, two shots in the right arm for anti-tetanus.

After we got the injections (some of the boys felt momentarily sick and had to sit down (I was O.K.) we, still naked, were measured for clothes and shoes.

Then slam-bang, the stuff was thrown at us. Everything from soup to nuts – really impossible to describe adequately. It's like

being thrown into a machine a civilian and being ground out (with lots of rough edges) a soldier.

My first impressions of this man's Army? Well, at first everything seems confused, and still is to most of the other new fellows. But, I could quickly see that there's a tremendous efficiency to all this hustle and bustle. There's thousands of men pouring in and out of here all day long- and they're coming in and going out on schedule – An enormous job. It's like cramming wash into a laundry bag. Most of the stuff gets in, and what's left hanging over the edges is just shoved in with a little extra attention. It's the same with us, most of us get through the first few days O.K., those that don't are just shoved along.

It's a far cry from our wonderful but raggedy-assed International Brigade in Spain. You ought to see the two pairs of beautiful, sturdy shoes they give us – and compare them a little sadly with the rope-soled canvas shoes of a few years ago.

The food's good. It's wholesome and there's plenty of it. No garbanzos here.

There're two things I've seen I didn't like though. The first, is the segregation of Negro troops. It hits you in the puss the minute you step off the train. From the day they enter it seems they keep them in their own companies + their own areas. They can circulate freely, though (Which, of course, doesn't alter matters).

The second is something that doesn't happen, which should begin as soon as men get into the Army. Nobody has told us what this war is about and why we have to win it.

We got a welcome speech from a chaplain and his most notable contribution to building morale and fighting spirit was "...we have been challenged."

Another lieutenant read us the Articles of War, describing penalties for everything from venereal diseases to shooting crap. But, not a word about fascism, about Hitler, about Japanese militarism. Or, do I expect too much?

Darling, I've been saving this for the end of the letter: -- When I get some time to myself like now and in bed last night, I miss you so much I get all choked up.

Last night I couldn't sleep well. It's a far cry from a hard army cot to a soft bed where I can reach out and hold my Gracie in my arms, and smell your hair in my nostrils, and kiss you on the back of your neck.

Darling, I love you and miss you. Write to me.

All yours, Larry

*

[After Fort Dix, my father was sent to Camp Geiger in Spokane, Washington, for basic training. Because of his prior combat experience in Spain, within three days of his arrival he was made an acting corporal and soon thereafter an acting sergeant. After several weeks, he was selected for Engineer Officers' Candidate School at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.]

Fort Belvoir, Virginia
15 November 1942

Hello My Baby,

This is Sunday. Do you think we've got the day off? Not on your life.

We've been out doing the manual of arms all morning, and before that we had an inspection.

After looking over the schedule for the next two weeks, I've come to the conclusion that it is not humanly impossible to complete all the reading assignments. You could, I guess, if they gave you a month to prepare for a week's work- but in 12 study hours a week? Never!

Everything must be as exact and precise as a lathe turning out stuff to the ten-thousandth of an inch.

The officers have microscopic eyes. Anything 1/16 of an inch out of line merits restrictions, a calling down, and the wrath of God.

A speck of dust, a quiver of the eyelids, and an officer is on your neck- insulting you like an army manual come to life.

For instance, take some things we do around here. When you walk, it must be at attention – and I mean attention! No talking,

looking right or left, or swinging the arms with a break at the elbow or more than 6" to the front 3" to the rear. That applies whenever we're outside the barracks. Makes us look like mechanical men.

When you talk it must be right out of the manual. When you eat you get 10 minutes! The food is splendid, but I haven't had time to taste it yet.

When we go from one place to another we "double-time."

And so on ad infinitum.

But, really, this place will probably be fine for me. If I make good, I'll learn a great deal, I'll be in swell physical condition, and I'll really be on my toes.

Everything is geared to high speed for 16 hrs a day. I guess they figure if you break down under it, you're not capable of being an officer.

Well, thousands have been able to do it. I expect I'm as good as the next guy, so I'm in there pitching.

Darling, I'll be seeing you soon. Our first weekend will be all our own. No relatives, no friends, no interruptions. Just the two of us, sweetheart.

Your own, Larry

*

[In February 1944, he was sent to England with the 582nd Engineer Dump Truck Co. to train for the invasion of France.]

582nd Engr. Dump Trunk Co.
APO 230, NY, NY
Somewhere in England
21 February 1944

Hello Darling,

At last I can sit down and write you from my new address…

My first vision of England was one worthy only of the pen or brush of a great artist. All I can say is that it was beautiful. I was speechless and deeply moved by the delicate pastel shades and the wonderful coastline. I kept wishing you were at my side so we could

hold hands and just drink in its beauty.

My impressions of England are just preliminary, but what I have seen so far I like immensely. The first thing we got when we got off the boat was a speech of welcome which told us briefly and unequivocally why we were here. There was no monkey business about it. Everything right on the line. We're here to invade the continent.

To me, the most thrilling remarks and those which practically floored the gentlemen from the South, were deliberate and blunt orders that in this theater there will be no racial discrimination whatsoever.

And, darling, it means just that. Any open demonstration of racial prejudice – even a remark – is a serious offense liable to a court-martial.

The people of England – the children, men, and women – are friendly and hospitable to our Negro soldiers.

Our boys are amazed, delighted, elated over their new status. Complete social equality, something undreamed-of for most of them. Their morale has gone up 500%.

As a result of these conditions, colored soldiers are making a splendid record in this part of the world.

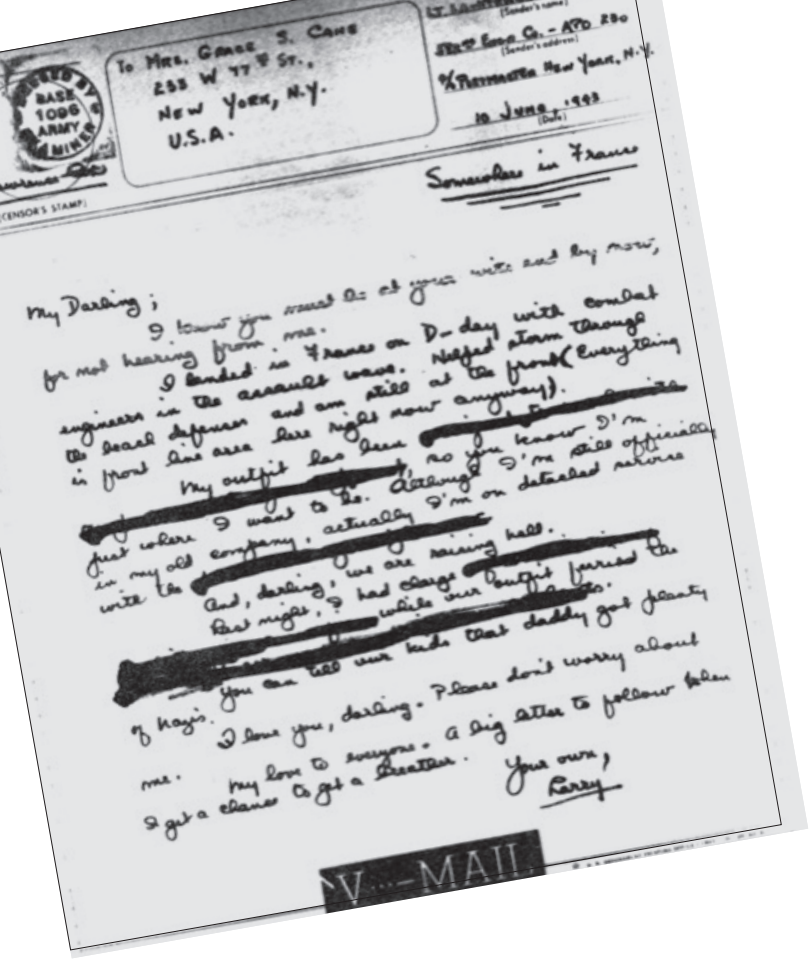
The young womanhood and manhood of England are in uniform. And the women – they do everything. We don't even begin to approach their organization for the war effort.

That's probably because this is really a country at war. At night England is black, black as the inside of my pocket. The people are calm and cheerful. After four years, war seems to be accepted almost as the normal mode of life.

But the country bristles with troops, planes, and arms. They are tucked away in the neat countryside waiting, training, girding for the day- Our Day.

I love you, Larry

*



first V-mail from liberated France, June 11, 1944

582nd Engr. Dump Truck Co.
APO 230, NY, NY
Somewhere in England
3 May 1944

Grace Darling,

I hope you haven't been worried by the sudden gap in my letters. We've been terrifically busy recently. What we've been doing and where we've been is, of course, impossible for me to describe – you'll understand.

Suffice it to say, we're now enjoying a breathing spell, and that gives me a chance to try to catch up on my letter-writing to you. None of us have been able to receive any mail for the past couple of weeks, and darling I ached to hear from you.

By the way, you'll be amazed to hear who I've made friend of.

We're in a combat engineer group, and the Protestant chaplain and I are great friends. As a matter of fact, he's plugging as only a chaplain can in his own quiet, unobtrusive way to get me transferred to one of the combat engineer battalions in the outfit.

Whether anything will come of it I don't know, + I've arrived at the point where I don't get excited over promises any more.

Know what he told me? He thinks I'm more religious in my own attitude and life, in spite of the fact that I profess a disbelief in religion, than most men he has ever known.

…

Here's a kiss, darling.

All my love, Larry

*

582nd Engr. Dump Truck Co.
APO 230, NY, NY
Somewhere in England
31 May 1944

My Darling,

Yesterday was Decoration Day. It was hot here, and we had lots of work to do. We were wringing wet before the day was half over.

I kept thinking about the Decoration Days I used to spend so long ago in my boyhood. There'd be a gang of us from the Scout Patrol go on an overnight hike up in the mountains. One year it would be the Ramapos; another, up Bear Mt. somewhere; another, along the Sunset Trail.

We'd always find a stream or pool, or lake somewhere. We'd tear our clothes off and race each other- last one in was a jerk. We'd hit the water with a splash, and come up screaming and gasping with delight at the shock of the clear mountain water.

First swim of the year, it was – And a glorious one at that.

It's been a long time since camping trips – And this year – well...Someday, maybe I'll be able to tell you about it. Someday, perhaps, I'll sit "Joe" in my lap and tell him the story of the crushing

of Nazism. Of how, in appalling struggle, mankind took another step upward.

I want to take this opportunity to wish you a very happy wedding anniversary – and tell you that you're the most wonderful wife a man ever had. I want you to think of me on June 16th as being at your side and whispering in your ear that I love you.

Four years, darling – four hectic years for the entire world. We were always so busy the first couple of years- and the last two there's been the Army. But loving you, and being loved by you whether we've been together or apart has given me the greatest happiness any man could ever want.

My greatest desire now is that Providence will be kind to me and permit me to spend our fifth anniversary together again, safe and sound.

So long, my love, don't worry about me.
I love you. Larry

[That is the last letter written from England. When Americans awakened on the morning of June 6, 1944 to news of the D-Day invasion, my grandfather said. "I don't know where Lawrence is or what he is doing, but if he is not on one of those beaches, he is probably writing letters of protest."]

*

582nd Engr. Dump Trunk Co.
APO 230, NY, NY
Somewhere in France
11 June 1944

Gracie Darling,

I wrote my first V-mail note to you yesterday. I'm sorry I couldn't sit down and write any sooner, because I know you've probably been worried. But I'm still alive and well and hoping that I'll remain that way.

You remember my anxiety about getting into some real action – about being up front where people like us should always be? Well, darling, I should never have worried about it. Somehow, I

always get to where the fighting is hottest.

As I mentioned to you in my note, I landed in France on D-day, 6 June, 1944, with the combat engineers in the assault wave. I was in on the storming of the beach fortifications and since then have been right up in the thick of it with the parachute troops.

A couple of nights ago, we ferried paratroops across a river and I was placed in command of all heavy machine-guns assigned to provide overhead fire for the crossing. It was a ticklish job because I had to set the positions up after dark, and estimate by compass bearings the fields of fire to be covered in the crossing area. It had to be just right, or we would have been firing into our own troops.

The job came off O.K., and as a result of the crossing we were able to link up with the other American bridgehead below us.

We are making what I think is satisfactory progress. Jerry is tenacious and he is not being routed yet. But we are smashing him back and piling the stuff in behind us.

What's going on at other places, I do not know. You've probably been able to get more information about that than I have.

But the day we stormed the beaches, and dropped from the skies to open this long-hoped-for Front, Jerry was through, and he damn well knows it.

He'll take some beating yet – and there's probably a lot of rough stuff ahead of us. But, in the light of history it won't be very long.

Not the least of my memories of this job will be the crossing of the Channel in those damned LCT's. God Almighty, what a miserable ride that was! I have been tossed around in boats before, but this goddam cruise took the cake. I got seasick for the first time in my life, and I wasn't the only one.

Well so much for now my Darling. I've got your picture out and I miss you so much I feel like crying. Please take care of yourself, and don't worry about me. At least, not too much.

I love you,

Your, Larry

*

582nd Engr. Dump Trunk Co.
APO 230, NY, NY
Somewhere in France
13 June 1944

Darling Mine,

Yesterday, I had an experience I shall never forget.

We captured an important town [Carentan, allowing the linkup of the American bridgeheads at Utah Beach and Omaha Beach], and as the last shots were being fired and the last snipers being sent where they belong, we moved in to throw a bridge across a stream to replace the one that Jerry had blown up a few hours before.

As we arrived at the bridge site, which was on the outskirts of town, an old woman crept out of a pile of rubble that had formerly been her home. She was followed by a deformed and ragged old man and three dirty, snotty-nosed little children. Two girls, one boy.

The old lady carried something close to her breast and painfully struggled up the debris until she stood at the highest part of the mound. Then gently and proudly she shook what she had in her hands, and out fluttered the tri-color of France.

The old lady was crying when she fastened the flag with a couple of bricks. "Vive la France," she said brokenly. "Vive la liberation de ---," she cried naming the town we had captured. And the little kids and the old man all repeated "Vive la France. Vive l'Amerique."

Then the old lady ran into her cellar and came out with apple-cider. She was sorry, she said that this was not the ..."Pays du vin, seulement des pommes."

I called her "mère" and she called me "Mon petit." And when the old man asked me some questions which were nobody's business but our own to know, and I told him so, she said "Bien répondu, mon petit."

She asked if I was married and I said yes and showed her your picture and she exclaimed that you were "très jolie." And when I told her you were "enceinte" she called on the Bon Dieu to bless both of us and our baby. And when I went away she kissed my hands.

Ardennes, Battle of the Bulge, January 1945

Goddam, isn't that worth fighting for?

But not all civilians here are like that. Jerry has been dropping parachutists behind our lines who dress in civilian clothes. There are also the "collaborateurs" to contend with.

They act as snipers, spies, and saboteurs.

Naturally, we are not very merciful with these fancy people when we catch them.

So far I have seen no evidence of the French underground. Perhaps, as we work farther inland and reach the larger cities we shall hear from them. Anyway, if we don't I'll feel disappointed as hell. I've always believed so implicitly that the French people would grasp this opportunity to reassert their fierce traditions of liberty, and that the wild, blood-tingling call of "Aux armes, citoyens" of the Marseillaise would once again resound throughout France.

Or am I an incurable romantic?

I am writing this in a foxhole and it's raining. That accounts for some of the blurs you see on these pages.

Good lord, I ache for the day when we can be together again. I'll kiss you from your toes to the top of your head and bite your ears for good measure. I'll love you until you yell Uncle.

I love you. Your Larry

*

[In July 1944, my father received a permanent transfer to the Combat Engineers with whom he served for the duration of the War, first as the commander of a heavy weapons platoon and then as Battalion Intelligence Officer. In the latter assignment, he was able to take advantage of his ability to speak not only English and Spanish, but French and German as well as Yiddish.

In the meantime, after establishment of the Allied beachhead in Normandy, there followed six weeks of painstakingly slow progress as the American Army fought its way from hedgerow to hedgerow that marked Normandy's bocage country. Finally, on July 25, 1944, the U.S. First Army launched a massive armored and infantry thrust that burst through the German lines in front of the French city of Saint-Lô. The attack was preceded by the most massive aerial bombardment in the history of warfare up to that time and an equally overwhelming artillery barrage. The German defenses were pulverized, and two American armored divisions broke out into the open plain. At the same time, Gen. George Patton's Third Army was activated, beginning a headlong pursuit of the German Army that drove them back into Germany by the middle of September. During the great attack of late July, known as Operation Cobra, my father's engineer company was assigned to the lead elements of the U. S. 2nd Armored Division.]

*

12 August 1944

Darling Mine,

I guess it's alright to tell you now –

I was in on the big break-through. I was with a platoon of engineers assigned to the advance guard of one of the armored columns.

My men rode the tanks, while I rode a bounding jeep.

It was during the advance that pocketed a lot of Jerries that I pulled the job which got me the recommendation for the Silver Star.

The Jerries were trying to break out, and temporarily cut off the advance guard of our tanks.

There were a lot of tanks + equipment that were in danger of falling into enemy hands.

So, I volunteered to get them out.

With some luck, I managed to take about a hundred armored vehicles, including thirty medium tanks, through enemy held territory…

*

[Around the third week of September 1944, the American Army entered Germany. After the dramatic breakthrough and pursuit through France, Belgium, and Luxembourg, the fighting now changed, as the German Army put up a stubborn defense of the Homeland behind the formidable Siegfried Line. My father's Engineer Combat Battalion fought on the front lines as infantry in the monthlong siege of Aachen, the first major German city to fall to the Allies. During this period I was born, although it was two weeks before the mail announcing my birth reached my father. The following letter was written just before the capture of Aachen.]

238th Engr. Combat Bn.
APO 230, NY, NY
Somewhere in Germany
23 October 1944

Hello Darling,

Yesterday, when I wrote you, I mentioned being in an outpost for a few days.

The outpost was a group of houses, all battered and smashed from shelling and thoroughly looted by retreating Germans, but excellent to fight from.

The house that I established my CP in belonged to an old, wealthy German family.

Well, naturally, when you get into a place like that, you kind of rummage around – just out of curiosity's sake.

I got into a closet that had a bunch of old papers, medals, trinkets, and picture albums.

There were relics and pictures of the War of 1870-1871 against the French. You remember, when the Paris Commune was crushed. Then there was a lot of junk from the World War of 1914-1918. But, the thing I became absorbed in was a picture of the only son + heir of the house.

He was born in 1918, just after the end of the last war. The pictures are the ordinary thing. Proud mama + papa and little snookums.

The pictures go on through childhood, and young boyhood

– shots of school, summer camps, winter sports, family groups, etc.

Then comes 1933 and the business begins.

Junior is now in the Hitler Jugend and a sturdy lad of 15. You see him with his "troop," all resplendent with his short pants and his "rucksack."

1936 rolls around, and he's now in the SA [*Sturm Abteilung*].

In 1937, he's in the Army.

In 1938 he's an "Unteroffizier" and is sent to Officers School in Potsdam. And, oh the pictures of the parades and goose-stepping and shiny boots now!

1939 and he transfers to the Air Corps. He is now a second lieutenant.

There are pictures of airfields, and officers' quarters, and more shiny boots and more goose-stepping parades.

1940 and Junior is a full-fledged pilot. Bomber pilot at that. But in 1940 the pictures stop.

Among the papers and books there were ravings of Adolf Hitler. I found a quotation that was quite appropriate from a document called "Training of German Youth for Military Service," 1935. Translated, it goes something like this, "It is repugnant to the heroic man that death on the battlefield should give rise to sorrow and complaint. It should be regarded as the ardently longed for termination of life…."

Well, maybe this time when we finish with these bastards they'll sing, "I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier," instead of "Deutschland, Deutschland, Uber Alles."

One thing, if they make us fight for every city – they're sure going to be too busy building them up again for the next fifty years, to think of building up an army.

Napoleon was the last guy to lead an army into Germany, and they had enough for about sixty years after him….

*

[After the fall of Aachen, two months of difficult fighting followed all along the western front. Advances were measured in yards rather than miles. During this period, my father was promoted to Intelligence Officer and assigned to the Battalion Staff.

On December 17, 1944 Hitler launched a massive counterattack through the Ardennes Forest in Belgium against a weakened section of the American line. The attacks, which took place during one of the worst winters in recent European history, achieved a major tactical surprise and were met with initial success. The deep wedge that was driven in the American lines gave rise to the name "The Battle of the Bulge." While many counseled a tactical retreat, Gen. Eisenhower saw this as an opportunity to engage the German Army outside its hardened defenses and to destroy the bulk of its remaining power west of the Rhine. My father's combat battalion was thrown into battle on the northern shoulder of the Bulge, near Manhay, Belgium, operating in support of the 82nd Airborne to confine the massed German armored assault. The following letter was written about a week into the Battle of the Bulge.]

238th Engr. Combat Bn.
APO 230, NY, NY
27 December 1944

Hello Sweetheart,

The past few days have been hectic, as you can well imagine. I'll bet you and everyone else back home has been hugging the radio and biting fingernails.

I can't say that I blame you – I've spent some anxious moments myself.

A great swirling battle is raging now – one which will go down in history as one of the great, decisive battles of all times. I say that because I believe from the way things are shaping up, that the German counter-offensive can be converted into a gigantic trap. I believe we can make even our massacre of the German 7th Army in the Falaise-Argentan pocket pale in comparison.

We've slowed them down now – and there's still some vicious engagements to come before the tide is completely turned. But we'll do it – never you fear.

Tell the folks back home, they can be proud of their boys. We've been in some shows the past few days that made me so proud I could have cried.

The best tribute to us that I've seen yet came from a famous Nazi paratroop leader, war idol of Nazi Germany, rescuer of Mussolini and Admiral Horthy, who led the airborne landings behind our lines. [This was Otto Skorzeny, the most renowned commando in the German Army.]

He gave himself up in disgust after his units were shot to pieces and grudgingly he said, "Americans are too goddam obstinate."

You bet we're obstinate. We've come a long way and buried a lot of dead- too much to have victory snatched from us when it was just within our grasp.

I love you.

Your own, Larry

*

238th Engr. Combat Bn.
APO 230, NY, NY
Somewhere in Belgium
9 January 1945

Hello Darling,

I am now in one of the most beautiful sections of the Ardennes salient. Of course, it would be a lot more beautiful if viewed from the inside of a nice warm hotel room, and not from the seat of that diabolical invention called a jeep. Or, as the natives say, "a gyp."

We've been having a blinding snowstorm for the past couple of days, and in other times I might be tempted to wax eloquent describing the craggy mountains, the forests, the swiftly flowing streams, the picturesque villages covered with snow and looking like a master etching.

These days, though, as I travel the country trails inundated in snow, hunched and miserable with the cold, with a wet "derriere," my face cut by the howling wind and my ears filled with the rumble and thud of artillery- all I can think is, "Brother you can keep it. Take me back to New York."

Say, darling, I never told you about my work. Here's a

glimpse of a phase. It's not all that way- just the reconnaissance end of it sometimes.

The Colonel calls me in and takes me to one of those large-scale military maps that always look so impressive in the movies.

"We're scheduled to build a Class 40 bridge right here," he says pointing to a spot on the map where a main highway is shown to be crossing a river.

A class 40 bridge means it will take loads up to and including 40 British long tons.

I take a look at the map and then remark brightly, "Colonel, we haven't advanced that far yet, according to the latest reports."
"I know," he says, "but we should have passed that point by now."

"Lovely," thinks I. Aloud, "Well, sir, I'll see if I can make it."

So out I go and mount my trusty jeep, and take off for the area to be reconnoitered.

Pretty soon there are the unmistakable signs of the front-wrecked and burning vehicles, dead men in all the shattered and grotesque attitudes of violent death, littered equipment both American and German, and the marrow-chilling symphony of small-arms fire, high-velocity artillery and the roar of planes.

Better go easy now, thinks I: Better see what the hell's what. According to my map we're only a few hundred yards from the prospective bridge.

We see a couple of infantry doggies sitting at a machine-gun which is trained down the road in the direction we're travelling.

"Hey Soldier, how far down is the front?"

With a kind of snicker in his voice one answers, "You're just about at it now, Sir."

"Anything between us and that bridge that's out down there?"

"Well," says the gunner rubbing his week old stubble, "I dunno."

"Look, I've got to go down and take a look at that bridge site. How's about covering me in case anything comes up?"

"O.K. Sir."

So, I go down there feeling like a damn duck in a shooting

gallery and proceed with my reconnaissance.

I look at the abutments. Measure the approaches. Look at the stream, sound it, gauge its speed. Tie a stone to a string and throw it across so I can measure the width.

"Crack." A rifle shot.

Some sonofabitch of a Krauthead is shooting at me from the woods across the river. I must look silly as hell to him, fooling around up there with a damn tape measure.

I dive for some cover. Take out my notebook and jot down my findings methodical as an Englishman and his tea. I take another peek to check on some detail. Another shot, this time it throws dirt on me. Close.

I yell back for the infantry gunners to throw a few bursts over me in the direction of the shots and tell them I'm going to run off to an angle so they can get a clear field of fire, and then come on in under cover of their gun.

The trick works, and I sprint the 200 yards in short dashes, from cover to cover, in remarkably short time.

I thank the boys for their help. One of them says, "Helluva job you got there, Sir."

"Same to you, son," says I. To my driver, "Give 'er the gun. Let's get the hell out of here."

That night a bridge goes in. The next morning tanks are rolling across….

Your own, Larry

*

238th Engr. Combat Bn.
APO 230, NY, NY
Somewhere in Germany -- Again
4 February 1945

My Darling,

You know, when most writers try to describe war, they attempt to capture the horror and terror of battle. Yet, somehow, that's not always the worst thing.

The physical hardships, the suffering, the nervous strain is something you can get away from when you get away from the front.

You get to a place where there are people – no matter how wretched and miserable the war has made them – the sound of artillery is faint and faroff, or not heard at all, there is no mad spitting of small arms fire, you get a roof over your head – even if it is a ruined house or a stinking barn – you get some hot chow, a shower, a shave, a change of clothes, and physically you're comfortable. Death is a little farther away.

But yearning for the one you love, the deep all-pervading ache – that stays. It even becomes more intense during rest periods. I miss you. Miss the smell of your hair, your head on my shoulder, the feel of your body at night. I miss the sound of your laugh, the perfume behind your ears, your warm lips under mine. I miss your biscuits, the way you walk in to a room, the desk crammed full of your junk. I miss our constant exchange of thoughts and ideas, our growing up together, our dreaming of the future. And I wish I could see and hold our son- part of both of us…. I love you as always.

Your own, Larry

*

[By early February, the Allied armies had launched massive ground and air attacks against the retreating German Army, crossing the Roer, the Erft and finally the Rhine River by mid-April. As they penetrated into the heart of Germany, Allied troops began to overrun numerous Nazi concentration camps. Among these was the Dora-Mittelbau camp at Nordhausen. Inmates, many of whom came from Buchenwald, were used as slave laborers in large underground factories in the nearby Harz Mountains, manufacturing V-1 and V-2 rockets under the direction of by *S. S.-Sturmbannführer* Dr. Werner von Braun, later to become the director of the U. S. space program. The Nordhausen sub-camp was created by the S.S. for prisoners too weak or ill to work in the tunnels of Dora and was termed a *Vernichtungslager*, or extermination camp. Most of the prisoners at Nordhausen were simply allowed to die of starvation or disease, with a total lack of any medical care. When American troops liberated Nordhausen on April 12, 1945, they found only a pitiful handful of survivors among more than 3,000 corpses. Able-bodied, mostly older, German men from the nearby city of Nordhausen

were brought at gunpoint by the U.S. Army to the Nordhausen camp and forced to view the thousands of corpses and to bury the dead.]

*

238th Engr. Combat Bn.
APO 230, NY, NY
Somewhere in Germany
15 April 1945

Darling,

You say when I get home you'll make me talk and talk. That'll be O. K., hon. But there're some things that I have seen on this drive into the center of Germany that I will refuse to talk about.

In my rather extensive career as a soldier I have seen much death and a great deal of suffering. But since this final push has been under way we have been overrunning some of the indescribable murder mills that have been running full blast since the Nazis came to power twelve years ago.

Here were scenes so monstrous, so grisly that the imagination palls. Never, so long as I live, will I forget the horrible sights, the tales of the pitiful survivors whom we liberated.

The worst one of all that I have seen was a concentration camp for political. Nothing in all the written history of man can equal, or even approach, the infamy and the degradation, the sadistic depravity, the barbarism of Germany under Hitler.

There is no Germany of Goethe, Heine, of Beethoven. They belong to us, to civilization.

So, remember, darling. Don't ever get me to talk to you about the concentration camps. You will only be shocked and sickened.

Your own, Larry

*

238th Engr. Combat Bn.
APO 230, NY, NY
Somewhere in Germany
8 May 1945

Darling,

V-E today!

What can I say? How can I describe my feelings? Shall I tell you how I longed to be with you, to kiss you, to put your head on my shoulder and say quietly – "We made it."

Such a long, hard, bitter road had been the painful trek from Madrid to Berlin. So much suffering, so much heartbreaking loneliness and longing for you, so many comrades lost.

The German church-bells tolled the end of the war in Europe, the people walked through the streets as usual. Here there was no wild-rejoicing. Nor were there tears of happiness.

I thought back, back to the long ago of 1937.
I wondered that day, as I stood on the top deck of the Acquitania and watched the Statue of Liberty, if I would ever see her again.

Then came France and the romantic and exciting secret moves via the underground railroad.

The hike over the Pyrenees and finally the thrill of being stopped by Spanish sentries.

The first three days in Spain at that old fort. The filth, the human faesces, the rotten wine, my first introduction to baccalau and garbanzas.

Enlistment at Albacete. The training period under the hot Spanish sun at Tarazona de la Mancha.

Then, the bloody street-fighting at Quinto and Belchite, the suicidal charge at Fuentes del Ebro, where I got myself hit.

The stay in the hospital. Typhus – and the raging delirium.

Then, the silly running away from the hospital to the Battle of Teruel. The incredible suffering and hardships of that campaign. The terrible retreat in Aragon. The weeks spent behind enemy lines and final escape to our own forces. The assault crossing of the Ebro.

…The trip home.

And you darling, I thought about you and our marriage and the indescribable love that I have for you, and how I cry inside for you all the time.

And then Pearl Harbor, and the Army and war again for me.

I thought of H-hour, D-day and how I with several hundred others in assault teams stormed ashore on Utah beach in the Cotentin peninsula. The bloody mess on the shore that day, the exhaustion which dulled any enthusiasm that might have been aroused at seeing the rest come in and the realization that I had helped to make it stick.

After that St. Lô and the breakthrough. The Falaise-Argentan gap. The swirling battle through France.

Then, the bitter, rain-soaked battle for the Siegfried Line. The Battle of the Ardennes. The crossing of the Roer, the Erft, the Rhine. And the final smash that ended with the linkup with the Russians, and the final surrender of the Germans.

A helluva lot of combat. And, now even though Japan has yet to be defeated, I want to go home.

I can't help feeling – Jesus, haven't I been in enough?

Who, even among those who are left from Spain have lived through so many battles? I'm the only man in America who fought in Spain and landed with the assault wave on D-day.

Perhaps it's wrong to feel this way. Perhaps I'm selfish.

But, sometimes I feel I can't bear my separation from you much longer.

I want to be with you and love you again.
I want to lie locked in each other's arms at night. To kiss you and kiss you and tell you how much I love you. To whisper the secrets of my heart. To be so close that we are one, lip on lip, heart pounding against heart.

I want to play with the son I've never seen. To help make his formula. Even to change his diapers. To wheel his carriage of a Sunday morning, with you on my arm.

Oh, my God, how I want to be with you my darling.

If you've ever wished hard for anything, wish that I'm one of the lucky ones who comes home soon.

I love you, love you, love you. Larry

*

[Over the next four weeks, while his battalion was assigned temporary occupation duty in Eisleben, near Leipzig, Germany, my father was put on detached duty in command of a counterintelligence group of German-speaking soldiers assigned the task of ferreting out members of the Gestapo and S.S. and other Nazi officials, as well as German officers and others who had abandoned their uniforms and were attempting to flee. This letter describes one of his more interesting experiences.]

Hqtrs. 238th Engr. Combat Bn.
Assembly Area Command
APO 752, NY, NY
Eisleben, Germany
22 May 1945

Hello Darling,

Say, hon, I had a funny one happen today. A wizened, dark-haired character was ushered into my office. He had been picked up by a guard at one of the road-control points.

I looked him over, and I had a strange feeling of pushcarts on Hester St., clothing stores on Canal St., an automat in the garment district during lunch hour.

I spotted him in a minute, but I had to work him over. There's been some strange things happening in Europe in the last few years.

"Well, what are you here for?"

He gave me one of those shrugs – one of those unmistakable, intangible motions which only one people in the world can give.

"I don't know."

"You don't know, eh? Where's your papers?"

"I haven't got any."

"No papers. Hmm. Where are you coming from?"

"Poland."

"Poland! For Chrissakes! Where do you think you're going?"

"Portugal, Lisbon."

"Portugal! Oh, my aching back! Wait a minute. What's your name?"

"Wolf Scheinaug."

"Now look, Wolf Scheinaug, you say you're coming from Poland and you're trying to get to Portugal. How did you get through the Russian area?"

"Oh, I came with French soldiers who were on their way home to France."

"Well how did you work that? Can you speak French?"

"No." Another one of these gestures. "All guards ever said was, 'Parlez-vous français,' and all I ever said was 'Oui, Oui,' and they used to wave me on."

I couldn't keep from laughing any longer. So, I burst out in Yiddish "Goyische Kopfer!" And you should have seen the expression of joyous wonderment on my landsman's face.

I told him he didn't have to be afraid and hold back any more. That he was dealing with an American and a fellow-Jew. I told him to let his hair down and tell me everything straight.

Then, he told me his story – which I interrupted from time to time for clarification (My Yiddish is rusty).

He had left Poland and gone to Portugal with his family in 1936. In 1939 he had returned to Warsaw to marry a second cousin of his.

That, incidentally, is an old-world Jewish custom. It's something that's decided even before kids are born. Ask my Pop, he'll tell you.

Well, he got married and then came the German invasion. He was stuck – couldn't get out.

In 1940 his wife and infant baby were sent to the murder camp at Maidenek. There, they met the fate of millions of Jews– murder and burning.

He himself was sent to another camp.

From then, until his liberation by the Russians, he went through a fantastic life of suffering and torture.

Now he was trying to beat his way back to his family.

I asked him why he didn't stay in Poland, especially since the Russians were there now. But, he said Poland is a place of too many horrible memories. He wants to be with his parents and his family in Portugal.

Well, I had to tell him he couldn't do that right now.

I sent him to the Burgomeister and got him some identification papers.

I also gave the Burgomeister orders that he was to be provided with food, clothing, and shelter in a private German home until travel restrictions were lifted, at which time steps were to be taken to send him home. And I also told Wolf Scheinaug that he was to take crap from nobody. That if anyone wanted to know who and what he was, he was to hold his head up proudly and say he was a Jew, and what about it.

When he left me he was crying he was so happy….

I love you, Larry

*

[In early June, the First Army was redeployed to northern France where millions of American GIs waited for reassignment, probably to the Pacific theater and then, following the surrender of Japan, back to the States. This was a difficult period filled with months of boredom, frustration, and a desperate longing to return home to a normal life. Then at last came the news.]

Camp Oklahoma City
Sissonne, France
10 October 1945

My Darling,

Stop the mails! Poppa's coming home!
I take it back about miracles, they still happen.
…Á bientôt, really.
My own dear heart, I love you.
Tell Davy he'll see his old man soon.
Je t'adore
Your, Larry

[And finally, a telegram.]

Le Havre, France
29 October 1945

VLT MRS GRACE S CANE
233 WEST 77TH ST NEW YORK=

SAILING LEHAVRE 48 HOURS HOME SOON
HALLELUJAH LOVE=
LARRY

Grace & Lt. Lawrence Cane, January 1944

**Jack and his father,
Siegfried, at fair**

Feibelmaenner: A Chronicle, *Part I*

H. Jack Feibelman

David Kane's story and letters belong to a much larger saga of courage, sacrifice, brutality, death, and destruction that have been presented in our journal. Fortunately, more than 20 articles, portraying American Jews' heroic efforts during the World War II era, have been published over the past two decades alone. Readers may recall that the longest article, presented in three issues (beginning in 2006), was adapted from Gerald Weinberg's memoirs. One of the shorter articles, by Mike Fink, was about his true Uncle Sam. Walter Sundlun's poem, "A Soldier's Plea," was about a missing pilot, his son Bruce.

More than 15 additional articles about the war reveal the plight of European Jewry. The longest series, presented in four issues (beginning in 2014), was excerpted from Ray Eichenbaum's autobiography. Many accounts of miraculous survival, written by or about women, portray Susan Brown, Betty Adler, Alice Goldstein, Leah Eliash, the Berkovic sisters, and their families.

In the following article, H. Jack Feibelman, explains how, at 15 years of age in 1936, he was able to flee his native Germany and gain asylum in America. But the author, a remarkably modest person, never sought the title of "survivor." Indeed, he was perhaps more interested in sharing the story of his family's heritage than in recounting its horrible downfall.

No less remarkable is the fact that Jack did not put words to paper until 2001, when, at 80 years of age, he completed his master's thesis in English at Brown University. (To be admitted to this program, he had to take the Graduate Record Exam, which meant reviewing mathematics.) His thesis, consisting of 17 chapters and an appendix, is more than 250 pages. Two more installments will be published in coming issues.

Jack chose not to have his story published during his lifetime, however. Permission was kindly granted by Barbara Feibelman, following her father's death, in June of this year, at 99 years of age.

Heimat (Homeland)

On July 20 through 22, 1998, a group of *Feibelmanner* (plural of Feibelman) met in Chicago for the first family reunion since the Holocaust. In attendance were 50 descendants of Leopold Feibelmann's branch of the family.

The reunion came too late for most family members who had fled from their *Heimat* and escaped the Holocaust. The eight exceptions were Leopold's two daughters-in-law, five grandchildren, and me, Hans Jack Feibelman, his nephew. The attendants at the reunion represented the larger Feibelman family, which, for centuries, had been like a tribe. They were examples of the vitality of this family, their perseverance against many odds, and their devotion to high ideals. They came to the reunion not only from many places in the United States but also from abroad: the United Kingdom, Bolivia, and Colombia.

In addition to the eight relatives mentioned above, there were our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren; evidence that they had taken new roots and were thriving. They were upright citizens in the countries that had offered them safe harbor and to

Siegfried Feibelman and siblings

which they now contributed as professionals – doctors, lecturers, teachers, lawyers, technicians, merchants, business executives, and industrialists.

My wife, Hannah[1], accompanied me, as did our children, Jeffrey and Barbara, and Jeffrey's children, Andrew and Marcy. We celebrated the lives of our dear departed, mourned the tragedy of our losses to the Holocaust, and reminisced about the roots of the Feibelmanns in their *Heimat*, Ruelzheim, in the Rheinpfalz (or Palatinate region).

I have no *Heimat* of my own in the sense of a place that my parents, grandparents, and ancestors call home, where they took roots, a place that had an emotional hold on them. I was born and grew up in Berlin, a metropolis that lacks the characteristics of a *Heimat*. Ruelzheim, vicariously, is my roots. My father tried to compensate for our living in Berlin, far from his *Heimat*, that place in the world that holds one's roots, by endlessly telling me stories and trivia of Feibelman oral history.

I was brought up to honor the integrity of the Feibelman name and with it its *Heimat*. It seems to be high time to write out the Feibelman history as it was told to me by my parents, aunts, uncles, and cousins so that it will be preserved for my children.

The story that I tell is of eight generations of Feibelmans, their marriages, their children and the ordinary lives they lived as well as the sufferings they endured as Jews. It starts with my great-great-great-grandfather and follow with his descendants:

Jakob Feibelman	1732-1796
Leon Feibelman	1760-1820
Jacob Feibelman	1794-1891
Isaak Feibelman	1827-1916
Siegfried Feibelman	1877-1972
myself, Hans Jack Feibelman[2]	1920-
Jeffrey Arnholz Feibelman	1948-[3]
Barbara Ruth Feibelman	1951-
Andrew Stuart Feibelman	1978-[4]
Marcy Rachel Feibelman	1981-
Matthew Willi Orenstein	1985-
Clare Bess Orenstein	1988-[5]

My Father and Mother

My father Siegfried and my mother Klara (Clare) were married on October 16, 1919, less than a year after the armistice of November 11, 1918 that put an end to the Great War. My father was the youngest of 11 children of Isaak and Barbara Feibelman of Ruelzheim, near Germany's southern border with France, and my mother was next to the youngest of 10 children of Carl and Bertha Arnholz of Arnswalde, not too far from Germany's northeastern border with Poland. The Great War had left Europe, especially Germany, in shambles, although it had been fought mostly not on German soil but in the territories of the surrounding states or overseas. The hardships the Germans were suffering after the war were imposed by the Treaty of Versailles and by the great financial sacrifices that fathers and sons had made to fulfill the Kaiser's ambitions.

My parents' wedding in Arnswalde was also the first Arnholz family reunion since the start of the war. I also heard often of that great party from its last participant, Hans Feibelman, who died rather recently. For the first time since the early war years, fine food-such as meats, eggs, butter, even whipped cream – was available to the Arnholz family from farmer friends.

In later years as I look back on my parents' romance, I find the French saying *les extreme se touch* very appropriate. We would say of their lives together that "opposites attract each other." They had met early in 1919 through my parents' relatives who lived in Berlin. Nathan Meyerstein was my mother's second cousin, and his wife, Aunt Rivka, was my father's sister. At that point, some considered my parents a confirmed bachelor and a potential spinster. Father ("Vati" to me) was 42 years old, a happy bachelor who had his share of girlfriends with no serious connection, and Mother ("Mutti" to me) was 29 years old. She enjoyed a nice small-town social life and two serious proposals of marriage at ages 22 and 23 from local aristocrats. My grandfather, Carl Arnholz, who was president-for-life of his small Jewish congregation, never gave these proposals outside of the Jewish religion any consideration.

