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...and Steve, ca. 1970
Editor’s Comments

An important milestone in my editorship and in the life of our publication occurred with the retirement of Bobbie Friedman, our splendid graphic designer for 11 years. After custom-designing the format and flow of 2,200 pages, she decided to focus her considerable creative efforts elsewhere. Bobbie has been a pleasure and a joy to work with, and all of us thank her deeply and wish her well.

I am proud to introduce our guest graphic designer, Stephen Logowitz, a Providence native whom I have known since we met as college freshmen, nearly 50 years ago. Yes, we are old friends, but not new colleagues. He was the editor of our college’s yearbook – actually a green box filled with two and three-dimensional mementos – whose imaginative design has never been rivaled. While based in Boston, Steve has built an illustrious design career.

As you know by now, another anchor of our journal has decided to move on. After 24 years as our Association’s beloved office manager, Anne Sherman will focus on other sources of pride and pleasure, most notably her family, her home, and her beach. We cannot thank Anne enough for all that she has helped us accomplish in such an upbeat and gracious manner.

As I think further about transitions, I would like to remember two gentlemen who preceded me as president of our Association. Stan Abrams was not only a visionary when helping select Anne, but he also made the shidduch between Bobbie and me. Indeed, Stan chaired the publications committee through 13 issues of The Notes, and he anchored our Association’s efforts to publish The Jews of Rhode Island in 2004. In a word, he was an optimist.

Bob Kotlen and I shared numerous historical interests and, perhaps, a mischievous sense of humor. More than anybody, he deserves credit (or blame) for popularizing the epithet, “Jewish Hysterical Association.” But unlike me, he was quite handy, and the Association’s former office revealed his inventiveness. And we cannot forget that Bob recruited Moe Cohen, a beaming presence in our office for no fewer than 20 years.

I thank so many other colleagues and friends – writers, advisors, benefactors, and printers – for honoring and implementing our mission. We seek not merely to remember the past, but to make it new and true.
Ettie and James Sackett
and their nine children,
ca. 1905
“It’s in the Cards”:

**The Evolution of the Sackett Family’s Business**

Shelley A. Sackett

A Providence native, the author was educated at Temple Emanu-El and Classical High School. She keeps in touch with many childhood friends who have fond memories of attending concerts by Jimi Hendrix, The Doors, and Linda Ronstadt at Brown during the late 1960s.

After earning a bachelor’s degree at Swarthmore College in 1974, Shelley moved to Vermont, where she lived in a converted sugar cabin, taught in an alternative high school, and played in a band. In 1980 she returned to Providence to work in her family’s business and remained nine years.

Shelley later moved with her family to Cheyenne, Wyoming, and in 1998 earned a law degree at the University of Denver. During her Western sojourn, she taught Hebrew school and advanced her own Jewish studies. After moving to Swampscott, Massachusetts, in 2001, she completed Hebrew College’s intensive, two-year *Me’ah* program and took additional Judaic studies courses at Boston University.

A former editor of Salem’s *Jewish Journal*, Shelley continues to write on a variety of topics for North Shore publications. She also maintains a divorce mediation practice, teaches yoga, and participates in Congregation Shirat Hayam’s morning minyan. Shelley has three children, Alexander, Julia, and James, the youngest of whom shares the birthday of his great-great-grandfather, James Sackett.

In April 1882, a month after a revolutionary assassin had killed Czar Alexander II in St. Petersburg, a wave of pogroms spread throughout the Russian empire’s southwestern region. Hundreds of Jewish communities were attacked, including some in the Rechitsa district of southeastern Belarus, where some of my ancestors lived. Like most of the approximately 2.3 million Jews who left Russia between 1881 and 1930, they never saw their native land again.

**What’s in a Name?**

When my paternal great-grandfather, Israel Sacofsky, and his wife, Ettie, landed in Boston on July 15, 1882, they were literally in the same boat as many
Jewish passengers who had also fled Czarist Russia. He was 23 and she was 24, and they sought the promise of new lives in America.

When Israel applied for United States citizenship on December 29, 1885, he renounced allegiance to “every foreign Prince, Potentate, State and Sovereignty whatever,” but particularly to Czar Alexander III. On October 31, 1891, he became a naturalized citizen in Providence’s district court.

The young couple made Providence their new hometown. Over the course of 17 years, they had eleven children, nine of whom survived. Only my grandfather, Morris, the fifth surviving child, was not born in Providence. Instead, he was born on August 9, 1889 at 176 Clinton Street in New York City.

Having returned to Providence in 1890, the city directory shows that Israel worked as a tailor and lived at 201 North Main Street. This was in the lower reaches of the Jewish neighborhood known as the “North End.” The following year he moved his business to 305 North Main. In 1892 his new home was located at 52 Charles Street.

By 1895, however, Israel was back in New York for a visit. As reported in the November 9 issue of The New York Times, he told Officer John Croughan that a stranger had tried to steal his watch near Delancey and Eldridge Streets. The suspect, arrested hours later, turned out to be Raymond Elroy of Boston, the leader of a masked band of thieves who had shot and killed a man during a holdup at a nearby bar a few nights earlier. Elroy had a gun in his pocket when he tried to rob Israel.

Uncle Meyer and Uncle Nathan’s Influence
According to my father, Herbert Sackett (born in 1928), Meyer and Nathan, the first and second-born, were the siblings who had the most lasting impact upon their family. Dad, the son of Morris, was their nephew.

There is a family story that in the fall of 1899, when Meyer and Nathan were seniors at English High School and applied for admission to Brown, they used their given name, Sacofsky. They were refused admission. Although Jews had always been welcome under the university’s colonial charter, the first identifiable Jew, Israel Strauss, did not graduate until 1894. So, in order to improve their chances for admission, Meyer and Nathan decided to change their surname to Sackett and their father’s first name to James. A few Sacketts lived in Providence. Frederic was Rhode Island’s adjutant general. There was also a Sackett Street
(between Elmwood and Broad) in South Providence. The family submitted a change-of-name application to the State Legislature in January 1900, and Meyer and Nathan reapplied to Brown in the fall.

Again, according to our family’s story, this time both boys were accepted, and they commuted from their family’s home at 22 Wheaton Street. Meyer and Nathan were born more than 18 months apart, however. Meyer was originally a member of the Class of 1905, but both young men, known as Sackett, earned bachelor of philosophy degrees with the Class of 1906. The “Sackett” seed of the family tree was sown, and next came the family business.

**Two Stores**

Prior to attending Brown or even while they were students, Nathan and Meyer opened a small store or newsstand at 449 Westminster Street, on the fringe of downtown Providence. They may have also sold postcards, a word that had not come into existence until 1870. Because they could not devote full time to the store, they persuaded their younger brother, Morris, to tend to the business. Herbert explained, “Apparently my father took a liking to it and, upon their graduation, he somehow ended up becoming the proprietor and operated the store at that location until 1910.” Providence directories suggest, however, that at least one of Morris’s siblings, Lillian, also continued selling postcards in the Union Street store through 1915.

By this time, according to the Providence directory, Meyer had moved to Detroit. In fact, he relocated to Cambridge and then Somerville, Massachusetts, where he became a wholesaler of cotton goods. By the 1940s, he and his wife, Minnie, lived in Winthrop, where he died in 1949.

According to Providence directories, Nathan sold postcards at 449 Westminster Street. In 1918, he moved to New York City and became a publisher of postcards. Herbert remembers that he ran a company on Long Island that manufactured high-quality, engraved cards. Nathan, who married Helen, died in New York in 1967.

Morris opened the small store at 203 Union Street in the center of downtown in 1910. “This became one of the first stores selling only postcards and greeting cards in the Northeast,” Herbert explained. He elaborated, “My father maintained the Union Street store for the balance of his career, and it was there I was raised into the retail business.”
Sackett’s, Union Street,
ca. 1930

Notes
Coincidentally, 1910 was the same year that another business pioneer, 18-year-old Joyce Clyde (J.C.) Hall, traveled from his home in Nebraska to Kansas City, Missouri. He brought two shoeboxes of picture postcards (the only form of greeting card at that time) and an entrepreneurial fire in his belly. Hall set up a wholesale distribution center at the Kansas City YMCA where he was lodging. The postcards were a huge success and soon his brother, Rollie, joined him in the business that became Hall Brothers. It was later known as Hallmark Cards.

J. C. Hall's Midwest success and pioneering spirit brought him and his shoebox full of cards to the East in search of greater distribution. One of his first stops was 203 Union Street. Morris Sackett liked Hall's product and decided to retail it. Little could either man suspect that that transaction was the start of a 75-year business relationship. It would culminate in 1985, when J.C.'s son, Don, invited Morris's son, Herbert, to a lavish weekend celebration at Hallmark's Kansas City headquarters to celebrate another milestone of their business relationship. In 1910 neither J. C. Hall nor Morris Sackett could have imagined that the 203 Union Street store would someday become the oldest Hallmark account in its original location.

It is of course ironic that Rhode Island became home to another of America's leading manufacturers of greeting cards. Founded in 1906 by Samuel and Charles Markoff, also Jewish entrepreneurs, Paramount was headquartered in Pawtucket after a start in Providence. It remained a highly successful family business until its sale to new owners in 1983. After relocating to Canada, the company folded in 2006.