Mutti was a fairly tall woman, about 5' 6", blond with long tresses, blue-eyed with a very fair complexion. My father was smitten

engagement of Clare & Siegfried

at first sight when he met her on his invitation to the Arnholz home in Arnswalde.

Just as Father and Mother came from the geographic opposite ends of Germany, so were their mannerisms different. Vati was an extrovert, as easily engaging in conversations as in undertaking business ventures, travel, and fun activities like joining organizations. He would strike up many friendships and investigate the world around him. Mutti was the opposite; she was reticent to the point of being shy, sedate, and conservative in her behavior and in socializing. Once she had opened up to friendships, however, she was known for her personal warmth, charm, and consistency.

Vati was a product of a metropolis and the world at large, a Berliner much like a New Yorker – energetic, aggressive, and outgoing. In contrast, Mutti was a product of a small town with limited experience of the world – reserved, considerate, and delicate.

Like several of his brothers before him, Vati was signed up as a commercial apprentice by his father, who had to pay for his upkeep. Grandfather Isaak took Vati as a 13-year-old to St. Imier in

Switzerland, which was located in the Jura Mountains on the Swiss-French border. He worked there as a commercial trainee for a small watch manufacturer. Father enjoyed the challenge and particularly loved the outdoor life in the Alps. He was a relatively frail child compared to his robust, heavyset brothers. In 1892, at age 15, he contracted an infection that required surgery on his right hip joint. Due to neglect by doctors, complications set in after surgery that left his hip joint frozen. After recovery from his operation, he walked with a slight limp for the rest of his life.

Father's older brother by 10 years, Herrmann, had established H. Feiblemann in Berlin. It manufactured and sold blouses and dresses. Willy Rose, who designed and created the firm's garments, was Herrmann's partner and married his sister Rika in 1890. After recovery form his operation, my father went to Berlin to work for his brother.

Before a few years had passed, Father was unhappy with his opportunities to grow in the firm and decided to strike out on his own. He established his own firm, acting as a resident sales representative in Berlin for textile manufacturers of all sorts selling to the wholesale trade, the larger department stores, and foreign buying offices, such as Macy's of New York. He eventually represented over 40 mills from as far away as Lyon and Liverpool. The products ranged from knitted sweaters, vests, scarves, spats, and kerchiefs to snoods and hairnets made of human hair. He operated out of a small office suite adjoining our apartment, as was customary for many small German commercial establishments. Vati started his venture at the turn of the century and within a few years became quite successful. He was able to enjoy the companionship of many friends and the middleclass luxuries of his time.

When the war broke out in 1914, Vati, because of his limp, was not qualified to serve in the armed forces; instead, he very actively organized volunteers to care for the many amputees and invalids who returned from the front. When the war ended, he returned to full-time marketing of textiles and was fortunate enough to be introduced to the lovely lady from the country who would become my mother.

The arranged marriage of these opposites turned out to be a very happy one. My mother accepted the challenge of a life in the big city, and became very popular with the Feibelman family. Whenever any members of the family came to Berlin, they visited us and were quite enchanted with Mutti. Her influence on my father was tremendous. I remember that my parents' eye contact would replace lengthy conversations.

A few years after my birth, Mutti became active in Vati's business, taking charge of office activities. Father and Mother complemented each other and thus enhanced our lives. My upbringing was their joint effort, carefully balanced.

I look back now and see that my parents met many challenges of the Hitler era with great courage. They sent me, their 15-year-old only child, overseas, and they later clandestinely left Berlin, leaving their apartment and belongings intact, including an automobile parked outside in front of the house. Their thoughtful and studied decisions proved to be right and saved our lives.[6]

My Childhood

1920

I was born on November 25, 1920 in a lying-in hospital in Berlin-Charlottenburg. My father was 43 years old and my mother 30; my arrival was celebrated by both my parents' families with presents and applause that forecasted their continuing interest in my progress.

1923

The preceding three years had been very traumatic for my native Germany, which went through a total economic collapse and an inflationary period rarely seen. I have some of the paper money of that time, which shows the word *milliards* (billions in English) printed over previously "thousand" or "million." That indicates how fast the money was devalued. On November 15, 1923, one American dollar reached the value of 4,200 billion Deutsche marks.

After my birth, Mutti went through a period of depression

and anxiety that for a few unfortunate women follows the late birth of a first child. For three years Mutti had no stamina to undertake anything; she was unable to cross the street, make decisions or even make any significant excursions. Her recovery was gradual over the following years.

The end of 1923 brought the death of her father, Carl Arnholz, my only living grandparent. He was a very distinguished gentleman, a successful businessman, a respected citizen and, as I mentioned, president-for-life of his congregation. He died at home at the age of 83. The only picture of him that I have shows him holding me as a baby in his lap. I was the one only one of his grandchildren he ever saw.

1927

At six years of age, I was enjoying a very happy life. During the preceding year, Germany had entered the path to economic recovery. Industry was rebuilding, unemployment was declining, the standard of living for a large part of the country was rising substantially, and Germany was approaching a rational calm as it was operating under the Weimar Constitution of 1919, which had been ignored over the past years. That constitution provided for a democratically elected government with divisions of power somewhat like the American Constitution.

This was the year that my father could fulfill his dream to take my mother and me on a visit to his *Heimat*, to see Ruelzheim through his eyes. I have very vivid recollections of this trip, such as meeting uncles, aunts, cousins, and distantly related *Feiblemaenner.* I recollect staying overnight in the family home, being in the dead center of the village, and seeing a car only every four or five minutes.

A strong impression remains with me to this day of celebrating at a pub, the Kronewirt, where his father took my father every year to celebrate his birthday with a Frankfurter Wurstchen or two. When I visited the Kronewirt for lunch, I had the special of the day and every day, a *Broetchen* (hard roll) with a lump of *Handkaes* (farmer's cheese) and a stein of Bier. I was in seventh heaven.

Our trip homeward included a detour to Stuttgart, where

we boarded a river steamboat. The cruise down the Rhein passed old castles situated on mountaintops, pastoral scenes of meadows and forests, and beautiful hamlets and towns. Along the way, the ship entered into many locks and was lowered into the river's downstream continuations.

We visited Heidelberg, the university town, and saw the world's largest wine vat, which was 12 feet tall. On the way, the boat cruised around the notorious Loreleifelsen, near St. Goar, passing through treacherous whirlpools. Believing in the legend of old, I heard beautiful Lorelei, the siren sitting on top of the rock, as told by Heinrich Heine in his famous poem. I also recall the visit to Frankfurt-am-Main and a nearby spa, Wiesbaden in the Taunus.

1927 was also a good year as I had completed my first year in *Volksschule* (grammar school). The customary start of the school year is right after the two weeks of Easter vacation. In no time at all, it was a week's vacation for Whitsun, and seven weeks later school closed own for the *grosse Ferien,* the long summer vacation. It was my happy lot that all my school vacations were spent in Arnswalde, my mother's hometown.

In 1927 I was able to undertake the four-hour trip to Arnswalde on my own. Mutti took me to the station with a big tag hung on me as a necklace, showing my travel plan, which involved changing trains in Stargard. I was dressed immaculately in a white linen suit. After Mutti asked the conductor to keep an eye on me, she situated me aboard the train and discovered in the same compartment the Falk brothers, the teenage sons of some neighbors in Arnswalde. She asked them, too, to keep an eye on me.

The trip ended in a tragedy for me. In my lunch bag, my mother had packed a big bar of chocolate. Somehow the Falk boys managed, unknown to me, to slip the melting chocolate bar on my seat. To my dismay but to their amusement, I arrived in Arnswalde with a big blob of brown on the backside of my pants. More than 70 years later, I remember it well.

That same year, 1927, held significance for me because we had visitors from America, the land of cowboys and Indians. My Aunt Adeline and Uncle Adolf Feibelman spent six weeks in Europe and stopped over in Berlin for a week. Our meeting had a lasting importance for me in that they felt comfortable enough, eight years later, to offer me refuge from Hitler. We had a great visit during an endless row of parties with them, the Rose and Fisch families, who also lived in Berlin, and other Feibelmanner, who joined us from other parts of Germany. I particularly remember Father's oldest brother Alfons and his wife, who joined us from Frankfurt. It was a happy year; our cup ranneth over.

1930

Having completed four years of *Volksschule,* I now had the option to transfer to a *Gymnasium* (the classic school for boys), which would open the doors to a university or academic education later on. School was very exciting for me; I enjoyed a large circle of friends and after-school sports. The Turners, a typical German youth organization with a program of extensive gymnastics and soccer teams, helped me develop many close friendships.

Surprisingly, the circle of boys who were often in our home and whom I often visited were very aware of politics. We boys knew of the Locarno peace conferences for modifying the Versailles treaty following World War I. We all knew of the difficult negotiations with such visiting French leaders as Lavalle and Daladier; we also knew who were our chancellor and our foreign minister. We were cognizant of upcoming elections, including 24 parties, such as the Social Democrats (liberals) and *Centrum* (Catholic), and a new party, NSDAP (National Socialist Germany Workers' Party). There was nothing sacrosanct about this party and its leaders. We satirized them as

only boys can, often when playing charades at birthday parties.

Looking back on our life during those years, summer weekends stand out in my memory. Friday afternoons, as soon as my father completed his workday and shortly after I returned home from classes, we left the city for our weekend retreat. We had a year-round cottage rented on the shores of the river Spree in a little village, Hirschgarten, about a 45-minute drive from the city. There our boat, *Baerbele II,* was docked, ready to be loaded with food. Once a year, we also cruised across the many lakes and up the rivers heading east into the countryside. The boat accommodated six people in comfortable club seats or a few more guests by using benches. We always had guests, sometimes my own young friends, to enjoy the cruise. They swam from the boat or fished.

My Dad and I were devoted fishermen and always had more good fishing stories than edible fish. We also went fishing for eels, which have to be caught on ground lines. This life on the river was as enjoyable to me as river life was as enjoyable for Huck Finn. Sometimes we put up tenting on meadows along the shore, miles from home, to spend a weeklong rendezvous with friends.

There was also the serious part of my father's volunteer rescue work. I recall when he rescued many young athletes whose sculls had overturned during a storm. What a great adventure for a boy of my age!

1933

As a native Berliner, I grew up drinking *Weisse* (wheat) beer. As a teenager, I was so familiar with this city of four and a half million people that I could get around on subways, elevated trains, and streetcars. I could also get anywhere on my cycle, including such places as the zoo, planetarium, botanical garden, the Kaisier's *Schloss* (the banished Kaiser's palace), and opera. Above all, there was Schliemann's absconded treasure, the Temple of Pergamum, in the museum erected across from the Kaiser's palace. My friends and I often cycled to this museum to be awed by the splendor of the Pergamum empire, which had governed most of Asia Minor three centuries before the current era.

A chain of events suddenly interrupted my joy of growing up in the bosom of a loving family, among wonderful friends and in a challenging environment. The news on January 30, 1933 that President Hindenburg, a man in his middle-eighties, supposedly with signs of senility, had appointed Adolf Hitler as Chancellor of Germany sent fear to many. Hitler, the *Fuehrer* (leader) of the NSDAP and a convicted felon, had never held an elective or any other governmental position. He and his party, who were known for their hoodlums and aggressive tactics, sent fear into the adults around me and surely scared some of my friends and me. We had seen fights that his followers instigated on the streets, in restaurants, and also in schoolyards. Of course there were those who predicted that nothing would come of his party. Hitler would not dare or he would disappear and fail like all those other chancellors who lost their positions in a matter of months or a year because they could not live up to their campaign promises.

Further, those ostrich-minded people predicted that he would never, never be able to impose the policy of a *Judenreines Deutschland* (a Jew-clean Germany), which he had promised in his book, Mein Kampf (My Flight), written in jail in 1923-24, because the German people would not tolerate it. How wrong they were.

Within three months after his rise to power in 1933, Hitler established the concept of racial purity. It elevated Aryans to the level of a super-race, which distinguished itself through pure bloodlines, mostly contained in Protestants of Nordic descent, which is confirmed either genealogically or by physical characteristics, such as blond hair, blue eyes, and skull formation.

Special lecturers were invited by schools to go from classroom to classroom to address students and indoctrinate them on the subject of the Aryan race. As ridiculous as it was, an expert addressed my class and singled out three students out of 30 who had the characteristic features of the Aryan race. He pointed me out and had me stand up with the two other examples. My standing up was accompanied by giggles from my classmates, who realized that this party lecturer did not realize that I was Jewish.

Jews and Gypsies above all were considered non-Aryans

Hans-Joachim & Siegfried

and were prohibited from many activities. Certain kinds of religious activities were prohibited. Among them was the kosher slaughter of animals, which was mandatory for fully observant Orthodox Jews. Thus Orthodox Jews who insisted on keeping a kosher diet had to eat vegetarian food or import kosher meats from Britain or elsewhere in Europe.

Next, intermarriage of races and miscegenation were prohibited and punished severely. As a further precaution, non-Aryan households could not employ Aryans. This meant that our maid of many years had to leave us. My father had a secretary and a sales assistant who had to leave his employ.

Friendships with non-Aryans were frowned upon, and thus I lost all contact with non-Jewish classmates and friends – except for my closest buddy. Our contact became very circumspect, as it would embarrass his parents if it became known that their son associated with Jews.

These regulations changed the pattern of my life. I could no longer participate in extracurricular activities. I was isolated to the extent that I would seek out Jewish boys for friendship and recreation, and I kept away from all my other affiliations – Turners, skate rinks, football practice, swimming, and other activities in which I customarily participated.

The first incident to bring home to us a hint of the life to come occurred in early 1933. As I always did, I spent the Easter holiday with my aunts and uncle in my mother's hometown, Arnswalde. My mother had me carry a suitcase of imported kosher meat from England as a present to her siblings. Barely had I arrived in Arnswalde and sat down for dinner when we heard the stamping noise of massive boots in the hallway and that dreaded knock on the door. Three Hitler troopers marched into the flat and took on a threatening pose. They were not police but the usual Nazi party thugs who took pleasure in exercising unauthorized but undisputed power over civilians.

My uncle pushed me into an adjoining room, where I stayed shaking with anxiety, realizing the danger of the situation and listening with my ear against the door. The family was accused of having procured illegal kosher meat. How could they know? We never found the answer but assumed that a maid still working for the family in the kitchen had spread the word. They knew that I had brought the meat from Berlin.

This was a severe violation, and therefore they arrested the head of the household, my Uncle Willi. I was allowed to return to the living room shortly thereafter to learn that my uncle had been taken away. Though this was less than three months after Hitler's accession to power, people often arrested in this extra-legal manner were never seen again.

My aunts, worried sick, contacted the rabbi of this little community, a young man in his mid-thirties, who, I later learned, went to police headquarters to look for my uncle but did not find him there. He persuaded the police to help him locate Uncle Willi, who was in custody at Nazi party headquarters. He was held by his classmates from 30 years ago. The police, assisting the rabbi, took my uncle to the police station, where, the next morning, they were fortunate to obtain Uncle Willi's release. All charges were dropped when we proved by means of sales slips that the meat had been slaughtered in England; the supposedly incriminating information about the meat was false.

On a sunny Sunday afternoon during the summer of 1933,

my parents, two friends, and I cruised on the Spree, docked at one of many cafes and restaurants that dotted the shore line, and enjoyed our lunch. Suddenly a marching band approached the restaurant from the highway, and an unruly crowd followed it. In front of the band two men carried a placard. I still feel the panic that overcame me as I read the words incomprehensible to me a 12-year-old. To the best of my recollection, the placard read: "Citizens: the invalid (World War I) veteran who follow us is a victim of Jews. It is because of them that he lost his legs and arms. What are you going to do about it?" The invalid, pushed in a wheelchair, was followed by a group of eight to 10 men dressed like army veterans with soldiers' caps or jackets carrying a Nazi flag.

When I swiveled to look at my parents and saw that that they were paying the bill, I started to run towards the docks with the adults following me. At that moment the veterans broke ranks and started to run after us. We surely were not carrying signs that we were Jews, but that must have been their assumption. At the dock we jumped into the boat, cast off, and revved the engine for a fortunate escape from the rowdies.

We were in shock and only later realized that this was the beginning of a pattern of events to come. To gain support for their propaganda, the Nazis contrived incidents of this type and made every effort to portray Jews as an alien element harmful to society. Later that summer we sold our boat, as it was too hazardous for Jews to be so visible.

Another traumatic event was the untimely death from cancer of my mother's sister, Minna, in Arnswalde. Thereafter Uncle Willi was not comfortable with the idea of staying in the town where he and his family had been born and where he had been brought up. He closed up his home and moved to Berlin. As a Jew, he would disappear among the population of the big city and not be vulnerable to random persecutions, which occurred daily in towns and villages.

Although he had gone to school in Arnswalde and had a lifetime of relationships with his neighbors, they supported boycotts of Jews. Hitler had been able to convince the masses that Jews were the cause of their economic troubles. Ridding Germany of Jews

would solve their problems. Furthermore, Germans would personally gain from taking over Jewish businesses that had to be sold at bargain prices. Party members would also acquire the personal property left behind.

In November of 1933, I turned 13 and celebrated my bar mitzvah in Berlin at the large synagogue on Lindenstrasse.[7] It was a solemn event for me. A joyous party followed with a large part of our extended family in attendance. I was too young to realize the damper that the political situation put on the affair.

1934

At the end of the 1933-34 academic year, the director of my high school, the *Luisenstaedtisches Real Gymnasium,* called my mother to school. Behind closed doors he expressed his regret that he could not admit me for the next semester, as this was against guidelines of the racial laws. Before the Easter holiday, I attended the last school assembly and said my good-byes.

To this day, three things stand out in my mind: the two songs we sang and a flagpole incident. My premonition of disaster to come was very strong when I joined in singing a nostalgic Berliner folksong:

> Who knows when we will meet again on the green shores of the Spree,
> Who knows when we will meet again on the green shores of the Spree.
> Oh, how heavy is the heart to leave the *Heimat,*
> If it weren't for the hope of a reunion.

My premonition of future events made me silently sing the first line as, "Who knows how we will meet again." Indeed, more than half of my classmates died during the war; the few whom I heard about later had very difficult lives.

Next we sang the national anthem, *Deutschland, Deutschland ueber Alles* ("Germany, Germany before all"), followed by the Nazi Party song, the *Horst-Wessel Lied.* One of the lines, which the Nazis changed from the official text and which I paraphrase from memory, was:

We are marching onwards to victory.
Until the Jew Blood drips from the knives,
The day breaks for freedom and for bread,
Slavery will last only a short time longer.

The atmosphere in the school auditorium was tense, and two other Jewish students in my class and I made a quick exit to avoid a fight with the rowdies in our class.

My day at school was not finished. I almost created a tragic incident for my parents and myself through a foolish act that was typical of a teenager. After emptying my locker on my way out of the quadrangle, I passed a flagpole where a caretaker was hauling down the swastika flag prior to locking up for vacation. I pulled out my handkerchief, which in German slang was appropriately called *Rotzfahne* (snot flag), and clipped it where that sacred flag had just been. Then I hauled it up the pole to vent my accumulated resentment and anger. I was alone in the quadrangle except for the school guard. Before I took a few steps, he took hold of me and took me into the director's office.

Having been accused of a major desecration of the flag, I was told this was a matter that the party would look into. It reflected my personal conduct, but also my parents' responsibilities. It was most fortunate that the director took charge and dismissed the janitor, but held me in his office. Though a successful principal in one of Berlin's largest high schools, he was also a Catholic, barely tolerated

Hans-Joachim's departure from Antwerp

by the system. He appreciated the dangerous position I was in due to my stupid action, and then phoned my parents and released me into their custody. Thus ended my school attendance.

My parents had close friends over for dinner at least twice a week. During 1933 and the ensuing years, this became an even more important part of our lives because the anti-Semitic movement going on in the country cut us off from news and contact with Christian friends. My father, though restricted in his business activities, still represented about 20 textile mills, owned by Jews and Christians, located all over Germany. Beginning in 1934, however, each month brought new contract cancellations. As a result, visitors to our home were almost exclusively Jewish friends, relatives, and bachelors.

Many of our guests were well traveled, and by listening to them I learned about business practices and conditions in cities from Helsinki to Athens. Among our frequent visitors was a cousin, Wilhelm Feibelman, a bachelor and man-about-town in his thirties, who owned a ladies' accessories firm and traveled all over Europe. In later years, when the persecution became impossible to endure, many of our friends wrote to us from exile in Russia and from their escapes via Poland, Belgium, France, Canada, and to an ultimate haven in Australia.

In the fall of 1933, the Jewish Congregation of Berlin opened up grammar and high schools to continue the education of students who had been dismissed from public schools. These schools were established hastily in lofts that had been rented throughout the city and staffed mostly with Jewish teachers who had been dismissed from the public school system. With students and teachers, the turnover was great. New students showed up daily, and other students and teachers left daily to migrate abroad or to move because Jews had been evicted or forced to seek shelter in new locations. Parents and children's anxiety made learning difficult.

During the summer of 1934, political developments restricted my activities in Berlin. In response, my parents conceived the idea that I would make an extensive round-trip to south Germany and Switzerland to visit cousins, aunts, and father's *Heimat*, Ruelzheim. As a matter of fact, in another couple of years it probably

would not have been possible to travel as freely. Of course, a young boy of 14 did not attract attention.

I had a great summer holiday stopping off to see relatives in Pforzheim, Frankfurt-am-Main, Basel, and Bern. On my way home, I made a stopover in Munich. The reception I received everywhere was tremendous; I felt like royalty. The timing was fortunate because the atmosphere for Jews in Germany continued to deteriorate.

1935

My parents received reports about accelerated persecution and the tightening of Hitler's control over economic affairs. The military was rebuilding forces with many tanks, ships, and airplanes. We heard reports of Hitler's call to the *Auslands Deutschen* (overseas Germans) to come home. My best pal's uncle, an aircraft engineer and designer in the American Midwest, heeded Hitler's request.

So it came about that my mother, a woman very attuned politically, spoke of making plans for me to leave Germany, as so many Jews were contemplating. Thousands of Jewish youngsters were taking agricultural courses to prepare for emigration to Palestine, South America, and South Africa. Middle-aged and senior emigrants-to-be were studying Spanish with an eye on life in Latin America; others were studying English with the intent to go to Australia, South Africa or – if good fortune would have it – to America.

Then my parents contacted Uncle Adolf Feibelman in Camden, Arkansas, to explore the possibility of my going to America. The mail brought a very prompt invitation. At that point the idea to send me to Arkansas by myself took hold.

There were three thoughts that led to this determination. First, one person would be accepted more easily by America and would be allowed to leave Germany more easily than three people. My parents also wanted to get me out of the country to minimize my exposure to Nazi persecution and a possible draft into the army's labor battalions. Finally, although my parents had made no decision about their own emigration, they decided having me in America would give them an advance base to ease their possible flight.

There were many hurdles in the way of emigration. An

immigration visa had to be obtained from the American consul in Berlin. Limited visitors' visas were to be had for the asking, but to obtain an immigration visa was limited to a quota set by Congress. Medical and economic criteria also had to be met. America did not want to add burdens in the middle of the Great Depression. The American government required sworn affidavits from American citizens showing that they could and would take on the burden of supporting an immigrant if he were unable to support himself. Having two or three sponsors would show the consul that admitting an applicant represented a minimum of risk. Adolf and Adeline in Camden worked with their lawyer and banker and also persuaded cousin Harry Dannenberg in Philadelphia to produce the necessary documentation and guarantees.

The application for my visa was ready by the end of 1935, when my mother and I had an appointment with an American consular official. It was an event charged with apprehension. This was the only logical solution for my emigration; it had to work. When a taxi dropped us off outside of the consulate, there was a long line of people queuing outside to enter. I recall that our appointment was honored promptly, and we had an opportunity to present our application formally and have an interview. We had been warned not to be too hopeful about the process.

All I remember now is the tension and anxiety we were under. During the interview, however, we discovered that the official, Miss Gertrude Messing,[8] a native of Indianapolis, Indiana, was acquainted with Feibelmans since childhood. They were friends and neighbors. Could they be our cousins? Of course all Feibelmans are related. Isadore Feibelman,[9] a prominent lawyer in Indianapolis, was indeed distantly related and contributed indirectly to this interview, during which Mother described our plans in detail. She spoke of her concern over my future, the security my parents sought for me, and of the ability of sponsors to care for me. Miss Messing, who spoke German, was gracious beyond any expectations.

We left, as my mother later recalled, with assurances given with a wink not to worry. It seemed reasonable to expect a visa within three to four months. My father, who had abdicated the ap-

plication job to my mother, was convinced that she would be much more effective in a presentation at the consulate. He proved correct. Five months later, the visa for me to immigrate arrived in the mail.[10]

1936

As I look back at my mother and aunt's efforts to buy, label, and organize clothes, personal articles, luggage, and gifts to take to America, I think of a preparing a bride's trousseau and a scout's summer camp outfit. My clothes and supplies were intended to last for about a year.

Finally a decision had to be made as to when and how to travel out of Germany without arousing too much attention, particularly at a border crossing. There had been many reports of emigrants being maliciously denied exit at the last minute.

The decision was for my parents to take me as far as Antwerp and to put me on a train for Paris. I would spend three days there and then continue to Le Havre and board the *S. S. Normandie* to sail to New York.

The sailing date of August 12, 1936 was picked as this meant that I would leave Berlin on August 6, in the midst of the famous Olympic games of 1936 (remembered by Americans for the great victory by Jesse Owens and other Americans over Hitler's Aryan supermen). It was a good choice because the rail traffic in and out of Berlin and at the Belgian border was extraordinarily heavy. We were waved through after a very quick check and breathed relief as we continued through Belgium towards Antwerp to meet our cousins, the Fisches, who had migrated two years earlier.

After a stay of three days in Antwerp with Flora Fisch, my parents and I said good-bye. They and the Fisches stood on the platform as my train pulled out of the station for Paris. I took the departure as a matter of fact, possibly because we were away from our home in Berlin, possibly because we knew this was the only intelligent step for us, but mostly, I think, because I was so confident that I would soon see my parents again in that new world that would be my home for the rest of my life.

The two days in Paris were quite exciting, as friends of the

Fisches took me sightseeing and made the days pass quickly. On the morning of August 12, a special train took all the transatlantic travelers and me to the docks at Le Havre, where we boarded the *S.S. Normandie* at 12 P.M. and pulled out of the harbor later in the afternoon.[11]

Editor's Notes

1
Hannah Davis Feibelman was born in Providence in 1919 and died in 2017. She and Jack were married for 71 years. Their years together will be portrayed in the second part of this article.

2
The author's given name was Hans-Joachim. It was not officially changed until he filed an application for naturalization in Providence's District Court on December 10, 1943, following his honorable discharge from the Army. Ironically, another oath of allegiance was required, so his naturalization was completed on June 27, 1944.

3
Jeffrey passed away in 2019.

4
Andrew's children are Harlyn (born 2017) and Jaxton (born 2020).

5
Clare's child is Graham Feiner (born 2019).

6
Jack discussed his parents' lives in America in later portions of his chronicle.

7
Built in 1891, the synagogue was burned during *Kristallnacht* (November 9 and 10, 1938). Later used as a grain silo, it was heavily damaged again during Allied bombing in 1945. The remnants were demolished in 1956.

8
Having searched online for genealogical sources in Indianapolis, I came up with little information about Gertrude Messing. I found, however, that Rabbi Mayer Messing (1843-1930), a native of Prussia, had led Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation (Reform) from 1867 to 1907 and that he and his wife were buried in its cemetery.

Then Evelyn Pockrass, librarian of IHC, with whom I was already corresponding about the following footnote, provided a link to an amazing reference: Mark Lasswell's lengthy article, "The Emma Messing Story," which was published in the April 2017 issue of *Commentary.* Emma (1874-1950), one of Rabbi and Mrs. Messing's four daughters, was secretary of the U.S. Embassy in Berlin from 1921 to 1939. She served under five ambassadors before working briefly at the U.S. Embassy in Stockholm and then returning home and retiring.

Emma had been an aspiring singer and actress who, based on her skills as a stenographer, found employment with the federal government, in Washington, DC, beginning in 1918. She never married but spent her final years with relatives in Indianapolis. She had also spoken frequently to Jewish organizations about the Nazi peril.

9
Members of the Feibelman family have deep roots in Indianapolis. For example, Charles

Feibelman and Rachel Kahn were married there in 1869. According to the 1870 census, Charles, a store clerk, had been born in Poland. Rachel was a native of Bavaria. The 1880 census states, however, that Charles was a lawyer born in Prussia, and Rachel, also 35, had been born in France. It is quite likely, however, that Rachel soon changed her name to Matilda, and that they were born several years apart.

By 1880, the Feibelmans had five children, all born in Indiana. Harry, the eldest, was born in 1872; Isadore, the second, was born the following year. The youngest, Leon, was not yet a year old.

Charles's grave in Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation's cemetery states that he had been born in 1840 and died in 1898. Matilda's grave in the same cemetery states that she was born in 1853 and died in 1932.

The 1900 census shows that Matilda, a widow, 46 years old, was born in Germany. Her six children, including two sons and four daughters, were living with her (as well as four boarders and a servant). Isadore, 25, was a lawyer, and his older brother, Harry, 29, was a tailor.

By the time of the 1910 census, Isadore, 37, was head of his own home, which included his mother and two sisters. In 1920, his sister, Gertrude, was still living with her mother.

Isadore was active in Jewish communal affairs. Evelyn Pockrass, librarian of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation, informed me that he served as IHC's president from 1913 to 1916. According to a front-page article in the June 8, 1928 issue of *The Ohio Jewish Chronicle,* he was elected president of District 2 of the International Order of B'nai B'rith at its 76th annual conclave in Columbus.

According to the 1930 census, Matilda was living with her two sisters, Minnie and Filka Mitchell, 60 and 70 years, who had emigrated from Germany in 1926. Living next door were: Isadore, 53; his wife Ella, 40; their children, Charles, 14, and Rachel, 7; and his widowed father-in-law, David Randolph, 65, a tailor.

Isadore's grave in IHC's cemetery documents that he was born in 1873 and died in 1954. His wife Ella (1889-1936) is buried nearby. Their son, Charles (1916-1971), who served as the congregation's president from 1953 to 1954, is also buried there. Isadore's sister, Ruth Gates (1893-1976), is not far away.

There is still another Feibelman family connection with Indianapolis. Jack's brother-in-law, Rabbi Maurice Davis (1920-1993), a Providence native who grew up at Temple Beth-El, led IHC from 1956 until 1967.

Barbara has explained that numerous members of the Feibelman family have lived in other parts of the United States. The list "goes on and on." One relative, Peter Feibleman, an actor, writer, and playwright, was Lillian Hellman's lover. His book, *Lilly: Reminiscences of Lillian Hellman*, was published by William Morrow in 1988.

10
According to his steamship's departure records, Jack's visa had been issued on June 9, 1936.

11
The ship's manifest shows that Jack, a student, could read English, French, and German. In contrast to some Austrian émigrés, whose "race" or "people" was listed as "Hebrew," Jack was identified as "German." His "final destination" (quite eerie-sounding within a Jewish context) was Camden, Arkansas. At this time, Jack stood only 5' 4". He would grow to nearly six feet.

A Luminous Evening at Temple Beth-El, March 17, 1957

Tony Silvia

This article is a sequel to the author's insightful portrait of Fred Friendly in our previous issue. Now Dr. Silvia, a Rhode Island native and a professor of journalism and digital communications at the University of South Florida, focuses on a quite special evening in Beth-El's history. Indeed, it was also quite an unusual moment within the history of broadcast journalism.

An address by Friendly alone, a towering news producer from Providence, would have been sufficiently notable. But he brought two stellar figures: a renowned radio and television journalist and a major literary figure. Of course Rabbi William G. Braude, a distinguished member of the Reform rabbinate, also spoke, and there were additional musical and textual flourishes. Indeed, as Prof. Silvia explains, this was an amazing confluence of talent, warmth, friendship, truth, and beauty.

It's too bad that video technology did not yet exist to document such a stunning evening. Sadly, not even an audio recording was made. But a reporter for *The Providence Journal* wrote a still vivid account. And the evening probably still shines within the memories of a few congregants who were present. Such a splendid celebration of Purim and one woman's life!

The tall, imposing figure with the baritone voice inched closer to the podium, knowing he was following a talk by one of America's greatest poets. It was a role to which one of America's most famous journalists was unaccustomed. Normally, he worked alone and, usually, on camera. This was different. It was a special occasion. It wasn't common for this giant, lurking figure, this imposing icon, to make a public speech. The man who came to be known as "the father of broadcast news" normally reserved his words for an audience of millions, first on CBS radio and then on CBS television. He was arguably as famous, if not more so, than President Dwight D. Eisenhower and had reported on as many wars as the general had fought.

On Sunday evening, March 17, 1957, Edward R. Murrow (1908-1965), the man who had brought a world war into American's living rooms and had toppled the despot Joseph McCarthy on television, looked restless within the confines of Providence's Temple Beth-El. It had taken a lot to get him here, and it would require some concessions on the part of those assembled, but especially the presiding rabbi. Murrow was seldom, if ever, seen without a lit cigarette in his hand, and he was noticeably nervous.

Still, he had promised his longtime producer and broadcast partner, Fred Friendly (1915-1998), that he would speak in honor of Friendly's departed mother, Therese Friendly Wachenheimer (1877-1954). Friendly, who had been born in New York but spent most of his youth in Providence, had asked Murrow for a favor and Murrow obliged. The two were tight; they were collaborators, but also partners, in the best sense of the word. Three years before, their collaboration had peaked with an exposé of Joseph McCarthy's Communist witch hunt, bringing an end to the senator's reign by using his own words against him. That "See It Now" broadcast, aired on March 9, 1954, went on to become one of the most historic television news programs in journalism history.

This was a much smaller stage for Murrow – in the thousands, not millions – but for the man to whom he was doing a favor, an equally towering Fred Friendly, it was the most important one of all. As a Friendly biographer, Ralph Engelman, described it:

> Friendly's mother died in Providence at the age of seventy-six... the funeral took place on April 19 at Temple Beth-El in Providence. Three years later, during the Purim festival of 1957, Friendly organized a memorial tribute to his mother with Rabbi William Braude presiding at Temple Beth-El's new building. Tribute was paid to Therese for her involvement in peace activities and civic affairs.[1]

It was a star-studded occasion, befitting not only his late mother, but also reflective of the television side of her son Fred, a true Friendly production. (And William G. Braude was a leading member of the Reform rabbinate.) The evening featured two luminaries: Edward R. Murrow, who had met Therese, and the poet and

Lincoln biographer, Carl Sandburg (1878-1967), the winner of three Pulitzer Prizes, who read from his works and sang folk songs.[2]

An account by the Temple's historian, Seebert J. Goldowsky, put the number attending as possibly more than 2,000. Approximately 1,600 congregants and guests were seated in the expansive sanctuary, another 300 in the chapel and classrooms, and 200 more were left standing, including 15 in the organ loft. It was the best-attended event in the Festival Forum, a series of programs for visiting rabbis, scholars, and artists established by Alfred Fain, in 1943, in memory of his wife, Elizabeth.[3] Indeed, this event was one of the best and most enthusiastically attended in all of Beth-El's history.

Temple members had already grown accustomed to welcoming celebrities to their sanctuary. On September 22, 1954, the Sisterhood had launched its Artists Series with a concert by Roberta Peters, the Metropolitan Opera soprano. The pianist Arthur Rubinstein performed on February 27, 1957, and the guitarist Andres Segovia a month later. The series would flourish for two decades.[4]

Of course Beth-El's glowing sanctuary made an ideal learning and performance space. Designed by the New York architect Percival Goodman, this was one of the first and finest examples of a modern synagogue in New England.[5] Indeed, it had few stylistic counterparts among all of the region's houses of worship.

Beth-El also recently enjoyed some national distinction, for it had been selected to exemplify modern American Judaism in the June 13, 1955 issue of *Life* magazine. This was the fifth part of a series on "The World's Great Religions," which became the title of a Time-Life book published in 1957. It included some of the same alluring photographs by two major photographers, Alfred Eisenstaedt and Cornell Capa.

Geraldine Foster and her husband, Warren, were among those attending the 1957 Festival Forum. Mrs. Foster, now 91, had been a Murrow fan since hearing his radio broadcasts during World War II, and she also watched his weekly TV series, "See It Now." As a Sandburg fan, she would later teach his poetry in Providence schools. She recalls being so eager to attend the program that the couple paid $5 for a babysitter (the equivalent of $46 today) to stay with their

four children (aged 9 months to 6 years) for the evening.

The Fosters picked up her parents, Beryl and Chaya Segal, driving their green Dodge from their Hillside Avenue home to Orchard Avenue. Jerry and Warren had been married at Temple Beth-El, in South Providence, in 1950, and her parents were close friends with Rabbi Braude, due to similar scholarly and religious interests and Saturday afternoon walks together. The Segal-Foster family always sat together in the same (unassigned) seats in the sanctuary: middle section, fourth row from the front.

Mrs. Foster, while not recalling the specifics of the Murrow speech, does vividly remember the decorum that not only survived but also flourished since the congregation's move from South Providence. Temple members (and their children) always dressed "to the nines," whatever the occasion. That night she wore one of two favorite hats, though probably not gloves. Virtually all the clean-shaven men, including the guest speakers, wore suits and ties. According to Mrs. Foster, there was no doubt a "classy and lovely" reception after the program in the social hall, with "fancy little pastries, served on silver platters." It was considered an honor for Sisterhood ladies to pour cups of tea or coffee for others, leading in the process to lively conversations.[6]

A printed program from that evening provided the order of events.[7] A congregant, William Bojar, extended welcoming introductions at 8:15, and the Temple organist, Alice Liffman, played a "Purim Medley." Donald J. Bernstein, a professional musician, sang "Megillah Blessings." Then Assistant Rabbi Selig Salkowitz and Mr. Bojar offered a "Megillah Reading." Rabbi William G. Braude delivered "Remarks." Friendly, Sandburg, and Murrow followed.

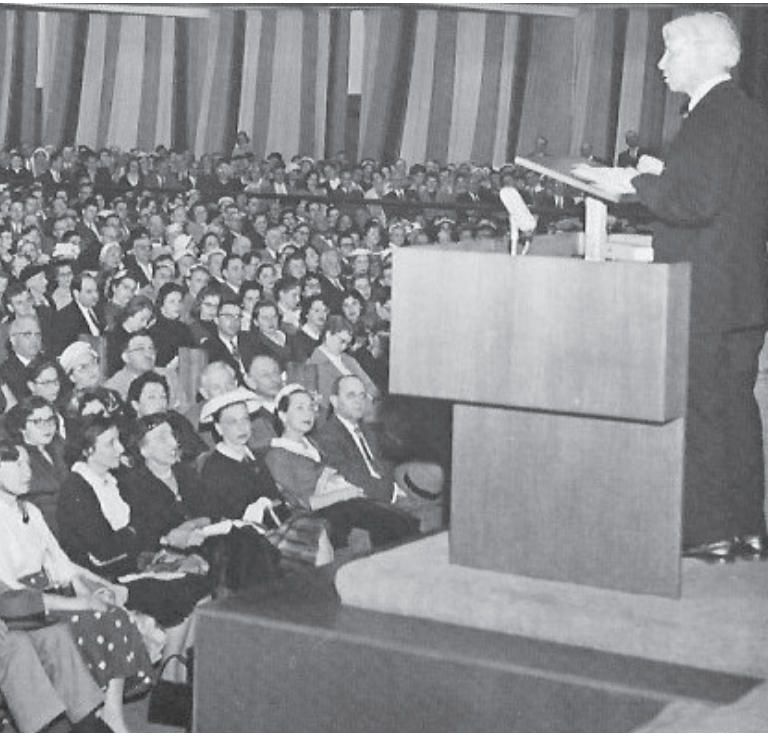
Rabbi Braude reminisced about the event a quarter century later:

A climactic event in the spirit of the Festi-

val Forum took place on Purim 1957 in the new Temple. Therese Friendly Wachenheimer died just before we moved to Orchard Avenue. A year later, her son Fred in observance of her Jahrzeit brought Edward R. Murrow, then at the height of his glory, to speak and Carl Sandberg to chat and strum his guitar. The entire place was filled- standing room only. Among the standees was Barnaby Keeney, president of Brown University[8], who when offered a seat declined, not wishing to receive preferential treatment.

Rabbi Braude unexpectedly found himself in a bit of a dilemma, described in this first-person account:

> Murrow, as people may remember, was an inveterate smoker. On the dais he looked yearningly in my direction for permission to smoke, which I gave. As he lit the cigarette his face lit up, even as the faces of some people grew dark with disapproval. My instinctive consent was, I found out later, confirmed by rabbis far more learned that I. A synagogue is not a shrine, they said, and smoking within its walls is permitted, particularly on a day such as Purim, and, of course, on any weekday. Within synagogues in Jerusalem I subsequently saw men smoking freely. Though Murrow's smoke wafted away, people still speak of that evening in the early days of the Temple on Orchard Avenue as a memorable one.[9]



Carl Sandburg at Beth-El

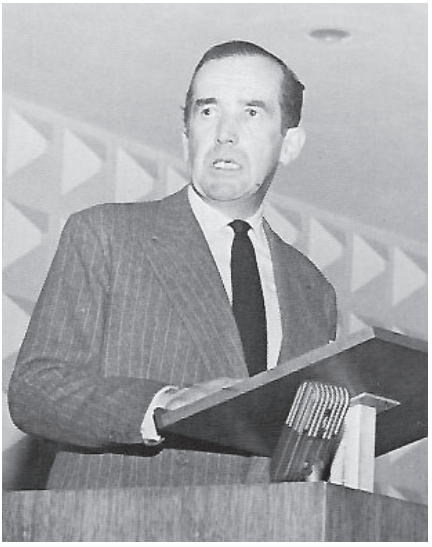
Rabbi Leslie Y. Gutterman, who served Temple Beth-El from 1970 until his retirement in 2015, recalls the story about the special smoking dispensation for Murrow. He says it remains very much a living part of temple lore. "Rabbi Braude made an exception, allowing Murrow, who was a chain smoker, to smoke in the sanctuary." He also remembers that the event might have included one more celebrity, a beloved Jewish entertainer, had it not been for a lapse in transportation. "Danny Kaye wanted to come as well, but there was not room in the small car."[10]

It's not surprising that Kaye (1911-1987), a famous actor, singer, dancer, and comedian, would want to attend. In his role as ambassador-at-large for UNICEF (the United Nations' Children's Fund), from 1954 until his death, he traveled around the world to entertain handicapped and underprivileged children. These humanitarian efforts were profiled on a 90-minute "See It Now" special in 1956, which had been produced by Fred Friendly. Included were clips of Kaye conducting the Israeli Philharmonic in Tel Aviv as well as pantomiming for Jewish kids.