Morris Sackett, like J.C. Hall, was an innovator. He developed solid oak, continuous-run greeting card racks so customers could see cards full-face. Max Abrams and Son, cabinetmakers in Providence, built these fixtures. Morris's store, also among the first to use fluorescent lighting and air conditioning, set industry standards. He wanted to create a pleasant, comfortable place where customers would linger as they selected cards. When postcard sales declined and the Hall brothers recognized the public's desire for more private communication, Morris carried their new greeting cards, which were sold with envelopes.

By 1930, Morris was living at 23 Methyl Street with his Providence-born wife, Evelyn (Sergy) Sackett, and their three children, Shirley (then ten), Edna (then six) and Herbert (then two). Morris and his wife, Evelyn, were charter members of Temple Emanu-El.
In 1934, James Sackett died in a tragic accident. When returning home from synagogue during a snowfall, he did not realize that he was walking along snow-covered trolley tracks on North Main Street. He also did not hear a silent electric trolley coming from behind. In the snowfall, its conductor did not see him either, and James was killed. Herbert recalled that his grandfather was 74 years old and in very good health. Herbert added, “I was only six, but I remember it clearly.”

The War Years

During World War II, manufacturers of all kinds faced strict quotas. The same was of course true for paper. Nevertheless, greeting cards became a popular way to communicate with troops stationed all over the world. Because mail took weeks or even months to reach its destination, customers had to send cards very early to arrive on time. Christmas cards were sold out weeks before the holiday, and Valentine’s Day cards were on sale before Christmas. “It was probably a never-to-be-repeated situation in the industry,” Herbert reflected.

During this era, Evelyn Sackett was actively involved in U.S.O. Herbert, who was a young teen at Nathan Bishop Junior High and already working after school at the family store, liked visiting the headquarters of card factories with his father, Morris. For example, they traveled to Rust Craft’s in Boston and Norcross’s in New York City. Morris was treated “kind of special” by vendors who recognized him as the retailing pioneer he was. “I used to tag along and got to meet the heads of the companies and many of the executives,” Herbert said, noting that companies in those early years presented their card lines through samples that buyers would choose from, one card at a time. “I gained knowledge of the products and learned to identify those which contained quality and salability,” he observed. Herbert also learned many intangibles from his father. “The major things he taught me were the importance of accurate record-keeping and financial discipline,” he added. Such lessons would stick with Herbert throughout his 41-year career.

Suburbs and Beyond

In July 1950, having graduated from the University of Rhode Island with a degree in business administration, Herbert went to work full-time for Sackett’s Greeting Cards. Given his full-time job and his engagement to Jane Lee Cohen,
he also gave up his ROTC involvement. I was born in 1952 and my brother Richard in 1955. Our family lived in a two-family house at 98 Dexterdale Road in Providence before moving to 287 Rochambeau Avenue in 1958.

From the Providence store, Herbert saw firsthand what was happening to downtowns throughout New England during the 1950s. “Downtowns were no longer the retail vehicle,” he said, referring to the development of suburbs and those residents’ desire to shop closer to their homes. He knew intuitively that this was where the retailing action of the future would be. Shopping centers were also the perfect vehicle for an ambitious young entrepreneur who already knew he wanted to be “an operator of stores, not a store operator.” But the suburbs were not the kind of place where a store that sold only greeting cards could thrive. He needed a plan.

Over the next four years, Herbert researched product mixes and store formats that could be duplicated as a multi-store operation. By 1960, he was ready to open a 1,400-square-foot store at 742 Hope Street, around the corner from his Rochambeau Avenue residence.

This “Sackett’s” carried party goods, candles, and stationery items in addition to greeting cards, a “social expression” resource that would become the prototype for future development. Because no single company carried all of these products, he had to put together his own mix of vendors, including greeting card vendors.

In 1962, Herbert brought this new diversified product approach to the store he opened on Westminster Mall, around the corner from the flagship Union Street location. He named it “Richley’s” after my brother and me- “Rich”- ard and Shel- “ley”- to avoid competition with the Union Street store. Although greeting cards were still the dominant product, Richley’s also had a paperback book department, an entire area devoted to party goods, and a candy department. Evidently, Herbert still believed that downtowns had a future.

Over the next few years, he paid careful attention to which products worked and which didn’t. Candy and paperback books were in the latter category.

In 1967 Herbert opened his first two stores outside of Rhode Island in downtown New Bedford and downtown Taunton, Massachusetts. They were also the first steps toward affiliation with an all-Hallmark product presentation. He then sold the Hope Street “laboratory” location.
Toward the end of the 1960s, when new highways connected suburban shoppers to destination retail areas, there was also an explosive growth of shopping centers. For Herbert, this was a perfect retail storm. “The major positive thing that happened to me in my career was timing,” he said. “Being able to be involved just about the time the suburbs, shopping centers, and malls caught on provided the biggest momentum for my career. I saw this as the wave of the future. It was obvious to me that Main Street, U.S.A. was not going to be the retailing future.”

In 1968, Morris, who had retired in 1963, died at age 79, leaving his son to continue his legacy. While Herbert did just that, he was poised on a very different trajectory. “For my father’s time and personality,” he explained, “functioning basically as a single-store owner was the right thing for him to do. I was much more oriented toward the idea that you take your knowledge and package it.” Unfortunately, Morris did not live long enough to witness a Sackett’s store in a mall location.
Further Expansion

By 1970, Hallmark was retooling in a similar way, diversifying its product line from greeting cards and gift-wrap to include other products like party goods, photo albums, candles, and some gift items. This shift made Hallmark a more attractive vehicle through which Herbert could accomplish his goal of expansion. So Sackett’s became an official Hallmark retail outlet and changed its name to “Sackett’s Hallmark.”

The relationship between the companies remained that of independent manufacturer and retailer (as opposed to franchisor and franchisee). This proved to be a winning combination.

In 1971, the first Sackett’s Hallmark store within an enclosed mall opened in Wampanoag Mall in East Providence. At 2,500 square feet, it included a book department, an expanded gift department, and a cutting-edge, brightly colored saw-toothed ceiling decorated with reproductions of silk-screened poster banners.

Over the next 20 years, Sackett’s Hallmark, driven by a philosophy of “controlled growth,” expanded to locations in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Maine, and upstate New York. In 1978, to accommodate the management infrastructure needed to support the rapid growth, Sackett’s moved its headquarters from an upstairs balcony alcove in its downtown, Union Street location to a 13,000-square-foot building in East Providence that housed both corporate offices and a warehouse. Herbert also concentrated on fine-tuning his mix of “allied” (or non-Hallmark) products to achieve an identity that would distinguish Sackett’s Hallmark stores from other Hallmark retailers.

He explained, “Our growth was a conservative one, which gave me a certain amount of comfort, but once you’re committed to that kind of expansion and growth, you’re in all the way. In order to attract and keep the right personnel to make it grow, you need to provide career opportunities for them. We were successful in attracting and keeping our key managerial and supervisory staff because they always knew there was the possibility for future promotion. That was always a challenge and responsibility for me.”

In 1980, I joined Sackett’s as area retail coordinator. Thus, I became the third generation Sackett to be part of the business. My duties included merchandising, writing a company newsletter, and learning the art of gift buying from my father. Only his sharp eye for spotting the next hot seller eclipsed his love for its
hunt. In the fiercely competitive gift industry, his merchandising prowess was renowned among vendors and fellow retailers alike.

When I started accompanying him to gift shows in New York and Los Angeles, I was amused and amazed by the effect his lingering in a vendor’s booth could create. I could not have asked for a better mentor.

I remained with the company until 1989, when I relocated to Cheyenne, Wyoming. My brother, Richard, had established and still maintains a psychotherapy practice in Manhattan.

By 1985, Herbert was again noticing a new trend in retailing, the “trendy, young-at-heart-oriented” shop. He wanted to take that concept, remove the off-color humor some companies emphasized, and package it in a 1,200-square-foot store that could go into the same malls as Sackett’s Hallmark stores. These new stores, which would carry no Hallmark products, would have a mix of 70 percent gifts and 30 percent cards and were named “Be Dazzled!” This would be the reverse of the Sackett’s chain merchandising formula.

This was also at the height of mall expansions, when developers were seeking to maximize their attraction by offering the most interesting mix of stores to their customers. The two-store Sackett’s approach had two goals: to differentiate Sackett’s Hallmark from other Hallmark retailers who were competing for the same locations, and to appeal to mall developers who were interested in an additional concept to add to their store mix. Such a move would also maximize Sackett’s management and administrative efficiencies.

Be Dazzled! was born on Thayer Street that year, and I was its project director. Over the next few years, it grew to its own chain of seven stores with additional locations in Dedham, Hadley, and Swansea, Massachusetts, as well as in upstate New York.

By the time the 1990s arrived, there were 60 stores under the Sackett’s, Inc. umbrella in six states with over 1,000 employees. Retail competition had become more intense and demanding than ever, and Herbert received a number of overtures from would-be buyers. Now in his sixties, he decided it was time for a change of lifestyle. An opportunity soon arose. In September 1991, after so many decades in the industry, he agreed to sell the retail division to a longtime acquaintance who was in the same industry but whose locations were primarily in the Mid-Atlantic states.