Kaye and Murrow continued their association and friendship after the latter left CBS for a position as director of the USIA (United States Information Agency) during the Kennedy administration. Murrow even sent Kaye a letter of praise following the performer's trip to Russia in 1963: "You gave generously of your time and talents and this country reaps the reward. These are personal thanks, but they also reflect the sentiments of all of us who know what you did in the USSR and realize how much you accomplished."[11]

Similarly, Friendly and Murrow had a "See It Now" affiliation with Sandburg. On October 5, 1954, in an episode titled "A Visit to Flat Rock: Carl Sandburg," Murrow had interviewed the writer at his farm in North Carolina. In addition to reading from his only novel, *Remembrance Rock* (published in 1948), Sandburg sang a song and discussed the process of writing and poetry.[12] The TV show solidified the relationship between them that led to Sandburg's appearing in memory of Fred Friendly's mother. As mentioned, Murrow had met Therese Friendly Wachenheimer only once; Sandburg never had the opportunity.[13]

Edward R. Murrow at Beth-El



The Providence Journal, on the following morning, March 18,1957, made note of how special and rare it was to see these two American icons in the same public forum. Ted Holmberg explained, "They did it for a woman whose life is outlined in the organizations to which she belonged and often played a leading part in the World Affairs Council, the League for the Hard of Hearing, the Rhode Island Committee on the Cause of War, to name just a few." The account goes on to state, "Mr. Sandburg read his poetry and prose and sang. His songs were filled with word pictures of the people he loves. Mr. Murrow spoke with conviction of something he believes in deeply. It was a night for integrity at Temple Beth-El."[14]

Perhaps due to the order of speakers (Sandburg before Murrow) and an impending deadline, *The Providence Journal* story is heavy on Sandburg and light on Murrow's speech. (And there was no mention of a concluding "question period.") However, we can discern that the journalist's serious, even stern, tone contrasted sharply with the poet's buoyant presentation. Murrow's topic was the aftermath of the Suez crisis, which began the previous year. He had closely followed the story as it unfolded and was anxious that night to discuss before the Temple audience what he felt he could not express on CBS.

"He won three Emmy Awards Saturday night for his television work," Ted Holmberg, *The Journal* reporter, noted, "but he felt compelled to speak his mind away from the medium last night when he lashed out at what he called 'the abdication of power by

the United States in the Middle East.' He felt he could not on video express his own opinions because of the responsibility he feels he has in that medium." Proof of his reticence to take a side on the issue came in this statement to the Beth-El audience: "I cannot editorialize for CBS," he said, "but here I can express my opinions."

The Suez crisis had begun on October 29, 1956, when Israeli armed forces moved into Egypt, marching towards the Suez Canal. The Egyptian president, Gamel Abdel Nassar, had nationalized the canal- a major waterway that transported two-thirds of the oil used by Europe. Sometimes called "the Second Arab-Israeli War," Israel was backed by England and France, but Nasser won the conflict, proclaiming the cause of Egyptian and Arab nationalism. Israel lost its use of the canal, but retained shipping rights in the Straits of Tiran. Britain and France, on the other hand, lost virtually all their influence in the Middle East. The U.S. had the military might to force concessions concerning the canal from Nasser, but President Eisenhower chose to stay on the sidelines.[15]

One can discern from his comments that evening in Providence that Murrow strongly and sternly disagreed with the U.S. position, suggesting that it had destabilized the region by breaking with key allies. He was passionate on the subject, having interviewed Nasser on November 25, 1956 on CBS.[16] A critic for an entertainment industry publication, *Variety,* wrote of that interview: "It was a close-up portrait in which Nasser's personal attractiveness, intellectual sharpness, and messianic potential were evoked under Murrow's sharp questioning."[17]

Murrow had also traveled to the Suez on numerous occasions. As *The New York Times* had reported two months earlier, on September 23, "Edward R. Murrow and Fred Friendly have been out to Suez almost enough times to qualify for canal pilot licenses. The team is back in Egypt for the fifth time, the third in a little more than six months."[18]

One question raised by Murrow's choice of a topic that evening in Providence is why someone raised as a Quaker displayed such strong affinity for Israel during the Suez crisis. One answer dates to when he was 24 years old. In 1932, Murrow, fresh out of

college, took a job in Manhattan as the deputy director of the Institute of International Education, which had been founded in 1919. He actualized the Institute's mission of creating "dialogue between American students and teachers and their foreign counterparts" as a step toward "greater understanding between governments."

One obstacle soon arrived in 1933, when Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's minister of public enlightenment and propaganda, began burning books and dismissing Jewish professors from German universities. Murrow's job became one of helping some of these esteemed professors obtain positions at American schools. That period in his life, three years before he was hired at CBS, had a profound influence on him. As one prominent journalist, Nadine Epstein, put it, "He would rescue some of Europe's brightest minds from Nazi hands, an experience that would make him a lifelong champion of the Jews and Israel."[19]

When he did attain stature at CBS, Murrow's propensity was to favor Israel. Some of his news colleagues considered such positions biased. Murrow's sympathy during the Suez crisis galvanized that view. As Epstein wrote:

> Murrow was entranced by the spirit of Israel. Until now, nothing in his life had so inspired him as England standing alone, a small country, battered by superior numbers, not only surviving but persevering her civilized values under direct provocation. In the plight of Israel, a tiny, beleaguered democracy, surrounded by enemies, he found another England.[20]

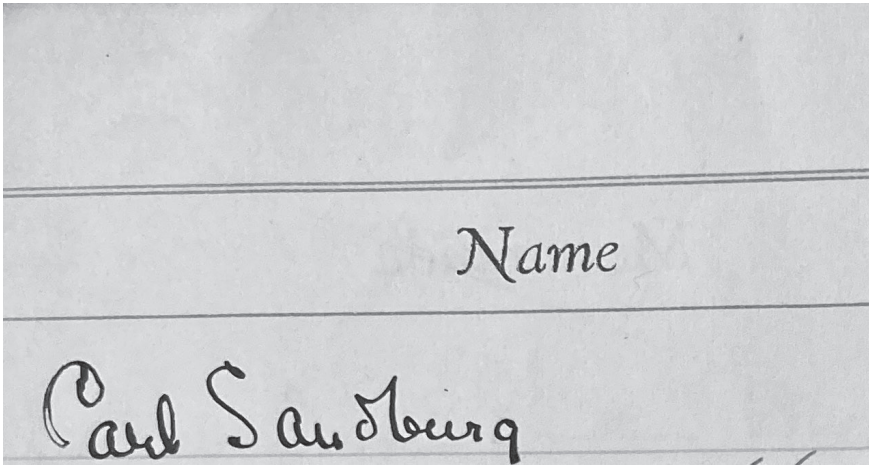
Several of Murrow's CBS colleagues tried, unsuccessfully, to counsel him. David Persico, another Murrow biographer, explained: "David Shoenbrun, himself a Jew, told him, 'Ed, everything that Israel does is not necessarily always right. You're prejudiced. Your credibility is in danger. And the credibility of an influential friends of Israel's like Ed Murrow is important."[21]

Murrow tried, but he never fully could separate himself from a belief in the underdog, the "little guy" being unfairly outnumbered and oppressed by the looming presence of a bully. That bully could be an individual (as in Senator Joseph McCarthy) or a nation

(be it Nazi Germany or Egypt). It was what he shared that night at Temple Beth-El, and it was fitting that he did so with the populist poet Sandburg. Both were rebels for a cause.

As *The Journal* reporter wrote of Sandburg, then 76, "Mr. Sandburg was a literary upstart. A newspaper reporter, a milk wagon driver, a harvest hand, house painter, dishwasher. What right did he have to write poetry or win a Pulitzer Prize?" Similarly, Murrow was the son of a sharecropper, who worked as a lumberjack and truck driver to pay his way through school. "But if these men are almost institutions, they bear their responsibilities with a charm, grace, and humility that is reflected in their words and actions," relayed *The Journal* account of the night Murrow came to town, flanked, but not upstaged by his poetic counterpart. For the over 2,100 fortunate witnesses to history in this city far from the television lights of New York, it was a night to remember and for remembrance.

On March 19, 1957, Temple Beth-El's president, Bertram Bernhardt, wrote Murrow a letter of thanks. "The Congregation Sons of Israel and David is most appreciative of your participation in the Festival Forum which took place here at Purim," the letter began. It ended with, "We consider it an honor that one as



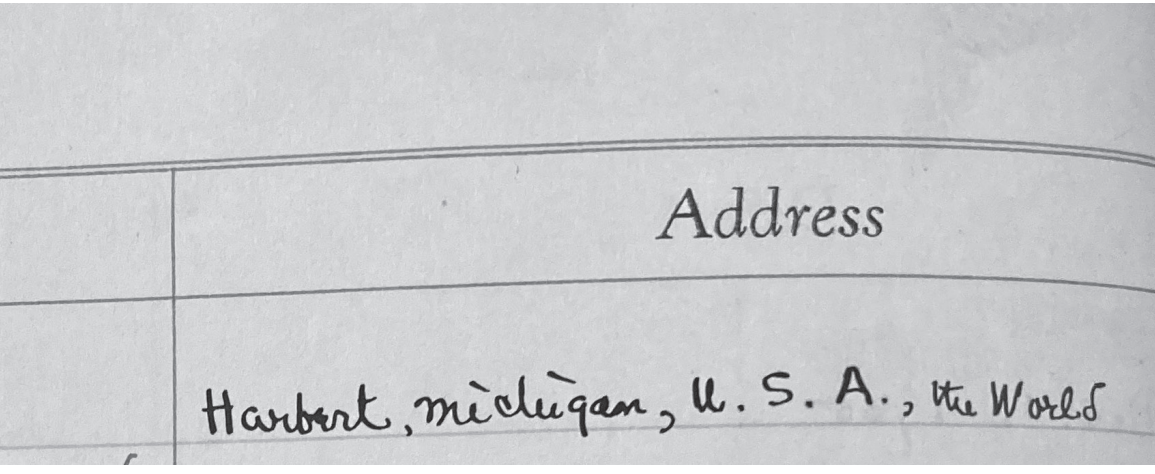
busy as you with the cause of human liberty and rights took time to come to us."[22] Busy as Murrow was globe-trotting, bringing down demagogues, and advocating for human rights, he also brought the evening to a close on a lighter, yet somewhat somber note.

"The one good thing about our 'See It Now' show with you," Murrow told Sandburg, "is that it will be around long after we are pushing up daisies." The poet replied, "That'll be nice."

On Murrow's desk in New York resided a picture of his speaking partner that evening, inscribed with these words: "Edward R. Murrow- reporter, historian, inquirer, actor, ponderer, seeker." It was signed, "Yrs. Carl Sandburg."

That night in Providence, the man who brought the war from Europe into Americans' living rooms via radio and pioneered the medium of television news felt free to be himself, to tell the story as he wanted to tell it, of a battle fought and lost – and battles yet to be waged. When he exhaled the last smoke from his sanctioned cigarette, he must have breathed more easily. Surely Therese Friendly Wachenheimer would have been happy. Her birthday had been 79 years and one day earlier.

guestbook, Wheeler School, 1936



Editor's Notes

1

Ralph Engelman. *Friendlyvision: Fred Friendly and the Rise and Fall of Television Journalism* (New York: Columbia University Press. 2009), 134.

2

American folk music was enjoying a resurgence during the late 1950s, but the Newport Folk Festival was not launched until 1959. See: George M. Goodwin, "The Newport Folk Festival: A Jewish Perspective," *The Notes* (1998), 484-95. Sandburg had published *The American Songbag*, an anthology of 280 ballads, in 1927. A second edition was published in 1950. When he sang, Sandburg often played guitar.

3

Seebert J. Goldwosky. *A Century and a Quarter of Spiritual Leadership: The Story of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David (Temple Beth-El), Providence, Rhode Island* (Temple Beth-El, 1989), 387. For more information on the Fain Festival Forum, established in 1943, discontinued during World War II, but revived in 1957 (perhaps to celebrate this special occasion surrounding Murrow's appearance), see: Goldowsky, 327.

4

Goldowsky, 367, 385.

5

See: George M. Goodwin, "Percival Goodman's Temple Beth-El in Providence, Rhode Island," *The Notes* (1994), 470-92; "A Conversation with Percival Goodman," *The Notes* (2017), 487-509.

6

Telephone interview with Geraldine Foster, conducted by George M. Goodwin, August 21, 2020.

7

The program was recently found among various Temple Beth-El documents from the 1950s owned by Barbara Orenstein, whose maternal grandmother, Sadie Davis, had been a Temple Confirmand and a longtime member of its Sisterhood.

8

Keeney had spoken at the Fain Festival Forum on April 29, 1956.

9

William G. Braude, "Recollections of a Septuagenarian." *The Notes* (1982), 435.

10

Rabbi Leslie Y. Gutterman, email conversation, October 9, 2019.

11

Murrow letter to Kaye, July 25, 1963, in Library of Congress. Retrieved from: https://www.loc.gov/resource/ihas.200197605.0

12

"See It Now: A Visit to Flatrock: Carl Sandburg," October 5, 1954. A copy of the original program and its description are located in the Paley Center for Media and retrieved from: https://www.paleycenter.org/collection/item/?q=murrow&p=3&item=T76:0118

13

Sandburg is known to have visited Providence on at least two occasions. On February 28, 1930, he spoke at Moses Brown School. See: www.rhodeislandshortstoryclub.org. In 1936, he delivered a graduation address at Wheeler School. Laurie Flynn, Wheeler's director of strategic communications, kindly provided this information.

14

Ted Holmberg, "Two Distinguished Visitors: Sandburg and Murrow Captivate Audience," *The Providence Journal,* March 18, 1957. Subsequent references to the first-person account of the evening at the Temple are attributable to this source, unless

otherwise noted.

15
A detailed history of the Suez dispute, including a timeline for the war over the canal, is found on History.com. November 9, 2009, updated April 3, 2020: https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/suez-crisis

16
A photograph from that interview, found in the Granger Historical Picture Archive, is described as "SUEZ CRISIS, 1956: President Gamal Abdel Nasser, left, is interviewed on American television by Edward R. Murrow, 25 November 1956, in the aftermath of the English-French-Israeli attack on Egypt, following Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal." Image No. 0112340. Retrieved from Granger.com.

17
Engelman, *Friendlyvision,* 104.

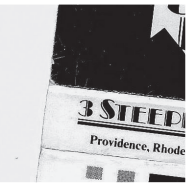
18
Richard Shepard, "Murrow and Friendly on New Journey to Egypt," *The New York Times,* September 23, 1956, 133.

19
Nadine Epstein, "Edward R. Murrow: As Good as it Gets," *Moment Magazine,* 2006. Retrieved from: http://www1.gcsnc.com/boe/2006/6_26/E.R.%20Murrow%20Monument%20Magazine%20Article.pdf

20
Same source as above.

21
Joseph E. Persico, *Edward R. Murrow: An American Original* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1988), 412.

22
On Temple letterhead, dated April 19, 1957 and addressed to "Mr. Edward R. Murrow, CBS Broadcasting Company, 485 Madison Ave., New York City, New York." In the archives of the Edward R. Murrow Collection at Tufts University.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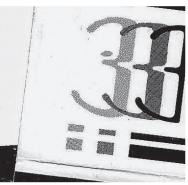
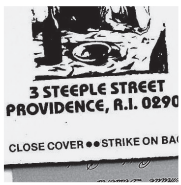
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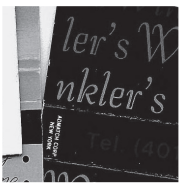
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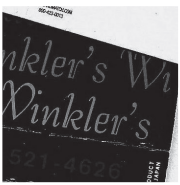
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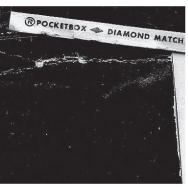
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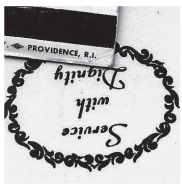
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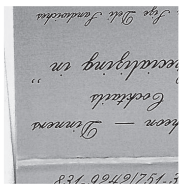

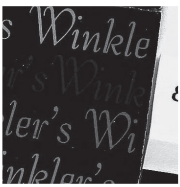
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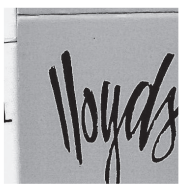
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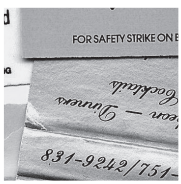
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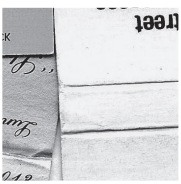

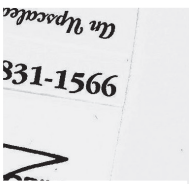
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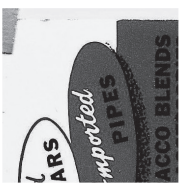
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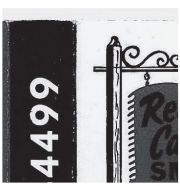
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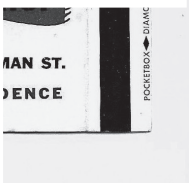
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More Luminescence

Michael Schwartz

Fortunately, Michael, a former Association president, is still active on our board. In case you're worried by the following story, he smoked only pipes and cigars, but gave up this habit about 35 years ago. Yes, he's still a passionate collector, but he prefers holes-in-one. A special thanks goes to Michael's sister, Bobbie Friedman, my first and highly creative graphic designer, who contributed the accompanying montage.

Around 1971, I began collecting matchbook covers as souvenirs. Readers of a certain age may recall that many restaurants and businesses were happy to provide matchbooks as advertisements. I now have about 1,500 pieces in my collection, mostly from places I have visited in this country or abroad, or as gifts from friends who know about my hobby. There are also organizations of matchbook collectors (known as phillumenists) that assist in the trading or the occasional buying and selling of these covers. During the last 20 years, especially in the Northeast, matchbooks have become scarce. If any reader has a group of matchbooks with a Rhode Island connection, I would love to hear from you.

All the matchbooks in the nearby montage were obtained from Providence restaurants or businesses with Jewish owners. Sadly, all of these establishments have closed.

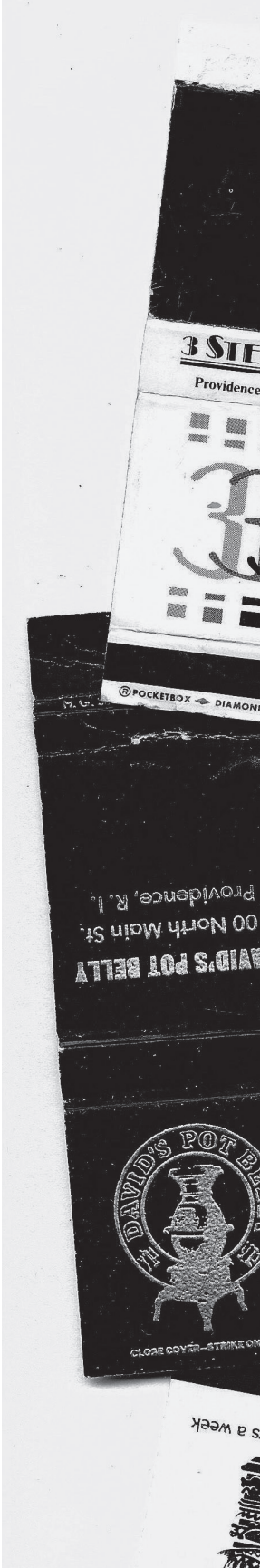
For more than 40 years, my Providence office was located near Three Steeple Street, a restaurant owned by the late Brian Kenner. I went there for lunch or dinner at least once a week. The Z Bar & Grill, on Wickenden Street, belonged to three brothers: Nathan, Saul, and Jack Lindenfeld. The Solomon family owned the beloved Lloyd's Restaurant. The matches shown here were from its Hope Street location, near the Pawtucket line. At present, I don't have any matches from its former location on Waterman Street, near Brown University.

Winkler's was widely regarded as the best steak house in downtown Providence. The late and lamented Rue de L'Espoir, run by Deb Norman, was of course a fixture for decades on Hope Street, near Fox Point. The Hi-Hat was a jazz club at Davol Square founded by the late Larry Friedlander (my senior class president at Classical High). Ziegfelds', also at Davol Square, was a wonderful deli operated by the Fishbein family that also owns the Coffee Connection in Fox Point.

Harry and Rose Ostrach founded The Red Carpet Smoke Shop, on Waterman Street, in 1948. It remained in operation until 2014, when their grandson, Eric Chaika, turned out the lights. For three generations the Sugarman family owned and operated Mount Sinai Memorial Chapel on Hope Street.

Perhaps the rarest matchbook shown is from David's Pot Belly, which was located during the late 1970s near the intersection of North Main and Thomas Streets in Providence. Known for its omelets and burgers, the restaurant was originally located on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village. It was a common haunt of celebrities, such as John Lennon. The food was so renowned that its owner, David Levine, was hired to cater the meals for performers at the Woodstock Festival in 1969.

While most of my matchbooks are from restaurants or bars, many are from clubs (golf or otherwise). Some of my other favorites include matchbooks from weddings and bar mitzvahs that were distributed as favors during parties or receptions. Some of these especially tacky matchbooks, with red velvet and doves kissing, have couples' names and their wedding dates. They have made great gags for anniversary gifts. I've been told that they remain either cherished presents or the objects of custody battles during divorces.



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Clara

Michael Fink

In recent years, readers of our journal have learned far more about Mike's family than perhaps any other. You'll recall, for example, his articles about Uncle Herb in 2007, Uncle Sam in 2008, and Aunt Lillian in 2009. A quite recent article, in 2018, focused on his brothers, Eddie and Chick. But Mike's more distant *mishpocha* have also been portrayed. In 2011 he wrote about Roger Williams, and in 2014 he saluted "My Feathered Friends."

Thus, it was perhaps inevitable that Mike would create a portrait of Clara Fink, who was both his paternal and maternal relative. It also happened that Clara lived only a few steps from his parents' home. Indeed, one reason Mike can still easily recall Clara is his continuing residence in that same abode.

Mike and I recently discussed whether Clara was a quite unusual person or somehow typified immigrant Jewish women of her generation. Well, yes and no. Alas, she probably would have remained forgotten without Mike's desire to rescue or resurrect her.

Mike's series of loving family portraits (and a 2018 article by his wife, Michael) leave still another question unanswered. Having succeeded Uncle Herb as the keeper of Fink family lore, who will follow Mike? None of his three children has yet stepped forward, and the seven Fink grandchildren are now too young. I hope that our journal, as a reservoir of facts and feelings, will continue to attract all kinds of historians and memoirists. Perhaps my kids too.

My mother called her "Aunty." She dwelt at 112 Summit Avenue, a few houses uphill from our home. We lived at 12 Creston Way, which had originally been labeled d'Estaing Road. Only having recently moved away from its farmland function, it had once been the campground for French troops during our Revolutionary War. Hillside Avenue cornered left, and this was why Camp Street was so titled.

Clara (1884-1962) was likewise a lady with a pivotal role in my own personal history. She was the second wife of my paternal grandfather, Harry (1881-1967). His first wife, Mira, had died in Montreal after leaving London, and giving birth in 1908. So why did my Mom call her "Aunty"? Well, it's not so easy to explain, so please bear with me.

A charming member of the bride's family attended the 1918 wedding ceremony of Clara Cohen and Harry H. Fink in Canada. Was her name Blima, Becky or Betty? Moe Fink, the groom's firstborn (in London in 1904), also appeared at that celebration. He was struck by the beauty of his thus – cousin – and courted her during a number of motor journeys from Providence to Montreal. In 1926, they eloped and settled at 67 Verndale Avenue near Roger Williams Park. A decade later, they followed Clara and Harry's migration to the East Side, the Summit neighborhood, and the Memorial Road oval. Of course Betty and Moe were my parents.

Thus, Clara was both my great aunt and my only living "grandmother." My two elder brothers, Eddie and Chick, and I were all named after women. Maternal names rise like kites or balloons and then blow away with winds and breezes.

Can you follow this so far? It meant that Clara was the usurping stepmother for Moe and something akin to his mother-in-law as well. Not a formula for goodwill in conventional folklore or a Disney animated fairy tale. Betty, nevertheless, fondly and amiably called her father-in-law "uncle," and received Clara and Harry as a symbol of a united family front.

Clara also became the stepmother to Moe's siblings, Ruth and Sam, but within a few years, two of their own American children, Edith and Herbert, were born in Providence. They therefore became for me both cousins and aunt and uncle, significant links who represented both sides of my parental tree.

When, after World War II, my Canadian aunts, uncle, and cousins drove through New England to visit us boys and our folks, they likewise called Clara their aunt, but pronounced her name "Claire" in the French style.

Everyone agreed that Clara/ Claire had been a "beauty" in

her prime, but some relatives differed in their emotional attitude toward her high style. Ruth, for example, loathed her the way the Brits loathed the Duchess of Windsor! She laughed at Clara's Yiddish pronunciations and resented her vanity, especially her narcissistic collection of large, color photographs of herself alone.

Her stepson, Sam, let slip slight hints that she treated him as an intrusive stranger, and had to roll his own cigarettes and purchase his own bread. Little by little, my mother began to alter her affectionate respect toward Clara and became slightly reluctant to defend her from harsh judgments.

Next to the fireplace in our then new house on Creston Way, there were several framed photographs. One showed Harry in his youth, and another portrayed his first wife, Mira (after whom I was named). Clara instructed her niece and daughter-in-law, Betty, to take down the second photo. She did so, but rather unwillingly.

While dressed in her 1920s finery or even in the earlier Gibson fashion, Clara would stroll downhill on Thursdays to pay a call on my mother. This is when Betty would do the week's laundry, iron everything she had taken in from the outdoor lines, and prepare for Shabbat. It struck me as poetic, even then, that as my mother would press out the wrinkles in the shirts, she would smooth slights and encourage good will among the contradictions of the conversations and confessions.

My grammar school, Summit Avenue, stood right next door to the fine mini-mansion of this, our ancestral castle, at the corner of Creston and Summit. The school was a somewhat grim, dark brick structure, an elementary prison for pupils, set right beside the Jewish Orphanage and later the Miriam Hospital. There were even separate boys' and girls' entrances, as indicated by carvings above the stone portals.

After classes, I often stopped by at the back door of Clara's house. (Notice, I didn't refer to Clara and Harry's house.) She would give me, of all things, a chocolate cupcake. No, not a knish, not a Yiddish cookie, but an American cupcake, homemade and familiar. There was a sunroom with wicker furniture and many thriving plants on the windowsills, but what captured my attention and enthralled

Clara & Harry Fink

me was a goldfish in a bowl, set on a maple table. There was also a golden canary in a turquoise cage, which swayed due to an open window or the bird hopping from one perch to another. On those afternoons homeward bound, I sought safety from snowball wars or half-imagined threats from goyish classmates.

Harry was either at the Fink Brothers' furniture factory or, later, at his Eddy Street studio, so Clara was alone and free to display for me sundry images of her youthful "great beauty," as the family began to experience major events of the now bygone 20th century.

The flourishing '20s had made the manufacturing center of Providence profitable enough, until the Crash caused the emphasis on home furnishings to switch over toward the retail step. Then Moe and Betty's "Wayside Furniture," at 139 Waterman Avenue in East Providence, made its entrance into my experience of our dynasty. True, Harry and Clara's stucco Summit castle, built in 1927, had two lanterns compared to our single light. Their backyard had roses galore, and the sofas, and hearth with its andirons, were far more lavish and elaborate than our more modest, middle-class taste. The cobblestones on our driveway and the bit of brick mosaic on our chimney, for example, indicated that we had somewhat arty taste, but that emphasis had none of the regality and the impressive décor of Clara's domain. Hung over and above her grand piano was a huge tapestry with her maiden-name initials, "C.C." Also memorable was its pattern of peacocks and roses!

Edith took pride in her mother. "She can stop the traffic with her gait and her gear," she would brag to me.

A few words here about Edith and Herb. In those days,

family tended to orbit around one another, before the postwar "nuclear family" took over the American dream-style. Thus, when my parents had a bungalow in Oakland Beach, Warwick, Clara, Harry, Edith, and Herb had a similar retreat a few streets away. At that shoreline, Herb, the youngest, would build boats and decorate the merry-go-round and give whatever coins he earned to help the household. Edith would gather seashells, string them into necklaces and, eventually, rise to a modest level of fame in Rhode Island's costume jewelry industry. She even stayed in her birthplace homestead and saved it during the fall from grace throughout the Depression, War, and Postwar eras. I recall the two little silk flags with stars, a home proud of two GI sons protecting America.

I rather cherish the memory of my Cub Scout seasons. Edith invited me to teach her how to tie knots with rope. She translated the twine into gold – like a folkloric, pre-tech miracle!

Like his older half-brother, Sam, who saved lives of wounded warriors in the Philippines, Herb fought on the battlefields in Europe. Both had mutual roots right here on Summit Avenue. Of course Herb had a dignified career as a professor of both printmaking and painting at Rhode Island School of Design.

Herb often used the Providence Art Club to present shows of his work that illustrated the people and events of his private life. Perhaps inspired by the noble painters of Providence's grand past, like the images found in the RISD Museum, he painted Clara. That charming, idealized, and romantic likeness now belongs to the museum at Southern Illinois University, in Carbondale, where he served later both as a professor and a dean.

Herb had the habit of sending a "c.c." of all his letters pertaining to his boyhood and family to me, thus appointing me as official historian of our clan. And I made a movie about Herb's career, which is in the RISD library and archives. Among those confessions are rather harsh accounts of his mother, father, siblings, nephews, and nieces. "She was a simple, country woman," is the way Herb assessed his mother! He described how she would dominate a horse by punching its head!

I may not always have sought during later phases of my

youth to sustain my affection for Clara, but I have often written about her with admiration and even fascination, and I have never given up my focus on her centrality. For example, her Yiddish accent charmed me. With a limited vocabulary, she could deal with most situations succinctly and powerfully. "You're rrrotten!" she proclaimed, if you didn't greet her with a formal kiss. By contrast, she'd remark, "You couldn't be any nicerrr," if she was pleased. If you complained about something, she might sympathize for your plight with, "*Planty tsouris in da vorldt!*" Yes, it was easy to laugh at her exaggerated opinions, but in my case the giggles were mixed with goodwill, although, in fact, my brothers were less kindly in their attitudes toward this lady.

Nearly an infinite number of my memories endure, including a few that recur regularly. One is when Herb and Sam met at that corner of Summit and Creston, visiting their father, Harry, and I saw them nod their heads and sort-of-salute each other. The very thought of that moment can still bring tears to my eyes. The dignity and complexity of that encounter bring various and sundry complex things to my mind. I won't spell them out, but instead invite you to project symbols of your own.

On the beach at Narragansett in mid-summer, Clara, who had closed off her Summit Avenue parlor with protective mothballs and taken down the draperies and covered them, would spend a fortnight bathing in the therapeutic salt sea and then raise her face up to bask in the blessings of the great sun above. Clad in a black bathing outfit, with her thin, white hair, she looked unglamorous yet regal all the same.

If my mother and I managed to get to that marvelous shoreline for a healthful hike towards the dunes, we had to politely and properly peck a kiss on the warm cheek of "Aunty" or "Grandma" and bid her the blessings of July or August. "Couldn't be any nicerrr" would be her response, and we would escape along the sands of summertime.

On occasion, Harry, fully dressed in city clothes, might visit his selfishly vacationing spouse. Betty, my beloved Mom, would slightly disapprove of such an escape from domestic responsibility.

I saw my mother in tears only once. This was on the drive to Lincoln Park Cemetery to bid farewell to Clara. But why was she weeping? I believe that she felt guilty in both directions – for forsaking her Cohen kin and for favoring the Finks.

Clara had wept silently when her correspondence with lost relatives still in Romania, her birthplace, came to an end. I saw her mourning and grieving on the wicker bench in that sunroom.

Yet our Clara made enemies and family foes among her allies and admirers who wished her well. If, as a teen, I sought refuge from solitude, I might hide out at the Hope Theatre, but then run into Clara. Embarrassed, I might avoid the requisite kiss in public.

As I summon lost days from long ago, I remember Moe and Betty laughing secretly while staring at a full-page article in the *Sunday Journal Magazine.* Attorney General J. Joseph Nugent was hunting for a woman who rivaled Marlene Dietrich in the 1939 movie, "Destry Rides Again." She was a naughty lady respected by the Mafia but not by respectable residents and citizens of the

portrait by Clara's son, Herbert, ca. 1960

community. This woman, "most wanted" on the list of hidden criminals, was Clara's cousin, Eva! So, underneath the pride and power and influence of the grande dame of my boyhood, there were many other strings. As Marcellus confides to his friend, Horatio: "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark." And, in the same tragedy, as Hamlet later remarks to the Ghost, "Oh cursèd spite, That ever I was born to set it right!"

Of course in the end we are indeed all cousins. In my perhaps poetic perspective, we are also cousins to all creation, all creatures upon our shared and designated planet. But in the case of the castle on the Fink-Cohen hillside corner, I have an important footnote to illustrate this point. I have a former RISD student – now an alumna – who is a gracious hostess. She enjoys eccentrically calling me her "grandson," not her former professor. But she is in fact named Cohen.

She receives her neighbors at 112 Summit Avenue quite frequently by her parlor hearth, so familiar to me, or in that rose garden, where a simple Norway maple has grown to a giant size. This former student found the aforementioned tapestry, with the birds and flowers woven against a dark and dignified background beneath the initials "C.C." Some semesters ago, she gave me the tapestry as a treasure and a metaphor for the strange bond that binds up our friends, relatives, neighbors, and fates.

Amy, an art teacher, also conducts classes in her basement studio, which was once my boyhood pirates' den. Uncle Herb had decorated it with murals of buccaneers. Were they refugees from the Inquisition or intruding invaders? Likewise, were his images of Indians a lost tribe of Israel? A bit of research on Google would probably confirm or perhaps contest these claims.

Yes, there are strange and wondrous ties and knots among us, especially among the bays and byways of Jewish Rhode Island. In this regard, Clara may have been only one unforgettable example.

This spring, as I stroll uphill or downhill recreating the past or percolating the past into the present, a thousand pale pink roses, with a rich perfume aroma, poke through the fence. And I salute these lovely souvenirs of my and our Clara.

Harry & Clara at wedding of Harry's son, Samuel, Narragansett Hotel, Providence, 1952

former Shaarei Zedek, 2020

Praying for Survival

Gerald S. Goldstein

How wonderful and ironic! One of Rhode Island's most gifted and accomplished journalists, now 80 years of age, has his first article in *The Notes.* Of course so many readers of our journal will readily and happily recognize his byline.

Gerry spent his first eight years in South Providence, before his family moved to Watertown, New York, and he became a bar mitzvah at Congregation Degel Israel. But the Goldsteins returned to Little Rhody, and Gerry graduated from Hope High School in 1957. Four years later he was one of the University of Rhode Island's first graduates in journalism (and a brother of Alpha Epsilon Pi).

Gerry spent the first 15 years of his career as a reporter and an editor at the *Narragansett Times.* In 1976, he became a *Providence Journal* staff member and eventually managed its South County bureau for no fewer than 25 years.

Some of his favorite *ProJo* stories include one about his late colleague, Brian Dickinson, who continued writing despite the ravages of Lou Gehrig's disease. Another article, appearing in the *Sunday Journal Magazine,* was about the 1978 sinking of a Galilee fishing vessel, *Lobsta I,* and the loss of five members of its crew. Still another of his favorite *Sunday Journal Magazine* stories, published on November 17, 1985, is reproduced below with the kind permission of The *ProJo's* executive editor, Alan Rosenberg, a Temple Beth-El member who once served as South County bureau chief.

Gerry and his wife, Ann, a clinical psychologist, are longtime members of Beth-El. They live on a five-acre hobby farm in Greenville, where they care for three miniature horses and two Tibetan terriers. Yes, a farmer from Somerset Street in South Providence!

Of course the fate of Congregation Shaare Zedek and its once thriving Jewish neighborhood has been addressed in many of our journal's articles. Two of the most recent were photo essays: Danielle Herzberg's in 2012 and Mel Blake's in 2013. The crumbling synagogue still stands but without a new use. Ironically, Congre-

gation Beth Sholom, which had been given ownership of the synagogue and its contents, sold its own Camp Street structure in 2020 and now gathers in the Dwares Jewish Community Center.

Alas, Gerry's article raises many complex issues about the decline and dispersal of other Jewish communities within and near the Ocean State. Perhaps another way to say this is that, ideally, the demise of one community may lead to another's birth or rebirth. Such is the agonizing and joyful story of our people.

It is 6:20 A.M. on Broad Street, but the only hint of dawn is a softening in the sky that has turned it from onyx to the color of a ripe plum. The corner spas of South Providence are coming awake; light pours out the open door of Tommy's Cozy Grill, spilling a yellow puddle across the fusty sidewalk.

Turreted and gabled, Victorian triple-deckers begin to emerge, their blemishes still hidden by darkness. Later, daylight will unmask the broken windows, the graffiti, the decayed porch railings that have lost their carved banisters and look like toothless gums. By day, the houses of lower Broad Street will show themselves for what they are: timeworn, wounded things.

The sleeping neighborhood is as silent as a stifled yawn – save for the footfalls of a young woman on Glenham Street who sidesteps little mounds of rubbish and makes for the bus stop on Broad. She moves swiftly and deliberately, because this is no place to walk in the dark; not in the year 1985 and not in the year 5746, which converge at their weary, unusual crossroads.

Six forty-five A.M. at Broad and Glenham, and the Sons of Abraham are doing what they do every morning. They are coming before God with that curious mixture of awe and familiarity that marks the Orthodox Jew at prayer.

Their Hebrew chant, wedded to a lugubrious melody preserved from time out of mind, already echoes through the Shaare Zedek-Sons of Abraham Synagogue:

> Adonia ahavti m'on beytecha, umkom mishkan k'vodecha.
> "Lord, I love the habitation of thy house, and the place
> where thy glory dwelleth."

Thus intones Barney Moss, 70[1], an optometrist, who is up front leading the worship, wrapped in his flowing fringed tallis, or prayer shawl.

Moss chants richly, robustly, reverently. But in this synagogue, where the faithful converse daily with their Maker, jocular informality provides a leavening for sanctity. So as Moss continues, lost in prayer, one tallis-clad worshipper leans over to another and comments, "Nice suit, Max. That's some suit."

Max Kerzner, a 75-year-old retired businessman[2], is soon called upon to make a blessing over the Torah – the book of holy law, the rock of Judaism. As he approaches Moss, Kerzner releases a sigh.

"What's the matter?" Moss asks him. "You got a cold?"

"No – I'm old," Kerzner complains good-naturedly.

With a philosophical shrug Moss responds, "So who's young?"

Fourteen are here this morning – a banner day, since this is four more than are needed to make the minyan, the quorum without which a Jewish service cannot be held.

The men are praying in the little upstairs chapel, because Shaare Zedek's cavernous 600-seat sanctuary would swallow them whole. From under their velvet yarmulkes, or skullcaps, white hair peeks out; the small talk is of prescriptions, muscle relaxants, chiropractors.

In this graceful, imposing synagogue that aches with emptiness, the young are nowhere to be found. For the dwindling faithful who pray here, the word of the Lord God often comes filtered through a hearing aid.

Congregation Shaare Zedek-Sons of Abraham, the last direct religious link to the teeming immigrant Jewish community of South Providence 50 years ago, is struggling to survive.

Louis Sacarovitz, 78[3], came right out and said it as he schmoozed – gabbed – with some of his comrades here after services one morning: "It's very bad. I doubt it'll last another four or five years. This year we lost four members who came every day. Am I wrong?"

Too often, says Sacarovitz, he and his fellow worshippers

light another bulb on the bronze memorial plaques holding names of the departed: Izak Berger, Selma Shapiro, Reva Malin… Too often, Shaare Zedek hears yet another voice sharing in the melancholy murmur: *Yisgadal v'yis-kadash sh'mey raba…*

This is Mourner's Kaddish, the prayer for the dead.

There are no children to carry this congregation forward because long ago its young people fled decaying South Providence. They worship now at the sprawling Conservative and Reform temples of the East Side, and Cranston, and Warwick. No longer does Shaare Zedek need a full-time rabbi; a rabbi, after all, is primarily a teacher. Here, there are no youngsters to be taught, no youngsters to make a future.

Synagogue President Joe Margolis, 78[4], says it has been years since Shaare Zedek (Gates of Righteousness) held a bar mitzvah. And locked away upstairs are the gleaming brass posts, topped with Stars of David, that once held the chuppa, the ritual wedding canopy, over Jewish brides and bridegrooms.

Above inner-city ruin, the columned Shaare Zedek looms majestically, all brick and granite and stained glass. Inside, the pews of burnished mahogany, the delicate curve of the balcony, the soft glow of the lights are reminiscent of the days when all this was new, in 1911.

Ironically, though the synagogue was built by nontraditional Reform Jews, it has owed its tenuous survival for the past three decades to Orthodoxy. Today it is tended and protected by a thinning group of aged men who cling to ageless ways of Jewish worship: no English, strict segregation of women, who are relegated to the back pews and the balcony; little explanation of what is going on during the service.

Each morning at prayer – sometimes there are barely enough to make the minyan – the men of Shaare Zedek literally wrap themselves in Judaism. They wear their yarmulkes; their wide, draping tallises; their tefillin, small black boxes containing scripture that are affixed to the arm and forehead with elaborately coiled leather straps.

Thus prepared, these aging men spend the first hour of ev-

ery day serving God: chanting, reciting, helping the bereaved choke out the Kaddish. And also they utter the ancient, mighty declaration that has been the cornerstone of Judaic monotheism since memory began:

> *Shema Yisrael, adonai elohainu adonai echad.*
> Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

"Prayer, charity, repentance – that's the life of the Jewish people," says Synagogue President Margolis. "We have a rich heritage – values that are worth fighting for. We want to hold on as long as we can."

Why do these men cling to their Orthodox synagogue when they could close it and join temples in safer neighborhoods?

Ask this of Max Kerzner and he fixes you with a quizzical stare that says you have asked a stupid question. But he is polite enough to respond. He does this in the time-honored Jewish way, by answering a question with a question:

"Why? Why do I not eat ham? Why don't I have milk with meat? Because I was brought up that way."

This is so, says Sheldon Shapiro, 65[5], who also comes every day.

"You can't change the spots on a leopard," he says, adding, "We have some very faithful people; they come out of love for the synagogue, and they don't want to see it go down the tubes. We had one man in his 90s, and he would always be the first to come. If the snow was a foot high he shoveled a path so the others could come in."

There is truth in this, says Harry Krakowsky, 73[6], who declares, "I've come in blizzards and in storms."

Krakowsky, like most members of the synagogue – Margolis and Sacarovitz are among the exceptions – lives far from Shaare Zedek; he's on the East Side now. He gets up at 5 each morning so he can pick up a few of the others and get to services by the 6:45 starting time.

"I'm not a religious fanatic, but when I get here I'm happy about it," says Krakowsky. He has not forgotten that Shaare Zedek

was there for him when he had to say Kaddish every day for the traditional 11 months after his brother's death, in 1974.[7] Now he repays this debt by helping to make up the daily minyan.

Krakowsky isn't bashful about complaining if the buzz of conversation gets too loud during the service: "Many a time I'll give a clop – "Be quiet, some people want to pray.'"

David Hassenfeld, one of the founders of this congregation who now also lives on the East Side, still comes every Wednesday to help make up the minyan. It's his way of keeping contact with his heritage. "I would feel like a traitor to my ancestors if I left," he says.

A lawyer, Hassenfeld came to South Providence from Austria when he was 6.[8] His immigrant father and his uncles later founded what is now the giant Hasbro Company.[9]

Hassenfeld hopes Shaare Zedek will endure, but he is not optimistic:

"Can it survive? I'd love to see it, but I don't expect it. Joe Margolis is almost 80 years old, and he's been carrying the load. I'm 71 and I'm one of the youngest members of the board. It's very discouraging, but I venture to predict it will be sold. We haven't got a single new member."

Margolis, a dapper man with energy that belies his years, says it isn't just the Orthodoxy that makes Shaare Zedek worth preserving. There are, after all, several other Orthodox synagogues to turn to in Rhode Island.

But Shaare Zedek is special – not only because of the grandeur of the building, he says, but also because of its link with a vanished South Providence, still remembered fondly by thousands of older Rhode Islanders.

Shaare Zedek is an amalgam of four synagogues that served the immigrant Jews crowding South Providence in the first half of this century. At that time the neighborhood was a colorful enclave of polyglot Europeans – Russians, Austrians, Romanians – who came as greenhorns to peddle rags and junk, to work in factories, to open stores… and to build the synagogues that served them and their *landsleit,* their countrymen.

They made Willard Avenue the center of their lives, for its

mural at former Shaarei Zedek, 2013

bakeries turning out braided loves of challah, Jewish bread as yellow as the yolk of an egg; for its delicatessens, with their mounds of salty red lox sliced from the belly of the salmon; for the butcher shops with their kosher chickens, killed out back by the schochet, the Jewish slaughterer.

The street was home to three synagogues, which rang with the chanting of the pious. There was the South Providence Hebrew Congregation, and the exotically named Tifereth Israel and Linath Hazedek. And nearby Robinson Street had another, Beth Israel Ansche Austria.

Eleanor Horvitz remembers the sounds and the color of Willard Avenue. Now she lives on the East Side, but as librarian-archivist for the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association[10] she has spent long hours researching, and recalling, the old South Providence that was her home in the 1920s: "I'll never forget it – the smell of the bakeries, the fish wrapped up in newspapers, the sound of the live chickens cackling. When you bought one it was so freshly slaughtered that when you got it home it was still warm. And then you had to singe off the pinfeathers."

Another who remembers is Bernard Spigel, a third-generation kosher butcher. His shop, now on Reservoir Avenue, was opened on Willard Avenue by his late father, Fred, who helped found Shaare Zedek. Fred's father, Harry, formerly a tailor in the Russian army who fled that country's massacres of Jews, had been a South Providence butcher for decades.[11]

Bernie Spigel, 54[12], remembers the neighborhood from the

1940s, when he was there every day helping his father in the store. "You had four bakeries," he recalls. "You could taste the freshness of everything – the Danish, the cheesecake, the rolls. It was like a miniature Lower East Side.

Mrs. Horvitz's research has resulted in a history of South Providence that includes the following vignette, provided by Joseph Jagolinzer. He recalled Morris Golemba's grocery store, where he had worked as a boy in the first decade of the century:

"Everything in the grocery store in those days was loose. Butter was cut from the tub; vinegar had to be drawn from a barrel. Any kind of chickpeas were lined up in sacks. Even the cane sugar and the cubes of sugar were loose in a barrel. Prunes were pressed in a box. One had to dig them up with a fork. The herring was in small barrels… laid beautifully… the line and rhythm of the barrel being following by the herrings. Jewish people were great herring eaters."

Those who shopped in such places – many of them parents of the men who keep Shaare Zedek alive today – were mostly poor. They lived in the tenements of Blackstone Street, Dudley Street, Prairie Avenue.

Some did not have enough money to rent flats with bathtubs, so they used the city's public bathhouse. This was a busy building on Gay Street that had atmosphere enough to rate a nostalgic write-up in a *Providence Sunday Journal* article of 1948, with Beatrice Levin reminiscing:

> "An hour or two before twilight, if you lived in the neighborhood of Gay Street, you saw many of the women who had hurried that morning to Willard Avenue for their shopping rushing along with white towels under their arms… There were two entrances, one for men and one for women… Privacy was undreamed of, and doors unknown, either on the dressing stalls or the showers across from them. The housewives came and found themselves a dressing stall and unrolled their towels. Inside would be a comb, a facecloth, and a piece of soap… You could tell the housewives who mopped their floors from those who scrubbed, for the scrubbers would have darkened, reddened knees and streaks of dirt on their legs."

Levin's description continued, "The women undress wea-

rily, removing their mended, soiled underthings with tired aching arms, but hurrying, naked, they walked across the wet tile floor to the showers, adjusted the water to as hot as they could stand it, and stepped into the needle-like downpour."

"Soon the weariness was washed away, and you heard them talk with their neighbors. Clouds of steam rose and the walls perspired… Thin women with droopy breasts dried themselves vigorously until their bodies were red, and fat women with wobbling thighs padded to the shower and back to their stalls, dripping wet. And above it all, one sometimes could hear the strong rich baritone of a male voice from the other side, where a father cleaned himself for the Sabbath and sang happily in the shower."

"It was a vital place," says Margolis, speaking of South Providence. "All you could see were Jewish faces and all you could hear was Jewish language. You walked up Willard Avenue and said, 'This is where I belong. I am among my people.'"

This avenue was the essence of immigrant America, says Margolis. He adds that even today the Jews of Shaare Zedek are grateful to the country that welcomed their often-persecuted fathers and mothers, and they have tried to prove their allegiance over the years.

This is so, says Joe Samson, 67[13], who comes to Shaare Zedek each day from Warwick to recite *Kaddish* for his wife. He will tell you that he was at no daily minyan on December 7, 1941 – he was at Pearl Harbor.

"Our parents came with ideals, to make a better life for themselves," says Margolis. "This congregation has never forgotten what this country meant to them."

The old days on Willard Avenue – those were different times, says Joe Margolis: times when the Rhode Island Jewish community was largely gathered together and largely living within a half mile of a synagogue.

But something began to happen in South Providence. As families prospered they moved away, to the East Side, to the suburbs. By the early 1950s the city was planning to revitalize a tired neighborhood – one that had served immigrants, Irish and then Jewish,

for generations – with a redevelopment project. The talk of bulldozers caused even more families to leave, remembers Bernie Spigel.

Redevelopment, which would later suffer spasms of its own with inner-city upheavals in the turbulent 1960s, was to be a reality. Soon the city owned the shuls (synagogues) of South Providence, and was announcing plans to tear them down with the rest of the neighborhood.

It was in 1954 that the South Providence congregations merged to form Shaare Zedek, buying the old Temple Beth-El, at 688 Broad Street, from the Reform congregation that had moved to its new synagogue on the East Side.

May 22, 1955, was a day of joy tempered with nostalgia in the Jewish community. Nearly a thousand people paraded through the streets of South Providence as leaders of the old synagogues stopped at each for a last time. They removed the sacred Torahs, and, cradling them in their arms, marched them to Broad Street to the tune of a band.

"We stopped at each of those synagogues as though we were stopping to see an old friend," Margolis recalls of that day on which Shaare Zedek began life with a congregation of about 900.

This was indeed a new life for Orthodox Judaism in South Providence. But it was only temporary, blight was continuing to creep through the area, and the Jewish population was continuing to move out. One of the former Willard Avenue congregations dropped out of the synagogue merger and even the addition of another

(left): **author, South Providence, ca. 1945**

(right): **author's father, Joseph, Jenkes St., Providence, ca. 1921**

group, Prairie Avenue's Congregation Sons of Abraham, could not keep the congregation robust.

As it always had, South Providence continued to be home for minorities struggling to make good in America. But immigrant Jews were no longer among them. The area took in new groups: blacks, Hispanics and, most recently, a growing number of Southeast Asians.

The past 30 years have not been kind to South Providence. Outside his graceful synagogue, Joe Margolis sweeps a hand across the corner of Broad and Glenham, surveying ruin. Despite pockets brightened by repairs and paint, much of the neighborhood is dilapidated, littered, tough. This is why the stained-glass windows of Shaare Zedek are caged behind wire-mesh screens; why the granite steps leading to the synagogue's front door are locked behind an iron fence; why one member's car was stolen as he prayed inside.

Margolis, who lives in the Elmwood section, a 20-minute walk up Broad Street, no longer goes to Friday-night services. Friday night begins *Shabbos,* the Sabbath, when devout Jews will not ride, and Margolis is now afraid to walk after dark. On Saturday mornings, when Shabbos is bathed in daylight, he walks.

Margolis admits that both the neighborhood's condition and the Orthodox strictures have contributed to the exodus from Shaare Zedek. Of the state's 22,000 Jews, only about 150 maintain membership there, and of those just a dozen or so are active. Except during the High Holy Days, marking the Jewish New Year each fall, Shaare Zedek sees only those few people who make up the morning minyans.

It is an irony that the only young man who attends daily services there, 34-year-old Gershom Barros, is Jewish by choice, not by birth. An insurance

man and financial adviser whose family background is Cape Verdean and Narragansett Indian, Barros converted to Judaism from Catholicism three years ago.[14] He says he did this not because his Russian-born wife is Jewish, but because he felt a kinship with Jewish beliefs.

But Barros will not be worshipping at Shaare Zedek much longer; he is moving from the Elmwood section to the East Side, and will not be able to make the crosstown trip each morning.

It cannot be denied that Orthodoxy has discouraged people from joining Shaare Zedek, observes Max Kerzner, who says that the old ways require patience and commitment. "Even me," he says, " can read the prayers in Hebrew, but I don't know what the hell I'm saying unless I read the translation."

Harry Krakowsky's wife, Anne, is one who cannot abide Orthodoxy. This is why over the years she has insisted on going to the less restrictive Conservative Temple Emanu-El; her husband maintains membership both there and in Shaare Zedek.

Says Mrs. Krakowsky, the daughter of a strongly Orthodox Jew (the late Abraham Linder), "I was brought up that way, but when I got married I didn't want it. I like sitting with my husband, instead of being segregated."

Separate seating never bothered Anna Margolis, who has been married for 56 years to Shaare Zedek's president and has maintained the same balcony seat for three decades. She says she was brought up to sit away from the men, and is accustomed to it.

Mrs. Margolis, a member of the synagogue's Sisterhood, which once played a significant role in fund-raising and social events, says that only a few women remain active.

"Many of them can't get to meetings," she says. "They no longer have husbands to bring them. We don't meet in the summer, and we don't meet in the winter – it's not very active, let's put it that way."

Joe Margolis, in reference to the dwindling numbers of both men and women, says he's thankful that some in the congregation supplement their annual membership payments with contributions, so that the synagogue can meet its operating expenses.

Spigel, for instance, still pays extra to keep his father's vacant seat beside his own, even though there are plenty of empty pews in

Herman Hassenfeld Talmud Torah, former Shaarei Zedek, 2020

the sanctuary. He says he does this both to perpetuate the memory of his father and "to help keep the old place going. To the old-timers it means a lot. It's a link – a last link."

Determined to keep the synagogue alive, Margolis is thinking about ways to help protect Shaare Zedek until the neighborhood improves and supporters begin moving back. How long that will take, or if it will ever happen, he cannot say. And meeting annual expenses, which with repairs and maintenance can total as much as $30,000, is getting harder year by year, he says.

For now, Margolis hopes to get the building listed on the National Register of Historic Places[15], and he may seek additional financial support by asking Rhode Island's Jews to buy associate memberships – for tradition's sake.

And in an effort to make the services more generally accessible, Margolis is beginning to explain – in English – more about the meaning of the various prayers and rituals.

The members of his congregation say that with their limited resources and diminishing strength, they can think of little else to do.

But they agree with the wistful Margolis when he declares hopefully, "Every time I look at this synagogue I say that it has got to be preserved. It looks like a synagogue should look, not like some of today's – all concrete and steel. There is something cold about them.

This one, you feel the warmth of it."

And there is something more, he says. "I don't look at it as a building. I look at it was a way of life."

Six forty-five A.M.at Broad and Glenham, the 25th day of the Jewish month of Tishrei, in the Jewish year 5746 – the 10th of October, 1985.

The men of Shaare Zedek have donned the trappings of prayer and have begun their chant. But today they are in the main sanctuary and they are *kvelling* – beaming.

In the congregation is a young father, Michael Kenner of Cranston[16], who insists that he is not religious. But his roots are in South Providence and he has a new daughter who, he believes, should be given a Hebrew name, in accordance with Jewish practice. He asked that the naming be done at Congregation Shaare Zedek because of old family ties, and because "I like the idea of all the tradition."

How does this strike longtime member Louis Sacarovitz?

"It's been years and years and years since we did anything like this. It feels wonderful."

So it came to pass on an early morning in October that Ashley Rebecca Kenner, in the 27th day of her life, took the Hebrew name *Ashera* – this witnessed by a small band of men in prayer shawls whose own years, when added together, made more than a millennium.

When they had gently laid away their cherished Torah and shut their timeworn prayer books, the tiny congregation reassembled in the synagogue's kitchen. There, the men of Shaare Zedek tossed down a schnapps, enjoyed lox and onion rolls provided by a joyful father, and contemplated the destiny of *Ashera,* their frail new link to yet another generation.[17]

Editor's Notes

1

He was born in Shudas, Lithuania in 1914, and his given name was Baruch Mastovskiene. He immigrated to the United States in 1923 and was naturalized in 1940. He died in 1995.

Like most of the minyan members mentioned below, Moss (whose legal name was Barney) registered with his local South Providence draft board, No. 9, in October 1940. At that time he was living at 26 Taylor Street. Almost all of the men identified below lived within a few blocks of each other: east of Broad Street, west of Prairie Avenue, south of Dudley Street, and north of Thurbers Avenue. This is in the vicinity west and south of two recent landmarks: Women & Infants Hospital and the Liston campus of the Community College of Rhode Island.

2

Another immigrant, he was born in Romanoff, Russia, in 1910 and came with his family to America two years later. Kerzner was naturalized in Providence in 1939. His draft registration shows that he was living at 94 Chester Avenue in 1940. Kerzner, who lived longer than most of his fellow minyan members, died in 2005. Like many of them, however, he is buried in Lincoln Park Cemetery.

3

Born in 1908, he died in 1990. Draft records show that in 1940, he lived at 19 Gay Street. Having begun as a "helper" in 1927, he made his living as a printer.

4

He was born in 1907 and in 1940 lived at 178 Blackstone Street. At this time he worked at City Hall Hardware in Providence. Margolis later established Industrial Supply Company, from which he retired in 1995. He also served as president of South Providence Hebrew Free Loan Association.

Having died in 2008, at 101 years, Margolis lived longer than all his minyan brothers. The translation of the Hebrew inscription on his grave in Lincoln Park reads: "Here lies the man Yosef Aryeh ben Moshe, d. 24 Elul 5768, May his soul be bound up in the bond of eternal life."

5

Born in 1920, he graduated from Central High School in 1939. In 1940 he lived at 60 Gay Street, close to Louis Sacarovitz. Shapiro served in the army during World War II. Later a salesman, he moved with his family to Cranston around 1959 and died in 2003.

6

Born in 1912, he was living at 25 St. James Street in 1940. His military record shows that when he enlisted in the army in 1943, he had completed two years of high school. Krakowsky died in 2006, outliving his wife, Anne (mentioned later in the article), by four years. He had also belonged to Temple Emanu-El.

7

This was Louis Krakowsky, who had been born in Russia in 1906. The brothers owned Standard Auto Sales (later Standard Truck Sales) in Providence.

8

Immigration and naturalization records show that Hassenfeld, originally named Dawid Hasenfeld, was born in Poland in 1914, and he sailed with his parents, Herman and Pessel, and his five older siblings, from Bremen to New York on the S.S *Susquehanna* on December 7, 1920. The family immediately traveled to Providence.

Unlike virtually all of his minyan colleagues, David lived as a young person at 83 Gallatin Street, farther south in the Elmwood neighborhood. Hassenfeld was also one of the best educated of the minyan group, having graduated from Brown in 1935 and Harvard Law School three years later. He served in the army from 1942 to 1946. In 1954, Hassenfeld was president of the Robinson Street Synagogue; following the merger that created

Shaare Zedek, he became its first president. He was also active in the leadership of Providence's Hebrew Day School and died in 1992.

9 Shaare Zedek's Talmud Torah, designed by Harry Marshak and built in 1958, was named in Herman Hassenfeld's memory. The addition originally housed a mikveh as well as classrooms. Within approximately a decade, the new building was no longer used as a school.

Herman, the eldest of four Hassenfeld siblings, had died in 1947. His naturalization papers in Providence's U.S. District Court show that in 1926 he worked as a "shop manager." His brother, Helal, a witness, was a "manufacturer of novelties." The 1930 census documents that Herman was superintendent of a "pencil box factory," another enterprise that eventually gave birth to Hasbro.

10 Eleanor Horvitz (1919-2005), a stalwart of our Association, served as librarian-archivist from 1971 to 2002. Having authored or coauthored more than 30 articles, she remains the most prolific contributor to our journal. Her most authoritative article relating to Gerald Goldstein's was: "Old Bottles, Rags, Junk!: The Story of the Jews of South Providence," which appeared in the 1976 issue of *The Notes* and was republished in the Association's 2004 anthology, *The Jews of Rhode Island*.

As a child, Eleanor Feldman lived at 12 and then 16 Portland Street in South Providence. As a senior at Classical High School in 1937, she was portrayed in its yearbook as a person who "will succeed in whatever her chosen field may be." Eleanor attended Pembroke College for three years before moving with her husband, Dr. Abraham Horvitz, to St. Louis, where she graduated from Washington University.

Fortunately, many former residents of South Providence have written vibrant accounts of their upbringing there. A few examples include: Irene Backalenick, "My Providence, Part I," 2009; Benjamin Lightman, "Born on Lincoln's Birthday, Part I," 2010; Harold L. Bloom, "Tales from an American *Shtetl,* Parts I, II, III," 2010, 2011, 2013; and Morris P. Schwartz, "Never Far From South Providence: A Cast of Characters, Part I, II," 2013, 2015.

Another important study of South Providence is E. Pierre Morenon's, "Harry Fish Lived Here: Archaeologists at Work in South Providence," 2004.

11
Fred Spiegel was born in Manchester, New Hampshire, in 1905 and was living with his parents in Providence five years later. By 1945 he had his own kosher butcher shop at 213 Willard Avenue. By 1964 it had morphed into a "kosher food center." Fred died in 1974.

Fred's father was Harry Spigel. He had been born in Russia in 1879 and immigrated to Manchester in 1904. Initially a peddler in Providence, Harry operated at least two kosher butcher shops by 1920. He remained in business until at least 1957 and died in 1964.

12
Born in 1930, he lived at 18 Taylor Street in 1940. He graduated from Hope High School. Spigel died in 2008, the same year as Joe Margolis.

13
He was born in 1917 and graduated from Central High School in 1937. Having enlisted in the Army Air Corps in September 1940, he later became a sergeant. Following his discharge in 1945, Samson lived at 35 Portland Street. He worked in sales at Samson's, a downtown Providence store, at Pine and Portland Streets, specializing in cameras. He and his family lived in Cranston by 1952. His wife, Sylvia, passed away in 1985, he in 1989. Their only child, Arthur, had died in 1970.

14
Originally named George, he was a son of George (1917-2001) and Winifred (1920-2009) Barros. The family lived on the East Side when George attended LaSalle

Academy, from which he graduated in 1969. During World War II, the elder Barros, a native of New Bedford with Cape Verdean ancestry, served in the Navy, while his wife, a member of the Narragansett tribe, worked as a welder in a Providence shipyard. He worked for *The Providence Journal* for 37 years and also served for 15 years as caretaker of Shaare Zedek. Rabbi Avi Shafran, who wrote about his years on the East Side in the 2019 issue of our journal, profiled the younger Barros in his book, *Migrant Soul: The Story of an American Convert* (originally published in 1992 and reissued by Hashgacha Press in 2012). The younger Barros, now a grandfather, has been active in the leadership of Providence Hebrew Day School and the Chevra Kadisha.

15

The National Register of Historic Places approved the congregation's highly detailed application in December 1988. For example, the application documents that, following the creation of Shaare Zedek, a classroom, library, and kitchen were transformed into a meat and dairy kitchen and a food storage area. In 1958, an addition to the synagogue's north side included classrooms and a mikveh. By 1988, however, the classrooms had been vacant for two decades.

16

I have not yet been able to learn much about Michael Arlan Kenner, who was born in Cranston in 1949 and graduated from Cranston High School East in 1967. He may have attended Rhode Island College and Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida. He married Elaine Simons in Reno in 1980. I believe that the Kenners may be living in or near Sarasota.

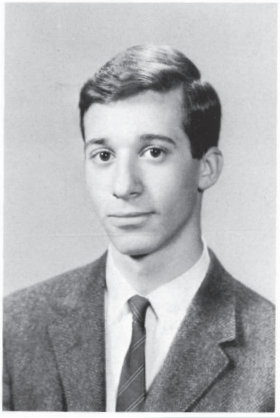
Beginning with the 1910 census, a fair amount of information about the Kenner family's roots in Rhode Island can be documented. Michael's paternal grandfather, Morris Kenner, was born in Odessa in 1879 and immigrated with his wife, Katie, who was six years younger, in 1904. The couple was naturalized in 1913. All five of their children were born in Providence: Philip, the eldest, in 1906; Sylvia, the youngest, in 1919. For the most part, the Kenners lived in South Providence. In 1910, their home was at 52 Staniford Street. In 1918, when Morris registered for the draft during World War I, the family lived at 161 ? Somerset Street. By the time of the next federal census, they had moved to 160 Somerset. The 1930 census shows that they lived at 152 Prairie Avenue, where they remained until at least the mid-1940s. Morris began working as a peddler and by 1910 owned his own fruit wagon. He later sold cotton and wool, and still later he became the proprietor of an office furniture store. By 1938, the store, located at 355 Weybosset Street, specialized in "fixtures." Morris died in 1951 and Katie three years later; the couple is buried in Lincoln Park.

Many other Kenners lived in South Providence. For example, Benjamin's sons, Arthur and Irwin, also registered for the draft in 1940. Arthur, who enlisted in March 1941, died in November, and was buried in Lincoln Park. Jacob and Lena Kenner's somewhat older sons, Fred, Harold, and Paul, were also eligible for the draft.

Michael Kenner's father, Milton, born in 1906, was Morris and Katie's fourth child. He lived with his parents and worked in his father's store until at least 1947. He eventually became an auto salesman and moved with his wife, Ruth, to Cranston. By 1952, the family resided at 106 Hybrid Drive, where it remained until at least Michael's high school graduation. The family then may have moved to Florida. It is not known how long Milton and Ruth lived or where they are buried.

17

I have also been unable to locate Ms. Kenner, who most likely lives in Florida.



joseph fromm lovett

40 brenton avenue, providence 6, r.i.

form i: tennis, forensic society
form ii: camera club, dance committee, proscenium club, tennis
form iii: camera club, **quaker,** proscenium club, tennis, varsity soccer, varsity swimming, french club
form iv: varsity swimming, varsity soccer, spring track, delegate to ecmunc, associate editor of **delphian,** executive editor of **quaker,** proscenium club
form v: letter in soccer, executive editor of **quaker,** associate editor of **delphian, mosaic** editorial board, business manager for proscenium club, delegate to ecmunc, french club, vice-president of chess club, dance committee, letter of commendation from merit scholarship corporation

joe is one of the best things that ever happened to moses brown — just ask him. actually, though, joe's conceit has lessened greatly in the past two years, to nobody's great surprise. his third love was pssc physics last year, his second was the hard fought j.f.k. campaign, which took place just about the time his first love fell by the wayside as his stock in the plastics industry dropped sharply. but joe manages to find consolation in constant female companionship. in fact, his personality is probably his greatest asset, and it sells a lot of tickets for the proscenium club, too. m.b. will always remember joe's interest and vitality, and joe will always remember oceanography and a certain night at jamestown.

RI to NY Jew: Assimilation, Acculturation, and Conformity, *Part I*

Joseph F. Lovett

The author and I have never met in person, but we have more than a few things in common. For example, this being Rhode Island, I happen to live across the street from his last childhood home. I'm acquainted with his sister-in-law, Nancy, who still lives around the corner. Joe grew up at Beth-El, my congregation, and both of us earned degrees at Columbia University. Our mutual friend and colleague, Prof. David Gitlitz, played an important role in Joe's most recent documentary film.

Both the author and I were also privileged to study at private schools. Though he attended Moses Brown as a day student, I was a boarder at a school in Southern California. Unfortunately, both of us experienced some anti-Semitism at these institutions.

Perhaps Joe and I also are independent thinkers, though our critics may simply consider us contrarians. Perhaps equally naïve, we would like to think that our thoughts and deeds matter. Joe and I also strive to be imaginative and creative.

Beyond the coincidence of Brenton Avenue, however, home has meant different things to us. As Joe will explain in the second part of his article, after departing for college, he never yearned to live again in Rhode Island. Betsey and I also studied and lived in many places, but we endeavored to build new lives in this community.

Yet, if home means more than one's place of habitation, Joe lost both his parents when still a child. By contrast, my parents lived extraordinarily long lives, and Betsey's are doing well in their nineties. While Betsey and I remain close to our brothers and sisters, Joe, the youngest of five, has outlived all his siblings.

I suppose that he and I easily bonded as storytellers.

In January, I screened my latest film, "Children of the Inquisition: Their Story Can Now be Told," for the Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association. This film, ten years in the making, reveals what happened to Jewish families who were forced to convert

or flee during the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions. Their tale is told by their descendants, many of whom are now discovering their Jewish roots.

Researching, shooting, and editing the film forced me to consider the age-old question, "What is a Jew?" But considering the scope of the film, covering 500 years and the constant change of names, places, identities, and religions, I came to think much more about "Jewishness" than I did about "Judaism." I thought of us more as a people or an ethnic group, with shared, overlapping experiences, rather than as co-believers in a creed.

One oddity I found in my research was that many converted families, who had been staunch Catholics for five centuries, had continued to practice Jewish rituals at home. These included: lighting candles (secretly) on Friday nights, circumcising their sons, never eating shellfish or pork, and never cooking milk with meat. Though Catholics, most of these families had no idea where their rituals had come from.

I thought that my film would open up others to accept people they may have rejected in the past. I hoped that they would reconsider converts who had been shunned for hundreds of years. So many excellent Jewish history series are presented by Jews talking about Jews for Jewish audiences. I wanted "Children of the Inquisition" to be an open tent.

The day after the screening, I received a note from George Goodwin, asking if I would consider writing an article for the Association's journal. The assignment was to explain how my identity – both Jewish and professional (or in reverse order) – was shaped by my upbringing in Providence during the '50s and '60s. What were the positive and negative factors and forces? Which were nurturing, liberating, and perhaps stifling? Was there ever a chance that I would spend my adult years in Providence? Conversely, does it feel strange or odd when I return?

George's offer came at just the right time. About to turn 75, I was considering, as one does at this age, my life – particularly my youth- in Providence. It's only recently that I have started to question which parts of my character are from which parts

of my life. It will never be perfectly clear, of course, but for me, it's an interesting conversation to have with myself. Though I left Providence in 1962 at the age of 17, I have always strongly identified as a Rhode Islander – for better or for worse.

Rhode Island history was funneled into our brains in school. I loved the idea of Roger Williams escaping the Puritans, paddling across the Seekonk River, and founding a land of religious liberty. I loved having The Independent Man standing tall on our Statehouse dome. In the ideal, Rhode Island in general and Providence in particular represented independent thinking and religious liberty.

Being Jewish

I come from an assimilated family. When I was born on March 29, 1945, near the end of World War II, my parents, Samuel and Jeanne, both born in Providence, were in their early forties and already had four teenaged children: Merrill, Tricia, Billy, and Raul. My father's parents had come to America from Russia and Poland as children, and he was the eldest of their seven children. My mother was the youngest of five. Her Russian-born parents had immigrated in 1895 when her older brother was a baby. I knew only my paternal grandmother, Bertha Mendelovitz, whom I called *"Bubbe."* She died when I was five, but I remember her visiting with gifts of cowboy suits, cap guns, and fruit jellies.

I had no personal connection to people who had perished in the Holocaust. Yet, it was very clear to me while growing up that the fate of German and other European Jews could easily have been my family's as well.

To me, being Jewish was going to Korb's Bakery on North Main Street with my parents to order bread and pastries while stealing glances behind the counter of the ladies' tattooed arms, which were living testaments to the war's horrors.

Being Jewish meant sitting down to a huge Sunday breakfast of cream cheese, lox, bagels, herring, and white fish, which my parents would wake up very early to buy at Miller's Delicatessen. The delicacies were beautifully laid out on our kitchen table by the time we all got up.

Being Jewish meant listening to the Army-McCarthy hearings in 1954 and wondering what they meant for our people. How could such evil men as Joe McCarthy and Roy Cohn have such power? Why would they want to kill Ethel Rosenberg whose sons were my age? Couldn't they just put her in prison so her sons could visit? When Ethel was executed, I was eight years old. I learned that we could never trust the government. I don't remember my parents being particularly political, but they and my siblings must have been, for the Rosenberg trial and their executions have had such a strong impact on me.

Being Jewish did not mean wearing mezuzahs, Jewish stars or the letter chai around our necks. "You wear your religion in your heart," my mother would say. I used to wonder why mothers who wore crosses didn't think that way.

Though my mother forbade the discussion of a person's looks, age or financial situation, looks and style were clearly important to her. Both my mother and my sister dressed with care, as did my father. My first sibling to go to college went to Brown. So "Ivy League" was clearly the look that my older brothers impressed on me. The joke was, "Dress so British but talk so Yiddish."

My father died when I was nine, my mother when I was thirteen. Although I remember them as being non-observant, their belief in God came out strongly in their letters to my brothers and sisters away at college. Their letters were filled with such phrases as "God willing" and "should God allow." And their Jewish identity was firm.

Our family belonged to Temple Beth-El, and all of us were sent to Sunday school. Yet, we did not observe Jewish holidays at home – except for lighting Hanukkah candles.

My father's sister, Aunt Millie Raisner, was observant, and we went to her home for Passover. I found it torture, the nonstop Hebrew, which I did not understand. I didn't know that a seder could be fun until I came to New York, where they were wonderful family events.

My mother never kept kosher. We always had bacon with our eggs, and my father loved pork chops. My great-grandmother,

we were told, made the best clam chowder in Rhode Island. We had a summer home on the Cape's south shore, where we clammed for steamers and quahogs. Our Saturday night favorites at the Cape were boiled and baked stuffed lobsters and lobsters Thermidor.

Yes, my parents were indifferent to much of Jewish tradition and expectations. My mother was a very attractive woman and clearly enjoyed the attention she received for her looks. She was also maddeningly never on time, most certainly so as not to ruin her entrance. My mother also had a great sense of humor and a keen sense of her foibles.

She told the story that she was once late for a bar mitzvah at a temple other than our own. As she walked down the center aisle searching for a seat, she noticed a number of stares. When telling this story, she recounted how good they felt. As she sat down, the looks continued and she thought, "Well, I knew I looked good, but didn't realize I looked that good." After a few more minutes of stares, she realized that the temple was Orthodox and that she was sitting in the men's section. I don't know, but I doubt that she moved.

When I was a child we had a Christmas tree, and our housekeeper, Ella, always made me an elaborate Easter basket. Because she was Catholic, we always had fish on Fridays. In fact, after Vatican II relaxed the Church's dietary laws, it took me years to be able to put meat in my mouth on Fridays.

Curiously, there were other Catholic reverberations in my childhood. These are explained in my film, "The Accident," which was an attempt to reconstruct my parents' identities through interviews with relatives who had known them as adults. I remember when I was little, crawling into my parents' bed at six on Sunday mornings to listen to Boston's Archbishop James Cushing recite Hail Mary's on the radio for an hour. My father tried to never miss Bishop Fulton J. Sheen's TV show on Sunday mornings either. Go figure.

During the '30s, my father had built a house in West Hyannis Port, between Craigville Beach and Hyannis, on the Cape. We spent our summers there. A few Jewish families lived in our neighborhood, so there were enough men to form a minyan if Rosh Hashanah fell when we were still there. But none of my close friends

were Jews. And I never heard an anti-Semitic remark there until I was 18.

Our neighbors on the Cape reserved their ill will for "Arcies." They were referred to in the most disparaging terms. I had never met one of these "Arcies," but they were clearly terrible people. When I hit my teens, it finally dawned on me that "Arcies" were actually "RCs"– Roman Catholics!

Yet, when I was 18, I also heard the term "Jewed me down." This was uttered by a friend whose family owned the barn where my niece kept her horse. I couldn't believe she had said that, and that she had thought nothing of saying it in front of me. It was just common parlance. It seemed to mean nothing to her.

Anti-Semitism

When I grew up during the '50s and '60s, Providence was a very segregated town. And it was not only about blacks and whites being kept apart. WASPs had their clubs where Jews were not allowed, and Jews had their own. Although I had friends at Ledgemont Country Club, my family did not belong. I can recall going only once. But my father kept a boat at the Edgewood Yacht Club, which he took on fishing trips to Block Island. The yacht club was nonsectarian, and so were my parents' friends. I don't remember if any Italian or Irish families belonged to the yacht club, but they had their own clubs as well.

The earliest story that I heard about anti-Semitism came from my mother. During the early '20s, as a rule, banks and public utilities did not hire Jews. So when my mother, who looked like she had walked out of Oslo, was hired by one of the banks, and her sister, Min, was hired by the telephone company, they considered these great breakthroughs. One day, however, when my mother was attending a lunch for a colleague about to be married, she was asked by another colleague, "Have you heard about that awful Jew girl? I hear they're making her manager, and she's supposed to be a terrible person!"

As my mother told the tale, she looked at the woman, smiled, and said, "Oh no, not at all! She's an absolutely lovely person

and, as a matter of fact, I am that Jew girl."

My mother always told the story with a great sense of timing and enjoyed the surprise ending. I always loved her matter-of-fact attitude. She was who she was- neither a "high WASP" nor "a dirty Jew."

By 1928, however, my parents had changed their name from Mendelovitz to Lovett, a name my grandfather, Hyman, who died in 1931, had used in business. Flash forward to 1934, when my sister, Tricia, a five-year-old, used to play with Virginia, the little girl next door on Shaw Avenue in Cranston. This girl would send my sister home before her father returned because he "hates Jews." One day, I was told, Tricia came running home crying because Virginia had called her "a dirty Jew." My mother sent Tricia back to tell Virginia that she was actually "a clean Jew." Again, told with humor and pride.

Shortly thereafter my family had a reversal of circumstances. My father had become quite wealthy through an automotive supply company he had created. It delivered auto parts to garages across New England. He lost it all with the arrival of auto stores, including Benny's, which was owned by the Brombergs, a Jewish family.

During the Depression, my parents and four siblings moved to Spooner Street in Washington Park, just west of Roger Williams Park, where Jews were not welcome. They were greeted with signs that shouted out: "The Lovetts are Jews! The Lovetts are kikes! The Lovetts are yids! The Lovetts get out."

It was a frightening and emotionally devastating time for my siblings. They were regularly beaten up after school. My eldest brother, Merrill (born in 1928), who was not the toughest kid on the block, was protected by his little brother Billy (born in 1931). He would fight the bullies every day.

This experience scarred Billy so badly that as he grew up he denied his Jewish background. He in fact became quite anti-Semitic – angry about how his heritage had made him a victim. He moved to Los Angeles to become an actor, and the day before he married, he "confessed" to his fiancée that he was Jewish. It made no difference to her. He was shaking with tears as he told her.

Billy's two children didn't know they were half-Jewish (or

not legally Jewish) until they were seven and five and coming East for part of the summer. Their mother took them aside and let them know that there would be discussions about such things as bar mitzvahs. She wanted them to have some idea of what that meant.

During the '40s, my father regained his financial standing by becoming a builder. So before I was born, my parents moved with their teen-aged children to 310 Doyle Avenue on the East Side. By that time, it was neither a Jewish nor a gentile neighborhood but mixed.

I was sent to John Howland, an excellent public elementary school. Because most of its students were Jews, the school felt emptier on the High Holy Days than on Thursday afternoons, when Catholic kids were dismissed for catechism classes. The difference was acknowledged, but seemed unimportant.

Many of our teachers were Irish-Catholic spinsters. They were wonderfully smart but often quite strict. Some of their favorite commands were: "Straight lines!" "Boys, get your hands out of your pockets!" and "Don't move your hands when you talk!" Our teachers were dedicated to making sure that we learned what we needed to know. For the most part, they could not have been better.

Though I never experienced any outright anti-Semitism in elementary school, I was terrified each time we sang "Onward, Christian Soldiers." I must have been seven the first time I heard it, and I couldn't stop worrying, "Against whom are these Christian soldiers 'marching as to war'?" Was it me because I wasn't a Christian? Not making sense to me, I wondered if there was something else going on that I just didn't understand.

Around 1954, I was troubled when the "Pledge of Allegiance" was changed with the insertion of "under God." It made no sense to me because I had just learned that Rhode Island, a land of religious liberty, was home to many freethinkers.

My family had chosen to become Americans because this country was so much freer than where they had come from. I knew we were very much Jews and very much Americans. Both went together.

Moses Brown

One day at the end of sixth grade, when my friends and I were nervous about entering Nathan Bishop Junior High School, which was thought to be a bit rougher than John Howland, my mother made an announcement. Moses Brown School, a Quaker boarding and day school for boys, was accepting "another Jewish boy," and we would apply for that place. But I didn't understand what Moses Brown was. I didn't know why it was accepting a "Jewish boy" or what that meant. The term "quota" I had yet to learn.

When I enrolled at Moses Brown in seventh grade, I was prepared academically but socially things were very different. Being one of perhaps five "Jewish boys" in my class made me feel different and perhaps "less than" Christians. There were far fewer black kids than Jews.

Students were taught the protocol of being "gentlemen"– little rules that suggest you know your way in polite society. For example, there was a dress code. Beginning in the lowest grades, every boy at Moses Brown wore a suit or a sports jacket, a dress shirt with a tie, and oxford shoes. We had to rise whenever an adult entered a room, and every answer had to include "Yes, Ma'am" or "Sir." Lunch was served in a dining room with linen tablecloths, and scholarship students waited on tables. My scholarship required me to staff the switchboard early in the morning.

Certainly there was a pressure to conform, not unlike some expectations within the Jewish community. My mother, for example, was not a rule follower and truly did not care what other people thought. When I asked for a sandwich during Pesach, my Aunt Millie remarked, "You mean your mother has bread in the house on Pesach?" My mother had her own opinions, her own ethics, and expected the same of her children.

But I digress. At Moses Brown, I started to experience anti-Semitism – not the physical kind that my brothers and sister had experienced – but something more subtle and emotional. For example, I remember my classmate, Richard Knight, spending a weekend at our house when we were eleven. We had a great time, but the next day at school he called me a "kike" in front of everyone.

I had no idea why, but I realized that he had learned that word at home.

The high WASP culture of Providence "society" was keenly felt at Moses Brown. There were Parents' League dancing classes that I knew somehow I could not attend. And there were Parents' League ski trips to which I was not invited, nor did I expect to be. I knew my place. Jews had their own dancing school in Churchill House, the former home of the Rhode Island Women's Club, on Angell Street near the Brown campus. This was where Jewish kids learned to foxtrot, waltz, tango, cha-cha, mambo, and rumba. Once, after I brought my friend, Carol Christopher, to a dance there, I had to deal with remarks made by some Jewish parents. I had brought a gentile! We were thirteen.

A few times I heard slurs from my friends' fathers. They said, "You know, Joey, there are Jews and there are kikes. I can't stand kikes, but there is nothing wrong with nice Jewish people like you and your family." I actually took those remarks as compliments until I was about fourteen.

The civil rights movement had begun to blossom, and Rabbi William Braude of Temple Beth-El urged us to understand that we shared a history of being slaves. Indeed, we must do everything within our power to make sure that no other person is ever enslaved. This identification with civil rights struggles gave me a new perspective on some remarks that had been made to me.