“Needless to say it was a difficult and traumatic decision and was not
made quickly or lightly,” Herbert said. “After all those years together, my organization was like family to me. Many of my employees had been with me from the beginning, and it was important to me that I was leaving them in good hands.”

“On a strictly personal level,” Hebert remarked, “the sale made me even more aware of and grateful for the opportunities made possible only through the courage and bravery of my grandfather Israel and grandmother Ettie and their migration to this great country.” “I’ve tried to pass this message of gratitude down to my own children and grandchildren,” he added.

**Retirement Reflections**

Herbert also reflected on his retirement. “With such a dramatic change of lifestyle and pace, it amazed me how seamless the transition became,” he said. “The fact that I have remained active was, for me, the key- and it still is.”

The corporate structure not part of the sale, Sackett’s, Inc., became an investment vehicle that still allows Herbert to keep a finger in the business world. Suddenly, however, there was more time to be involved with his grandkids, volunteer work, travel, hobbies, and reading. He is also able to enjoy one of his favorite activities, skiing, especially midweek, when slopes are less crowded. “All in all, it became a satisfying combination,” he said.

**United Brothers Synagogue**

Since 1987, Herbert has lived in Bristol. A couple of years before he sold the business, he ran into Jack Temkin, a fellow Temple Emanu-El member also active in the wider Jewish community. When Herbert remarked about planning to see him over the high holidays, Jack asked why he didn’t attend the synagogue in Bristol. That was the first time Herbert heard there was such a synagogue.

Having learned that United Brothers Synagogue has been located at 205 High Street since 1916, Herbert decided to attend services one Shabbat. “I was overwhelmed by the building and very impressed by the cantor, who had a beautiful voice,” he remarked. “My nickname for him was ‘the Robert Goulet of the cantorial world.’ A lot of people felt that way.”

Although still a member of Temple Emanu-El, Herbert was so taken by United Brothers that he decided to become a member. Since his retirement in 1991, he became further involved. In 2006, after serving many years on its board, he became treasurer. Quickly realizing that the synagogue was underfinanced
Herbert, flanked by Shelley, and her children Julia, Alex and James Roseman; Richard and his children, Taylor and Mimi
and in need of many costly repairs, Herbert decided that his personal goal would be to strengthen United Brothers’ financial health. This led to a building fund campaign that paid for a restoration in 2008. After the completion of a recent 2015 capital campaign, there is now an operating surplus.

Business Advice

When asked if he misses being in business, Herbert quickly replied, “I don’t miss being in business at all. If I miss anything, it’s the camaraderie that I developed, the personal relationships.” At gift shows there were social engagements almost every evening. “I always looked forward to them,” he said. He served on the boards of the New York and California Gift Shows and remained an advisor to the board of the California Gift Show for a few years after his retirement. He still sees some old business friends a few times each year.

Asked what advice he would give a young person just starting out in business, he answered without hesitation. “The most important thing, no matter what kind of business—whether it’s bricks and mortar or Internet or whatever—is to have a sound business plan. A well-thought-out business plan becomes a vehicle for producing the degree of profit. Those rules never change.”

“What does change,” Herbert cautions, “are business cycles that represent shifts in consumer demands. The successful entrepreneur must respond to these, which may occur in five-year cycles.” “The Internet,” he warns, “has completely overhauled the retail arena.”

As for additional lessons learned from his family’s business launched about 110 years ago, Herbert offered this: “Don’t expect to be 100 percent right when making decisions; that’s aiming too high. Always think about the ‘what ifs.’”

Despite the phenomenal growth of the Internet with its dozens of virtual e-cards, Herbert still believes that there can be no substitute for old-fashioned, paper cards. “The concepts of art and sentiment, in the ‘touchy-feely’ greeting card, will always have their place,” he proclaims.

Still drawn to Hallmark cards, Dad and I send them to each other on every card-giving occasion. I can’t speak for him, but the ones he has sent me over the years are in a special shoebox. I look forward to adding more for many years to come.
The Jews of Fox Point

Geraldine S. Foster

In her May 24, 2015 article in The Providence Journal, Christine Dunn told of a June 13 walking tour of Fox Point sponsored by the Providence Preservation Society. Although Irish, Portuguese and Cape Verdean immigrants were mentioned as previous residents and business owners in the neighborhood, there was no mention of Jews.

Eleanor Kelman Carreiro, who noted this inaccuracy as well as an unidentified photo of her grandparents’ home on Sheldon Street, called the Association's office to set the record straight. Fortunately, Jerry Foster was happy to investigate this situation and lend her expertise as a researcher and writer.

A former president of RIJHA and the Bureau of Jewish Education, Jerry has written numerous articles for The Notes and continues to author frequent columns about Rhode Island Jewish history for The Jewish Voice.

Her family is also exceptional for its three-generation leadership of the Association. Jerry’s father, Beryl Segal (1898-1980), was a founder, president, and prolific contributor to The Notes. Her son, Harold, is currently an active board member.

Fox Point, originally known as Foxes Hill, has the distinction of being the place where Roger Williams landed in 1636. Williams, exiled from the Massachusetts Bay Colony, brought his boat ashore in a salt cove of the Seekonk River. There, on the rocks near what is now Gano Street, he and his companions were greeted by a band of Narragansetts with the salutation “What cheer, Netop.” Canonicus, their chief, gave Williams a large tract of land from which the colony of Providence Plantations grew and became a haven for religious dissenters.

Settlers soon began arriving but development of the area – originally used for farming – remained slow until 1680. The construction of a port, in the area that became Transit Street, changed the economy of the area from agricultural to maritime. The port served as one of the points of the Atlantic Triangle that involved West Africa, the West Indies, and New England in the trade of slaves, sugar cane and rum. The busy waterfront became known as India Point, a name derived from the “Indiamen’s” trading ships that sailed to and from the
West Indies. Providence’s port did not surpass Newport’s until after the Revolutionary War, however.

The completion of the Boston and Providence Railroad in 1835 and the later connection to the New York Railroad on the side of Tockwotton Hill brought further development to the Fox Hill area. Steamship lines with ports of call along the East Coast also attracted industries and immigrants to the prospering economy. The first European immigrants to settle in the area were Irish; Portuguese and Cape Verdeans began arriving in large numbers in the second half of the 19th century.

In an early instance of urban renewal, Mayor Thomas Doyle in 1875 announced his plan to change the character of Fox Point. Five years later Tockwotton Hill and the shanties and dirt alleyways clinging to its side had disappeared. The hill was leveled, and dirt used in reclaiming part of the Seekonk River was also used to form Gano Street and land to the east. Fox Point was now ready for development as a residential neighborhood bounded by the Seekonk and Providence Rivers to the east, south and west, and Williams and Pitman Streets to the north. The population remained predominantly Irish, Portuguese and Cape Verdean, however.

Although Fox Point did not attract many Jewish residents, the waterfront on South Main Street attracted Jewish businessmen, particularly in the clothing trades. (The “carriage trade” customers went across the Providence River to Gladding’s and such emerging department stores as the Boston Store, the Shepard Company, and the Jewish-owned Outlet Company.) Thus, the clothiers (of new or secondhand merchandise) and the tailors on South Main depended on the poor or sailors for their business.

City directories of the second half of the 19th century show a pattern of Jewish businesses opening, closing or moving frequently. Of the earliest entrepreneurs in Fox Point, only the flamboyant Lewis Lewisson, who opened his Clothing Bazaar at 2 South Main Street in 1845, remained in the area for more than a very few years. When Lewisson opened his store, his family was one of only nine with Jewish family names living in Providence at that time. None of these families lived in Fox Point, however. Lewisson and his family left for Worcester in 1861.

By 1870, a cluster of Jews can be found on Wickenden Street. Isaac Buitekan’s clothing store and home were at 41, and Jacob Cohen’s clothing store and
home were at 61. Mrs. A. Dimond, who owned a “fancy foods” store at 230 South Main, resided at 30 Wickenden.

As the number of Jewish immigrants to Providence increased after 1880, so did the Jewish presence in Fox Point. It was comprised primarily of families and individuals with shops along South Main and Wickenden Streets. Their presence remained small even until World War II. Tailoring, clothing and grocery stores predominated. Few families chose to live on streets farther into Fox Point; of this number most moved elsewhere within a short period of time. There were no synagogues or Jewish communal organizations. These were found primarily in the North End and later in South Providence, where poor and struggling Irish-American families preceded Jewish immigrants.

Morris Kelman was an exception in Fox Point. He came to Providence from Kiev, Russia, in 1895. His sister and brother-in-law, Annie and Nathan Rou-
slin, had already settled here.1 Rouslin owned a grocery store at 271 South Main Street, where he and his family also resided. Kelman, who was listed as a clerk at that address, boarded at 265 South Main.

As soon as he was settled, Kelman sent for his sweetheart, who, though only in her teens, made the arduous trip accompanied only by a girlfriend. Elizabeth and Morris were married in 1899 and resided at 12 Arnold Street until 1927. All three of their children—Harvey, William, and Harry—were born there.2 Morris had applied for and was granted American citizenship in 1906. He was already proprietor of his own grocery at 22 Wickenden Street. Between 1907 and 1917 he changed locations several times, always in the same vicinity, and ended at 40 Wickenden.