At some point I suddenly understood what was being said, and I was overcome by revulsion and shame that I had ever accepted those words. The next time it happened, I had the sense to respond, "You have to understand, Mr. High WASP, I'm every bit of a kike as any Jew you have ever met."

Our French teacher and swim coach regularly confused me with my friend, Peter Winslow. Our similarity? We were Jews.

Our American history teacher, revered by alumni, was an outright bigot. He referred to niggers, wops, dagos, guineas, and kikes. By that time I was sixteen, I would regularly correct him, saying, "Don't you mean Negro or Italian or Spanish, Mr. Raines?" Once, when talking about pickaninnies, he stopped himself and

turned to me with a smirk, "That would be small, Negro children for Joe." Although we had black, Italian, and Jewish kids in our class, he felt comfortable making these racial and ethnic slurs.

One of my classmates in high school was Russell, a kid who smoked in the bushes and regularly called me a "kike." Because his last name began with "M," we sat next to each other in study hall every year. One day during junior year, I opened the top of my desk to find it filled with confetti. On each tiny piece was written "KIKE." Having known Russell for so long, I was astounded by the effort that he had put into his project. Pointing to his handiwork, I said, "Gee, Russell, this must've been an enormous amount of work for you." Russell wasn't the world's greatest student or the most fun person to be with, and I never took him too seriously.

At the beginning of senior year, Russell and I were once again assigned to adjacent desks in study hall. This time, I went to the dean of discipline, a fastidious and distinctly unpleasant man, who always had it in for me. I told him that he had to change my desk. He replied: "What are you talking about? That's your desk. Why would you want to change it?" I said, "Well, sir, I'm tired of being called a 'f…ing kike' every day and having 'kike' confetti filling up my desk. So I don't want to spend my last year sitting next to Mattson and being called a 'kike'." The dean changed my desk.

Although these experiences did not occur every day, they did happen often enough to have an effect. So I was always prepared for them to happen. At the same time, I was also aware that some Jews saw anti-Semitism as an excuse for every rejection they encountered. This seemed particularly obvious when Jewish friends' parents were rejected for a promotion. They might say, "I didn't get it because I'm Jewish." In many cases, however, these adults could be difficult people.

Despite the bits of anti-Semitism, I thrived at Moses Brown, throwing myself into required activities that my shyness would have had me avoid had I been given the chance. Required sports introduced me to soccer, which I loved, as well as tennis and competitive swimming.

After my mother died in 1958, I lived with my sister and

brother-in-law, Tricia and Alvin Stallman, who were much younger and hipper than our parents. They were also interested in my friends, so our house became a hub of activity. Because we lived so close to school, we often signed out my boarding friends to spend a weekend with us. To have a number of teenagers sleeping all over the house was pretty regular.

My class at Moses Brown helped usher in the rebellious '60s. My friends and I were the people who didn't accept restrictive, conforming standards and tried to push back. I continue to enjoy these friends to this day.

Temple Beth-El

When I was nine, my father died on a Thursday morning after a six-month ordeal with cancer. The first time I ever attended a Friday night service was the following night. I went with my brothers and my brother-in-law and remember the service being incredibly sad. Being so small, I could see nothing but a wall of black, grey, blue, and brown suits in front of me.

Unfortunately, services remained sad events for me, always bringing me back to the loneliness of that first *kaddish.* But going to Temple gave my mother great comfort, so we started going on Friday nights regularly. I was inspired by Rabbi Braude's exhortations about our role in enacting social justice and his pride in our Jewish heritage.

At eleven, I wanted to be a rabbi. I enjoyed learning a new language in Hebrew school, and I loved the history lessons learned in Sunday school. I also loved being a bad boy there with my friends, especially pulling pranks and making Mrs. Segal wring her hands. She wailed at us, asking: "Vy do you doin', boys? Vy do you do it, sonny?"

Four years later, when I turned thirteen, my mother was killed in a car accident. After that, I could not believe in God. My bar mitzvah, which took place a few months later, seemed like a repetition of her funeral. So it is no wonder that I have always associated services with sadness and loss – on an even more personal level than standard Jewish historical gloom.

My sister and my brother-in-law, Tricia and Alvin Stallman, had always been second parents to me. I would spend weekends with them when they lived deep in the country in Foster. They would move into our house on Doyle Avenue to care for me when my parents and later my mother traveled for weeks at a time.

Both Tricia and Alvin were the epitome of social progressives. They had participated in sit-ins for fair housing at the Statehouse during the '40s. Tricia was the first Jewish girl accepted by her sorority at URI. (Alvin belonged to a Jewish fraternity there.) She then turned around and nominated a black girl. That nomination turned into a scandal that made *The Providence Journal.* Tricia and Alvin's friends were always diverse. Neither of them could bear prejudice of any kind.

Tricia was perplexed when I wanted to continue going to Sunday school after my bar mitzvah, but I saw it as an opportunity to continue seeing my friends from John Howland. They were smart, funny, cared about social justice, and I didn't want to lose them. Additionally, I enjoyed learning more about Jewish history as well as folk songs and folk dances.

As I mentioned, this was the civil rights era, and Rabbi Braude, who in 1965 would march with Rev. Martin Luther King from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, insisted that we do our part. "We were slaves in the land of Egypt," I can still hear him saying from the pulpit, "and we must do everything we can to make sure that no person ever suffers the same enslavement that we suffered." His words were not only personal but also relevant to our lives.

Tricia and Alvin lived at 40 Brenton Avenue, a short, tree-lined street on the East Side just north of Olney Street and between Hope Street and Morris Avenue. (Jill and Jim Tobak, Beth-El members, later owned this house. How appropriate or ironic because her father, Charles, and her uncle, Robert, were probably Moses Brown's first Jewish graduates.) Brenton had a lot of young families like ours – I had two little nieces, Samra and Jeanne – and it was a very mixed lot of WASPs, Catholics, and Jews. According to the Urban League, when we were trying to integrate the block, no black family in Rhode Island could afford a house on our street.

Brenton was an extremely friendly street, a wonderful place to be a teenager. However, my friend Annie, who lived across the street, had parents who were very forthcoming about their anti-Semitism. They made remarks that began with, "Well, you people…." The Bullocks were prominent members of the Parents' League, which also ran the Providence Cotillion, the debutante ball that traditionally excluded Catholics and Jews from the guest list.

In 1962, during my freshman year of college, the mother of my friend, Connie Worthington, agreed to chair the ball with the proviso that Catholics and Jews could be invited. My non-WASP friends and I were stunned that things had begun to change. Decades later, I met the people who bought the Bullocks' house. They explained that they found a secret closet in the attic, which was filled with literature and memorabilia sympathetic to Nazis.

At fifteen, I was in Beth-El's Confirmation class and faced a dilemma. I went up to Rabbi Braude's assistant, Rabbi Jerome Gurland, and said quietly that I did not think I should be confirmed because I did not believe in God. He said, "Why don't you come to my study?" We walked down the hall, I took a seat on the couch opposite his desk, and he closed the door. Then, sitting at his desk, Rabbi Gurland asked, "Now what did you say?" I was ready for a very serious reprimand, but I went ahead and said, "I don't think I should be confirmed because I do not believe in God." I waited.

He looked at me, leaned across the desk, and said: "Come on now. Who believes in God?" I was dumbfounded. He continued: "Do you think anyone in his right mind honestly believes that there is some white-bearded guy sitting in heaven with a flowing gown, looking down, and making everything happen here? Don't be silly, no one thinks that."

Not knowing what to say, I sputtered something like, "But, but, but…" He continued: "It's about the question of existence. What is our purpose? What is there to know, and how can we help one another? That's all you need to know." I stared. "Now go get confirmed," he replied. A very smart thing to say to a fifteen-year-old, I realized years later.

Temple life had a huge influence on me. One of the

activities I loved was NFTY, the Reform movement's National Federation of Temple Youth. It had leadership conferences to explore themes of social justice. Reform Judaism to me at that time was all about social justice. It melded with the principles I learned at home, the principles of the civil rights struggle, and the Quaker principles that were taught at Moses Brown.

The summer I was fifteen, I went to NFTY's national leadership conference in the Poconos. Most kids were from east of the Mississippi, and many seemed very different from my friends in Providence. There was a worldliness to the New York City and Westchester Jews. They seemed so sophisticated, so poised, so much more adult than I felt.

Southern Jews were also a revelation. Most were Southerners first and Jews second. One friend from Birmingham told me that her family lived next door to the president of the White Citizens' Council, otherwise known as the KKK. Her father, a prominent lawyer, had made it clear since she was a little girl that they were NEVER to discuss ANYTHING said at the dinner table with ANYONE outside of the house. It was clear that such a transgression could result in a firebombing or death.

At the conference in the Poconos, we participated in workshops where we acted out aspects of civil rights protests. Each of us took a different role. One scenario was a sit-in at a restaurant, where some of us played black students sitting in at a lunch counter, some played white customers, and a girl from Mississippi played a waitress. The psychodrama evolved to where the protesters had ordered their food, and the waitress went to the kitchen to get it. As she approached the protesters with the food, this girl broke down in hysterical tears, crying, "I just can't do it. I just can't do it. I just can't do it."

That moment seared itself into my consciousness. There I realized how utterly irrational prejudice was, how powerful it was, and how deeply ingrained it was into a person's psyche. I've taken that moment with me my entire life, and it has informed nearly every bit of reporting and filmmaking that I have ever done. I'm usually drawn to taboo subjects because I like to demystify taboo.

And most taboo comes from ignorance and myth.

Ben Braude, Rabbi and Pearl's middle son, and I grew up together and have remained friends. A few years ago, when we were talking about Jewish identity, Ben posited that in high school he had been sent to Israel to study and became that much more Jewishly identified. "You," he said, "were sent to Moses Brown and became WASPified." To some degree, he was right.

Minority vs. Majority

When it was time for me to apply to colleges, our director of studies at Moses Brown suggested Brandeis. I said that I was so used to being in a minority, I thought I'd feel very uncomfortable being in the majority. I had come to enjoy my uniqueness, the different perspective I could offer.

For example, a close friend of mine used to carry on about his lineage: how his family had lived in the same little Rhode Island town since the 1600s. One day, when thoroughly fed up, I asked, "Charlie, did you ever think that the fact that no one in your family ever thought to leave East Greenwich, in 350 years, was more about having no curiosity or imagination than something to brag about?" Charlie looked at me and said, "You know, I had never thought of that." He went on to live in Kansas.

When I was 16, Raul, the youngest of my older brothers, took me aside and said, "I think it's important for you to have more Jewish friends." So I explained, "I have Jewish friends. Ricky, Bobby, Peter, and Elliot are all Jewish." "Yes," he said, "but most of your friends aren't Jewish."

I countered, "But most of the people I go to school with aren't Jewish, and what difference does it make?" "Well," he said, "when you grow up and come back to Providence from college and open a business, you'll be dealing with Jewish people, and you have to know how to deal with them."

My brother and I never agreed about anything, but this sounded utterly crazy to me for many reasons. So I asked him several questions. "One, why would I deal with one person differently than I would with anyone else? Two, how do you know I'll go

away to college? Three, and if I do, how do you know I'll return to Providence? Four, why are you so sure that I'll open a business? Finally, how is all this so set in your mind?"

My experience growing up in Rhode Island was for the most part a happy one. I had a very loving family. Like an adopted child, I was wanted by my sister and brother-in-law and never felt that our situation within a new family structure was anything but normal. And I had strong friendships both at Temple and at Moses Brown that continue to this day.

Lovett family at home, Doyle Avenue, spring 1954:
(r to l:) **Samuel, Jeanne, Raul, Tricia, Billy, Merrill, Joe (at bottom)**


1863

Moses Brown's Jewish Alumni: 1920 through 1976

George M. Goodwin

Over the decades, two of our journal's pervasive and unifying themes have been educational access and success. In the 1993 issue, for example, Seebert Goldowsky profiled a pioneering group of Jewish students at Brown. The first to enroll in 1890 was Israel Strauss, from Pawtucket High School, who graduated four years later. According to Karen Lamoree's 1998 article, Clara Gomberg, a Russian-born émigré, became the first Jewish graduate of Brown's Women's College (later named Pembroke) in 1897. Based on a photograph taken in 1916, I profiled 14 of Brown's relatively early Jewish students in my 2003 article about the brothers of Phi Epsilon Pi fraternity.

In our 2010 issue, Geraldine Foster, a former teacher, profiled Melvin Zurier's considerable academic acumen, which began at Henry Barnard School, flourished at Classical High (Class of 1946), and gained further momentum at Harvard College and then Harvard Law. Mel was also one of the early beneficiaries of a Charles H. Smith Scholarship, which enabled scores of outstanding graduates of Providence's public schools (and later some of its private schools) to attend the university with America's most famous yard. Another early beneficiary of a Smith Scholarship was Mel's Hope High contemporary, Jerome Spunt, our former Association president, who also graduated from the College and the Law School.

For a variety of reasons, however, most of Rhode Island's young Jews were unable to attend Ivy League colleges and universities. Yet, a surprisingly high number were welcomed at Providence College. Jennifer Illuzzi and Arthur P. Urbano, two PC professors, traced this phenomenon in their 2017 article. A year later, Edward Feldstein, a prominent 1964, alumnus, wrote about "What Providence College Has Meant to Me."

In our 2011 issue, Benjamin Lightman, in the second part of his reflections, "Born on Lincoln's Birthday," described his years at Rhode Island State College, from which he graduated in 1943. Of course many more Jewish students were able to attend this institution (later known as URI) during the postwar years as

1920
E. Gardner Jacobs

1936
Charles Fox

1938
Robert Fox,
Ernest Israel

1939
(Hugh Rose),
Joseph Sinclair

1940
(Albert Seltzer, Jr.)

1941
Ronald Sopkin

1942
Malcolm Elfman,
(Walter Sundlun, Jr.),
(Charles Zinderstein)

1943
E. Gardner Jacobs, Jr.

1944
Gardner Grant,
Theodore Low,
Monte Sopkin

1945
Daniel Finger

beneficiaries of the GI Bill. For example, in the 2006 issue of *The Notes*, Florence Waxman wrote about her experiences as well as those of her husband, Sidney's, in "Our Trailer, Outhouse, and Chickens: Memories of Rhode Island State College." A 1951 graduate, he earned his doctorate at Cornell in 1957 and spent his academic career as a professor of plant science at the University of Connecticut.

Several Jews were also able to attend Rhode Island School of Design as beneficiaries of the GI Bill. In his 2005 article, Sidney Chafetz explained how he had begun his studies in 1940, returned after military service in 1945, and completed his degree in two years. With funds still remaining from the GI Bill, he studied in France before becoming a professor at Ohio State University, where he served for 40 years. Michael Fink explained in our 2007 issue that his Uncle Herb also returned to RISD on the GI Bill, earning his degree in 1949. After completing a master's degree at Yale, Herb taught at Southern Illinois University and retired as Distinguished Professor in 1987.

In the 2002 and 2003 issues of *The Notes,* further documenting Jews' love of learning, Jerry Foster and her longtime colleague, Eleanor Horvitz, wrote about some of Providence's Jewish public school teachers. The first was Etta Cohen, who began her career in 1898. As Jerry also explained in the 2003 issue, another force behind public education was Sherwin Kapstein, a former teacher, who served on the Providence School Committee from 1953 to 1966. In the 2014 issue, Hilton Weiss, a chemistry professor at Bard College, wrote about his father, Leo, a beloved science teacher and guidance counselor at Hope High from 1935 until 1975.

My friend and colleague, Stephen Logowitz, may have belonged to a small minority. In his

2014 article, he pointed out much of the "despair" and "drudgery" he encountered while a student during the early 1960s at Classical High. Yes, he learned a great deal but at a considerable cost.

Although Providence's Jewish day schools have been portrayed in our journal, there have been very few references to other private elementary and secondary schools. In the 2009 issue, for example, M. Charles Bakst, a Fall River native, mentioned that he had followed an older cousin to Phillips Academy, in Andover, and graduated in 1962. In the 2011 issue, Harris Weiner, a 1976 graduate of Providence Country Day School, profiled Jules Cohen, an outstanding tennis player at PCD (Class of 1951) and then at Yale. In 2014, having written about three 1896 Jewish graduates of Pawtucket High who attended Harvard College, I mentioned Henry Shartenberg. In 1907, his younger brother, Charles, had graduated from Phillips Academy, in Andover, before entering Yale. In the same article, I mentioned that probably the first Jewish lad to attend a Rhode Island boarding school was Kenneth Strauss, who graduated from St. George's, in Middletown, in 1923 before entering Harvard. This New Yorker was a Harvard legacy, however, for his father, Jesse, FDR's ambassador to France from 1933 to 1936, had graduated in 1893 and his older brother, Jesse, Jr., in 1921.

But nothing comparable to the GI Bill enabled Rhode Island's Jewish children to attend Providence's elite private schools (as day or boarding students). Indeed, academic brilliance was probably not the key qualification that caused doors to gradually open. Rather, Jewish families (with Reform or Conservative affiliations) needed to be wealthy enough to pay tuition, and fathers who had achieved a level of professional success and communal

1946
Milton Brier, Malcolm Lipson, Stanley Markowitz, C. Howard Shore, Leonard Triedman

1947
Roy Forman, David Shoolman

1948
Maurice Adelman, Jr., Howard Triedman

1949
Melvin Rosen, N. Barrie Shore, Aaron Siegel

1950
(Lawrence Kaplan), John Livingstone, Harris Rosen

1951
Leonard Miller, Michael Silverstein, Herbert Triedman

1952
Steven Falk, Laurence Gates, Stephen Kay, Ernest Oppenheimer, Richard Oster, Daniel Pollen, Robert Schwartz

1953
Paul Leand, Richard Oresman

1954
Benjamin Gottlieb,
Myron Saxon,
Louis Silverstein

1955
L. Saul Alpert,
Donald Dwares,
Edward Leand,
Frederick Levinger,
Allan Myrow

1956
Joel Altman,
Daniel Cohen,
Robert Fain,
Ronald Goldberg,
Arthur Press

1957
Edward Baram,
Peter Bloom,
Albert Feinberg,
Stanley Goldberg,
Morris Mellion

1958
Jason Goldstein,
Michael Saklad,
(Edmund Strauss),
Michael Zarchen

1959
Richard Chaset,
Stephen Dashef,
Fredric Gottlieb,
Steven Greenberg,
Stephen Hassenfeld,
Stephen Loeber,
(Bruce Pansey),
James Roitman

leadership may have gained some advantage. As portrayed by Jerry Foster in our 2013 issue, Joseph Ress, for example, became sufficiently accomplished to send his daughters to Lincoln, the East Side girls' school honoring Friends' traditions (but never owned by the New England Yearly Meeting).

Ress, a graduate of Providence's Technical High School, earned a Phi Beta Kappa key at Brown in 1926 before entering Harvard Law. Having later acquired affluence as a wholesale grocer (and then as a jewelry manufacturer), he also served in numerous leadership positions within the Jewish community (as did his wife, Ann) as well as at Brown, the United Way, and beyond. Thus, Joan Ress graduated from Lincoln in 1950, her sister Betsy in 1955. Joan Ress Reeves's daughters followed: Ellen '79, Caroline '80, and Pamela '83. Joan, who as a student felt socially isolated from many of her classmates, has nevertheless been honored twice, in 1984 and 1995, as one of Lincoln's most loyal and distinguished alumnae.

A few Jews have also enjoyed highly successful teaching careers at private schools. For example, Susan Hahn Brown, who wrote about her family in our 2004 issue, mentioned her own career as a foreign language teacher at Lincoln and Moses Brown. And the Association's past president, Ruth Breindel, as explained in the following article, also enjoyed a distinguished career teaching Latin at Moses Brown, which had been founded by Friends in 1784.

Joe Lovett's article, the first in our journal by a Moses Brown alumnus, presents a wonderful opportunity to consider a fuller picture of his fellow Jewish graduates. School officials probably did not keep such records, however, and most Jewish alumni probably know little about their predecessors or successors.

Thus, I turned to nine Jewish alums to help

me identify their friends and acquaintances before 1977, when, after a 50-year experiment, their school returned to coeducation. I hope that other researchers will seek to identify MB's more recent Jewish graduates (and Jewish alumni of other private schools will study theirs).

My colleagues in assembling the following list included: Harris Rosen '50, Stephen Kay '52, David London '60, Jeff Brown '66, Alan Salmanson '69, Neil Brier '70, Jeff Brier '71, Robert Fine '72, and Theodore Winston '74. Jill Fox Tobak, whose father, Charles '36, and uncle, Robert '38, were early Jewish alumni, also helped with this endeavor. Two more of my Providence-born friends, Charles Fineman and Stephen Logowitz (mentioned above), also identified some Jewish alumni, bringing the total to about 160.

Jewish-sounding surnames suggested additional alumni, so I also used my extensive experience as a genealogical researcher, primarily through Ancestry.com, to identify approximately 120 more Jewish alums. Of course beyond religious or Hebrew school rosters, there aren't any lists of Jewish boys who grew up in Providence or elsewhere, so I relied primarily on Jewish burial records of graduates and their parents. For alumni who served in World War II, I was also able to search the national Jewish Welfare Board's records. Additionally, I was able to search marriage records for mothers' and wives' maiden names. Again, not merely interested in Jewish "sounding" names, I tried to connect these names with Jewish families or Jewish-owned businesses I knew in Rhode Island.

In some cities' and counties' marriage records, the names and titles of clergy are included. This is how I was able to identify Moses Brown's first Jewish graduate, E. Gardner Jacobs (1901-1985). Two rabbis officiated at his wedding in

1960
Alan Brenner,
Allan Cokin,
Stephen Dashoff,
Barry Fain,
Alan Holoff,
Stephen Koffler,
David London,
Roy Maletz,
Mark Saklad

1961
Max Blum,
Jeffrey Darman,
Lloyd Feinberg,
William Greenberg,
Jonathan Kolb,
Nahum (Norman) Levy,
Stephen Oster,
Stephen Sachs

1962
Peter Dwares,
(Elliot Fain),
Gary Friedman,
Ross Goldberg,
Mark Goldman,
David Leach,
Steven Lerner,
Joseph Lovett,
James Saklad,
Lorenzo (Lawrence) Weisman,
Peter Winslow,
Joel Zoss

1963
Larry Bishins,
Lyle Fain,
Bruce Jacobs,
Phillip Kay,
Robert Krause,
Roy Pansey,
Carl Sandler

1964
Paul Chaset,
(Steven Cohen),
(William Kolb),
Richard Licht,
John Lisker,
Alan Rosenthal,
Jonathan Sachs,
(Peter Simon),
Peter Stevens,
(Steven Wattman),
(David Wolf)

1965
Richard Fain,
(Gordon Feiner),
Steven Freedman,
Arthur Grace,
Abner Katzman,
James Medoff,
Darryl Ross,
Charles Temkin

1966
John Bloom,
Jeffrey Brown,
(Peter Gordon),
(Alan Hassenfeld,
Harold Kenner,
Thomas Kolb,
James Paisner

Marion County, Ohio in 1924. Indeed, one was Henry Englander, who had led Providence's Temple Beth-El from 1905 to 1910 before becoming a professor at the Reform seminary, Hebrew Union College, in Cincinnati. Yes, Jacobs was the son of Jewish parents and had been educated at Beth-El, but his father, Henry, president of Bryant College, eventually became a member of Central Congregational Church. Neither of his parents was buried in a Jewish cemetery. By the way, Gardner spent his entire career as a Bryant administrator and succeeded his father as president.

No doubt, however, this preliminary list is incomplete and will require many revisions. There are probably several graduates with names like mine who slipped under the radar. And there are also probably more than a few alumni, who, having descended from Jewish families, no longer identify with our community. By contrast, perhaps there may be a few Gentile graduates who became Jews. In the following list, parentheses mean that a student did not graduate from Moses Brown. A few transferred to such elite boarding schools as Deerfield and Phillips Academy, in Exeter. But a few other students, perhaps reflecting a change in family finances or seeking a renunciation of snobbery, also returned to public schools.

Despite its inevitable flaws, I believe that this is an astonishing list, which suggests that Moses Brown, having eventually lowered discriminatory barriers, welcomed Jewish students in large numbers (and, understandably, probably an even larger number of Catholics). But why was this so? Presumably, many Jews were strong applicants and would become highly accomplished students. A large number of Jewish parents were also able and eager to spend considerable amounts on their sons' education. But why was this also true? Of course since the 1920s, many affluent Jewish families lived only

a short distance from the spacious and leafy, if somewhat austere, Moses Brown campus. Their sons would probably benefit from small classes, and they would be isolated from less privileged peers. But Friends' ideals and values were also essentially compatible with Judaism in a way that the routines and rituals of most prestigious Protestant prep schools were not.

But why weren't public schools good enough, especially when Providence's high schools sent large numbers of their best graduates to Brown, Pembroke, and other outstanding colleges and universities? Moe and Betty Fink's family may serve as a useful example. Although neither parent had attended college, their three sons, all graduates of public schools, matriculated at Brown, MIT, and Yale. Strangely, however, Brandeis University, which had been founded in 1948 because of lingering Jewish quotas at the most selective institutions, was considered "not quite good enough." Ironically, before the mid-1950s, when it embarked on another promising era of growth and selectivity, Brown too may also have been considered "not good enough."

Yes, prestige surely mattered- even in the selection of elite summer camps- or the location of vacation or retirement homes. But the world of higher learning was seldom intended to bestow only philosophical, artistic or spiritual rewards. Indeed, no kid was sent to a prestigious private school or college to better prepare for the rabbinate or become a poet!

Practically speaking, graduation from a small circle of elite institutions could provide the best opportunities for professional advancement as well as friendships with similarly privileged peers (and possibly their sisters). Having founded Ledgemont Country Club in 1924, for example, an evolving Jewish elite sought additional symbols of worldly accomplishment

1967
Frederick Bernstingle,
(Daniel Bluestein),
(Ronald Conheim),
David Espo,
Allen Handwerger,
Bernhard Lisker,
Alan Reider,
Kenneth Rosenthal,
Roger Silverstein

1968
Harry Blazer,
(Jonathan Fain),
John Gertz,
Peter Greenberg,
Ronald Lechan,
Richard Levine,
David Raphael,
Fred Rotenberg,
Richard Sauber,
Paul Silver,
Robert Sondheim

1969
Kenneth Ageloff,
Michael Farber,
Kenneth Feldman,
John Hamolsky
Robert Mann,
David Radovsky,
Alan Salmanson,
Steven Schneider,
John Summer,
Dean Temkin

1970
Robert Auerbach,
Mark Barad,
Steven Berk,
Neil Brier,
Neil Brown,
Stephen Buckler,
Stuart Fine,
David Lapidus,
Gary Licht,
David Mayer,
Barry Nelson,
Jeffrey Reider,
Henry Rosenthal,
Bruce Stone,
Stanley Wachtenheim

1971
Eric Berger,
Steven Bienenfeld,
Jeffrey Brier,
James Engle,
Harold Espo,
Eric Genser,
William Helfand,
Bruce Holland,
Richard Kaplan,
(Harris Pansey),
John Pranikoff,
Gregory Schneider,
Robert Shore,
Ethan Siegal,
Peter Weisz,
J. Scott Wolf

and, conversely, wider acceptance within Gentile circles.

Yet, the irony of greater educational opportunity for Jews was that many of the most talented or driven Moses Brown alumni would never return to Rhode Island or nearby Massachusetts, and some would forsake family businesses. Perhaps, as a result, some of our Jewish institutions would also be deprived of gifted leadership and another generation of family support. And perhaps some advocacy for Rhode Island's public schools would also falter.

Meanwhile, however, more than a few of Moses Brown's Jewish graduates would send their children and grandchildren to their beloved alma mater. I'm not yet aware of any great-grandchildren, however, who have become alumni or are current students.

Yet, I think that it's probably safe to say that Jewish students were never considered members of a minority group, who, having been longtime victims of discrimination, became worthy of special consideration. Rather, Jewish families always thought that, given a fair chance, they could fully and perhaps happily compete with their Gentile counterparts. Ironically, the motto of one of Moses Brown's athletic rivals, also formerly a boys' school, is "Play the Game."

1972
Roger Aransky,
Alan Axelrod,
Jonathan Bell,
(Gary Berkson),
John Blacher,
(Edward Davis),
Mark Decof,
Allan Farago,
Barry Field,
Robert Fine,
Mark Flink,
Jordan Goodman,
Michael Gordon,
John Kern,
Donald Kopans,
Louis Miller,
Edward Odessa,
Gary Pansey,
Jeffrey Pine,
(Robert Riesman, Jr.),
Charles Saltzman,
Ahvi (Lawrence)
Spindell,
Michael Steiner,
Michael Strasmich,
Simon Weil,
Joseph Zuckerberg

1973
(Scott Ageloff),
Peter Bazar,
(Mark Chason),
Richard Engle,
Michael Exstein,
Jeffrey Fine,
James Gilbert, Jr.,
Richard Gittleman,
Peter Goldman,
Roger Goodman,
Mark Michaelson,
Richard Sackett,
Peter Shore,
Kevin Stone,
Ira Sutton,
Andrew Wilner

1974
Marc Chernick,
(Joseph Espo),
Paul Farago,
Philip Flink,
Alan Gerber,
Bruce Gladstone,
David Hamolsky,
Samuel Mencoff,
(Jonathan Nelson),
Daniel Reiser,
H. Steven Rosen,
Michael Rosenstein,
Theodore Winston,
Daniel Zuckerman,
David Zuckerman

1975
Jon Abedon,
Charles Fradin,
Mark Goldberg,
Brian Goldblatt,
Lloyd Granoff,
Thomas Israel,
Stephen Litwin,
Lincoln Pranikoff,
Mark Rakatansky,
David Saltzman,
Peter Scoliard,
Mitchell Tobin,
John Triedman,
Royce Winsten

1976
Mark Alperin,
Joel Bernstein,
Jason Berstein,
Douglas Bonoff,
David Chapnick,
David Jaffe,
Peter Leviten,
Steven Rubin,
J. Alan Sasson,
Steven Spindell,
Steven Triedman,
Matthew Wilner,
(Samuel Zurier)

students masquerading as Ruth, Halloween, 2003

Teaching Latin at Moses Brown School

Ruth Breindel

As Ruth explains in her article, Moses Brown has had very few Jewish teachers. Yet, it could not have been easier obtaining a faculty member's perspective, for Ruth is not only the immediate past president of our Association but continues to serves as our secretary. She is also dedicated to better organizing and cataloguing our vast archival collection. Indeed, she is always happy to help in any way she can.

Far beyond her career as an educator and as a leader of our Association, Ruth has become a celebrity on the East Side. Whatever the season, she can be seen walking everywhere. This habit may seem ironic given her disinterest in travel! Or, having become a true Rhode Islander, much of what she enjoys or needs is close by. I'm not referring to children or grandchildren, however.

Upbringing and Education in New York City

Only after moving away from New York City did I discover that Reform Judaism there was unlike any other place! My mother's family, the Hechts, had arrived from Germany around 1848 and became quite prosperous. Surprisingly, one relative was buried in a Sephardic cemetery in Lower Manhattan. My father's parents, the Bronsteins, came in 1906. As family lore goes, they were hiding arms for the wrong side in the early Russian revolution and had to flee. Their status here was much lower, and my mother, Elaine Mandel, was considered to have "married down" in Jewish society. That my father, Lewis Bronstein, was a board certified cardiologist didn't seem to lift them up socially, not that either parent cared.

The funniest part of this is that my father's mother didn't want him to be a doctor, but a high school biology teacher. Who ever heard of a Jewish mother who didn't want her son to be a doctor? However, as the doctor in the family, he was in charge of everyone's health. One set of first cousins married each other, and when their

daughter had dysautonomia, a terrible disorder, my father had to tell them they could not have any more children.

My mother went to Hunter College and then took graduate courses at Teachers College at Columbia. She taught history in various New York City high schools before my older brother Dan was born and after I went to high school. She and my father met at a dance for organizers of the teachers' union in the early 1930s. The story goes that he asked her out because she was the first young woman who didn't ask to see an autopsy!

My mother's family was Reform, and my father's Orthodox, but my father really didn't care, so all that religion was dropped. Actually, my mother's family was Reform with a difference: they had meat, milk, and shellfish dishes.

We belonged to a Reform congregation, Temple Israel, founded in 1873 by German Jews, and this is where I was confirmed. Practically no Hebrew was taught, so I had to teach myself when I got older. I finally became a bat mitzvah at the age of 65! This was at Temple Anshe Amunim, in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, where my older son, Josh, was rabbi.

My older brother Dan became a bar mitzvah, but I have only one memory of it. While the boys were tossing mashed potatoes into the decorative plants, I ate a large portion of the marzipan Torah topping on his cake. As a result, I have never eaten marzipan since.

Growing up in New York City in the 1950s and '60s, I thought everyone, if not Jewish, at least understood what Jews were. My school, Hunter College Elementary, must have been 50% Jewish; it accepted children only from Manhattan, and entrance was based on an IQ exam. The school was housed on an upper floor at Hunter College. My brother had gone there before me, so it was assumed that I would pass the exam and go too. By this time we had moved from the Upper West Side to the Upper East Side. In the morning, I went with my father to his office and waited until his nurse could walk me to school. Later I took public transit.

What I didn't realize until about 10 years ago was that I never went to first grade, but was put directly into second, thereby

setting my mathematics career back about 10 years, since I was never taught the basics of addition and subtraction. I was also small and one of the youngest in the class because my birthday is at the end of August.

The one time I found it odd that others didn't know about Jews was when, as a Girl Scout in a troop at a Presbyterian church, the leaders didn't know what matzoh balls were. I had made some for a cooking badge. Then I brought some in, but they were not a hit.

I attended Hunter College High School – again after passing an entrance examination. Run by the Board of Higher Education (the only high school to be under its control), it was a teacher training school. We were all too smart for our own good, and definitely made the young teachers' lives miserable. While the curriculum was rigorous and competition was fierce, it was a wonderful experience to go to an all-girls' school. Elena Kagan, the future Supreme Court Justice, was just a few years behind me.

Hunter High School was at least 30% Jewish. My parents and I often invited non-Jewish friends over for Seder. My father would lead the service. One of my favorite memories is of a family Seder, when he and his two younger brothers would compete to see who could get through the Haggadah first!

I came to Latin as a refugee from French, through which I had suffered for six years, starting in elementary school, where it was required. Since I have no auditory ability, the class was absolute torture, and I never really understood what anyone was saying, although I was able to read French. When I discovered Latin in 11th grade, I was so excited – no one asked me to speak it! I could read it! It was orderly and made sense!

I decided to go to City College of New York, the star of the city's colleges, because I wasn't ready to leave home; I was 16 when I graduated from high school. CCNY had originally been very Jewish, but by my time, it was no longer so. However, as a Latin major, I was in the department of classical languages and Hebrew, so I was right at home. The classes were very small and the personal attention very great. Actually, in my year, there were only two Latin majors, so we traded departmental awards each year. I minored in Greek and

earned special honors in linguistics. I also did a tutorial in Egyptian.

All the professors in my department were Jewish; we never discussed religion, but there was comfort just in their names! My most famous professor was Stephen Daitz, who championed the idea of oral Greek – that is, reading it aloud. He told our Homer class that we were to memorize and recite 30 lines of the *Iliad,* and we just looked at him and never did it. It was the Sixties, after all.

As I used to tell my high school students, while it might sound exciting to have grown up in that era, it really wasn't! There was always fear in the air. Even as a younger child in the Fifties, I was afraid that the Nazis would come back and kill us when we were attending services. I had friends whose relatives had died in the Holocaust; I never forgot their stories. The atomic bomb drills didn't help either, and when, in 7th grade, some students refused to sit under the desk during a drill (and this was supposed to save us from radiation how?), the school decided to abandon that practice.

My friends and I joined all sorts of progressive organizations – anti-bomb, anti-war, the Lexington Democratic Club – with my parents' blessing. I always kept in mind my father's philosophy that we are here to make the world a better place.

I also worked at the American Museum of Natural History in the anthropology department. I had begun as a volunteer in high school, and then moved into a very part-time position in college. I loved working there, and took several anthropology courses in college, but my heart was with the ancient world. It was really at the museum where I first met someone who had absolutely no knowledge of what it was to be Jewish. While talking with another intern, I mentioned that I was Jewish. She stared at me in shock. I told her that I hid my tail under my skirt, and she actually looked at my back!

After college, I went directly to Fordham University in the Bronx for my master's. Now we can talk about culture shock on my part. At Fordham I was the token Jew – they took one each year. If you were in this program, you were expected to go into teaching, even though we had no education courses. Fordham also gave me a really good scholarship, and I knew I could get my master's in one

year, as opposed to Columbia, where it was a never-ending story. At the end of my master's, the professors wanted me to continue for a Ph.D., but I moved to Massachusetts, so my formal Latin education ended.

My first class at Fordham was quite an awakening; the priest, clad in a black cassock, began with the Lord's Prayer. All I could think of was the old joke about the obstreperous Jewish boy who finally behaves when sent to a Catholic school – "Look what they did to the last Jew who went here!" Indeed, there were crucifixes in every room. The Jesuit priests, however, were just the most wonderful teachers, open to new ideas and eager to discuss everything with us. I might be one of the few people who actually enjoyed graduate school.

Marriage and Children

Along the way, in my junior year of college, I got married. Lawrence Breindel and I had gone to Hunter Elementary together and had played at each other's houses, and we met again at CCNY. He earned a degree in psychology, and then we moved to Massachusetts, where he went to graduate school at UMass, Amherst. We kept a kosher home for the first few months, and then my husband said he wanted to stop. I should bring home some bacon and cook it. I did so, and that was the end of religion!

After graduate school, we moved to Belchertown, Massachusetts, because we could buy a house cheaply. (In 1971, a ranch house cost $16,000). There I discovered an unintentional kind of anti-Semitism. A woman who lived across the way asked us which church we went to, and we just said we didn't. Then she said that she had a Jewish friend in college, and "Wasn't it something that Jews put sour cream on everything they eat!" There is no answer to such a comment. We left that area after two years and came back to New York.

Our older son Josh was born there in 1975, and two years later we moved to Rhode Island so my husband could attend graduate school at Brown. I had never earned a teaching certificate, although I had always wanted to teach; instead, while in Massachusetts and in Rhode Island, I worked as a bookkeeper. There

are actually many similarities between Latin and bookkeeping: order, charts, structure.

Our younger son Nate was born in Rhode Island in 1980. By this time, I knew that I wanted to stay in Providence. Following our divorce, I stayed here with the boys in the house we had purchased in 1979.

Beginning at Moses Brown

When Josh was in Montessori kindergarten, my husband and I went to speak with the principal of Martin Luther King Elementary, which was in our neighborhood. We told him that our son would be going into first grade and was reading at a 4th grade level. He told us not to send him to King! That's when I began to work with, but not yet for, Moses Brown. We liked the atmosphere and the class size and the decision to give Josh a curriculum that suited him.

It wasn't until spring of 1985, when Josh was graduating from fifth grade at Moses Brown, that a position opened up for a Latin teacher. The former teacher left, and even though I had no teaching certificate (which is not needed for a private school) or real experience, I was hired to teach Latin in the upper (high) school in the fall of 1985. I stayed for 30 years.

Nate also began at Montessori, but entered Moses Brown in 1986, after I had been teaching for a year. Both boys graduated from MB – Josh in 1993 and Nate in 1998 – and even took Latin with me! As the only Latin teacher in the upper school, they had to be in my class. Sometimes this worked out better than other times, but for the most part, we enjoyed being together in the classroom.

Unfortunately, Latin was not required at Moses Brown, which was a pity, because it would have given me complete job security! However, I built up the program over the years, and some years I even taught more students than the French teachers. We had an excellent middle school Latin program, and it was a pleasure to work with my colleague there. Many of our students came from parochial or private schools (Friends Academy in North Dartmouth, Lincoln in Providence, and various Catholic schools in the area),

where Latin was taught, and they continued their studies in high school.

As a full-time teacher, my class numbers ranged from a low of four to a high of 20 students. This also depended on the level (Latin 1, 2, 3, 4, 4AP, 5AP/Advanced Latin) and the year. I also taught Greek, sometimes as a "real course" and other times as an independent study. In addition, I wrote a linguistics book and used it for several courses.

What was it like for a Jew to teach at a Quaker, or Friends, school? The Quakers are, for the most part, very "live and let live." Because only about 3% percent of Moses Brown students were Quakers, we had what I called "secular Quakerism." When I started teaching, there was a required Quaker religion course; over the years it was watered down to almost nothing. Since about 40 to 50% of the students were Catholics, whether practicing or lapsed, it was definitely "Quaker lite."

On the other hand, over those 30 years we went from having Quaker meetings, either around the campus or in the meetinghouse on Olney, from four times a year to once a week. This was not a religious experience, but more a chance for students and teachers to talk about things that they thought were important. Sometimes there were excellent insights; other times, the rumbling of stomachs and the sly look at notes for the next class were the norm. Certainly, there was nothing wrong with sitting in silence; it was suitable for any religion.

When I began teaching, there was only one Jewish teacher, who taught math; two more were hired when I was. One was Susan Brown, who taught Spanish and French. (Her husband, Steven, was later a president of our Jewish Historical Association, and it was through him that I came onto its board and later became president.) The other Jewish teacher taught drama.

No one in the administration ever asked about my religion or made any comments; if anything, administrators bent over backwards to accommodate everyone. Over time more Jewish teachers came and left for various reasons (spouses changed jobs and had to move or there was a new child), but the number stayed quite

low, usually no more than four. I believe that the student population varied over the years from 10 to 20% Jewish. As a teacher, not an admissions person, I have no idea how students were selected.

That first year I made my stand and said that I would not be in school for the High Holy Days; no one blinked an eye, and other teachers covered my classes. A moment of truth arrived when, at my first parents' night, a mother told me how much it meant to her daughter that I had taken those days off, as her daughter had always felt odd about doing so.

In those early years, I would go to services at Brown Hillel, which were free and open to the community. I sometimes saw another Moses Brown teacher at Hillel services too. I loved Hillel – the disorganization, the college students running things, and the green was a safe place for my boys to walk around when they got bored.