In 1927 Morris and Elizabeth bought a small house at 8 Sheldon Street, one block north of Wickenden. It was spotlighted in the Providence Preservation Society’s walking tour in 2001. William J. Doyle, who lived around the corner at 419 Benefit Street, built the small structure as a rental property in about 1833. For close to a century, it was home to teamsters, chandlers, and carpenters. Early in the 20th century, the one-and-a-half story, clapboard home, reflecting a vernacular Federal style, belonged to the Fox Point Social Club.

Eleanor Kelman Carreiro, a daughter of William and Anna Kelman born in 1930, whom I recently interviewed, has fond memories of her grandparents and their home. The cellar, she explained, was converted into a grocery. From the narrow sidewalk, one entered via a door set between two windows, then down two or three steps to a floor carpeted by sawdust. Every Friday the floor was swept clean and the sawdust replaced by clean shavings. The two windows served as display cases for products available within.

To the right, a row of glass jars containing candy and cookies lined the wall behind the counter. As a special treat young Eleanor was allowed to choose something from the jars. Her favorite was the chocolate-covered marshmallow cookies. On the opposite side was the meat counter and chopping block where Morris Kelman wielded his cleaver to carve up sides of meat. A barrel of salted codfish stood in a corner. As their trade was mainly Portuguese-American, Morris and Elizabeth, as well as Harry who worked in the store, spoke Portuguese fluently.

The Kelmans employed people from the neighborhood to assist in the house and in their business. A young man named Frankie picked up supplies and
made deliveries in a truck kept in a barn/ garage in back of the house. Elizabeth had a garden of vegetables and flowers in the yard. Every year before Passover, after thoroughly cleaning her kitchen, Elizabeth painted its walls, always in the same shade of yellow.

In addition to gathering for Passover seders and other holidays, the Kelman family came together every Sunday for dinner at the grandparents’ home. “My grandmother was an excellent cook,” Mrs. Carreiro, said. “She used a lot of schmaltz in her cooking.”

“My grandparents had a large Victrola in their parlor,” Eleanor recalled, “and they had a large Philco radio.” Every Sunday, after dinner, chairs were brought into the parlor and arranged into a semicircle so they could all listen to Eddie Cantor’s radio program.

Eleanor painted a vivid portrait of her grandmother: “From her teen years, she was very independent. She came to a strange country on her own. She refused to be a passive housewife. She was a feminist before her time.”

Eleanor explained that her grandmother learned to drive, but vehicles were so unreliable, she did not travel very far and never had a license. “She loved the beach and swimming, and taught me to swim,” Eleanor added. Donning a housedress over her bathing suit, Elizabeth Kelman would take streetcars from Fox Point to Edgewood, where her son William and his wife Anna had purchased a two-family house. Elizabeth would take her granddaughter to the beach at the end of her street. Before industrial and commercial facilities took over the waterfront, sandy beaches lined Narragansett Bay.

Morris Kelman passed away in 1937, and the property on Sheldon Street was sold. Around that time, only a year before the Great Hurricane, a small wing for a larger entrance was added on the home’s west side. William Kelman, who became a successful electrical contractor, supported his mother as she built a new life for herself. After Elizabeth died in 1953, she was buried beside Morris in Lincoln Park.

The Jewish businesses and homes dotting South Main Street began to disappear with urban renewal projects during the 1960s and ‘70s. Gentrification has also displaced much of the working-class population that once lived in Fox Point. Only a few Jewish businesses remain on Wickenden Street amid the mélange of restaurants, coffeehouses, and shops catering to students and a new generation.³
1
Nathan Rouslin came to New York from Russia. He sent for his sweetheart, but her older sister, Annie, was not yet married. According to Jewish custom, an older daughter had to be married first. Hence, Annie came instead and married Nathan. After a short while in New York City and the birth of their son, Ben, the Rouslins moved to a farm in Colchester, Connecticut. They were assisted by the Baron de Hirsch Society, which resettled unskilled Jewish immigrants from crowded cities to farms so they could earn a living. The Rouslins did not like farm life, however, so they relocated to Providence.

2
Harvey married Maude Moskovitz, a woman from Montreal related to the Bronfman family. William married Anna Gubernick whose family owned a fur shop and later changed its name to Goodwin. Her uncle Samuel Goodwin, a musician, also changed his first name to George in honor of his friend, the composer George Gershwin. Harry married Sylvia Presser whose family owned a clothing store on South Main Street.

3 Editor's note:
Today there are at least five Jewish-owned businesses on Wickenden Street. The oldest, founded in 1919, is Adler's Design Center and Hardware, at 173 Wickenden. Its third-generation owners are first cousins, Harry and Marc Adler.

The next oldest business is Atomic Appliance, at the corner of 250 Wickenden and Brook Street, which began as Flescher Furniture and Appliance on Elmwood Avenue in about 1960. Soon after his father, Samuel, moved to Fox Point in 1966, Joel, still only a kid, began to help out. He worked part-time at Atomic while in college and later succeeded his father. Joel remembers Fox Point when it was still a rough neighborhood and his mother and sister were not encouraged to become involved in the business.

By contrast, Sally Lapides and her partners founded Residential Properties in 1981 and five years later built its Shingle style headquarters at the corner of 140 Wickenden and South Benefit. The realtors have expanded to many locations around the state.

In 1989 Gregory Serota opened Gregory's Optical at 263 Wickenden and was later joined by his son, Michael, who is also an optician. Still another Jewish-owned business is Charles Fishbein's Coffee Exchange, another popular establishment at 207 Wickenden.

At the northern edge of Fox Point, at 99 Hope Street, is, fittingly, Rue De L'Espoir. The renowned Jewish restaurateur, Deborah Norman, opened it in 1976 and sold it after 39 years.

Between 1995 and 2011, the Dorot Foundation, an eminent national foundation supporting Jewish scholarship, was located on the first floor of a three-story Victorian house at 439 South Benefit. The neighboring Jacob Morgan House, built at 433 South Benefit by 1844, displays a charming mezuzah patterned after Touro Synagogue [see page 167].

A number of retired Jewish families have purchased condominiums in Corliss Landing. This is a former manufacturing complex at 555 South Main built in the late 19th century.

Fox Point's most famous native son was the legendary showman George M. Cohan (1878-1942). He was a gentile, but the chairman of a committee to erect a statue on Wickenden Street in his honor in 2009 was Seymour “Sy” Dill, a Jewish transplant to Providence from New York City even better known as a staunch defender of Israel.
How I Came to Live in Chepachet

Bess Lindenbaum

That’s right: a Jewish family lived in Chepachet, Rhode Island. Indeed, that family thrived while living there.

Now consider the author’s age. Bess may celebrate her 105th birthday by the time you read this article.

When an early version of it was sent to our office, I did not imagine that its author was happily and busily engaged at her home in Florida. Knowing that the Lindenbaums had once belonged to Temple Beth-El, I called its ageless office manager, Rona Nachbar, who informed me that she enjoys chatting with Bess from time-to-time. They enjoy many mutual friends.

I then called Bess’s daughter, Roberta Fox, in Albany, New York, hoping that she could answer a few questions. “There’s nothing wrong with my mother,” she explained, “so just give her a call.” Thus, Bess and I chatted for about 45 minutes. A few days later, after she remembered a few more names, dates, and places, we schmoozed some more. Now we feel like cousins.

I was also able to chat with Bess’s son, Kenneth, who lives in New Jersey. Having obtained much information through interviews, he became Bess’s scribe. He also did some careful research, which brought to light Geraldine Foster and Eleanor Horvitz’s article about Bess’s family written for the January 1990 issue of The Federation Voice.

A Columbia University graduate, Kenneth has been a journalist, a documentary filmmaker, a chef, and a restaurateur. He has also taught culinary arts and American history in high schools in Albany and in Camden, New Jersey. Kenneth is currently writing a memoir and working on a new restaurant concept.

His original impetus for midwifing an article about Chepachet was an invitation Bess received from the Glocester Heritage Society, which is housed in the Job Armstrong Store, which was built in about 1814 on Putnam Pike in Chepachet. Though unable to attend, Bess was honored at its meeting held on April 20, 2015. Stacy Swift, a local radio and TV personality, read her article. I asked Kenneth to expand upon it for the benefit of our readers.

I had to ask Bess about the key to her longevity. “It’s not that I’m careful with my diet,” she remarked. “Young man,” she suggested, “why not ask the Lord?”
I lived in the village of Chepachet for many years. I grew from a young girl into an adult there; I married and raised my family there; and like my brother and my father, I went into business there. In my heart, Chepachet will always be my home, but I was not born there. This is the story of how I came to live in Chepachet.

My Shtetl

I was born in 1911 in a small village called Lanovits or Lanovtsi in Eastern Europe. At one time, it had been part of the Ukraine, which was also part of Russia. But in those years before and after World War I, the border separating Poland and Russia was like an elastic band, snapping back and forth with each new skirmish between them. If you were to look for Lanovits today, you would not find it, because in modern Poland it is spelled Lanowce or Lanowicse (and pronounced in Polish as lee-on-a-veechee).

Lanovits was a shtetl, which, in my first language, Yiddish, means “little town” or “village”. Such market towns, populated mainly by Jews, existed for centuries in Russia and Poland. They survived until the 1940s, when the Holocaust destroyed them.

A forest and open fields surrounded our shtetl. We lived in the town proper, and the wealthy people lived outside of the town. The streets were unpaved and the houses were constructed of wood. There were a synagogue, a church, separate cemeteries, bathhouses and, of course, the marketplace. We had friendly, daily interactions with our Gentile neighbors. All the shtetl residents, Jews and Gentiles, merchants and farmers, engaged in business transactions and maintained social contacts as well.

Beside my mother, Chana, and my father, Nathan Rosenberg, I had two brothers and a sister: an older brother, Irving; an older sister, Anna; and a younger brother, Moses. We lived in a wooden cottage with a thatched roof and dirt floors and no indoor plumbing. In Lanovits, most people cooked on a trinishka – a three-legged, iron grill over a wood fire. Some well-to-do families had wall ovens, but rich and poor alike bathed in public bathhouses.

Father’s Journey

In 1914, with war imminent, my father, who was born in 1875, decided to leave the village to avoid being conscripted into the army. His older brother,
William, had already left for America and was living in Providence. Another brother had emigrated to Palestine.

Like many of us who have suffered through desperate times, who have experienced the horrors of war, and who have survived where others have perished, my father did not like to speak about the past. So I know little of his journey. But I do know that somehow—whether by land or by sea—he got from Poland to China and from China he successfully made his way to join up with his brother in Providence. When I think about how much of the world he had to travel across and what a great risk he took, it is a shame that I know so little of his adventure.

In Providence, my father was ready to find work, save money, and send for us as soon as possible. His brother helped him get a job in the Venus Flour Mill, but it didn’t last too long. The work was very strenuous, the air was thick with a fine dust from grinding the grain, and I think my Dad came to the realization that working there would not provide enough money to bring his family over here.

He decided that being a peddler might be more lucrative and a healthier option. He went to the Hebrew Free Loan Association to apply for a loan in order to buy a horse and a wagon and some merchandise that he could sell. Free loan societies were formed to make interest-free loans to Jewish immigrants to help them become established in the retail community. Most immigrants, like my father, who came here had great ambition and were highly skilled workers, but they lacked the one thing they needed most—capital. Bankers would not make loans to immigrants who had no collateral.

**Surviving War**

For a little while, our family stayed in touch with our father through letters, but as the war came closer and grew fiercer, it became more difficult to receive or to send mail. Now came the darkest days of my life. Living with a war raging all around betrays the notion that childhood is a safe and protected place. Every sound, every shadow fills you with fear. The small comforts and joys of civilized life disappear. You are like a hunted animal—scared and trapped. You run, you hide. You spend your days in shelters, in people’s basements, in the woods. There is no rest. No peace. No food. You are always tired, always hungry. War is relentless. There are no time-outs. No days off. When it was cold,
we could never get warm enough. When it rained, we would be up to our knees in mud. When we had an opportunity to wash, we could never get clean enough. War is a stain that can’t be removed. Even if you survive it with your life, you are a casualty and all your wounds never heal.

One time during an attack, when we were frantically running to hide, we became separated from our mother. Whatever atrocities we were hiding from were never so frightening to me as the sudden fear of losing her. When the danger had finally passed, and we could come out of hiding, we found each other. It remains in my memory as one of my most vivid moments of happiness during those dark, war-weary years.

Of course I was very young during that time without my father, and it is difficult for me to adequately describe the separation and isolation we experienced but my brother, Irving, despite his being only in his teens, held the family together and gave us the courage and the will to keep going.

**Father to Chepachet**

On the brighter side of the world, my father was finding success plying the peddler’s trade through the streets of Providence and was quickly learning to speak and read English. One day he saw an advertisement in a newspaper for a store for sale in the village of Chepachet.

The store and a small barn, owned by Ben Steere¹, were on the piece of land where the Sunoco gas station presently sits. This is Jack’s Way, next to the Tavern on Main (the former Stagecoach Tavern). I don’t know whether it was due to Steere’s generosity or to my father’s skills at negotiation, but they forged an agreement which made it possible for my Dad to purchase the store from him and stock it with merchandise.

I think my father was extremely grateful to Steere for two reasons. Not only did he give him the opportunity to own his own store, but this village resembled his shtetl of Lanovits. Chepachet was another close-knit community.² People were involved with their neighbors. They lent and borrowed things, helped in times of need, and generally were closely bound to each other. No one was isolated or alone.

The kind of support and consideration given to him by his friends and neighbors during his years of loneliness and anxiety over the fate of his family provided him a comfort that can only happen in a community like Chepachet.
don’t think my Dad was ever comfortable in Providence. He had always lived in a village and he never cared for city life.

In 1917 a large storage barn owned by the Old Stone Mill went up for sale. It was a few blocks away on Main Street, near the corner of Douglas Hook Road. My Dad bought it and moved his store. Now he had enough room to sell hay and grain as well as groceries. He also put in some pumps and was able to sell Gulf gas for automobiles.

He was successful as the proprietor of a general store; he grew his business until it was quite large; and neighbors admired him. Over the course of many years he became a wealthy man. Eventually he was able to move out of the village proper to live in a large house on Chopmist Hill Road (Route 102), an emblem of prestige he never would have earned had he stayed in Lanovits.

Another War

At the same time, in 1917, the war was coming to an end, and a letter from Irving finally got through to my father. At long last he learned that we had survived. As much as we experienced pain throughout the conflict, he had suffered even more from years of silence: not knowing if we were dead or alive, hearing news reports about the hunger and misery that we (and all civilians in Europe) were experiencing, and not being able to do anything.

Immediately he began to explore every channel possible to find a way to bring us to America, but peace in Eastern Europe was short-lived. When the general armistice was signed in November 1918, Poland declared its independence and reclaimed Lanovits and all of the nearby Ukraine. After the Russians invaded Ukraine, we were once more in the middle of a war.

In the spring of 1920, my mother became ill and died of typhoid fever, a disease brought on by malnutrition and bad sanitation. I can only imagine how much food my mother must have denied herself during those years of shortages.
and privation so that her children would not go hungry. It is the deepest love I have ever known.

When this tragic news reached my father, he intensified his efforts to bring us to America. Henry Sayles, who was town clerk at that time, helped him apply to all of the relief agencies, but Poland was still entrenched in a border war with the Bolshevik armies. So there was no way my Dad, or anyone else, was able to get us out.

The Polish-Soviet war was even more brutal, and more anti-Semitic, than World War I. Now, without a mother or a father, the four of us were really on our own. Once again, Irving held us together, guided us and protected us, and kept us fed and sheltered as best he could. With good fortune we survived until a cease-fire was announced on October 12, 1920.

By that time, Jewish charities and the American Red Cross were active in Poland, helping people to migrate to other countries. Many steamship companies were selling cheap passage to the United States to take advantage of open immigration policies before the federal government passed restrictive quotas in May 1921.

**Our Journey to Chepachet**

When my father learned that we were able to leave Poland, he sent money, and our exodus from Lanovits was arranged. And even with all that help, it was not easy. There was still danger everywhere. We had to stay hidden until our departure, which would have to be under the cover of darkness. We were all so fatigued and war-weary, so truly exhausted, that I barely remember the trip.

I can never forget that the night before we left, my maternal grandmother, Malka, who had miraculously survived this ordeal with us, tragically died. There was nothing that we could do for her; we had to leave. With the first piece of good fortune we had had in a long time, we were somehow transported, without incident, from Lanovits to the Baltic port of Danzig, Germany (now Gdansk, Poland).

We were booked third class on the S.S. *Lituania*, a steamship of the Baltic American Line. As a cruise ship, it normally operated with no more than 1,000 passengers. As an immigrant ship, it carried more than 1,000 people in third class, which was more commonly known as steerage.

Typhus, which had caused my mother’s death, was still rampant in East-
ern Europe. Several cases of typhoid had been found early in February among immigrant ships arriving in New York. American authorities moved quickly to decontaminate and isolate these passengers until a 12-day incubation period for the disease had passed. This of course put a great strain on health facilities in New York harbor. Because many ships were suspect, some were diverted to Boston. Among those was the S.S. Lituania.

Irving cabled my Dad telling him that we would leave Danzig on February 10 and land in Boston on February 27. That was really good news for my father because it is much closer than New York.

When we arrived at the port in Danzig, we were ordered to have a typhus examination by the ship’s doctor. We were then given an antiseptic bath and vaccinated. Like most girls back then, Anna and I had never had our hair cut. So before we could go through the delousing process, our beautiful hair was cropped into a bob with bangs. We were devastated and humiliated, and we cried all the way through the process.

As I walked up the Lituania’s wide, wooden planks to the deck, I knew that I was leaving the country where I had been born. I hoped that I could also leave my memories on that shore or bury them beneath the ocean’s tides.

Steerage on the Lituania was a large room with bunks deep in the ship’s hull. There was very little opportunity for privacy, and sanitation facilities left something to be desired. The food was poor. Nevertheless, the ship was safer and more comforting than anywhere I had been over the past seven years, and I was on my way to be reunited with my father.