I tried attending various temples in Providence, but was never comfortable. Fortunately, Lea Eliash, who taught Hebrew at Emanu-El for decades, was like a surrogate grandmother to Josh and Nate. Various rabbis and Ethan Adler tutored each boy privately for his bar mitzvah. Their ceremonies were held in the Ray Building on the Butler Hospital campus and at Brown Hillel.

Later Years at Moses Brown

For 30 years I brought in matzoh during Passover and kept it in my classroom. Eventually, the cafeteria offered matzoh, but by then, it was my "thing," and I didn't like its brand anyway. I would offer matzoh to students to try: "It's sort of like communion wafers. Don't worry, it has practically no taste." This was my bit for ecumenical education.

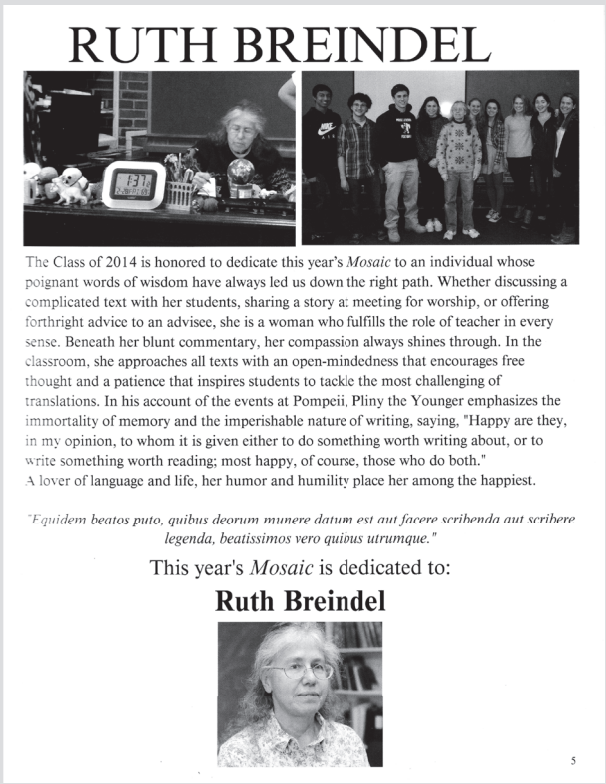
There wasn't much discussion of religion as practiced by students. Moses Brown could not accommodate Orthodox Jews because there were games on weekends, and the middle school had group outings during several nights in September, which sometimes conflicted with the High Holy Days. I remember one year when a parent drove her child and Josh to a venue in the mountains of Vermont; I had to teach that day (the second day of Rosh Hashanah).

Somehow, by Nate's time, group outings were no longer a problem. Some Jewish students went to Hebrew school, but most didn't, as the after-school commitment to sports or drama was so strong. I don't think any child kept kosher at school, although some did at home.

David Burnham was head of school when I was hired. Joanne Hoffman, a Catholic, succeeded him in 1994. She met with each faculty member, asking what was the one thing he or she would like changed. I said having Jewish holidays off for faculty and students (and no expectation of students doing homework, either). She listened. A little while later, that policy was put into effect. No longer did I feel I was cheating my students out of their education when I wasn't in class.

However, each year, as we approached the various holidays, I would mention in a faculty meeting about the homework problem

dedication in Moses Brown yearbook, 2014



RUTH BREINDEL

The Class of 2014 is honored to dedicate this year's *Mosaic* to an individual whose poignant words of wisdom have always led us down the right path. Whether discussing a complicated text with her students, sharing a story at meeting for worship, or offering forthright advice to an advisee, she is a woman who fulfills the role of teacher in every sense. Beneath her blunt commentary, her compassion always shines through. In the classroom, she approaches all texts with an open-mindedness that encourages free thought and a patience that inspires students to tackle the most challenging of translations. In his account of the events at Pompeii, Pliny the Younger emphasizes the immortality of memory and the imperishable nature of writing, saying, "Happy are they, in my opinion, to whom it is given either to do something worth writing about, or to write something worth reading; most happy, of course, those who do both."
A lover of language and life, her humor and humility place her among the happiest.

"Equidem beatos puto, quibus deorum munere datum est aut facere scribenda aut scribere legenda, beatissimos vero quibus utrumque."

This year's *Mosaic* is dedicated to:

Ruth Breindel

5

for students; I was the only Jewish teacher who brought this up. In other respects, regarding all the heads of school I knew, I would say: *de mortuis nil nisi bonum* (about the dead, nothing but good).

Yes, there was the obligatory Chanukah song at the winter concert (called the "Christmas" concert), which always made me cringe, but the school was trying. Sometimes the trying was better than other times; I still remember Josh telling me about a teacher in middle school. When he said that he wasn't making a star for a Christmas tree, the teacher suggested that he make a Jewish star for the tree!

What was excellent about a Quaker school was the idea of service. This version of *tikkun olam* made sense to me, and I was an eager participant. I took students to work at a food bank, to serve at McAuley House in the Elmwood neighborhood, and I taught many to sew quilts on a sewing machine for the Linus Project, which gives quilts to families of premature babies. Even after retiring in 2015, I came in to help with those projects.

Another Quaker tenet, as handed down to us, is that there is a little of God in each person. I used this idea as a teacher, making sure that all my students were treated properly and with the respect they earned. I truly did not have any behavior problems with students; they came eager to learn. For many students, as it had been for me, the move from a spoken language to a written one was a relief.

Latin is essential to Catholicism. When I began at Moses Brown, many of my students had gone to parochial school and still went to Sunday Mass. While Mass was no longer in Latin, they knew various catch phrases: *pax vobicum … et tecum* (peace with you plural) … (and with you singular) and *dona nobis pacem* (give us peace!). I added one Latin prhase to our list: *vis sit tecum* (may the force be with you!). It was strange to me that as a Jew, I knew more about their religion than they did; the concepts of purgatory and limbo gradually faded away, and students were sure they weren't going to hell. However, those who had gone to parochial school certainly knew their grammar!

As a Jew, I was always careful about how I discussed mythology and religion. This certainly came up when we discussed

the hero myth. I always used a modified version of Lord Raglan's system (based on his classic 1936 book, *The Hero*), which is much easier to remember than Joseph Campbell's system. After going through the seven stages, I gave examples: Moses, Jesus, Hercules, and Superman. By treating them all as stories or myths, no one religion was given precedence over another.

I was also careful when discussing mystery religions, an important topic when reading Vergil or other authors. We know that "something was said, something was done and something was eaten." But that is all we know – after all, it was a mystery religion! When asked what this may have meant to students, only a few could see the similarity between it and the Mass, where special words are said that change wine into blood and bread into flesh, and then they are eaten. I was careful to emphasize how important this was, to eat your God and take him into yourself. I have no idea if the students ever discussed this with their parents or at Catholic religious classes or at Moses Brown, but I never had any complaints.

For several years I co-taught a course called "Myth and Meaning" with a teacher in the religion department. That department was in charge of teaching about Quakerism, world religions, and philosophies. As a Quaker school, it was deemed important to have a moral code. Teaching with another knowledgeable adult was a wonderful experience. I took care of the ancient world and North America; she did the rest. (I will mention that this was a volunteer job for me, for which I was not paid.) Some students had taken Latin, but most hadn't, so I could tell my stories and jokes to a mostly new audience. As with the hero myth, we drew comparisons among various religions and their stories, treating them all as myth.

I could decorate my classroom, whose location changed over 30 years, as I liked. I remember once putting up a time line of the earth all around the top of a wall, showing how humanity arrived only at the last half inch. One of my students once said that he didn't believe that there were dinosaurs.

At one point I put up one of my favorite quotes:

Is not this the fast that I have chosen?
to loose the bands of wickedness,
to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, land
that ye break every yoke? (Isaiah 58:6)

And another:

Justice, justice you shall pursue. (Deuteronomy 16:20)

Using the Hebrew Bible was completely acceptable at school, and these quotes fit in so well with Quaker philosophy. Growing up as a Reform Jew in New York, the use of Bible as literature made perfect sense to me.

One fall one of my students came to me and asked: "Mrs. Breindel, can we start a Yiddish Club? There are clubs for Spanish, French, Italian and even Latin." I was in charge of the Latin Club, and at various times the Fencing Club (run by my older son Josh) and the Beatles Club (run by my younger son Nate). I told this student that I knew only a few phrases, and I probably pronounced them wrong, anyway. He didn't care; what he really wanted was to have a club that celebrated his Jewishness.

We went to the dean of students, who gave us permission; as long as a student thought up a club and it wasn't partisan, approval would be given. I bought several books about Yiddish grammar and phrases, which we enjoyed. The club was open to everyone, and when we had food, lots of Jews and non-Jews came. We would meet during "free time," when clubs usually met during the school day. There were no other religious clubs; this one was in the guise of language.

After this student graduated, the club faded away, as many clubs do. But it was there for him when he needed it.

All teachers have advisees. Most of mine came from my Latin classes, or else they brought their friends along. Students could pick their advisors, and change them if needed. Very few of my advisees were Jewish, whether because my classes usually had few Jews or because they felt comfortable enough without needing a second "Jewish mother." Instead, I was the Jewish mother to all my students and advisees, and many of them called me that, as did their

parents! I thought it was kind of cute. Actually, some of them called me "Mom" and were quite embarrassed afterward. At least I wasn't called "Grandma"!

Part of being a teacher and advisor was writing college recommendations. My best story is a student who, in desperation, asked me to write one for him; he said he had no one else to ask. I said, "You're a great kid, but I can't write about your Latin ability." That was fine with him, so I wrote about his personal qualities instead. I always demanded a thank-you note before I wrote a letter because I knew that I wouldn't receive one later.

One of the hardest discussions faculty had was about students who were having so much difficulty with their coursework that they had to be denied admittance to the next year. This is a wrenching discussion; luckily, very few of my students ever came up in these discussions. Latin is, after all, a self-selecting course of study.

I based my teaching at Moses Brown on my excellent teachers in high school. They had gone the extra distance for us, even meeting at lunch to teach ancient Greek. Later I did the same thing with students for many years.

Here's an interesting side note. I had no idea at the time, but one of my favorite high school Latin teachers was Jewish. His granddaughter later became the girlfriend of a fellow Latin teacher (also Jewish) from western Massachusetts. This is truly Jewish geography! The percentage of Jewish Latin teachers is quite small.

I truly believe that one can teach anyone of normal intelligence anything; it's all in the way that it's done. Latin often becomes the language of choice for children with learning differences; I had so many of those that I wrote a book about it, published by the American Classical League. It's entitled *De Rerum Discendi* (about the nature of learning). I am extremely proud that my students did learn Latin and enjoyed themselves in the process.

After Moses Brown

One of my joys is that three of my former students went on to become Latin teachers: one in California, another in New York, and the third in New Hampshire. I do still hear from many students,

and parents often stop me when I'm walking on the East Side to tell me about their children's progress. I love to hear their news.

I left formal teaching, but not my work in Latin. For over 23 years I have been the treasurer of the Classical Association of New England, a group of Latin and Greek teachers and students mostly in our region but also around the country and even overseas. I am currently teaching three Latin courses and one in ancient Greek online to adults. We started at the Rochambeau branch of the Providence Community Library, but then moved to Zoom. These courses are, of course, free.

I also get together with some friends who teach high school and college, and we translate texts together for fun. (Yes, Latin teachers are strange!) I also give presentations about teaching Latin and write articles for our journal and edit texts. Tutoring students is another adventure in Latin that I enjoy.

While my successor at Moses Brown is excellent, Latin teachers always have a fear that their program might be cut. There is less of a fear at Moses Brown and at other private schools in Rhode Island because of a strong history of Latin in these schools. The public schools are more in danger, and I have written letters and gone to meetings to speak on behalf of those programs when they were under siege.

When I go, I explain all the benefits of Latin: increased SAT scores, working with a logical structure, the advantage for ADD students being that they can "space out" and turn to people speaking in English. But the best reason is that it's fun!

Strangely enough, I have never been to Italy or Greece. My one trip abroad was in college, and since then I have stayed put. Quite frankly, I hate to travel! A friend of mine who went to Thermopylae sent me a postcard of the area; the pass, so famous and narrow, had widened over the centuries so that it looked nothing like the ancient descriptions. My imagination works very well, and I don't need to see something to visualize it.

Overall, I have had an excellent time teaching Latin. As I used to say to my students: "I love high school kids, and teaching is the most fun you can ever have."

bat mitzvah with sons
Rabbi Josh and Nate, 2014

playing cello at home, Providence, ca. 1961

Born to Teach

Lynn Rakatansky

Thanks primarily to Temple Beth-El, the author and I have become good friends and colleagues. Before the pandemic, Lynn coordinated the daily minyan service and led it at least once a week. I led on Wednesday evenings or whenever a need arose. Since March, Lynn has led every minyan service by Zoom, and I have been on sabbatical. She recently became chair of the Worship Practices Committee.

Lynn and I have shared another bond, our deep connection to modern architecture. She grew up in homes designed by her late father, Ira, a prominent architect. Many of these were adorned by artwork selected by her late mother, Lenore, a well-known art dealer. As you may know, I've been a student of modern architecture for decades, and Betsey and I live in a notable Arts & Crafts bungalow. Of course the three of us so much enjoy Beth-El's architecture, whose striking modernism now seems traditional. Or Judaism's essence remains forever new and vital.

Lynn and I are further connected through our work as educators. Compared to her full career in the classroom, my tenure was relatively brief. But I too once earned a teaching credential and had to endure too many lame excuses about missing or late assignments. Both of us still care deeply about students and how to anchor and enrich their lives.

Lynn and I differ in at least one important respect, however. She has been a Rhode Islander her entire life. Some day I may become a Rhode Islander! Perhaps my probationary period (33 years) will soon expire.

Ever since I can remember, I always wanted to teach. Maybe when I was really young, before I entered school, I would have chosen the career path of a ballerina. However, once I started school in 1958, I knew that I was destined to teach.

In sixth grade at John Howland Elementary School in

Providence, our teacher, Miss Toole, spoke with her students individually, asking what they wanted to be when they grew up. I told her that I wanted to teach. She asked at what level and I replied "elementary" because I didn't know anything else. She said that she had chosen elementary so she could teach the same students all day.

Then I entered Nathan Bishop Junior High School and was placed in the seventh grade math class taught by Mr. Raymond Balkus. He was an outstanding teacher, and I knew that I wanted to teach mathematics. I was extremely fortunate to have him the next two years for algebra and geometry. In ninth grade guidance class we had to create a "Career Notebook" about an occupation we might want to pursue when we finished our schooling. Mine was on teaching math at the secondary level, a career I followed and loved for decades. My "Career Notebook" was dedicated to Mr. Balkus.

I graduated from Hope High School in 1971. The education I received there was outstanding, preparing me well for the rigors of college. Seven of my classmates and I were accepted at Brown. This was an exceptionally high number, especially for a high school in Rhode Island.

My religious education, beginning in second grade, took place at Temple Beth-El. My best friend, Evan Amster, and I would walk to Temple two afternoons a week for Hebrew school and again on Sunday mornings. Boys had solo bar mitzvahs, but girls participated in a group. In 1966, there were 11 students in my bat mitzvah class. My group of five celebrated together in a February ceremony. In 1969 my confirmation class had 43 students. I was a teacher assistant for the following two years. There were many excellent teachers. Two who stood out were Chaya Segal and Esther Karten, grandmother of Rachel Mersky Woda, the current Director of Youth and Family Engagement at Temple. I also enjoyed many summers as a camper and counselor-in-training at the JCC's Camp Centerland.

My extracurricular activities during high school included playing cello in the Rhode Island Philharmonic Youth Orchestra from 1966 to 1971. I also performed in the pit orchestras for "Peter Pan" at Hope High School and "Paint Your Wagon" at Rhode Island

group bat mitzvah, Beth-El, 1966; Lynn is in front row, on left

College and volunteered at Miriam Hospital. Of course I enjoyed reading and spending time with friends.

At Brown I majored in mathematics and English and took the required education courses that would enable me to teach in public schools. Given Brown's open curriculum, which had no requirements beyond one's major, I enjoyed taking many other courses, especially in drama.

My English mentor was David Krause, who, passionate about Irish literature, was a leading scholar and biographer of the playwright Sean O'Casey. My math mentor was Tom Banchoff, whose specialty is geometry. Years later Tom asked me to join Brown's Education Advisory Board of ICERM (The Institute for Computational and Experimental Research in Mathematics). I served two terms through June 2020.

I never felt any limitations on my choice of a career. I was not hired by the East Providence School Department until the August following my graduation. Meanwhile, I was volunteering at Miriam Hospital. Its director of personnel kept pushing me to go directly to graduate school. He said that it took him eight years to get the job he really wanted. When I asked if it was worth the wait, he stopped pushing graduate school.

I knew that I wasn't ready for grad school because I wasn't sure what area I wanted to study. I already had way more credits in mathematics than I needed to qualify for the state's Professional

Teaching License, so I could continue to teach math while earning a master's in another area. In fact, a master's wasn't required – only a certain number of credits in one's content area beyond a bachelor's degree.

In 1980 I earned a master's in English at Middlebury College's Bread Loaf School of English. I accomplished this by taking advantage of its summer program, which is primarily designed for teachers. With this further education I was able to teach literacy, direct school plays on a voluntary basis, and use writing in math class to help students fully understand math concepts.

Both my brother and I were very fortunate to have parents who encouraged us to follow our own careers. Dad was a prominent, mid-century modern architect. His residential, religious, and commercial buildings can be seen throughout Rhode Island and beyond. The book, *Ira Rakatansky: As Modern As Tomorrow,* published in RISD's architecture series in 2010, tells his story. I loved living in two of the houses he designed, one in Providence, another in Lincoln.

Our mother, Lenore Gray Rakatansky, opened Rhode

with parents, presidential teaching award, Washington, DC, 2002

Island's first gallery devoted to modern art in the late 1960s. Known as the Lenore Gray Gallery, it was located in the same building as Ira's architectural office on Meeting Street in Providence. My home is enriched by artwork from her gallery and Dad's architectural touches.

My brother Mark became an architect and is the principal of his own studio in New York City. He is also an adjunct associate professor in Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation and wrote *Tectonic Acts of Desire and Doubt,* which was published by the Architectural Association in 2012.

Teaching mathematics is a passion for me. I want students to see the relevance of math in their daily lives and in their future careers, to observe its beauty by seeing its patterns and presence everywhere, and to enjoy the fun of solving math puzzles while not necessarily realizing that they are thinking logically and doing math. I assigned my middle school students two projects each year. For the "Career Poster," a student had to interview someone about how and where math is used in his or her job. For "The Anything Math Project," a student could choose any topic and show its connection to mathematics. In addition to writing a one-page paper, a student made a presentation that could include a model, a poster, a game or another creative object. For example, one student demonstrated the number of degrees and revolutions in breakdancing. All the students thought that his dance was fantastic. By seeing all the jobs referenced in the "Career Posters" and "The Anything Math Projects," students began to realize that math is everywhere.

In 2000 I won the national Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, one of the top awards given to outstanding teachers. Yet, what I have always found to be most rewarding is seeing when a student who has struggled with a concept suddenly "gets" it. Hearing about the successes of my former students always makes me smile and brings back fond memories. One former student became a math teacher because of my influence, and she uses my projects with her students!

Yes, there were many wonderful moments during my 32 years of teaching in East Providence schools. I taught four years at

the High School, one year at Central Junior High, and the rest at Riverside Middle School. I have such great memories and am still connected with many of my students.

Given an absence of synagogues, there are very few Jewish families in East Providence (or not enough Jews to build one of their own). I believe that over my entire career, I taught only six Jewish students, but I also met some of their siblings.

While a student in Providence's public schools, I never felt any discrimination due to my religion. But I did while teaching. One student whom I did not know came by my classroom one day and shouted, "Hitler is going to get you!" Another year there were swastikas drawn on my bulletin board. One of my department heads told me that I had to use my personal days for the Jewish holidays. This was not true. Yet the only other Jewish teacher in that school that year was Jacob Smith, who was also in the math department and a cantor at Temple Sinai in Cranston. He had taught in that school longer than our department head.

I was very fortunate to have the support of administrators in the schools where I taught. Though these anti-Semitic situations occurred rarely, they were still unsettling. However, the joys far outweighed these negative incidents.

The year after I retired I taught an eighth-grade algebra class at St. Cecilia School in Pawtucket. I continue to tutor and also mentor teachers. For example, I have taught teachers enrolled in Lesley University's master's in math education program.

Involvement in professional mathematics organizations has also deepened my connections to colleagues. Having served as president for two terms, I remain on the executive board of the Rhode Island Mathematics Teachers Association. I was also president of the Association of Teachers of Mathematics in New England and served on various committees for the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics at annual and regional meetings held in Indianapolis and throughout New England.

I have been invited to several international conferences. In October 1993, I gave presentations at the First Joint U.S./ Russia Mathematics Educators Conference held in Moscow. We met with

colleagues and visited schools in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Minsk. We were there during the constitutional crisis, which was quite frightening, but we were well protected. In November 1995, shortly after apartheid ended, I attended a similar conference in South Africa. I visited schools and met with teachers and principals in Johannesburg, Pretoria, and Cape Town. I set up pen pals with my students.

Over the years I have enjoyed traveling, knitting, sewing, and quilting. I belong to two book groups, attend plays, classical music concerts, and dance performances, and I visit museums.

My connection to Temple Beth-El has continued and deepened over the years. In addition to having served two terms on the board of trustees, I coordinate the second day Rosh Hashanah service and the daily minyan (now being led by me via Zoom). I'm also the new chair of the Worship Practices Committee and am an officer of Sisterhood. I feel nourished and strengthened by the Temple's sense of community.

At my retirement party in 2008, I told a story about the first math department meeting I attended, which was the day before I met my students. The department head had us fill out index cards with our personal information, including the number of years we had taught. I of course wrote 1. The teacher sitting next to me wrote 40! I gasped and said, "You've been teaching longer than I've been alive!" Everyone laughed. It seems funny now, but she had the job that I had dreamed of having.

As of this moment, I've been teaching for 44 years. This includes tutoring and being involved with the math teacher associations. If I had to go back and choose again, I wouldn't change a thing. Teaching, and the friendships it brings with colleagues and students alike, have so enriched my life.

"Wherefore is this house different from all other. . .": Jewish Life in a Mexican Village

David W. Gitlitz

David is a former vice president of our Association, and he and his wife, Linda Kay Davidson, have helped us in numerous ways. As scholarly partners, they lectured about their numerous, award-winning books, contributed articles to *The Notes,* and even hosted a wonderful luncheon in their 18th-century home on Kingstown Road in Kingston. In 2006, however, they retired from their academic lives at URI in order to find a new home, at least their fourth together.

Given their love of Spanish language and literature and Hispanic culture, including Sephardic strands, a move to Mexico seemed natural. I believe, however, that they could have found peace and happiness wherever conversations flow, flowers blossom, and creatures fly and sing.

Not long after David and Linda erected their new residence in Oaxaca, her fragile health weakened further. Unfortunately, regular therapeutic trips back to Rhode Island were not effective, and our dear friend passed away three years ago.

Fortunately, David is as busy as ever, squeezing more out of a day than most of us accomplish in a week. In April, as much as I wanted to say hello, I was reluctant to bug him about writing another article for our journal. But after receiving my email, he said that he'd consider my suggested topic.

It didn't take long. David wrote the following essay within a day or two. A few weeks later, I was privileged to participate in a Zoom celebration of his birthday. His daughters, younger brother, cousins, old and newer colleagues, former students and neighbors, and friends from at least three continents were delighted to share happy, silly, and abiding memories. I'm confident that this essay will also bring our readers closer to David and Linda.

"So," my friend George Goodwin asked me, "what's it like, as a former Rhode Island Jew, to find yourself now living in a

tiny mountain village in Mexico's deep south? Is it hard to maintain your sense of Jewish identity where the local Jewish support system has to be somewhat less than zero?"

"Ah," I said, with a flip answer already perched on the tip of my tongue. And then I paused. There is a lot buried in George's question, a lot that might be worth thinking about.

"Let me get back to you," I told him.

By 2007, a few years after I had stepped down as Provost at URI and begun to teach and travel and write books again full-time, a genetic tic that occasionally manifests among Northern Europeans and Ashkenazi Jews caught up with me. My second wife and often coauthor Linda Davidson's genetic tics were likewise catching up with her. My life-threatening crisis was resolved by the altruistic gift from a URI colleague of half of his liver; Linda's crisis was resolved when her doctors ordered her never to spend another winter in New England. The short version of this story is that we moved to Mexico, settling in Michoacán in a gorgeous village on a volcanic lake at about 7,500 feet in altitude. By the third winter we found that (1) our haven was again too cold for Linda, and (2) it was smack in the middle of lands coveted by the Michoacán drug cartel. We relocated.

We knew what we wanted: a tiny village not swarmed with foreign expatriates, in an area with gorgeous mountain scenery and a lot of ethnic diversity, near enough to a big city to have accessible high-end medical facilities, and at an altitude between 1,400 and 1,600 meters, something like Denver.

Oaxaca filled the bill. It is famous for its archaeological sites, its indigenous cultures, its art and artisanry scene, and its pride as the culinary capital of Mexico. We rented a *casita,* a little guest house, in the village of San Pablo Etla, population about 3,000, about a half hour north of Oaxaca City, a hundred meters or so above the Etla Valley, with 360-degree mountain views. Unlike most of Oaxaca, the Etla Valley's main language is Spanish, in which Linda and I were fluent, rather than Zapotec, Mixtec, or a dozen other indigenous tongues which are the majority languages in Oaxaca's other valleys and the surrounding mountains. San Pablo had a small expat community with whom we instantly bonded. It included several

1960s veterans of the Peace Corps, several former Ford Foundation program officers, a smattering of academics, a missionary couple, a hospice nurse, a seminarian, and a former street clown. Good folks, every single one, many of them deeply involved with the local Mexican community, and most of them conversant in Spanish. After three more years of winters in San Pablo Etla and summers in Rhode Island, in 2014 we sold our Kingston house and bought a bean field in the even smaller village of Santa Cruz Etla, a couple of kilometers farther up the mountain from San Pablo. We hired an architect and a builder here in the village, and with their guidance we learned to make adobe. We first put up a small one-bedroom *casita* to live in for the nine months it would take us to build a full-size *casa,* at which point the *casita* would become our guesthouse, and someday, should we ever need it, our long-term care facility. With the houses in place, we set about becoming fully participating citizens numbers 510 and 511 of our village, the only *Santacruceños* not blood related to every other person in the village.

Did you notice how back there on our criteria list you did not see anything about proximity to a Jewish community?

Let's pause for a moment to think about what being Jewish, and the concept of Jewish identity, actually mean. George, I hope you will pardon, in your kindness, my extreme oversimplification of what are at heart profoundly complex matters.

As most of us know, there are basically five approaches to defining what it is to be a Jew.

1. The biological way:
a Jew is a person with a Jewish mother and a Jewish grandmother. You get born into Judaism; you are a member of a tribe. This definition seems to have something to do with "race," and thus has periodically brought *tsouris* down upon the Jewish people. All of the collective nouns that run through our liturgy – *kol, 'am. b'nei Yisrael* – seem grounded in this definition, and it underlies the concept of the State of Israel to be a defense and sanctuary against recurrent *tsouris.*

2. By belief:

a Jew is someone who believes what Jews believe. Aside from the idea of a single, non-corporeal deity, and sometimes not even that, it is hard to find a set of specific tenets likely to be approved by the vast majority of people who identify as Jews. Many have tried to compose one, but Judaism still shies away from a listing of obligatory beliefs as per the Credo that many Christians recite as part of their religious services.

3. By practices, or mitzvot:

a Jew is someone who does Judaism. Keeps the Sabbath, fasts on Yom Kippur, circumcises his/ her male children, keeps a kosher kitchen, etc. In medieval Judaism, and in fact right up until the mid-nineteenth century, almost all Jews lived in tightly circumscribed communities where the centripetal force of daily practice maintained religious and community coherence, and where every minimal routine act was an act of being Jewish. Judaism was the whole package. Nothing was left to individual choice, and for the individual there was no menu of options, except, perhaps by my grandparents' time, through emigration.

4. By self-concept:

In the last century and a half much of Judaism has shifted the responsibility of defining the criteria for being Jewish from the community to the individual. We have Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist Jews, *Havurot,* non-affiliated, atheist, and even Buddhist Jews (Leonard Cohen?). Adherence to any particular belief is not required for a person to consider herself a Jew, and neither is the practice of any of the myriad customs prescribed by tradition.

5. There is a fifth way of defining Jewish, too.

The external definition: Not "*I* am Jewish because *I* . . ." but, "You are Jewish because I say so." More *tsouris,* especially when the speakers have a grudge and a gun.

People who define their Judaism in accord with 1, 2, 3, and 4, which include most observant Orthodox Jews and many others as well, require a support community. People defined by 5, often based on 1, are all too tragically often no longer with us.

For people like me, who define their Judaism as type 1 and4, that is, by birth and self-concept, a support system is optional. As an answer to George's question this is not very satisfactory, at least perhaps without a bit more explanation.

This is where I veer into autobiography.

I believe that from long ago, even from before my bar mitzvah, I did not believe in any sort of supreme being. I rejected the idea that divine monitoring, with its carrot of heaven and its stick of hell, was essential to sustaining goodness and righteousness in human behavior. The carrot and stick were essentially Christian concepts, I now know, but I was a teenager in the Christian USA in the 1950s, so of course they were in my conceptual knapsack. After I tried to explain my beliefs in 1957 to an Eagle Scout Board of Review, the majority voted to deny me the rank, even though I pleaded that I could be reverent as a scout, in the sense of being respectful of others' religious beliefs, without personally believing in a deity. It was only after the intervention of my scoutmaster Les Bailey (I think he may have mentioned the ACLU) that they relented.

In college (it was Oberlin, in the early 1960s – enough said), I received a good grounding in the humanities and social sciences, and a strengthening of belief in the imperative of social activism that was such a fundamental part of my parents' and my college's values. My mother Ruth had founded the Homemaker Service of the Family and Children's Society of Broome County, New York; my father James was an advocate in the 1930s-50s of equal rights for New York's black citizens, helping the state to quash restrictive real estate covenants and to adopt its first antidiscrimination laws. Speakers on the civil rights circuit often stayed with us, as the hotels in upstate New York would not admit Negroes. Langston Hughes read me children's stories on our sofa; Jackie Robinson and Jake Pitler gossiped on our side porch. Dad wanted me to follow him into the law.

By graduation I had already lived in Mexico and in Spain, and my aspirations were to an academic career in Hispanic studies. At Harvard I became fascinated by interactions between Catholic, Muslim, and Jewish communities toward the end of the Middle Ages and the Spanish Renaissance, such that my dissertation (1968) delved into the interplay of antisemitism and reverence for the Hebrew Bible in the literature of the Spanish Golden Age. My mentors at Harvard included some refugee intellectuals of the Spanish Republic and an Austrian-Argentinian secular Jew. They pushed me, gently, but sometimes with a 2 x 4 up against the head, into learning Hebrew and some Arabic. My then wife Libby, who was not Jewish by any of the 5 ways I listed a moment ago, did a five-month Ulpan with me in Israel and progressed so quickly that an official from the Jewish Agency offered her a job teaching Hebrew to immigrants once she had completed the second and third courses.

There were many Jews at Oberlin, but if there was a community, I was not a part of it. Likewise at Harvard. Likewise at Indiana University, my first full-time professorial job. Libby's and my two daughters, Deborah and Abigail, were born there. Deborah lives in Portland, Oregon, where she is a bilingual children's librarian and the founder of *Libros Para Oregon,* making sure that immigrant Hispanic children in that state do not lose touch with their native language. Abby, after living in Turkey for a while, and in Boston, is back in Indiana as founder/director of the Bloomington Creative Glass Center; she is also currently vice president of Bloomington's Unitarian Church, in which her mother has also been active.

There were Jews as well at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where I went in 1976 to chair the Language Department, but again I did not affiliate with the community. My attitudes had been formed in part by my father's lessons about the corrosive consequences of discrimination and by an array of personal experiences, where I had been dissed because of my Jewishness. My attitudes were also formed by university studies in the history of the all-too-habitual, pernicious discriminatory policies of organized religions- be they Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu or what have you. My attitudes were further formed by my firsthand

knowledge of Spanish and Portuguese Inquisition documents. All these factors had solidified my inherent skepticism and my discomfort with corporate religion.

[Sidebar to introduce a contradiction: in the mid-1970s I founded an academic summer program in medieval studies that replicated for students a 1,000-km walking pilgrimage to a European Catholic shrine. Over the next two and a half decades, my second wife Linda Davidson and I walked *El Camino de Santiago* with students five times. We regularly attended mass with our student

pilgrims and, by the by, garnered several certificates that attested to our having been granted plenary indulgence by the Church. None of this seems to have had an effect on my personal sense of Jewish identity. Linda, whose Ph.D. was in medieval studies, was

raised in southern Indiana by a lapsed Catholic mother and a not very Christian father. Prior to our association, her only personal connection with Judaism was attending synagogue services a couple of times with a Jewish childhood friend. As a couple with similar attitudes about religion, we did not "do" Christmas or Easter, but we did share Passover and Hanukkah with my children and extended family.]

In 1982 I moved as Dean of Arts and Sciences (and later Acting Provost) to Binghamton University, one of SUNY's four research universities. This was my old hometown, where my parents still lived, and where all my childhood Jewish friends were thriving businesspeople and professionals. It had a strong Jewish community, with synagogues of several denominations (including Chabad), and a country club. Binghamton University hosted a Hillel. I did not formally affiliate with any of these, but I was an active presence in most, and to an extent Linda's and my social life revolved around their activities. Senior officials at state universities are expected to do no less. The same was true when in 1989 I went to Rhode Island, my last and most enduring academic home, where, among other involvements, I was active with Hillel.

This narrative thread aside, during most of my life I have mainly engaged physically with Judaism in two venues: community, as per the previous paragraphs, and family. There was the occasional wedding, funeral, or bar/bat mitzvah, of course. While my parents were in good health, our nuclear family gathered at their home in Binghamton for two annual holidays, Hanukkah and Pesach, which conveniently coincided with the academic winter and spring breaks. Lighting the Hanukkah candles in my mother's dining room is one of my fondest memories. My brother John is also an academic, a political scientist whose heart resides in the mountains of northern Peru. When our parents' health began to fail, my home became the center.

Another narrative thread comes from my kitchen in Rhode Island, when my father Jim was in his early nineties and was barely able to stand. Part of my tradition is to make my own matzoh, which requires speed and dexterity, to mix it, to pat it out, and to poke it

full of holes so that the liquid in the batter will not turn to steam in the oven and cause the flat cakes to rise. We propped up my father at the end of the counter with fork in each hand, raised high the way Spanish bullfighters grip their *banderillas.* We would slide the baking tray with the raw cakes in front of him, and- bang, bang, bang, bang- down would come the forks and lines of holes would appear as if by magic, while the rest of us screamed out *"Olé!"* and slipped the trays into the oven.

These two holidays, observed with family, are the core of my children's somewhat tenuous sense of Jewish identity.

The one Jewish community of which I have always been an active participating member, as much here in Mexico as in the States, Spain, and Israel, is an international community of scholars. This community, in addition to speaking to each other in print, also congregates physically at meetings and conferences, and I generally attend one or two a year. Over the years I wrote a number of books, coauthoring six of them with Linda. Two of our/my books garnered National Jewish Book Awards. One was also given the Lucy Dawidowicz Prize for History; another, also on a Jewish theme, was awarded the International Association of Culinary Professionals Prize for Scholarship.

In effect, my writing plays a large role in tethering me to my roots. Since I carry my lab equipment on my shoulders, I can write anywhere, even in a little village like Santa Cruz Etla, although archival work still requires me to invest time periodically in Mexico City, Madrid, Seville, Rome, and Lisbon. I still plug away on Jewish themes, and my most recent book, *Living in Silverado: Secret Jews in the Silver Mining Towns of Colonial Mexico,* appeared late in 2019 with the University of New Mexico Press. Someone wrote to me that I have successfully hidden its academic apparatus in such a way that the characters come to life and the plot breezes along like an adventure story. The skeptic in me has a hard time believing that is true, but still it is nice to hear. This book did not win a National Jewish Book Award, but it was named a finalist.

Hang on, George, I really am getting to my life in Mexico. Everything up to here is about the habits and expectations that I

brought here with me.

I also brought with me a handful of tokens and talismans that tie me to Judaism. These contend for wall and shelf space with my children's art and the textile and ceramic art that my family has collected in our travels. There are the portraits of my maternal great-grandparents that my grandmother Jennie brought to the United States as a sixteen-year-old in a locket on a chain. She never saw her parents again. My father had the portraits enlarged, and the two ancestors now survey my dining-room table. He is stern, bearded, with a polka-dot neckpiece of some sort; her hair is enclosed in a kerchief, and she has all the facial features of my younger daughter Abby. When the anthropologist in me needs an infusion of humility, I say to myself, "How could I ever explain my life to them in a way that they would understand and accept?" And by the same token, is it in any way possible for me to comprehend their lives in that shtetl, so far off in both time and space?

In my back room I have hung the photograph of a seder in Binghamton in 1945. The whole family gathered at my grandmother's table, including my uncle Carl, who must have been on leave from the Coast Guard. I'm there too, a little blond-haired kid, in a snapshot pinned to the mantle. On my own mantle here in Santa Cruz Etla, sits the glass *hanukkiah* created by my daughter Abby, the glass artist. In my study are two large, antique, Iranian pewter repoussé plates- Moses with the tablets of the law and the sacrifice of Isaac, both Hebrew lettered- that I found in Vermont in a tiny antique shop up along the Canadian border. Now they flank the stand-up desk where I do most of my

Gitlitz family seder, Binghamton, NY, 1945

writing. One bookshelf holds six Bibles, in Hebrew, English, Spanish, Latin, and Ladino, or combinations thereof, source books that are part of my collection of basic research material.

In my car's glove compartment sits a little squeaky toy in the shape of a Franciscan nun that was given to me a thousand years ago by Rabbi Leslie Gutterman, when Linda and I were setting off to drive from Kingston to Panama on a yearlong research jaunt. Les said it was a talisman to keep us safe during the expedition. Today, several centuries and four cars later, it is still in my glove compartment, and I squeak it nearly every week for Les and Janet, hoping that it will keep them as safe as it seems to have kept me.

Here in my village of Santa Cruz Etla, I am pretty much a Jewish community of one. Santa Cruz is in many ways a typical Mexican rural village in the shadow of a small city. Sixty years ago its economy was 99% agricultural, corn, rice, and squash, with everybody eating what they themselves produced. They plowed with yoked pairs of oxen, sowed seeds by hand, and harvested with a hand sickle; women ground their dried corn to flour on a stone *metate,* patted their tortillas by hand, and cooked them on a clay *comal.* In their small, often windowless adobe houses, the single room was where people slept on straw mats and kept their tools and personal possessions. A covered front porch was where they lived: it served as kitchen, playroom, work room, whatever. An ethnography that was written about the town around 1950 noted that only one family was considered wealthy, and that was because it had furniture: one wooden table and three chairs. The village's only cash crop was firewood, gathered on the mountain that rises about 1,700 meters (a vertical mile) right behind the town, or charcoal, which they sold across the valley for the ceramic kilns in Atzompa. The village had one school: six grades with one teacher.

Nowadays Santa Cruz Etla has changed, of course. New folks have moved in, and some moved out. Half the families still farm, and still eat all they grow; on every third yard graze donkeys, sheep, goats, and chickens. But in each family a person or two has a job in the city that pays for the gas, the cellphone, the school uniforms, and whatever they are buying to supplement their diets.

About 20% of the families have a member in *El Norte* sending back remittances that are the family's principal income source; it is possible that some of them actually have legal papers. Nowadays there is one communal tractor, but most of the plowing is still done by the twelve pairs of yoked oxen. There is still one school of six grades, but now there is a teacher for each grade, and there are a middle school down the hill in San Pablo, and a high school and a pre-university program farther down on the valley floor.

A small Catholic church a couple of hundred meters up from my house on the village's only paved street services the 75-80% of our neighbors who identify as Catholics. The rest, people affiliated with one of the nondenominational evangelical churches, or the Adventists, or the Latter Day Saints, or the Jehovah's Witnesses, participate in the town's religio-civic activities like processions, novenas, saints' day fiestas, Day of the Dead celebrations, to the extent they are comfortable. There is only one street-side chapel to the Virgin of Guadalupe in our little village, but there are five to the Virgin of Juquila, the patroness of the State of Oaxaca. From my porch where I am typing this, George, I can see one of them, painted purple, a few steps down from my front gate. Farther west across the valley I can see the pre-Columbian temple pyramids at Monte Albán and Atzompa that at dawn reflect the morning sun like beacons.

It is actually not surprising that Santa Cruz Etla is exactly the sort of place Linda and I were looking for to settle in for the rest of our lives. Once you delve into our research beyond the titles, you would see that we have always focused mainly on the daily lives of the people living in those far off times and places. In villages like Santa Cruz there is plenty to do, lots of ways to contribute, and interesting folks to do it with.

Is there a Jewish connection? Perhaps via *tikun olam,* for those inclined to interpret that mitzvah as constructive social justice. The mandate to help one's neighbors is not unique to Judaism, of course; it runs liberally through many of the world's religions. It is also an important strain of our tradition that urges Jews to try to repair the world, to make wherever they are a little better place for their efforts.

with Linda Kay at *casa*. The dog's name is *Qalbá* (meaning female dog). As David explained, "It's a standard Mexican *meztizo* street mutt."

Santa Cruz Etla is self-governing via a sovereign assembly of the whole. I started attending from the day in 2014 we bought the property, and because people here do not have the habit of marginalizing foreigners, and because I am near-native fluent in the language, I was accepted as a neighbor and citizen without question. The assembly assigns each year's major tasks, like mayor, treasurer, head of public works, and membership on the committees for water, for health and sanitation, the festival committee, and the church committee. Each person is obligated to assume a major chair or committee membership every two or three years.