Initially, American health officials had decided to detain and quarantine arrivals only if an examination revealed an infectious disease. But that was not the case after we boarded our ship. We were informed then that only U.S. citizens would be allowed to land on February 27. Everyone else was going to be sent to the quarantine hospital at Gallop’s Island in Boston harbor.

On February 27, the happiest man in Chepachet was the proprietor of Rosenberg’s general store. My father had received word that the Lituania had docked in Boston. He also became the angriest man in Chepachet that day when he learned that his children were being held in quarantine and would not be released until March 11.

Once again his neighbors and friends gave him comfort and aid, and with their help he put together a package of baked goods, fresh fruit, and some
Yiddish newspapers, which was shipped to us at the Gallop’s Island hospital. These gifts helped brighten my dismal, tenth birthday, which we celebrated unhappily on March 5.

On Friday, March 11, we were taken to the Cunard Pier in East Boston for our anxiously awaited immigration examination. That same night, after the store closed, Leonard Sayles, Henry’s son⁶, drove my father to Boston.

On Saturday, March 12, after a sleepless night for all, it was determined that we were free of any infectious diseases, and our journey was finally over. Because my father had become naturalized a few months earlier in Providence’s federal district court, and we were all under the age of 21, we automatically became American citizens.

My father greeted us with such a big smile on his face we could see the happiness in his heart. We were bundled into the car, and we were on our way to our new home in Chepachet.
Our New Lives

My father had rented a small apartment on Main Street, near Oil Mill Lane, where Jim Farrell’s law office is currently located (at 1189 Putnam Pike). We were happy to be a family again and sleep in our own beds in a safe and clean house. We were happy to believe that we would no longer be hungry.

After living in devastation for seven years, we now belonged to a new country. It was a strange place where people didn’t look like us and spoke a language we didn’t understand. Would our happiness erase the fear of the unknown that we had faced? Would it wash away the terror still in our eyes from seeing our neighbors vanish or perish and our village bombed and burning? Could our new home take away the emptiness I felt in my heart without my mother?

Arriving in Chepachet was not the happy ending to my story. Instead, it was what it had been for my Dad – a happy beginning. It was difficult not being able to speak English. The sound of a car backfiring or a plane flying overhead would send us scurrying for cover. But with time, life became more comfortable, and we felt safer.

Goldie Olney, a neighbor, brought me a rag doll. It was the first doll I ever had. For the first time in ten years I truly felt like a young girl. I loved that doll and showed her off to everyone.

The process of our Americanization had actually begun on a Boston pier. The Lituania’s passenger manifest had listed us by our birth names. Our first step in becoming new citizens was to Americanize our names. My older brother, Icko, was renamed Isaac, and he later changed it again to Irving. My sister, Enia, was now Anna, and my name was changed from Pesia to Bessie. My young brother, Mozko, became Moses, but most of the time we called him Moe.

Irving, who was 20, went to work with my father in the store. Anna was 16. He hired a private teacher for Anna so she could continue her education while staying home to cook and keep house for the rest of us. Moe, aged 9, and I, a year older, were enrolled in the old schoolhouse on the corner of Douglas Hook Road and Dorr Drive.

In March, school was already in session. Because of the war, neither Moe nor I had ever been to school. We couldn’t read or write in our native language, so both us were put in first grade. Amy Buxton taught first and second grade. If she asked you a question and you didn’t know the answer, she would grab hold of your ear and pinch it until it hurt. Getting your ears pinched was
no fun, so Moe and I became quick learners. When school ended in June, we both were promoted to second grade. Hortense Steere taught third grade. She observed that I was left-handed. Back then, schools did not know how to teach left-handed children to write. As a result, kids got ink and pencil stains on the side of their hand, and most left-handed kids developed a bad writing style and an awkward posture.

Fortunately, Hortense decided to teach me to write with my right hand. After much practice, I developed a beautiful skill, which I have always been proud of.

I was beginning to enjoy my new life in Chepachet. I liked school and my Dad was building us a new home where his original store had been located. It would have an artesian well, hot and cold-running water, and indoor plumbing.

Dad’s life changed in still another way. When working as a peddler, he had bought dry goods from a man named Samuel Faber and became good friends with him and his wife, Faiga. She had a friend, Rivka Fishman, an unmarried woman visiting from New Jersey. Faiga knew about Dad’s loss of his wife and his need for a mother for his children. So, like a good shadchan, Faiga arranged for them to meet.

Dad announced to us that he would marry Rivka. She was a very beautiful and kind woman, who would be for him a very caring wife and, for me, the loving and attentive mother I was missing and needed so much.

Irving, in the meantime, decided to leave Chepachet and find work.
somewhere else. He had been like a father to us through the war years and now saw himself as a grown man. He wanted to be treated as a partner, as an equal. I think that my Dad still thought of him as a young boy and treated him accordingly. They were not able to work together.

In 1927, like so many generations of Chepachet children, I graduated from grammar school in a ceremony in the Chepachet Union Church, which was decorated beautifully with mountain laurel. I was then sent to Commercial High School in Providence, so I could learn the skills that would enable me to get a job and meet “appropriate” boys. I had several Jewish girlfriends: Etta Bazarsky, Betty Berger, and Rebecca Marx. Moe went to Burrillville High School in Harrisville.

After high school, both of us worked with my Dad. Years later, after he passed away, Moe opened his own business selling propane gas and fuel oil. Like me, he lived in Chepachet for many years.

Anna got married and moved to Providence. After a few years passed, Irving returned home and opened the New York Department Store in Pascoag. It wasn’t said out loud, but I am sure my father thought it was time for me to find a suitable husband. Once again, Faiga Faber came into our lives. She had close relatives in New York City, so arranged for me to visit and to stay with her cousins. During one of my visits there, I met her sister’s son, Charles Lindenbaum (born 1906), and fell in love with him. Faiga had found me a mother and now a husband. In 1933 we were married by Rabbi David Bachrach of the “Howell Street Shul” (Ahavath Sholom). Charlie came back to Chepachet with me and went to work with my father.

**New Homes**

We lived in Chepachet until our children, Kenneth and Roberta, were of high school age, and then we moved to Providence. We also joined Temple Beth-El, where Charlie became a leader of Brotherhood. My father was buried in its cemetery in 1957, as was Rivka in 1965. But we remained active in business in Chepachet until Charlie was in his early 90’s, when we retired to live full-time in Florida. He passed away in 2002 and is also buried in the Temple’s cemetery. Although our children did not remain in Rhode Island and their children grew up elsewhere, we still have relatives and good friends there.

So that is the story of how I came to live in Chepachet, almost a century ago, from a war-torn village in Poland to a peaceful village in Rhode Island. One
almost killed me; the other gave me a new life. I have been very lucky. As it says in the song, “To Life!,” from “Fiddler on the Roof,” which takes place in a village like the one I came from:

Here’s to our prosperity, our good health and happiness,
and most important,
To life, to life, L’chaim…
This was probably Benjamin F. Steere Sr., who was born in Rhode Island in 1870 and died in 1952. He and his wife, Urania, are buried in Gloucester’s Acotes Hill Cemetery.

By 1925, according to the state census, only about two hundred families lived in Chepachet. For the village’s importance during the Dorr Rebellion of 1841-42, see: Jane Lancaster, ed., “The Battle of Chepachet: An Eyewitness Account,” Rhode Island History, LXII (winter/spring 2004), 17-24.

Sayles (1855-1945) had been a farmer before becoming town clerk and a notary by 1916. He may have been Benjamin Steere’s cousin, for the maiden name of Steere’s mother, Martha, had been Sayles.

Christened in 1915 as the S. S. Czarista of the Russian American Line, the ship was transferred to the Cunard line in 1921. It usually sailed between Danzig, Copenhagen, and New York, but went occasionally to Boston, Halifax, and Quebec.

Named after John Gallop, who had owned it in 1633, the island was purchased in 1860 by the city of Boston, which leased it to the federal government as a Civil War barracks and training field. By the 1870s, Gallop’s Island was used to quarantine victims of smallpox, cholera, and yellow fever. By 1886, more than 47,000 bedraggled and sick immigrants were sent there per year. When used by the federal government as a quarantine station between 1917 and 1936, more than 20 buildings were erected. Later, the Public Health Service’s quarantine hospital was located in Boston. Although Gallop’s became part of the city’s park system in 1975, there is no regularly scheduled ferry service (though there is to nearby islands).

Leonard Sayles (1902-1978), who graduated from Brown in 1923, became a biology professor at City College of New York. He wrote several textbooks, including A Manual for Comparative Anatomy, originally published in 1933.

Goldie (1909-1936) was the daughter of Alva (1882-1975), a spinner, and Edna (1882-1971) Olney. They too are buried in Acotes Hill Cemetery.

Buxton (1892-1984), a native of Tiverton, was the daughter of a lobsterman and the youngest of six Church children. She began teaching at Tiverton’s Osborn Grammar School, where her aunt, Mary Church, was principal. Olivia, Amy’s older sister, also taught there. Amy began teaching in Chepachet by 1920 and soon married Merrill (1895-1963), who was a weaver at the Stillwater Worsted Mill in Harrisville. Childless, they are buried in Acotes Hill Cemetery.

The wife of Benjamin F. Steere Jr., she was about 22 years of age in 1923.

Samuel (1869-1933), a Russian immigrant who lived at 13 Halsey Street, served as a witness at Nathan’s naturalization proceeding. Beginning with the Providence directory of 1916, Samuel was listed as a seller of “remnants” at 281 North Main. Samuel’s wife was Faiga (“Fannie”) Lindenbaum (1871-1944). One of their eight children was Saul Faber, whose daughter, Evelyn “Lyn” Stepak (1922-2011), was a devoted RIJHA member. Her husband, Samuel, the executive director of Temple Beth-El, was a steadfast member of Providence’s Hebrew Free Loan Association.

Beginning in 1925, Rivka was listed as “Beckie” in the state and federal census.
Brown University, 1928
Beginning My Career, Part I:

*Medical Training, Early Years of Practice, and the Draft*

Seebert J. Goldowsky

Without Seebert’s extraordinary dedication and leadership, our Association would never have survived nor flourished. He was the longest serving editor of *The Notes*, from 1962 through 1978 and again in 1983, and was president from 1982 to 1985. He also wrote numerous definitive articles for our journal and, with his dear wife, Bonnie, never missed a board meeting.

When not practicing medicine, Seebert shouldered many other scholarly responsibilities. For instance, he edited and contributed to the Rhode Island Medical Society’s *Journal* for 27 years. He authored *Yankee Surgeon: The Life and Times of Usher Parsons (1788-1868)*, the story of a naval hero and leading Rhode Islander, which was published by Harvard’s Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine in 1988. One of Seebert’s most notable accomplishments was a highly detailed history of Temple Beth-El, *A Century and a Quarter of Spiritual Leadership*, which was published by the congregation on the occasion of its 135th anniversary in 1989. All of Seebert’s meticulous efforts as a researcher, writer, and editor were labors of love.

Although he wrote about his colorful father, Bernard, Rhode Island’s first Jewish detective, Seebert never got around to writing much about himself. He probably thought that, despite his success as a surgeon and as the first full-time medical director of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Rhode Island, his own experiences were relatively unimportant. Indeed, some of his acquaintances may have thought that he was a reserved, possibly taciturn, person. Fortunately, I was able occasionally to see Seebert’s lighter side, even his gleeful and mischievous streak. We had some fun together.

In November 1989, I was able to record about 10 hours of oral history interviews with Seebert at his home, near mine, on Laurel Avenue in Providence. Having learned a great deal about his early aspirations, struggles, and sacrifices, I would like to share some highlights, 18 years after his passing. Alas, Seebert and Bonnie did not have children who could have told us some of these stories.
There were four men in my Brown Class of 1928 who went to Harvard Medical School, and there were four from Harvard who came to practice in Providence. It so happens that all of the Harvard men who came here were Rhode Islanders. One had gone to Brown (three years ahead of me), one to Harvard, one to Princeton, and one to Rhode Island State College. None of these four was a Jew.

I think that most members of my Brown class who were well qualified got into medical school. I had a cousin, Ira Goldowsky, who lived in Jersey City. He had graduated from Rutgers in 1928 but had some difficulty getting into medical school. He eventually landed at the University of Edinburgh, which was a very fine medical school, and he was very well thought of in the New Jersey community where he practiced.

Of course Harvard Medical School, going back to 1782, had a great tradition. I attended its 200th anniversary in 1982, which coincided with my class's 50th anniversary. It also happened to be my 75th birthday and our 40th wedding anniversary. Probably half of my class, from all over the country, was there.

Yes, the first two years of medical school were a lot of drudgery because of learning anatomy largely from memory. In addition to pathology, one began a little clinical medicine in the second year. One also took the first of three parts of the national medical boards after the second year, so that was a source of considerable relief. The third and fourth years were essentially all clinical, and the pressures lessened. After World War II, when I took the American Board of Surgery examinations, I had to start all over again.

There was minimal attrition at Harvard Medical, but a higher rate at Tufts, probably 35%. There were perhaps four who left my class. We entered with 125 students and finished with 135 because some students were allowed to transfer. For example, all of Dartmouth's Medical School class was admitted after two years.

Harvard Med always had a feeling of superiority, even though we met Tufts and Boston University students all the time. We felt that they learned things more by rote, and we learned more by association. I don't know how much our sense of superiority was warranted. They were all well trained and got good internships.

At that time, Harvard did not accept women students. I do not remember if Tufts or B.U. had any, but Hopkins was taking them. One of my classmates
at Pembroke, who had entered with the Class of 1929, finished in three years and went to Hopkins.

The third year of medical school was mostly outpatient work, and in the fourth we were clinical clerks, which is like a mini-internship. We went on teaching rounds with the lowest-ranking professors or the instructors.

Beginning in my third year, I had pretty much decided on pediatrics because of my brother-in-law, Dr. Maurice Adelman. I enjoyed it, but I felt that I wanted to go into surgery, so I oriented my courses in that direction. I liked to do things with my hands.

In those days internal medicine was pretty much an intellectual exercise. There were not too many diseases for which you could do something substantial. I think that surgeons then and probably today felt more of a sense of accomplishment because you could improve a patient’s life.

A student would work up a case and then go into an operating room and hold a retractor. In other words, you are the second assistant. Maybe on a minor case you would be allowed to become a first assistant. Nowadays I guess that medical students still hold retractors, but nurses do so as well.

In my first year I joined Phi Delta Epsilon, the Jewish medical fraternity. Any Jew could probably have belonged. A half dozen of my classmates joined. The fraternity did not have its own house, but rented a suite of rooms across the Fenway from Emanuel and Simmons Colleges.

I lived in a dormitory, Vanderbilt Hall, for two years. It was completed just a few years before I arrived, so it was new like Beth Israel Hospital. It was a nice place.

The room across from mine had three guys in it. They slept on a cot and two bunk beds. I did not have a roommate. Perhaps my room, on the second floor, was a little more expensive. The next year I lived on the fourth. It was probably $25 or $50 cheaper. There was no elevator. During the second year I waited tables in the refectory three-and-a-half days per week. I received three meals per day.

I was never much of a fraternity man, but it accomplished one very important thing for me. In February of my first year, I went to a dance in the Georgian Room of the Statler Hotel, which is now the Copley Square Hotel (not the Copley Plaza). I did not have a girl, so I took Ruth Goldberg, my second cousin in Boston. She eventually became a producer for PBS in Boston, but I do
Intern, Beth Israel Hospital,
ca. 1932
not know if she is still living.

Through a classmate I also met a very beautiful girl. I said, “Oh, boy.” I called her up and took her out. Thirteen years later I married her.

There were ups and downs, but this is a long story. Both my fraternity brother and I kept calling her. Perhaps I was not very brotherly. Anyway, I won. He later married a gentile nurse at Brigham Hospital, where he worked.

Bonnie was a first-year student at Radcliffe. She lived in Brookline and commuted. I saw her on and off for a quite a bit while in medical school. I was not in a position to offer anybody anything in those days.

During my first year of medical school, I walked or took a streetcar to her house, and then we would go to a movie. After a while, her old man said, “Why don’t you take my car?” So we did. After my second year I had a car because I needed one as an intern at a nursing home near Roxbury. I succeeded one of my fraternity brothers. I also lived there for two years.

There were two student doctors. We took histories, did physicals, and ordered medication in a primitive way, but always under supervision. It was run more like a hospital than a nursing home. It became the Jewish Memorial Hospital for chronic patients, and it’s still on Townsend Street in Roxbury. I ate kosher meals, which I did not need.

Once I got a little arrogant with one of the visiting doctors, who was elderly. I did not think very much of what he was doing, and I guess I countermanded his orders or some damn thing. The director, Mrs. Cooper, called me aside and said I should apologize. So I swallowed hard and told her that I did not really mean to offend him. I guess that I did not quite understand the situation.

My choices were always discussed with my brother-in-law, Dr. Adelman. (He was Brown ’16 and Harvard Med ’20.) For example, I asked him if I should join the medical fraternity. He said I should. After my first year, I asked him if I should be a commuter because he had been one. He said, “Live in a dormitory. If your old man can’t see you through, then you come to me.”

At Brown I had received a James Manning Scholarship for four years. I did not have any scholarships in medical school. Besides waiting on tables, I was also able to earn a little cash by giving transfusions. My father and brother-in-law did not keep me on a short leash, but I had to live very frugally, of course. I would come home to Providence once a month or so. During my first year I
would take the streetcar home.

As a kid I saw triple-A baseball in Providence. I saw my first major league game in Boston while in medical school. I also used to skate on a puddle on the Fenway when it froze over. I went to the Gardner Museum on Sunday afternoons for chamber music concerts. I also enjoyed going to the Museum of Fine Arts when I had a chance.

Although I had planned to return to Providence to practice, I was never rigid about it. It did not become important until I was well along in my residency.

There were four Harvard teaching services for internships: Boston City Hospital, Brigham, Mass General, and Beth Israel. Because I took most of my clinical work at Beth Israel and received practically all As, I thought that I would have a good opportunity to get into surgery there. The other Harvard services were difficult for a Jew to get into. At least one of my Jewish classmates got into pathology at Brigham, but he came over in medicine to Beth Israel.

It was a young but big, modern hospital. As soon as I got there, on June 10, 1932, there was a question whether it was going to stay open. It did not have great resources in the way of capital. This did not affect its clinical prestige, however.