As a new citizen, I was tabbed to be a *topil,* one of the corps of policemen who patrol the village at night to make sure there are

no intruders afoot, or over-indulged folks who need help getting home. *Topil* is a typical first assignment for teenagers when they turn eighteen, an initiation that prepares them for a life of service. I told the mayor that I would prefer to demur on the grounds of my age, physical condition, and the fact that I am not quite yet a Mexican citizen, and thus my participation as a policeman would violate the terms of my permanent residency.

"Isn't there something else I could do that would be useful to the town, maybe something that nobody else would be qualified to do?"

The list of assignments is traditional, and it was clear that nothing else was coming to mind. So I prompted.

"You know that book about Santa Cruz that you keep in a drawer in the office, the one by that young American anthropologist who was here about sixty years ago to help with the school, and that no one here has read because it is in English? Well, maybe I could translate it into Spanish so our neighbors could find out what it says about their great-grandparents."

And that's what I did, all 300 pages of it. What with my other commitments, it took me two years. At each assembly I would read a translated passage relevant to whatever was on the day's agenda. At one assembly they named me Town Historian. I like that title better than *topil*. Linda edited every page. By then her infirmities were limiting her movements to pretty much around the house. But she held court here, and many people in the village got to know her well.

I also take part in the labor levies. The town doesn't have much of a budget, so whenever there is a major specific task to be accomplished – clean the cemetery, repair a concrete culvert, cut a firebreak, spruce up the town for a festival – they call a labor levy, and everyone turns out on Sunday morning with a shovel or a machete or a wheelbarrow and together the work gets done. What with one thing and another, it didn't take long for this tall-by-Mexican-standards bearded gringo and his charming wife to become, well, neighbors: different, but pretty much just like everybody else.

Every day at dawn I walk my dog, *Qalbá,* through the streets of the town and up onto the lower slopes of the mountain. She is an old rescued dog, clearly several times a mother, who was found downtown scavenging on the streets between the Zócalo, the plaza between the cathedral, city hall and market. A local woman, who has given much of her life to rescuing strays and bringing them back to health, placed her with me. I gave her the name, which is Hebrew for "lady dog." There is no flat land in Santa Cruz Etla, and the up and down morning circuit of four to eight kilometers takes me about two hours. I log each day's bird observations online with Cornell's eBird progam.

Sometimes I go up into the 3,500-hectare La Mesita nature preserve up on the mountain for which the village of San Pablo is responsible. The town has managed it as a model of land reclamation and sustainable stewardship. Managed it so successfully, it turns out, that we were signaled out as one of the three top villages in all of Mexico for management of our natural resources. Lots of school kids visit La Mesita's plant nursery and its butterfly house. They learn about the *lorena* stove that only requires half the usual amount of firewood and the eco-toilets that make efficient use of every drop of what is therein produced. *Tikun olam?* As a frequent docent at La Mesita, I have squired many of the nearly 4,000 students who visited last year. The trick is to get them excited in some lasting way about preservation and conservation. Maybe with luck they will take my handout home and nag their mothers into making a *lorena* stove. We have expanded the docent corps as the crowds grew, and I have also had the pleasure of helping to shape a training program for the new guides.

Tikun olam? In order for the reserve to be economically sustainable, the town has to generate sufficient material support, and not by bleeding it from the school groups. One way is to tap into the international eco-tourism boom. The area around Oaxaca City is extraordinarily rich in bird life. In fact, the whole state is encyclopedically diverse in habitats and climates, and Mexico's two main mountain chains meet here, so we get both East Coast and West Coast avian migrants who come down from the U.S. and

Canada much like the tourists to escape the cold. The flocks of feathered resident birds and migrants are a sustainable resource that does not pollute.

In order to attract eco-tourists, we need trained eco-guides, people who can distinguish species, know their habitats, and have enough English to be able to fire the enthusiasm of the foreign visitors. Voilá, a program, with the help of Deborah Barry, a Ford Foundation forest-sustainability expert who lives a couple of ridges south of me in San Pablo. Three days a week I meet with my corps of students, under the sponsorship of San Pablo's Natural Resources Commission, and with material support from one of the federal agencies. Now, three months into the program, my young trainees can identify all five species of hummingbirds that come to my feeders, and can distinguish males from females for three of them; they are beginning to get the hang of the orioles and warblers, and they know which birds are likely to be seen in each of a dozen of our local habitats.

Tikun olam? A young architecture student here in Santa Cruz thought about doing her master's thesis on traditional vernacular adobe houses. Frida had lots of good technical help from her professors at UABJO (the Unversidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca), but was having trouble figuring out how to organize and focus the research. Somebody sent her to me, and we are now collaborating. Our goal is to create a photo-archive of the oldest houses in the town so that when today's toddlers grow up, they will be able to see what their grandparents' world was like. And if Frida

and I can take the project far enough, maybe we will even write a book.

This morning Frida and I spent several hours mapping, measuring, photographing, and taking notes about house number 16 in the project. Her two dogs, *Güero* (Whitey) and *Manchis* (Spot), and my dog *Qalbá* (Dog) enjoyed sniffing out lizards in the underbrush. Like most vernacular architecture, at first this house appeared to have a cookie-cutter sameness about it, but with close focus there were treasures to be found: technical differences in the composition of the adobe, the way of laying the bricks, idiosyncratic solutions to site-imposed problems, and a couple of unexpected aesthetic touches.

It is Pesach, and I started today's investigation by asking: "Wherefore is this house different from all other houses? In all other houses . . . ." I tried to explain the joke to Frida, but I fear the explanation fell flat.

All this said, however, in Santa Cruz Etla I do not do the things I do because I am urged to do so by the principle of *Tikun olam* or any other religious mandate. I do them because it lets me learn things, and it seems useful, and because it pleases me, and it seems to please my neighbors, and it makes me happy. If it also fulfills a Jewish ideal, so much the better.

Since Linda's death almost three years ago, I've become friends with a local woman, Gloria, who also walks briskly for a couple of hours every morning and who, it turns out, as I discovered several weeks into our casual hiking, is Frida's mother. When I commented on Frida's skill in approaching strangers and instantly establishing rapport, and her talent for turning those conversations into interviews that help advance the architecture project, and how in my experience those skills are rare among young adults in the villages, Gloria said that Frida had honed her abilities during her year and a half as a Mormon missionary in Brazil. I was dumbstruck, as I had previously noted no signs at all of there being a Latter Day Saints community in our villages.

I've since come to appreciate how both Gloria and her daughter are seriously religious people, both spiritual and observant.

And Gloria has come to know that I am not, at least with regard to belief in a deity, prayer, compulsory ritual, or affiliation with an organized religious community. She says that she feels that I am at heart a good person, but it is unfathomable to her how that could be in the absence of belief in an interventionist deity, or even a deity at all. She keeps coming back to the subject, and I keep trying to explain. I am the first Jew that Gloria and Frida have ever talked with, and they have trouble getting their head around the fact that the multiple ways that Jews define their religious identities differ so fundamentally from the prescribed way that they define theirs.

Oaxaca, everyone says, has no organized Jewish community. Many members of the sizeable expat throng who live in Oaxaca City and hang out at the English Language Library downtown are Jewish, but they seem to be type 1 and 4 Jews, a little like me: secular, aesthetic, apparently more interested in culture than in cult. Jews who require resources for kashruth and a place to pray with a minyan do not come to places like Oaxaca to live. Instead, they tend to go to Mexico City, Puebla, Monterrey, Guadalajara, and a few other mega-cities where Mexico's 80,000 Jews live. Short-term winter vacationers go to the beach.

The expat Jews who have settled in Oaxaca, and the many more who come here as snowbirds for three or four months each winter, to date have not founded a congregation, or even set up a regular minyan. They do not seem to observe Jewish holidays in groups. Three or four times a year, however, they do sell out my lectures on Jewish topics at the English Language Library. The talks seem to engage them with aspects of their heritage, to resonate with their sense of personal identity, and in those, and perhaps other ways, to satisfy for them some need that they have brought with them to this glorious place as expatriate Jews.

For me, too, it seems.

Hebron

Eyewitness to the Six Day War

Alvan Kaunfer

Rabbi Kaunfer, who helped lead Temple Emanu-El for decades, was also the founding director of the institution now known as the Jewish Community Day School of Rhode Island. Indeed, his wife, Marcia, became his colleague there, and both Kaunfer boys were early graduates. Alvan wrote a lively article about the school's creation for our 2018 issue.

This article portrays an earlier era, when Alvan and Marcia were college students in Brookline and were growing ever closer together. At least that was why he wrote so many letters to her.

I imagine that a majority of our journal's readers recall many details of the Six Day War. Surely, many of us still feel jubilant over Israel's speedy and stunning victory. Now, thanks to Alvan, we can enjoy some vivid, eyewitness accounts. No, he was not a member of Israel's Defense Forces, but he saw some of the immediate results of what they struggled – miraculously – to achieve. His life changed, as did surely ours.

In September 1966, when I set sail on a Greek liner from New York along with 20 fellow students from Boston Hebrew Teachers College for a year of study in Jerusalem, I had no idea how that year would end. I was just nineteen and a junior at both Hebrew College and at Brandeis University. Those were the years, before Jewish studies departments became widespread in universities, when it was common for students in the Boston area to live at home, attend one of the many local universities, and study simultaneously for a second bachelor's degree at Hebrew College. Our Hebrew College group was excited to spend a year together, funded by the Jewish Agency's special program for students at Hebrew colleges around the country. For all of us, it was our first trip to Israel. We were looking forward to meeting other students with similar backgrounds, from the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, Gratz College in Philadelphia,

and from numerous Jewish institutions in South America.

When we arrived 12 days later at the port of Haifa, at night, we could not believe that we were setting foot in a country that we had heard and read about since our earliest days in Hebrew school. During the first days and months of the program, we enjoyed getting to know the land of Israel and practicing the Hebrew that we had been studying for 14 years. We had such a large group of baby boomers that while some of us stayed in the school dorm in the Bakka neighborhood of Jerusalem, others were assigned to live in a privately-owned guesthouse in nearby Talpiot.

There we were just blocks from the home of the famous Hebrew writer, Samuel Joseph Agnon, and had the privilege of *davening* (praying) with him each Shabbat in his small synagogue in the neighborhood. Talpiot appeared prominently in his stories. One told of how the author fought with the wind on a hill before the neighborhood was built up. We loved living in that storybook neighborhood, just yards from the Jordanian border. We would often take walks around to the fields of kibbutz Ramat Rahel, which abutted the border with Jordan. We also often snuck into a nearby hotel, Ganei Yehudah, posing as American tourists and taking a dip in their pool, which overlooked the barren hills towards Jordan.

The Jewish Agency conducted our academic program at a small teachers' college for foreign students called the Hayyim Greenberg Institute. The year at the Institute progressed normally with courses in Bible, Talmud, and Hebrew literature. We also took courses at the Hebrew University campus next to the Israel Museum.

Although there was ongoing tension caused by terrorist attacks from Jordan and Egypt as well as dogfights with Syria's Russian-made MIG jets, no one was expecting a war! Least of all, our group of 20-year-old somewhat naïve foreign students!

For us, the crucial turning point came around Yom HaAtzmaut, Israel Independence Day, on May 15, 1967. We attended the parade in Jerusalem, where, according to the UN agreement of 1948, no large military equipment was allowed to be displayed. But, shortly after that, on our regular bus trips to Hebrew University, when we saw tanks carefully placed under camouflage in the valley

next to the Israel Museum, we knew something ominous was brewing.

On May 22, President Abdel Nasser of Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran, blocking shipping to the southern Israeli port of Eilat. Israel and much of the Western world considered this an "act of war." However, despite the eloquent speeches by Abba Eban, Israel's ambassador to the UN, and the threat by President Johnson to send an American ship through to open up the blockade, nothing happened to break the deadlock. Soon after, six Arab countries tightened the vice on Israel by deploying troops close to Israel's borders.

As the situation heated up, the landlord of our dorm building, Mr. Gidron, had us begin preparations for a possible war by collecting sandbags to reinforce the front door. Having lived in that building through the 1948 War of Independence, he knew that although Jerusalem stone looked sturdy enough, it could easily be blown apart by a military shell.

As part of civil defense preparations, we were also asked to check the water well under the building and to clean out the reinforced bomb shelter in its basement. Additionally, there were some air-raid siren practices and preparatory blackouts during those weeks before the war.

Despite all of these preparations, and some nervous communications from parents, we were reluctant to feel a sense of "panic." This is what I wrote on May 24 to my girlfriend, Marcia Lapidus, who was living at home in Brookline and attending Brandeis, and who would later (in 1969) become my wife:

> It must be strange getting stale news of the Middle East situation. But still, it may be of some interest. In any case, I want to keep writing what's happening now, so that people back home don't panic at the way US news blows things up. One girl got a telegram asking what her evacuation plans were. That is all such a typical American exaggeration. Of course, the US was the first to tell their citizens to leave on the first commercial transportation if their stay was not vital. The situation now is <u>not</u> one of evacuation, and it's only tourists who have panicked. As a matter of fact, the thing that has struck us, especially yesterday when things were very hot [after the Straits of Tiran were closed], was how absolutely cool the Israelis take the whole situation. Absolutely no panic. As a matter of fact, if you didn't read the papers or listen to

view from Jerusalem to Jordan

the news reports, you would never guess anything was going on. People go about their daily business as usual. Last night we met a taxi driver who told us he just took a couple to the airport and he said that he couldn't understand why everyone is leaving. Joel said, "But there might be a war." He answered, "So what – Jerusalem is the most secure place in the world." That's the general Israeli attitude. Besides this, they are 100% confident that they could beat the Arabs, no sweat, because of their superior fighting ability (which may be very true and not just Israeli talk).

I remember taking a walk down to the religious Hasidic neighborhood, Meah Sh'arim, on a Friday night just a week before the war started. There we saw a sight that was totally unexpected on Shabbat in this ultrareligious neighborhood: a table set up in the street with Israeli Army personnel inducting reservists into their units.

That week the principal of our program called a meeting and tried to give us students a realistic analysis of the situation. While recalling parallels to the 1956 Suez Campaign and assessing Nassar's moves, he tried to keep us calm. The Israelis were still remaining unusually calm.

On May 28, I wrote Marcia:

I still can't get over how matter-of-factly these people are taking the whole situation… Last night I went to see a movie, and the streets were mobbed with people like any normal Saturday night…. At the movie, we saw a newsreel that showed tank practices in the Negev. We saw them show an ABC newsman taking shots of it, then we realized that in the US they are seeing all of this on TV while we here only hear 10 minute news broadcasts. No wonder you people must be more scared than us! Besides this, the Israelis weren't "concerned" when they saw those news shots – they were overjoyed. A loud cheer went up in the theater. You can begin to understand why Israel is so proud of their military – without it they would have been "driven into the sea" long ago. This militarism has gotten to me too. Especially since I see how little the world does to an obvious aggressor like Nasser.

On the Sunday before the war, we were downtown waiting for a bus when we heard shots being fired. The Israelis were undaunted and remained in the bus line, while we Americans were frightened beyond belief. On the way home from the bus stop, we saw soldiers digging trenches in our neighborhood and installing mortar emplacements. We knew the war was getting closer.

On May 31, I wrote Marcia:

> I haven't written much about my thoughts about this whole situation, maybe now I can write a little more because by the time this reaches you, the crisis will pass one way or another – right now no one can guess still what will happen. I guess my feelings are very mixed. On the one hand, I'm scared. I've never been this close to war. People preparing stockpiles of food, sandbags, shelters. But on the other hand, if it comes, I've definitely decided that I have to stay

and help somehow. Right now they're taking volunteers for filling teaching and counselor jobs which I'll do between tests. I gave blood for the first time in my life on Friday. If there is a war, they'll need lots of volunteer workers just to keep the country going internally. Most of the girls are learning first aid. The boys may fill spots on Kibbutzim. To me, life has never been so close – understand? I feel I've really grown up this last week to face the horrors of the real world. Americans are so used to a soft life, they don't know what it is to be insecure for once….

I know I shouldn't get personal at a time like this either, but I have to tell you something too. In case you can't guess, you mean a very lot to me too, and no matter how far that life seems to me now, I still can't forget everything.… I forgot completely what love feels like and what holding hands is like. And all that has to do with life. Here everything says death – lots of it. I almost sometimes feel like running away from it all: but you can't. Israel is too big a thing to run away from. If the world allows it to be destroyed, then maybe it wouldn't mean anything living in that world. But this past year I've begun to want to live so much. Being in love makes you want to live very fully….

It's so depressing and frightening being in a country that is marked for destruction. Can't the world let the Jewish people live in peace! I hope I can be happy again sometime….

I think if I didn't stay now and do something for this place, I would regret it when I came home– all those people in America and around the world wanting to come here to volunteer and all. Anyway that's it. Will write again.

Am Yisrel hai! (The People of Israel – Live!) Alvan

We changed our original plane tickets home, which, coincidentally, had been scheduled to leave on Monday, June 5, the day the war began. My friends and I, along with many others, volunteered to fill positions left vacant by reservists who had been called up. On the morning of June 5, several of us took a ride to a small moshav (settlement) outside of Jerusalem where we had volunteered to pick fruit.

Just as we arrived, at 8 AM, an air raid siren went off. At first we were not alarmed because there had been so many civil defense exercises during the weeks and days before. But the secretary of the

village came out to tell us that this was not a drill but a real azaka (siren). He advised us to get back to our dorm as soon as we could.

We hitched rides across town back to our dorm on top of the hill in Talpiot. It was a beautiful, clear June summer day. Some of us sat out on the roof listening to the radio and heard strange codes like "green onion" being read on the radio, alerting reservists where to meet their platoons. And we saw a sight never seen over Jerusalem- Israeli jets flying across the sky.

We later heard several things that had happened. At just 8 AM on June 5, the Israeli Air Force conducted a preemptive, surprise attack on the Egyptian Air Force, which destroyed practically all of its planes while they were still on the ground. The story goes, that because of its superior intelligence, Israeli forces were able to know exactly when Egyptian pilots were indoors for breakfast. They even knew the individual names of the pilots, so that if any pilot got into the air, he could be contacted directly and warned to go home to his family (whose names were also known).

Jordan's King Hussein, who had signed a mutual defense pact with Egypt at the end of May, had been approached through back channels and warned by Israel to stay out of the war or face the consequences. Nevertheless, Jordan entered the war along with Syria and Iraq. At 11:45 AM on Monday, June 5, all of a sudden, there were shells whistling over our rooftop and exploding down in the valley of Bakka (which means "valley"), where our school building was located. We all rushed into the shelter in the basement.

Naturally, for us Americans who never had to serve in the army, the only wars we had witnessed were ones on TV and in the movies. The height of the Vietnam War, with its nightly TV coverage, was yet to come. None of us had ever heard a real shell explode or the genuine sound of machine-gun fire. We stayed up most of the night listening to radio reports and classic Zionist and militaristic tunes also played on the radio. It was only later that night that Israel admitted to knocking out the Egyptian Air Force. Meanwhile, Arab propaganda was falsely claiming that its forces had blown up oil refineries in Haifa.

The next morning, when we emerged from our shelter, we

found a machine gun bullet lodged in one of the window frames of our building. That made us very aware of how close we were to the actual fighting. Talpiot was really on the edge of the border. It was literally a "stone's throw" from the no-man's-land separating Israel and Jordan.

We also lived just blocks from *Armon HaNatziv,* originally the Governor's Headquarters during the British Mandate. Now it was the UN Headquarters in Jerusalem. It was located on a small hill, jutting out into no-man's-land between Israel and Jordan. During that first day of the war, as we learned later, fighting on that hill went back-and-forth between Jordanian and Israeli troops. Finally, Israeli troops captured and held the hill as well as the UN headquarters.

We nervously ate all the bread and jam that we had stored in the kitchen. During a lull in the shelling, a couple of us ran down the hill to our school's kitchen and asked the chef, Sarah, if we could get more bread. She yelled at us and said, "Don't you know that in 1948 Jerusalem was under siege and we couldn't get any supplies at all!" But in her kindness she reneged and gave us a few more loaves to bring back to our dorm. Needless to say, we rationed them more carefully. By Wednesday things were quiet in Jerusalem.

On Thursday, June 8, my friends and I took a walk over to the edge of the Ramat Rahel field, just two blocks from our dorm, and we were amazed to see blue and white Israeli flags flying from several tall towers in the Old City of Jerusalem. We had already heard on the radio that the Old City had been recaptured on Wednesday, but the thrill of actually seeing those flags was absolutely indescribable. As I wrote to Marcia after the war:

> On the hill far into what had been Jordan, we just saw through binoculars, an Israeli flag flying. That might have been one of the most exciting joyous feelings inside. All of a sudden, we realized that we were no longer surrounded by Jordan but by Israel! Buses in the "Arab" village across from Ramat Rahel! All of this made the dream very real.

We could also see in the distance the blown-out roof of the Dormitian Church, on the top of Mt. Zion, just inside the Israeli side of the border with the Old City. Little did we know that in 24 hours we

near Lion's gate of Old City

ourselves would be standing on those very spots.

Later on Thursday, my friends and I went downtown to the main street in central Jerusalem, Rehov Yaffo, where a captured Jordanian truck was being displayed, and a handmade sign in a tourist office window advertised with bravado that "Tours of the Old City, Temple Mount, and Straits of Tiran" would be conducted! We continued our walk to the area of the Mandelbaum Gate, which a day earlier had been the only passage point from the Israeli sector of Jerusalem to a small Israeli enclave on the Jordanian side at the top of Mt. Scopus. Under the UN agreement of 1948, a small group of Israeli soldiers was permitted to travel

there every two weeks. Suddenly, the Mandelbaum Gate was now open wide to the other side.

That evening, a couple of our friends came back with stories about how they had snuck into Bethlehem for a peek at the captured territory. Not wanting to be outdone by our friends, two of my companions and I decided that we were going to do the same thing the next morning. So at 5:30 AM on Friday, the fifth day of the war, David, Joel, and I went down to Bethlehem Road to see if we could hitch a ride to sneak into Bethlehem, which was just a few miles south of Jerusalem. Before 1948, this road obviously went straight to Bethlehem, but for 20 years it had been blocked off at the border by large cement obstructions. Now that road was open, and again it led directly to Bethlehem.

An off-duty soldier, in a small car crudely camouflaged with mud, signaled us to hop in, and he drove us directly to Rachel's Tomb outside of Bethlehem. The biblical story is that Rachel died along the way, in childbirth with Benjamin, and was buried near Bethlehem. That tomb, venerated for centuries as her traditional burial spot, was depicted in a black and white illustration in the old Humash (Bible) textbook I recalled from my youth. Now I was standing right there!

Next, we walked briefly around Bethlehem's town square, which was deserted except for a few Arab children out in the street. A group of Israeli soldiers were singing, "V'shavu banim l'gevulam" ("Your children have returned to their borders"), a line from the famous image of the prophet Jeremiah, where he imagines Mother Rachel sitting at a crossroads and welcoming her children back from Babylonian exile. And here we were, near Rachel's Tomb, with the feeling that Jeremiah's prophecy had come true!

We then proceeded south on the road to Hebron. On the way, we stopped near a group of Israeli soldiers who were examining a burned out Jordanian tank. They were happy to pose for a group picture with us. One of the ironies of the war was that much of both Jordan's and Israel's military equipment had been supplied by the United States. For us as Americans, it raised eerie and somewhat conflicting feelings.

Hebron had always been a hotbed of anti-Zionist activity. In 1929, for example, there had been a horrific massacre of yeshiva students there. But Hebron was also known as Abraham's original home and the site of the famous *Me-arat HaMakhpeilah* – the burial cave that Abraham bought from the Hittites to bury Sarah. Subsequently, all the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, except for Rachel, were buried there. There was even an old tradition that Adam and Eve were also buried there.

As we pulled up to the *Me-arat HaMakhpeilah,* we began to run towards the entrance. Since the seventh century C.E., when Arabs had conquered the Middle East, no Jew had been allowed beyond the third step of the elaborate building erected on the site. And here we were, 13 centuries later, some of the first Jews to run up those same stairs and enter the vast complex!

A small group of Israeli soldiers who had captured the building had just improvised a makeshift Israeli flag out of a white sheet and blue paint, which they were about to hoist on top of the roof. We took a photo with that group. The soldiers were happy to show us around the building, and we found that its Arab attendant was still there! We marveled at the intricate grillwork above the caves of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, the fine Arab tiles on the walls, and crescents that adorned the roof.

When we left the caves, another off-duty soldier with an open-back truck ("tender") invited us to join him on a ride to the Old City. In the euphoria of the Israeli victory and being fearless at age 20, we accepted his invitation and hopped in the back of the truck. (In hindsight this was rather foolish because snipers were all around.) We took a speeding ride back through Bethlehem, past the Church of the Nativity, and back to the Old City. We were riding on a road that had been built specifically for Pope Paul VI's visit in 1964. We passed the arched windows of the International Hotel, perched atop the Mount of Olives, where Jordanians had paved the way using Jewish gravestones. Now we were swinging rapidly by and heading towards the Lion's Gate, the very gate that Israelis had burst through the day before.

When we arrived at the Lion's Gate and entered the Old

City, we could see burned out tanks on both sides. The soldiers on duty yelled at our driver that no civilians were allowed in the city, which was under strict curfew and off-limits. As the driver attempted to turn around in a narrow alleyway, we saw a group of foreign journalists being led right by our truck.

As it happened, we were amazed to see that the person leading them was none other than the son of our landlord, Mr. Gidron, and he recognized us! As an Army spokesman, a *dover Tzahal,* he was in charge of the first official tour for foreign journalists in the Old City. He told us that we couldn't be here, but in the same breath, he said, "Come with us." So we jumped off the truck, wearing our cameras around our necks, blending in along with the other journalists.

Needless to say, we received an amazing official tour of the newly captured Old City. Our group included the daughter of the last "Mukhtar," or head of the Jewish Quarter in 1948, Rabbi Mordecai Weingarten. As we proceeded from alleyway to alleyway, Rivka Weingarten embraced shopkeepers whom she hadn't seen in 20 years.

We continued on to the Temple Mount, where the Mosque of Omar stands on the very spot where the ancient Temple once stood. From there we went down to a small stairway, through ruined houses, which led to a narrow area in front of the Western Wall. The small alley in front of the Wall looked just like the black and white photographs from the late 19th and early 20th centuries that we had all seen in textbooks and prayer books. Here we were, standing at the Western Wall, the first Jews (aside from Israeli soldiers) to be there in 20 years! Against the Wall, there was a small Army ark erected the day before on the spot of the iconic photo that showed paratroopers and Rabbi Shlomo Goren blowing a shofar. He had led the first service at the Wall since Jerusalem's liberation.

As we were leaving the Old City, we passed the U.S. Consulate on the Jordanian side of Jerusalem. This was another ironic and mixed-feeling moment for us as Americans. We exited the Old City through Zion Gate, the very gate through which the last Jewish inhabitants had left in 1948! As we walked by the Dormitian Church, we looked up at its blackened skeletal roof, which we had seen from

afar on Thursday. We then entered an area on Mt. Zion, where Jews had gathered for 20 years to be as close as they could get to the Western Wall and the Temple Mount, which had been in Jordan. Those sacred places would soon be open to any Jew who wanted to go there.

I recounted the amazing adventures of that day in a June 9 letter to Marcia. Its tone was very different than ones I had sent just a week earlier, before the war. Here are some highlights of that letter:

> *Barukh atah H' elokienu melekh haolam…sheheheyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higi-anu laz'man ha-zeh!*
> (Praised are You God…who has kept us in life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this special moment.)
>
> As you can see, this letter is a little different from the others. I have such things to tell you that I don't even believe them myself. This past week has been a total dream, and I can only begin to tell you of the experience I've been through. I feel as if I'm writing from inside the movie "Exodus." It's all that unbelievable, and more so, because it all happened so fast. I can only give you spurts and sketches of the things here and there….
>
> But I have to cut this short… to tell you of today's adventure – the most unbelievable and exciting time of the whole thing. At 5:30 AM Joel, David and I walked down to Bethlehem Street and stood on the side going south. We didn't expect to get anywhere since the Old City and all occupied areas were still closed to civilians. But we tried – and what luck we had! First we got a hitch with a soldier as far as Bethlehem – only a 10 minute drive. All year we had been kidding about crossing the border and how close Bethlehem is, and all of a sudden we were standing at *Kever Rahel*/ Rachels Tomb. Can you imagine our disbelief and excitement?! I can't get this feeling across in a letter. Here we were, just four days later in Jordan, but no – Israel! That's not all. After chats with soldiers, we got a hitch to Hebron! …. [We] were the first Americans to come from Israel to Hebron in 20 years, among the first Jews to be in the cave in 1,300 years….We signed the visitor register in Hebrew, and I put "Brookline, USA." By the way, while waiting in Hebron we saw the regional ruler and his counsel walk up to the Israeli army headquarters to surrender.
>
> From there (as if that weren't enough), we got a hitch back to Bethlehem by the Church of the Nativity, around the backside

into the Old City! ….[We] found a news correspondent group being shown through the city (correspondents from all over the world including Life magazine whose photographer was killed in the Sinai). … We played reporters speaking English and flashing our cameras. The tour was unbelievable. We got such a tour no one would get – through all the streets, the Western Wall, The Mosque of Omar – too much to tell you about…. I prayed the *Minhah* service at the *Kotel*/Wall and said "sheheheyanu"– this might have been the most religious experience I had here in Israel. After seeing pictures of the Wall all through Hebrew School, it makes an impression to be one of the first Jews in 20 years to come back to it. But too much and too many stories. Will have to continue when I return. … What a year!

(In Hebrew): "Rebuild Jerusalem speedily and in our days"; "After that Abraham buried Sarah in the Cave of Mahpelah near Hebron." (Genesis 23:20).

Alvan

My classmates and I remained in Israel through Shavuot, when the Western Wall was open to everyone. My friends and I decided not to go again to the Wall with the crowds. We had walked those ancient sites in a private tour that we would never forget.

Epilogue

That spring before the war, Naomi Shemer had introduced her award-winning song, "*Yerushalayim Shel Zahav,*" "Jerusalem of Gold," which became the equivalent of a second national anthem in Israel and throughout the Jewish world. One of those verses went:

How the cisterns have dried
The marketplace is empty
And no one frequents the Temple Mount
In the Old City.

And in the caves in the mountain
Winds are howling
And no one descends to the Dead Sea
By way of Jericho.

In a now famous concert she held for soldiers right after the war, she

introduced her updated version of that verse:

> We have returned to the cisterns
> To the market and to the marketplace
> A ram's horn calls out on the Temple Mount
> In the Old City.
>
> And in the caves in the mountain
> Thousands of suns shine-
> We will once again descend to the Dead Sea
> By way of Jericho!

The audience went wild and burst out in applause. She quieted it down and said, "No, it is I who need to applaud you." She proceeded to add one poignant rhyming line, *"Yoter kal l'shanot shir mi-l'shanot ir."* "It is easier to change a song *(shir)* than to change a city *(ir)*."

That war changed the world's view of Israel. No longer seen as a small, embattled country, it had become a major Middle Eastern power with a superior military force. Unfortunately, that worldwide respect for Israel was soon to dissipate, and the issues created in the wake of that war are still unresolved. But for that brief moment, there was a feeling of Jewish unity and pride, and especially a feeling that went deep into my own heart, that Israel had been rescued from the jaws of an unimaginable peril.

Those were six days I shall never forget.

Note:
This is a personal account. For a more historical background readers might consult: Michael Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East.* For a brief timeline, see: http://www.sixdaywar.org/timeline.asp

Parker Pond, Maine

Fishing for My Father

James B. Rosenberg

In March, Rabbi Jim and I sat down in an East Side coffee shop to schmooze but also to discuss topics for his fourth consecutive article in *The Notes.* Somehow, we bibliophiles wandered into the realm of hobbies. I then became quite astonished to learn how much my friend knew about fishing.

Yes, our journal has had articles about such pastimes as golf, skiing, mah-jongg, and bird watching. And a few members of our community have won renown in such endeavors as tennis, track, and boxing. Perhaps some day I should regale readers with my own tales of Ping-Pong.

But far beyond his love of Melville, Jim shows us that fishing can mean many things. He and I also discussed the possibility of an article about his love of music, and I think that its melodies and rhythms also echo here.

Now, in my old age, I have come to realize that my lifelong love of fishing has had more to do with catching my father than with catching fish.

I grew up in Hillside, New Jersey, a middle-class suburb about 15 minutes from Newark Airport and 45 minutes to an hour and a half from Times Square, depending upon traffic at Lincoln Tunnel. As a young boy, I found my father Benson to be extremely hard-working, impatient, and somewhat emotionally remote; he held high expectations for me, for my older sister Jean, and for my younger brother Bill.

My parents' marriage seemed to typify postwar, American suburbia.My father worked all day outside the home, mowed the lawn in season, and shoveled snow in winter. Until my brother was off to school, my mother Edith was a stay-at-home mom, taking care of us three kids, cooking, cleaning and, in general, running the household. In my earliest years – I was born in 1944 – it was my

mother who tended to my emotional needs: when anxious, I would tell her, "Mommy, I feel funny," to which my mother would inevitably respond: "Funny ha-ha, or funny peculiar?" My mother knew how to make me feel "listened to."

In retrospect, I realize that my father, having grown up poor, the child of immigrants from Lithuania and the youngest of five children, was under considerable psychological and economic pressure to be a good provider for our family. During my childhood and into my early adulthood, he remained the respected "boss" of Elizabeth Bio-Chemical Laboratory, which performed a wide variety of laboratory tests for patients from a pool of approximately 400 physicians. Because my father found it so difficult to escape from the demands of his work, one of his most frequent responses was: "Can't you see that I'm busy?"

The only time I saw my father let go and relax was when we went fishing. When I was about five or six years old, he began taking me "down the shore" on warm spring and summer days to the Shrewsbury River to fish for flounder; we would spend a couple of hours together in a rowboat with an outboard motor attached to the stern. During those first trips, my father did all of the fishing, while I was content to watch him bring a flat fish into the boat from time to time; I could somehow sense that layer after layer of tension was peeling off him.

Off the Shore

A year or two later, he took me on my first "deep sea" fishing trip. We showed up at what was called a "party boat" or a "head boat" shortly before the 8:00 A.M. departure, stepped on board with our tackle, paid our fare, and looked for an empty spot along the railing, where we could place our rods and reels. Empty potato sacks, evenly spaced, were hanging upon the railing, ready for the day's catch, one sack for every two or three paying fishermen.

"Deep sea" meant that we were doing our fishing in the waters of the Atlantic Ocean, which tended to be a bit bouncier than in the more protected waters of river or bay. Those trips to ocean

fishing grounds followed a prescribed routine: after traveling an hour or so from the pier, the crew would drop anchor, the captain would sound a horn one time, and those on board would let their baited hooks drop 20 to 40 feet to the ocean floor. We would stay for quite a while if the fish were biting; but if fishing was slow, the captain would sound the horn, indicating that we should reel in our lines so that the boat could search for a more productive place.

On those first trips my father would catch relatively small fish of a pound or two: sea bass and porgies (what Rhode Islanders call "scup"). My father kept his catch of sea bass, but gave away the porgies, claiming that they were too bony. As was true on the Shrewsbury River, my father mostly fished, while I mostly watched.

Within another year or two, we started fishing for fluke, a flounder-like flatfish that generally was not much heavier than porgies or sea bass but, on rare occasions, could reach "doormat" size of eight or 10 pounds. When possible, we sailed on the *Queen Flash*, which comfortably held perhaps 30 fishermen; the boat was docked in the Highlands, on New Jersey's Sandy Hook Bay, about 20 nautical miles from the bustling harbor of New York City.

By now I was old enough to fish alongside my father and contribute to our daily catch. In contrast to fishing for sea bass or porgies, the boat did not anchor at the fishing grounds; rather, we drifted over the same productive spots over and over again. Sometimes we remained in the bay all day; on other occasions, we "rounded the Hook"– the end of Sandy Hook peninsula– and entered the choppy ocean waters, depending upon where the best "bite" was to be found.

After the *Queen Flash* returned to the dock around 4:00 P.M., we would dump our gutted fish into the large wash bucket stored in the trunk of our station wagon, get a large chunk of ice from the nearby machine to keep the fish fresh, and began driving home. We often stopped at a watermelon "bar" to eat a couple of cold, juicy slices or picked up a dozen ears of just-picked corn at a farm stand. A full day of fishing. A full day with my dad.

By the time I was 12 years old, I had enough upper body strength to reel in large bluefish, pound-for-pound one of the

strongest and "fightingest" of all saltwater fish, typically running between four and 12 pounds. During my teenage years in the late '50s and early '60s, bluefish were extremely plentiful off the Jersey and Long Island coasts in the summer and early fall. At one point, *The New York Times Magazine* published a tongue-in-cheek article on how to rid oneself of all the excess bluefish one took home from the boat.

During the height of the bluefish bonanza, my father would call his friends the night before a fishing trip to take orders for how many blues – gutted but not scaled – they wanted. Upon returning from our trip, we would place 30 or so large fish on our front lawn, cover them with chunks of ice, and then phone the friends with a "come and get it." My mother was not happy about the crowd of meowing neighborhood cats that visited our front lawn, attracted by the stench of all that fresh fish.

Those saltwater fishing trips with my father off the Jersey shore were limited to a single day; by the next morning it was quite literally business as usual for my father, and the magic of our deepening father-son connection would necessarily yield to the do-it-now demands of the everyday.

Parker Pond

The summer I turned 12, my father began taking me on his annual fishing trips to Parker Pond, which is nestled in the pine forests 20 miles northwest of Augusta, Maine; these sojourns, though brief, offered me a more extended time to be with my father in an environment whose only distraction was the pursuit of smallmouth bass. Most of Parker Pond's waters lie within the town of Mt. Vernon, although a small portion is claimed by the town of Vienna – pronounced "VIE-enna" – as opposed to "VEE-enna, Austria's capital; Chesterville and Fayette also lay claim to small pieces of the lake.

Though called a "pond" in Maine, it would qualify as a mid-sized lake just about any place else. Irregularly shaped, with a shoreline measuring 13 miles and a band of islands bejeweling her western reach, Parker Pond stretches about five miles between its most distant points. For those unfamiliar with its secrets, the lake

holds an abundance of hidden dangers. While more than 70 feet at its deepest, reefs and ledges seem to arise out of nowhere.

Given its relative isolation from casual fishermen and its abundance of underwater, rocky dens, Parker Pond is an ideal home for smallmouth bass. Though rarely exceeding four pounds, they are, for their size, among the strongest and most acrobatic of freshwater species.

Although it was more than 60 years ago that my father first took me to Parker Pond, I still remember how thrilled he was when I hooked and reeled in my first two-pounder. Of course, I was beyond thrilled.

Since my first visit to Parker Pond in the summer of 1956, I have returned to the lake, with rare exceptions, every summer to this very day. On every one of those occasions, I fished with my father until two years before his death in 2001 at age 87. Many of those trips were long weekends with his fishing buddies: an eight-hour drive from N.J. on Thursday, two full days of fishing on Friday and Saturday, and another eight-hour drive back to N.J. on Sunday. As year followed year, we sometimes extended our trip for close to a week– bringing my mother and brother along with another family of close friends.

Though my father and I were never closer than when fishing together on Parker Pond, we did have our moments. One summer afternoon – I can no longer remember the precise circumstances – the two of us were alone on Parker, and the fishing had been rather slow that day. Suddenly, my father hooked a really big bass, which threw itself out of the water several times, displaying its great size. After quite a struggle, my father worked the fish to the side of the boat. "Net it! Net it!" he yelled. I grabbed the small trout net, but I was unable to scoop the fish out of the water; it seemed that the fish was too big for the net… and it was gone. "You knocked it off the hook! You knocked it off the hook!" And then he was silent; his angry glare posed an overwhelming question: "How could you do such a thing?"

I had failed my father, and I could never undo that deed. However, the next time we fished together on Parker Pond, we were

sure to bring a net double the diameter of the trout net.

After my father was mostly retired, he built a large, comfortable, architect-designed house five miles east of Parker, on Long Pond in Rome; being Maine, that particular "pond" was 12 miles long. My parents spent many summers up there, the house usually filled with family and friends, until they became too frail to meet the physical demands of living lakeside, deep in the woods.

As they aged, it became more difficult for them to navigate two miles of rutted, dirt road to reach smooth blacktop or to pilot their small motorboat across the lake to the general store to buy food. Not surprisingly, my father spent more time on Parker Pond, six or seven miles away, than my mother would have liked – leaving her alone in the woods, or– to the contrary– to cook for a house full of guests.

Bill Nurse

Through most of our years fishing on Parker Pond, we were accompanied by Bill Nurse, a Registered Maine Guide, whose clients were fishermen in summer and hunters in autumn. Bill knew the dangers and the glories of the lake. He kept us supplied with live bait, small frogs, which he caught by hand as he waded in hip boots through buggy and often snake-infested bogs. At times, especially at dusk, we might switch to artificial lures often called "plugs," which remain on the water's surface after being cast.

Bill's world was lake and forest; he was a man of the outdoors, who would leave us notes written on birch bark. By the time we met him in the summer of 1957, he had set up a large platform tent on one of the many islands in the northwestern area of the lake – known to the locals as "Bill's Island" – even though it was technically the state's property. In addition to the tent, Bill had constructed a sturdy picnic table, with a built-in bench along each side, as well as a rough but serviceable fireplace on which we grilled hotdogs, hamburgers, and even an occasional steak for lunch or dinner.

Though Bill was not a religious man in a parochial sense, he felt a profound identity with the natural world. As we sat in our boat one evening towards sunset following a spell of rain, a large double

rainbow arched over the water. Knowing that I had become a rabbi, Bill stretched out his arms as if to embrace the beauty that surrounded us and said, "Jim, this is my church." And, I might add, the many loons on the lake formed his church choir. Some years after that rainbow evening, Bill, a master wood-carver, presented me with his soulful, interpretive carving of Albrecht Dürer's *Praying Hands.*

My father's relationship with Bill Nurse, spanning decades, was not limited to the summer season. Though rich in spirit, Bill was poor in resources; I still remember the small house in which he and his wife Renee lived. He had built it himself along with the outhouse; he had running water, but no indoor plumbing. On several occasions my father found winter work for Bill down in New Jersey; theirs was a relationship of mutual admiration and respect.

Sandy I and were married on December 24, 1967. The summer before our wedding, I had brought her up to Parker Pond to meet Bill Nurse. When the three of us were not engaging in conversation, I fished, Bill motored us to different spots on the lake, while Sandy read Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man.* At the end of the day, Bill presented us with an engagement present: a meat-eating pitcher plant, which he had found in a swamp. Bill's instructions were simple: "Make sure you give it enough water, and give it a little bit of chopped meat a couple of times a week."

At every stage of my life – youth, middle age, old age – Parker Pond has been a place of healing. Sunday, August 15, 1999 was no exception. The day dawned rainy with low clouds, one of the few rainy days all summer – hardly an auspicious beginning for my annual bass fishing trip to Maine with my father, the last time the two of us would ever fish together. When we stopped in Belgrade Lakes to pick up our fishing licenses and bait, our fortunes did not change for the better. The teenage bait boy informed us that his 15 dozen frogs had died a stinking death in the oppressive heat. We'd have to make do with worms.

My nephew Adam and his Moroccan Israeli wife Ruth were sharing the cabin on Parker Pond with us for the first half of the week. At a quarter to three, Adam dropped me off at the only stretch of lake with access to a public road. I sat down on a rock to wait for

delivery of a rented four-seated boat with an eight-horsepower outboard motor. As I was gazing at the ever-changing, reflected patterns on the rippled surface of one of Parker Pond's many coves, a middle-aged couple pulled up a few yards from where I was sitting and got out of their car. The man began to make conversation: "We should have brought our kayak."

I agreed that the water had certainly calmed down and went on to ask, "How much rain did you get up here?"

"Well, about 40 miles north they got about two inches since yesterday."

"We can sure use it this summer. I'm from Rhode Island, and it's bone-dry down there. Believe it or not, I've been coming to this lake with my father for more than 40 years. Used to fish with a licensed guide named Bill Nurse. What a man!"

The man called to his wife who was stretching her legs: "Honey, I think you're going to want to hear this." Turning his back to me, the man continued: "Mister, would you mind repeating what you just told me?"

"I was telling your husband about our fishing guide, Bill Nurse. Must have died about 10 years ago."

Her face contorted in a confusion of joy, pain, and disbelief. "I am Wanita, Bill's daughter."

"And I'm Jim Rosenberg, Benson's son. My father and I are in a cabin on the lake, just a couple of miles south of here. He's going on 85 and still fishing."

"My father really loved you folks! He was always talking about you."

And then a cascade of shared stories was magically released from the prison of our unconscious. "Wanita, do you remember the time Bill and my dad were caught on the lake with a huge thunderstorm about to hit? At first they thought they'd make a run for the tent on the island. But then, at the very last minute, they took one last look at the sky and said to each other, 'Let's get out of here.' The next morning Bill found that the big pine in front of the tent had been struck by lightning, showering slivers of pine trunk into the tent. Had they decided to remain in that tent, God knows what could

have happened."

"Yes, Jim, he told me about that…I'm sorry," she continued through her now copious tears. "I've been having a bad day. I've come here to be with my father. He is here. He is on the island. He is in the water around the island." We hugged tightly for a brief moment. "I can't tell you how much it means to me to see you today, of all days."

"Don't forget to give my regards to your mother," I added.

"She'll be thrilled to hear that I ran into you. I needed this. You really helped me."

A middle-aged woman in need of healing. A middle-aged man, who has never in his life spoken to this woman, arrived at this precise spot 15 minutes ahead of schedule. If he had arrived just 15 minutes later, the woman would no longer be there. Because of this "accident" of time and place, the man was temporarily empowered to bring healing to the woman; and in bringing healing to the woman, he brought healing to himself, the healing that comes from being an unwitting vessel, a messenger from Another Place.

Catching Memories

My father died in October 2001, two months before his 87th birthday, without having realized his dream of building a house near Parker's shoreline; for decades there was simply no available land. Nevertheless, some years after his death, my brother Bill and sister-in-law Pat were able to acquire a buildable parcel. By the end of summer in 2015, they just about completed a fully equipped and winterized house on a pine-covered hill facing the eastern shore of Parker Pond. They are now official Maine residents, although they tend to be elsewhere during the coldest, snowiest months, when ice on the lake can be up to three feet thick.

In July 2016, I spent a couple of days with my brother at his new home fishing for smallmouth bass. I have used hook, line, and sinker long enough to know that fishing does not necessarily mean catching; indeed, during my three-day visit with Bill during the previous summer, I had failed to land a single, legal-sized fish.

By way of contrast, my return visit in 2016 yielded one

large bass after another. My three-and-a-half pound, "trophy" bass took my bait, a small frog, in a quiet pool in the southwest corner of Parker. As soon as I caught sight of it during its first jump, I knew I was in for a protracted struggle, since I was using ultralight tackle. My line was only four-pound test – that is, four pounds of force – and the fish on the other end was exerting far more force than that.

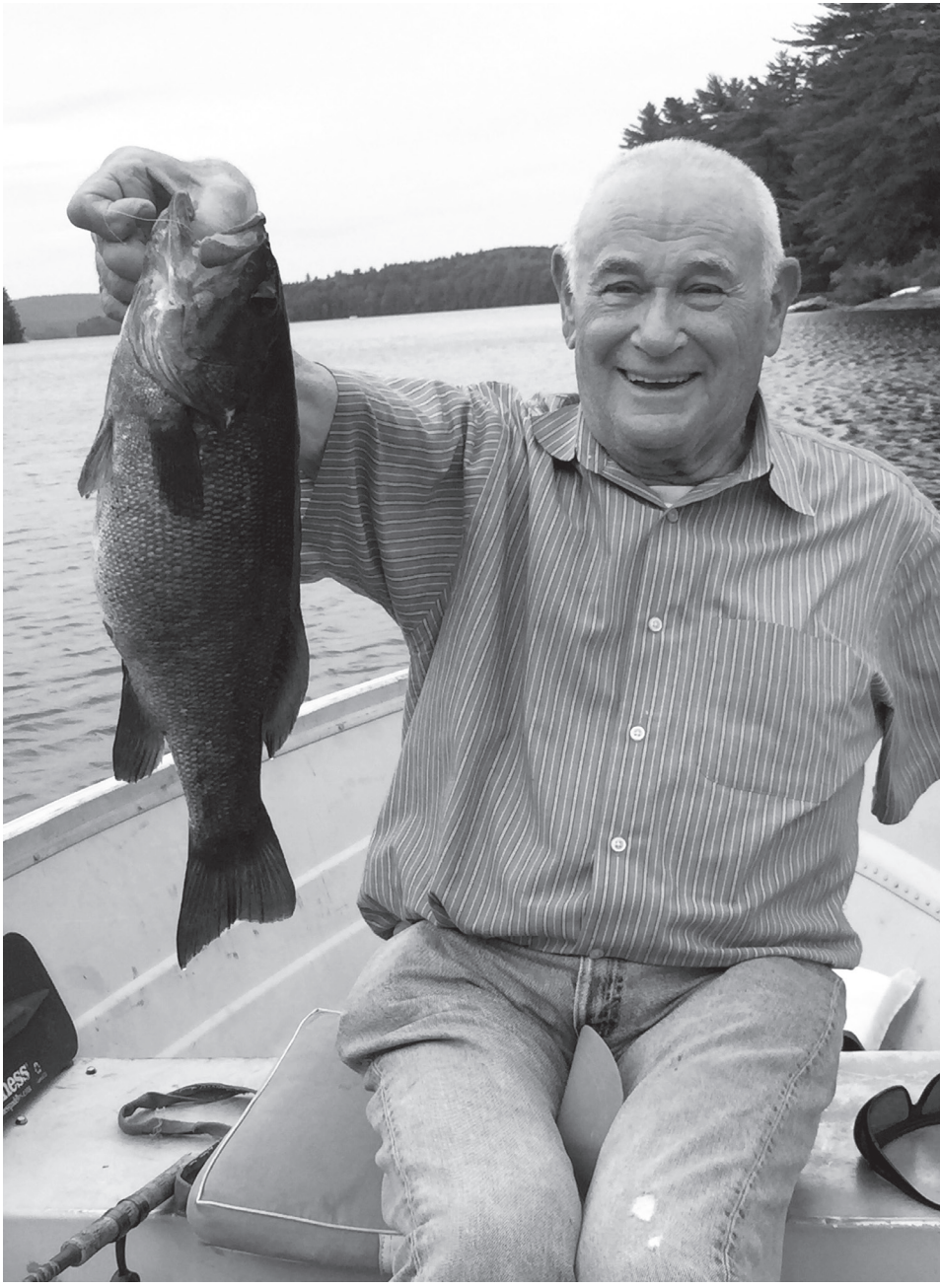
In order to keep the line from breaking, I needed to rely upon the flexible action of my pole. In addition, I frequently needed to "reel backwards" in order to reduce the pressure on the line while managing to keep the fish from both the anchor rope and the outboard motor's propeller. Beyond their remarkable strength, smallmouth bass are empowered by instincts which help them escape: they throw themselves out of the water, often dislodging the hook should it be caught on their lips; or they pull their bait into their rocky dens, where they can cut the line on a sharp edge. When they sense a boat's shadow, they dive at an angle underneath it in a final effort to snap the line– succeeding more often than I care to admit. Often my fishing partner, net in hand, has watched helplessly as yet another big one gets away just inches from the side of the boat.

This time the big one does not get away; as I guide it to the boat, my brother nets it on his first try. Unfortunately, after taking a picture of it and weighing it for the record, we cannot return it to the lake. It has swallowed the hook along with the small frog serving as bait. An hour or two later, I reduce the big bass to fillets that will contribute to a tasty fish fry.

By saltwater standards, a fish weighing three-and-a-half pounds is not big. Using heavy saltwater tackle, I once hauled in an 18-pound bluefish; my largest striped bass weighed 30 pounds and measured 40 inches head to tail. While larger blues and stripers have tested my strength, that smallmouth bass, struggling against my ultralight tackle, tested my finesse; one false move, and the fish would be gone.

In many ways, fishing on Parker Pond with my brother has been less about catching bass than about catching memories. Wherever we stop to cast our lines, we recall stories of fishing with our father, Benson, during the ripeness of his middle years as well as dur-

Dinner! Parker Pond



ing the years of his decline. Sometimes all three of us fished together; at other times our schedules led to our father fishing with only one of his sons.

Whatever the circumstances, my brother Bill and I agree: out on the water, our father let go of his workaholic personality, a personality that led to several of his "retirements" being temporary. Out on the water, he would never scold either of us with, "Can't you see that I'm busy?" Out on the water, our father lived in a world of superlatives: "Excellent!" "Better than excellent!" "The best there ever was!"

On Parker Pond, with his fishing rod in hand, our father was a different person: open, unrushed, willing to reflect upon his life and ours. I never saw him happier than when upon the waters of our lake of memories. As we continue our search for big bass year after year, my brother Bill and I have the profound satisfaction of knowing that we are fulfilling our father's dream.

I caught my "trophy" bass in the same shallow, southwest corner of Parker Pond where my father caught his last big bass in August of 1997. After landing it securely in the boat, he told me with delight: "I saw it take my frog!" In catching my big bass in that same spot, it was almost as if the one who was reeling it in was my father, though he had died 19 years earlier.

FATHER

Maine woods, August, 1997

An old man limps up steep stairs
Linking a rocky shore
To a cabin in the pines.
His right hand grabs a crude wooden rail,
Pulling himself higher and higher,
One step at a time.
He does not complain.
In his left hand hangs
A fish stringer from which dangle
Two large bass, freshly killed.

A day or two later,
After a morning on the water,
The old man tumbles
Out of a small boat
Onto a rickety dock.
He remains on hands and knees,
Gasping for air.
I kneel down to help him to his feet.
Pouring his eyes into my face,
He says: Don't be angry.
This is who I am now.

December, 1999

Channukiah lighting at Statehouse, 2019

The Rabbi of Hope Street

George M. Goodwin

Part I *(Written in 2005)*

Eighteen years ago, when Betsey and I moved to Providence, we immediately joined Temple Beth-El. Both of us had grown up in Reform congregations, we were married in Betsey's, and we belonged to still another in St. Paul, Minnesota. Over the years I had felt close to several Reform rabbis- especially my great uncle, Edgar F. Magnin- but also many professors of Hebrew Union College, with whom I studied in Los Angeles.

Of course Beth-El soon became our spiritual home. Betsey and I soon exceeded the Reform movement's expectations when, in 1992, we enrolled Molly and Michael in the Conservative movement's Alperin Schechter Day School. Four years later, having bought a home on the East Side, we were close enough to walk our kids to and from ASDS.

So why did it take an additional six months for Yehoshua Laufer, rabbi of Providence's Chabad House, to find me? Almost daily – against tremendous odds and obstacles – he searches tenaciously for his tenth man.

Alas, Rabbi Laufer had not remembered meeting me on a few previous occasions. Once, when I was shopping on Hope Street, he asked me, a complete stranger, if I had shaken a *lulav*. To make him happy, I smiled, recited a blessing, and waved the fronds towards and away from my body. On another occasion, I was conducting oral history interviews about Lee v. Weisman, the Providence case opposing public school prayer that in 1992 had been upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. I knocked on Chabad

House's door to ascertain the rabbi's opinion, but he never heard of the controversy. Of course Rabbi Laufer favored prayer – any kind of prayer – so, with a shrug, he politely declined my request for an interview.

After moving to Brenton Avenue, my family would often hear a heavy pounding on our front door, usually late on a Friday afternoon. At first we were frightened by this furious interruption. Then we grew alarmed by the potential damage to the beveled windows in our quaint Arts & Crafts bungalow. Eventually, however, we grew accustomed to Rabbi Laufer's resounding summons. Who or what else could this be?

While feeling no need to affiliate with another congregation or further proclaim my solidarity with Israel- the nation or people- I would reluctantly trudge over to Chabad House. No doubt both Rabbi Laufer and I felt that we were doing a mitzvah, but each for the other. Some kind of compact was silently struck. My journals show that I davened with Chabad for 30 or 40 Shabbats per year.

Sadly, however, Chabad worship has never appealed to me. Services are conducted entirely in Hebrew, and I reject the antiquated language that (in translation) celebrates God's "kingship" and calls for the "extirpation" of heretics. Could I be one? I also object to both the length and speed of typical Chabad services, which often combine Mincha and Maariv without a pause.

A wife, daughter or girlfriend may be sequestered behind Chabad's lace mehitza. But the only female heartily welcomed is the Sabbath bride.

There is music, but none performed by a cantor, choir or organist. Clapping and stomping are familiar sounds. The laymen who frequently lead services are most recognizable from behind: by their bending, bobbing, and bowing backs. What a strange sort of dancing – from the waist up.

As a champion of modern architecture, I respond to bold forms and the daring use of space and light. Thus, a Chabad service, set in the front parlor of a three-decker house, comes as a shock or betrayal.

Given my upbringing within Wilshire Boulevard Temple, one of America's most lavishly decorated synagogues, I also enjoy ceremony and spectacle. I want to be swept up in a glorious experience. For me, beauty both enables and ennobles the perception of holiness. Yes, I know, this sounds like witchcraft or idolatry.

Neither of my grandfathers prayed in a *stiebel.* George Washington Rosenthal, a third-generation American and president of Cincinnati's august Plum Street Temple, probably never heard that word. Isadore Goodwin, who rebelled against his parochial upbringing in Romania, chose to ponder eternity by walking along Santa Monica's shore.

Despite Chabad's lackluster surroundings, there is something courtly about Rabbi Laufer. Against my objections, he has always called me "Dr. Goodwin." Indeed, as if he were living in the Victorian era, he refers to all his congregants by their titles or surnames. When, by chance, Betsey picks up the phone, she is always addressed as "Mrs. Goodwin." Is he thinking of Sadie, my Russian-born grandmother?

While a few Chabadniks may wear coats and ties, most dress quite casually, as if they had just awakened or will soon go out for a jog. Perhaps a large number do not own coats or ties; many do not own cars or homes. Indeed, several men live temporarily upstairs- in bedrooms once belonging to Providence's Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society. Yet, I have never seen Rabbi Laufer without a *kippa,* which he usually wears beneath a black fedora. On Shabbat he wears a black garment resembling a frock coat, with its sash wrapped tightly around his waist.

Rabbi Laufer, when appearing on my doorstep, is often surrounded by children. His older sons are rabbis or apprentice rabbis; the younger ones are just beyond diapers. When occasionally asked how many children (or grandchildren) he has, Rabbi Laufer brusquely replies, "I love them all." Perhaps his most fervent follower, a boy around ten, will some day command a legion of rabbis.

I enjoy kibitzing with the older Laufer sons, particularly one who wears a fur-trimmed *strimmel.* They have of course studied and worked in Crown Heights, but also in Mexico, France, Germany,

Russia, and Australia. Somehow they are worldly while denying a larger world. The entire family attended a son's wedding in London. A groom and his family journeyed from Johannesburg to Providence for a Laufer daughter's wedding.

Rabbi Laufer's worldliness is displayed by his linguistic skills. For example, when celebrating the profundity of a Hebrew text, he may speak English, Yiddish or Russian – or perhaps all three languages. Having studied at a yeshiva in Montreal, he is also a Francophone. But Earth's geography or gravity does not much interest him. That's why, at the beginning of a service, Rabbi Laufer often cautions, "Strap on your spiritual seatbelts." He would gladly accept an assignment as Chabad's first *shaliach* in outer space.

Rabbi Laufer may prepare extensively for a lesson, but he speaks extemporaneously and quickly, knowing that his opportunity to impart wisdom is transitory. He loves teaching, but he has no need for a lectern, a blackboard or a syllabus. Muffled conversations from the rear of his *shul* neither distract nor disturb him. Somehow, he knows, truth and wisdom will prevail.

Though blessed with a sharp and nimble mind, Rabbi Laufer would never consider himself an intellectual. The point of learning is neither to discover new meanings nor critique established ones. Ironically, it is to affirm that which requires no further affirmation. Thus, Rabbi Laufer's favorite way to introduce a lesson is to refer to "a powerful idea." But because power resides in all of Judaism's ideas and ideals, there is little need for a taxonomy. Everything matters!

Has Rabbi Laufer ever read a novel, visited a museum or heard a symphony? Can Israel also be understood in geo-political terms? Regrettably, beyond our proclivity to schmooze, he and I are unable to cross a bridge to discuss or debate large ideas.

Yet, I can't decide if I know a great deal or relatively little about him. For example, he never mentions his age (early 50s), his birthplace (a Displaced Persons camp near Munich) or how long he has lived in Little Rhody (about 25 years).

Indeed, nothing to him is more significant than the future. Why? Because it will bring us *Moshiach.* I once asked if the messiah

would be a real human being. He answered, "Wasn't King David a real human being?" Of course a whale swallowed Jonah, and Lot's wife became a pillar of salt.

Unlike many Lubavitchers, however, Rabbi Laufer has never referred to *The Rebbe,* Menachem Mendel Schneerson, as *Moshiach.* Yet, Rabbi Laufer is awed by Lubavitch's rabbinic dynasty. Accordingly, he considers his own considerable learning vastly inferior.

While in no position to favor one kind of Jew over another, Rabbi Laufer prefers not to do so. He often quips, "Soup cans carry labels." He believes that every Jew possesses a divine spark- yes, an eternal soul. Consequently, whatever a person's level of learning or degree of observance, there is room for growth and improvement. Indeed, the path toward salvation is paved with small deeds: laying tefellin, lighting candles, and saying Kaddish.

Though Rabbi Laufer has probably never set foot in Temple Beth-El, he has never challenged my allegiance to it. To my amazement, he has occasionally apologized to me for condescending remarks made by rude "minyanaires." Rabbi Laufer once exclaimed, "Don't worry, this is my *shul.*"

This, I'm afraid, is both his extraordinary accomplishment and burden. After so many years on Hope Street, Rabbi Laufer has accumulated few signs of conventional success: no desk, no outer or inner office, no secretary, no computer, no newsletter, no board of trustees. There is no religious school, no Brotherhood, no Sisterhood, no Young Marrieds' Club, no Seniors' Circle. Likewise, no raffles, bake sales or golf tournaments.

Dues, if they exist, are deposited in a *putshke.* He has no office hours, no vacation, no sabbatical. Guess who cooks the Shabbat chicken, washes the dishes, carries out the trash, and shovels the sidewalk. I feel embarrassed because nothing is beneath him.

If a businessman, Rabbi Laufer would have long ago found a new territory or a new product. What kind of enterprise flourishes by giving away treasures?

As Shabbat approaches, Rabbi Laufer often looks weary. Perhaps his large family or his sprawling flock has depleted his

enormous energy. Constantly on the move, he greets friends and strangers at the JCC as well as several retirement and nursing homes. Once, after he greeted a bedridden patient at Miriam Hospital, she proclaimed, "I had no idea I was that sick!" In his beat-up station wagon, with a *Chanukkiah* strapped on top, Rabbi Laufer delivers candles and *shmura* matzah. And he usually shovels the first and last mounds of earth when officiating at funerals.

Although I worry about him, I have never heard Rabbi Laufer complain about his lot. Has he ever imagined doing something easier with his life? For all his talk about luminescence and iridescence, he would have made a fine astrophysicist. Yes, a cardiologist routinely mends broken hearts.

In my presence, Rabbi Laufer has never uttered a word about injustice or unfairness. Yet, many of his relatives and his wife's were Holocaust victims, and those who reached America struggled to obtain necessities. His father died of cancer. A Laufer son, whose bar mitzvah I attended, is developmentally disabled. A daughter died in infancy. The rabbi's mother-in-law suffered a lengthy, debilitating illness. Somehow, these hardships and cruelties have not become reasons to spurn God's blessings. For a true believer, every moment is precious – indeed, heaven-sent!

Thus, Rabbi Laufer often proclaims to visitors that he resides in "The City of Divine Providence." Similarly, he refers to Chabad's location, near the intersection of Olney and Hope, as "Only Hope."

Surely humor has been another of Rabbi Laufer's reliable antidotes for pain and suffering. Referring to his congregants as "Maccabbees," he tells them that their paychecks will be doubled or tripled after attending next week's Shabbat services. Urging his "gentlemen" to hurry over, he declares, "I can't hold up the sun forever."

Rabbi Laufer clearly thrives on merriment. Chabad celebrations, featuring magicians, clowns, and jugglers, often resemble carnivals. Klezmer music produces a friendly frenzy.

Yes, the "street rabbi," as he sometimes calls himself, has an uncanny ability to gather a flock. When urgently seeking his

tenth man, he enjoys calling out to a pedestrian or a Domino's deliveryman on Hope Street, "Hey, aren't you Jewish?" Israeli students or South African diamond merchants visiting Providence become easily recognizable through his secret screening devices.

Once, upon entering a *bodega* in South Providence, Rabbi Laufer discovered José, a son of Holocaust survivors reared in the Dominican Republic. José ended up attending services for a while because Gedalia, an American-born Israeli and a fervent Knicks fan, also encouraged him to do so. Of course Gedalia, a shepherd married to a Dominican, also speaks Spanish. But did José walk all the way from and back to his home?

Rabbi Laufer has a genius for attracting two types of Jews: those in need of a meal and the highly educated, who may hunger for other nourishment. His mainstays include a number of medical students and physicians. Is it merely a coincidence, however, that a former chief of psychiatry at Bradley Hospital was Maurice Laufer?

When I began heeding Rabbi Laufer's call, I thought of myself as an anthropologist. Here was a marvelous opportunity to observe a traditional, patriarchal society, and I wouldn't need shots or a passport. With my own full-length beard, dark fedora, and flowing trench coat, I might even assimilate.

But then I determined that I was observing not a rooted but a highly transient community. Never knowing who would walk through (or possibly storm out) the creaking front door, I decided that I was watching an extraordinary drama. But who could imagine such a cast of characters or so many surprises on such a narrow stage? What property master would have thought of the *Dos Equis* sign beaming through the sanctuary curtains from across Hope Street?

Recently, however, I have moved past the vantage points of anthropologist or theatre critic. Now, I'm inclined to think more of literature – especially such genres as fable and legend. Is the Chabad story real or something I imagined? Does Rabbi Laufer spring to life only upon the onset of darkness? Does his continual reference to *The Rebbe* mean a human or a wizard? Why the medieval costumes and the incessant counting of days? Why so many children and such

irrepressible optimism?

If he is Don Quixote, then I must be Sancho Panza. Or perhaps I'm Basil to his Zorba the Greek. Then again, doesn't "Yehoshua & George" sound like a children's book or a comic strip?

Although we may totally disagree on the frequency, Rabbi Laufer knows not to knock on my door or call me too often. Fortunately, it was another conscript, who, seeing Rabbi Laufer approach his front porch, proclaimed, "Welcome to the eighteenth century."

Compared to most of my male Jewish neighbors, I have gained a deep knowledge of Rabbi Laufer's faith, fervor, and fanaticism. Yet, more often than not, I consider him a dear friend and a shining spiritual presence.

Yes, a few years hence, when *Moshiach* finally strides up or down Hope Street, he will encounter a true disciple. Then again, perhaps my fantastic friend is *Moshiach*!

Rebbetzin Mikla and Rabbi Laufer at son's wedding, Paris, 2013

Part II *(Written in 2020)*

I will never play in the NBA nor perform at Carnegie Hall. Likewise, despite my youthful yearnings, I will never become a curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art nor a professor of art history at Princeton. Though I have served on the boards of Temple Beth-El and the Rhode Island Historical Society, I will never become president of either organization.

Indeed, after nearly a quarter-century's exposure to and entanglement with Chabad, I will never become a Lubavitcher or an Orthodox Jew. Isn't this quite obvious?

Despite my children's early years at the former Alperin Schechter Day School, I have never even flirted with the Conservative movement. More than ever, I consider myself both a Reform and an ecumenical Jew, though "Jew" alone will suffice.

Fortunately, beauty remains an essential way for me to perceive, understand, and embrace this world. Beyond my attraction to portraiture, still life, and landscape, for example, I will probably also remain transfixed by Christian art and architecture – perhaps music too – because of its accessibility, range, complexity, and intensity. But modernism's imagery – representational and abstract- has also become a means by which I can comprehend joy, sorrow, mystery, and splendor.

Despite my verbosity often revealed in these pages, silence will also continue to mean a great deal to me. Thus, if searching for an alternative method of or setting for communal worship, I might feel some affinity for a Quaker meeting.

True to my upbringing, I have found it possible to speak to God at any time and in any place. Yet, while preferring to use my own words, I often tire of these. I also don't want to take too much of God's time. He, She or It has probably heard quite enough from me. But I also believe that *mitzvot* matter at least as much as confessions of weakness or renewed declarations of good intentions.

Yes, I fully accept that I'm a flawed person. Indeed, this is what it means to be human. While continually striving to improve, I don't despair about making rudimentary progress.

So why can't Rabbi Laufer accept me as the person I think I am – and have probably always been?

I feel sorry for anybody forced to accept or conform to any ideology – indeed, a person who has lived without freedom of choice. Yes, Roger Williams was right about fleeing Massachusetts Bay Colony and founding a dominion free of doctrine.

But choice is also a slippery slope. For example, I have been troubled on a few occasions when Chabadniks have treated Rabbi Laufer disrespectfully. If he happens to make a tiny mistake when reading Torah, a relative newcomer to his services has seemed eager to interrupt and correct him. Some Chabadniks may also think that he is too lax with some rituals or observances. Or perhaps his sense of humor may occasionally seem irreverent.

Some Chabadniks have disappointed me in other ways. For example, only on a few occasions have I ever been thanked for helping form a minyan, especially when somebody is observing a *yahrseit.* Hardly anybody knows my last or first name or ever helps Rabbi Laufer summon a minyan. For that matter, only a few regulars have any idea that my spiritual home is Beth-El. Does anybody care that I served for years as a board member of Hebrew Free Loan Association – several as president? How about my leadership role within our Association? Aren't these also worthy Jewish endeavors? *Mitzvot* of sorts?

Even on a Wednesday evening, after I have gladly led Beth-El's minyan service for a smattering of congregants, Rabbi Laufer may ask me to help form his minyan. Yet, when I assert, "Hashem has heard enough from me," he persists. He too also forgets that I'm active in our Association, even though I once presented him with a copy of our anthology (which includes his family's portrait).

If there's one dimension of Chabad observance that drives me bananas, however, it's the annual *Chanukkiah*-lighting pageant under the Statehouse dome. Our patriarch, Roger Williams, would wretch! As a civil libertarian, I too believe in the absolute separation of church and state. No exceptions, even for federal funding of churches and synagogues during the pandemic. I adamantly believe that Jews have far more to lose than gain by seeking politicians' favors.

Yet, I value Rabbi Laufer's friendship. Though dressed in black, he is surely my most colorful acquaintance and neighbor. My life has been truly enriched by our unpredictable and sometimes absurd encounters. Yes, I am particularly grateful that he came to my home, after my father's passing, to sit with me, pray, and listen.

Do we regard each other as brothers? Yes, we care a great deal about one another. More likely, however, we are cousins. Years ago, as I insisted, he should have dropped the "Dr. Goodwin" stuff. More regrettably, however, as long as I dwell within walking distance of Chabad House, I will also remain a number.

Though he would vehemently disagree, I believe that, after 40 years of knocking on doors, making phone calls, and performing countless *mitzvot,* Rabbi Laufer has labored long and hard enough. He has done as much as any mortal could to bring heaven and earth closer together. Indeed, I question why *Hashem* has continually, if not relentlessly, tested his loyalty, strength, and endurance.

Perhaps through Rabbi Laufer I see too much of myself. I'm thinking of my fanatical dedication to art, museums, travel, collecting, photography, reading, and study. With each issue of this journal, I also work hard – perhaps relentlessly – to gather my own minyan of writers. By being more flexible and accommodating, perhaps I too could have experienced a somewhat easier life and shown greater respect for and devotion to my loved ones.

Rabbi Laufer is only a few years younger than I, but at times he feels a generation older. My first grandchild recently turned three, but some of his grandchildren have children of their own! My beard is grayer than his, but I may be healthier. His toil has been harsher than mine, though he would probably claim that it has been more joyous.

Yes, it may sound more bizarre than quixotic, but I want more for him than he may want for himself: a sense of peace, pride, dignity, and accomplishment that lasts far longer than this week's Shabbat. I'm afraid that "Only Hope" isn't good enough.

In Memoria:
November 1, 2019-November 1, 2020

Berkelhammer, Robert, a son of the late Anne (Rossman) Berkelhammer Krause and Cyril Berkelhammer, was a Providence native. He graduated from Hope High School, University of Rochester, and Boston University Law School. He practiced in Providence for 42 years.

In 1997 Mr. Berkelhammer became a founding partner of Chace Ruttenberg & Freedman, where he focused on corporate law and also advised not-for-profit organizations on the development of affordable housing. Once a part-time letter carrier, Bob even found delight in overseeing his firm's mail delivery.

Having enjoyed many summers as a camper and attained the rank of Eagle Scout, Mr. Berkelhammer loved the outdoors. He became an avid walker (especially to and from his office), hiker, cyclist, and golfer, and also enjoyed vacationing with his family.

A life member of our Association, Bob was vice president before serving as president from 2000 to 2001. He helped raise funds and formulate plans for the Association's participation in Heritage Harbor Museum. He was also a president of the former Jewish Family Service of Rhode Island and served on many additional boards, including Temple Beth-El's. So much made Bob happy.

Our friend is survived by his wife, Miriam ("Mitzi"), and their children, Jessi, Max, and Abby.

Died on February 16 in Providence at the age of 70.

H. Jack Feibelman, a son of the late Clare (Arnholz) and Siegfried Feibelman, was born in Berlin in 1921. His given name was Hans-Joachim Feibelman. The remarkable story of his life, written as a master's thesis in English at Brown University in 2001, is the basis of a three-part article in our journal. The first appears in the current issue.

Mr. Feibelman, an exceptionally modest man, was predeceased by his wife, Hannah (Davis), and their son, Jeffrey.

His ancestors had lived in Germany for centuries. In 1936, Mr. Feibelman fled by himself to America, where relatives sheltered him in Camden, Arkansas. In 1938, after graduating from the local high school and earning a diploma from Chillicothe Business College in Missouri, he moved to New York City to launch his business career. Soon reunited with his parents, Mr. Feibelman was also hired as a bookkeeper by Coro, one of the world's largest jewelry manufacturers. Later that year, the Feibelmans relocated to Providence, where Jack became Coro's head bookkeeper.

He served stateside with the Army during World War II. After resuming his career with Coro, he attended night classes at Northeastern University and earned a bachelor's degree in business.

In 1966 he became a founder of Feibelman & Krack, which represented jewelry manufacturers. Only a year later, he established A & H Manufacturing Company, which produced and marketed a revolutionary design for the display of earrings on a hanging display card. In 1973 his son, Jeffrey, joined the business, which became "product packaging architects" and expanded worldwide. Jack never fully retired.

Mr. Feibelman belonged to Temple Beth-El and Temple Sinai. He served on the former Jewish Federation's endowment committee and on The Miriam Hospital's board of governors and its foundation board. In 2014 the Miriam honored him as Person of the Year.

He was a life member of our Association.

Mr. Feibelman is survived by his daughter, Barbara, and his daughter-in-law, Jaine.

Died on June 19 in Cranston, his longtime home, at the age of 99.

Flink, Renee, a daughter of the late Anna and Morris Lampert, was a native of New Bedford. Following her graduation from Mount Holyoke College and marriage, she moved to Providence, where she became a social worker.

Throughout her adult life, Mrs. Flink was devoted to women's rights, particularly in the workplace, and the improvement of community schools. An active supporter of Planned Parenthood of Rhode Island, she received its Volunteer of the Year award. She also enjoyed skiing and vacationing with family in Maine.

Mrs. Flink is survived by her husband, Alan, and their sons, Marc, Philip, and Peter.

Died on June 21 in Providence at the age of 90.

Glashow, Robert, a son of the late Sarah (Bereson) and David Glashow, grew up in Brookline, Massachusetts, and was an alumnus of its high school. He graduated from Washington University in St. Louis and Bentley College.

Mr. Glashow was the president and owner of Woonsocket Sponging for more than six decades. He was also an active member of Woonsocket Rotary.

He is survived by his wife, Diana (Ziskind), and their three children, David, Jill Padwa, and Andrew.

Died on January 16 in Providence at the age of 89.

Hurvitz, Arthur, a son of the late Morris and Ray Hurvitz, was born in Brooklyn and grew up in Queens, New York. In 1944, before completing high school, he enlisted in the Army and was sent to fight in Europe. After being been badly wounded at the Battle of the Bulge, he was hospitalized for five months.

Through the GI Bill, Mr. Hurwitz earned dual degrees in industrial and textile engineering at Georgia Institute of Technology. In 1951, he and his wife moved to Pawtucket, where he began a 27-year career at Health-Tex/ Standard Romper Company, a leading designer and manufacturer of children's clothing. He eventually served as its president. He later started his own company, Heritage Color, a color separation and printing company.

Mr. Hurvitz served as a board member of numerous organizations, including: The Miriam Hospital, the former Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, the former Jewish Family Service, the former Jewish Seniors Agency, Pawtucket Boys' Club, Cumberland-

Lincoln Boys' Club, and Planned Parenthood of Rhode Island. He also established scholarships at Lincoln School in Providence and at The Miriam. Mr. Hurvitz cochaired the hospital's Campaign for the Next Generation, received its 2009 Person of the Year Award, was designated an honorary nurse, and served as a life trustee of its foundation.

He was a life member of our Association.

Mr. Hurvitz is survived by his wife, Joyce, and their daughters, Karen and Ellen.

Died on August 25 in Providence at the age of 94.

Klemer, Estelle R., the daughter of the late Minnie (Rubin) and Abraham Liberman, was born in Quincy, Massachusetts. She was predeceased by her husbands, Arnold Robinson and Bernard Klemer.

While still a teenager, Estelle became active in Hadassah. After graduating from Quincy High School in 1942, she earned an associate's degree at Bentley School. Following her marriage to Mr. Robinson and move to Rhode Island, she became the coproprietor of Randall Hardware on Orms Street in Providence. Following Arnold's death, she became the store's sole proprietor at its new location on North Main Street. This was a pioneering role for a woman.

After selling her business in 1977 and marrying Mr. Klemer, she devoted herself to Jewish communal service. Her numerous positions included board chair of the Jewish Home for the Aged, president of The Miriam Hospital's Women's Association, board member of the hospital, and vice president of Temple Emanu-El. This resident of Pawtucket, who had been devoted to caring for her own parents, also played key roles in the establishment of Shalom Apartments and Siperstein Tamarisk Assisted Living Residence in Warwick. She also helped guide Jewish Eldercare of Rhode Island, which became part of Jewish Collaborative Services. In recognition of her devoted service to the elderly, Mrs. Klemer received the Maurice Glicksman Leadership Award. For more than two decades, she was also a devoted fundraiser for the Jewish Alliance.

Mrs. Klemer was a life member of our Association.

She is survived by her daughters, Carol Robinson Sacerdote and Lisa Robinson Schoeller.

Died on July 18 in Lexington, Massachusetts, her home for three years, at the age of 95.

Moss, Louise, was a native of Akron, Ohio, and graduated from its university. While residing in Massachusetts, she worked as a senior statistical analyst for Navy and Air Force missile systems. Later, she worked as a senior computer software engineer at MIT's Lincoln Laboratory.

As a retiree, Ms. Moss moved to Bristol and then Riverside, Rhode Island. She volunteered for several organizations, including the Lifelong Learning Collaborative, and enjoyed Rhode Island Public Radio.

Ms. Moss is survived by her children, Daniel, and Linda Sohn.

Died on June 20 in Riverside at the age of 87.

Salmanson, Dale, was the daughter of the late Esther (Himmel) and Isaac Azimow. Born in Philadelphia, she graduated from Hazelton High School (Pennsylvania) and from Boston University in 1971. After earning a master's degree in special education at Suffolk University, she taught for several years in Boston-area schools.

After earning a second master's degree in public relations at Boston University's College of Communication in 1990, Mrs. Salmanson worked in a variety of positions, including as an assistant producer of Boston's WBZ-TV news and in marketing for beauty and home furnishing products.

Mrs. Salmanson, a member of Temple Beth Avodah in Newton, Massachusetts, served as president of its Sisterhood during the 1980s. She volunteered for several charitable causes and enjoyed directing many memorable theatre productions at her children's school at Beth Avodah.

She is survived by her husband, Jerrold, and her children, Ilissa Lipworth and Ethan Wood, and her stepchildren, David Salmanson and Lauren Levin.

Died on June 20 in Providence at the age of 70.

Sapolsky, Jerome R., a son of the late Ann and Joseph Sapolsky, was predeceased by his wife, Edith J. (Jaffe). A native of Haverhill, Massachusetts, he earned a bachelor of science degree at Tufts University in 1951. During the Korean Conflict, he enlisted in Naval Officers' Candidate School and was sent to Newport before serving on as a gunnery officer on an aircraft carrier, the *U.S.S. Tarawa.*

In 1956 Mr. Sapolsky earned a master's of science in health care administration at Yale and received further training at Beth Israel Hospital in Boston. He served as assistant director of Malden Hospital before returning to Beth Israel as director of administrative services and planning.

Between 1967 and 1983, Mr. Sapolsky was president and chief executive officer of The Miriam Hospital. During the 1970s, he was also a Rhode Island trustee of the New England Hospital Assembly and chaired the board of trustees of the Hospital Association of Rhode Island. He was later a founding trustee and secretary of the Consortium of Jewish Hospitals. Beginning in 1985 until his retirement in 2004, Mr. Sapolsky was the administrator of Radiation Oncology Associates of Rhode Island.

For a decade beginning in 1973, Mr. Sapolsky chaired the United Way's hospital division. He was also served on the trustees' executive committee of the former Jewish Home for the Aged from 1976 to 1998.

Mr. Sapolsky was a life member of our Association.

He was also a lifelong tennis player and an avid Red Sox fan. He and Edith lived in Barrington for nearly four decades.

Mr. Sapolsky is survived by his children, Peter, Beth Nitkin, and Steven.

Died on March 26 in Barrington at the age of 90.

Spindell, Judith Kay, was the daughter of the late Molly (Plotnick) and Louis Kay, and the stepdaughter of the late Anne Factor Kay. She was predeceased by her husband, Dr. Edward Spindell.

Mrs. Spindell earned a bachelor of science degree in education and a certificate in education from the Eliot Pearson School at

Tufts. In 1979, she also earned a third-class operator's license from the Federal Communications Commission. Soon thereafter, she became a research assistant in a national drug study.

For 27 years she taught in Temple Beth-El's religious school and helped create a family life curriculum focusing on middle school students. In 1994 she was certified as a Judaic studies teacher by Rhode Island's Bureau of Jewish Education. Four years later, she received the Millman Prize for excellence in teaching. She also served as a tutor at the International House of Rhode Island, a docent at the RISD Museum, and a volunteer at the Samaritans of Rhode Island.

Mrs. Spindell is survived by her children, Dr. Faith Tobias, Julie Corwin, Pamela Greiner, and Chaim Cohen, and her stepchildren, Ahvi Spindell, Marcia Lentz, and Stephen Spindell.

Died in Providence on August 19 at the age of 83.

Tilles, Florence, the daughter of the late Carrie and Benjamin Trinkel, was born on Independence Day, 1921, in Providence. She was predeceased by her husband, Norman. Her twin brother, Murray, was a Marine who died during the American attack on Iwo Jima.

Mrs. Tilles graduated from Hope High School and studied sociology and psychology at the University of Maryland. She was a social worker for two decades with the Rhode Island Division of Child Welfare. Her numerous interests included Trinity Repertory Company, music, dancing, and fashion. Late in her life she continued to enjoy playing bridge with many childhood friends as well as more recent acquaintances. She was a member of Temple Beth-El.

Mrs. Tilles, known as "Flo," is survived by her three children, Sandra, Donna, and Barry.

Died on May 30 in Providence at the age of 98.

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