By the way, I never went to my own Harvard Medical School commencement. Most of my classmates did not. It was just not considered very important.

The medical school was spread all over Boston, from the Charles River to South Boston to Brookline. I never went over to Cambridge for anything in four years.

The romantic part of my story is that, around my third year, my future wife became engaged to a guy in Montreal. So I was out of the picture for at least a year and a half.

Then a fraternity brother of mine, Sam Collins, said that she was available. To this day, I do not know quite why she separated from the other guy. So I called her up. She said that they were not suitable for each other.

I think that she was glad to hear from me. We began seeing each other.

After a 20-month internship at Beth Israel, I spent four months as an assistant resident in neurosurgery at Boston City Hospital, which was also a Harvard teaching service. I believe that the only full neurological surgery residency in Boston at the time was at Beth Israel, but I did not get it. The residency was
Seebert is second row, second from right.
taken. I could have had an internship, but I declined.

Eventually I applied to Mt. Sinai Hospital, in New York, and I got the residency there. But I had six months to kill, so I spent the time at Providence City Hospital, which was then the Charles V. Chapin Hospital. This was a general internship with an emphasis on contagion, which was already becoming a “dying” specialty. There was a tuberculosis ward, and there was scarlet fever, but it became treatable by penicillin. I did not see a single case of diphtheria.

There was also a psychiatric ward for poor people. They were brought in by ambulance and were reviewed for a week or two. If they needed long-term care, they were sent to the state mental hospital. I valued this experience because it gave me insight into a lot of things that I did not learn in a surgical ward.

I sporadically saw Jewish patients. In those days I did not have much to do with The Miriam Hospital, which was located on Parade Street.

During these six months I lived with my parents, Bernard and Antoinette, at 224 Baker Street, near Roger Williams Park.

At Mt. Sinai I did straight surgery for a year and lived in the hospital, finishing in 1935. I learned all kinds of major procedures, such as stomach and colon resections. It was more advanced surgery than I had seen, even in Boston.

At that time, to be accepted by the American Board of Surgery, a person needed one year of a rotating internship and three to four years of a surgical residency. I had only the equivalent of six months in the first and a year and a half in the second. Eventually, based on my record and war service, I was considered acceptable. I did not take my national boards until after the war, however.

After finishing at Mt. Sinai, I returned to Providence and opened my office for a general practice in Washington Park Square. This was in Edgewood near Broad Street School. My brother-in-law had advised me to do this, and I think in retrospect that it was a wasted year. A year later I moved over to the East Side. If I had had an opportunity to work under an established surgeon, I would have done so. There were very few Jewish surgeons other than the chief at The Miriam, but at first I was not given a staff appointment there.

I happened to have known Dr. Alex Burgess, the chief of medicine at Rhode Island Hospital, since I was a kid. His son played cello in the same little orchestra in which I had played violin. Dr. Burgess knew that I had been ignored by The Miriam, so he hired me as an assistant in medicine. Through my brother-in-law and my own case of abdominal pain, I met Dr. Lucius Kingman, the chief
of surgery, and he told me that I could apply for a full appointment the next time around, which I did.

I tried to figure out whether I was a victim of anti-Semitism or hard times. I think that it was the latter.

When I graduated from college in 1928, I thought that a man making $10,000 a year was a success. But there was certainly no improvement during the 1930s. I will not tell you what I earned in 1935.

I can tell you that, when I started my practice on Broad Street, I charged $2 for an office visit and $3 for a house call. Perhaps at that time an accepted specialist would not have charged more than $5 for an office visit.

During my first year, I made damn few house calls. I signed up to work for the Providence Health Department, which took care of the city’s poor. A secretary down there, a Jewish girl incidentally, would call me up and say that she had two or three calls within a few blocks of each other. Up until the Depression, a doctor received $1 for one of these, but it was then reduced to 90 cents. Maybe you could make $2.70 in an evening.

During those early years I was also hooked up with a jewelry factory, which sent me compensation cases. Those were mostly quick cases of dressing up fingers, for example.

I did not have a nurse. Even after I went over to the East Side, I did not have an office assistant for a few years. As a matter of fact, I did not have one until I came back from the war. I would clean the office myself after hours. I also did the billing myself.

After my first year of practice, my sister, Bea, who was working for Dr. Adelman across the hall, set up the bookkeeping system I used until I actually retired. It was a very simple double-entry system. I had opened my office in January of 1936, and my father died in March, so I inherited his typewriter. I would hunt and peck, even if I had a report to type.

Yes, these were frustrating years after all those years of advanced training. There were not too many doctors in Providence. Rather, there was not enough money. Also, I did not seem to have enough sex appeal to attract more patients.

My sister, Bea, and I lived in our family home, with our mother, until the war. Our mother died in November of 1940.

My older sister, Eleanor, was the mother figure in the family, and her husband, Maurice, was like my big brother. They said, “You got to get the hell out
of here.” The house was too big, and Bea and I knew it, so we sold the house. It went for $4,500. Shortly after the war it was worth $18,000.

Bea and I moved into an apartment in The Lafayette, near the corner of Lloyd and Tabor. It was 380 Lloyd Avenue, one of the first very nice apartment houses in the city.

Bea and I were sitting in the living room on a Sunday afternoon, on December 7, 1941, when the war broke out. I was I-A in the draft, and I had no illusions that I would not be going away. During the first six months of 1942, things began to accelerate, and I appeared before my draft board. As a member of Rhode Island Hospital’s staff, I was invited to volunteer with its unit, the 48th
Evacuation Hospital, which I did. This would have canceled my 1-A draft status.

I remember that a car full of us drove down to Fort Adams, in Newport, which was an active Army post at the time. We went for our physicals. I had lousy feet and had begun wearing steel plates in my shoes as an intern. One of the senior surgeons on the examining staff sent me to his colleague, who was an orthopedist. I soon received a letter saying that I was rejected for service, either as a captain or a first lieutenant, because of my flat feet. Consequently, I was reclassified as I-A by my draft board. Although I had been turned down as a medical officer, I could still be drafted.

So I then applied for a commission in the Navy either as a captain or a lieutenant senior grade. I went down to the office of the 1st Naval District, in Boston, and had my physical. Soon I received a rejection letter because I was color-blind. The Navy considered this very important, even though it was ridiculous for doctors.

Then I went to see Dr. Lucius Kingman at Rhode Island Hospital. I said that I was at wit’s end. Having been rejected by the Army and the Navy but having been classified 1-A, I said, “What the hell do I do?”

He said, “There’s something going on at Quonset Point.” They were building up the Seabee base and had to examine civilian workers who would be sent out to build new bases all around the Pacific. He said that examining physicians would not be eligible for the draft. So I went down there, and they hired me. We also examined some construction workers who were coming back to see if they had developed any disabilities.

At about that time, my sister and brother-in-law said to me, “You shouldn’t be keeping that girl, Bonnie, on a string this way.” It had been 13 years. They did not know that I had already proposed to her two or three times, and she had said no. So I said, “Well, I’ll try again.”

She was working for her father, Solomon Nisson, who was in the real estate business at that time. She was also working in a department store’s specialty shop for women. I do not think that her folks were eager for her to take a full-time job. Anyway, she said no because my future was so uncertain. Somebody else might have taken a different point of view.

So I got tough and said, “Take it or leave it.” She took it, and we got married at the Copley Plaza, in Boston, on Thursday, June 25, 1942. Bonnie, who belonged to a Conservative congregation, had had much more religious education.
Seebert is second row, second from left
than I. We were married by a Rabbi Levy rather than by Rabbi Braude of Temple Beth-El.

We went on a honeymoon to New York City, but I told my boss that I had to be back the next Monday. He said, “You should take more time.” But I did not want to make any trouble. Bonnie and I had a nice time. We went to the theatre, museums, and restaurants.

She came to live with Bea and me. We had two bedrooms, and I fixed ours up so she could have a little vanity.

She started working as a sales lady at the Shepard Department Store, selling handbags or ladies’ dresses. She was a Radcliffe graduate, Class of 1932, but many of the salesgirls in the better stores were college graduates.

By May or June of 1942, I had known that my job with the Seabees would terminate. I probably worked through July. Meanwhile, I went back to see Dr. Kingman again because I was still eligible for the draft. He sent me to see Dr. Guy Wells, an internist who had been in the Reserves for a while. He was in charge of procurement and assignment for the Army and the Navy. He said that being flat-footed and color blindness no longer mattered, and he would put me on limited service, which probably meant that I would be sent overseas. He told me that I could not be commissioned as a captain. Instead, I would have to accept a first lieutenancy. So he sent me for another physical, where a friend of mine, a psychiatrist, was in charge. He said all of this was “damn foolishness.” He recommended me for limited service and a commission as a lieutenant because I had not yet had a surgical fellowship and had not yet taken my boards.

I received a telegram around September 1, 1942, telling me to proceed to Camp Shelby, in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, on September 21 to join the 97th Evacuation Hospital.
Proud to Be a Yankee

Eugene S. Goodwin

My father was born a century ago in Hartford, Connecticut. A son of Eastern European immigrants, whose first language was Yiddish, he was the second of four children. The Goodwins lived in New Britain, a small industrial city west of Hartford, where his father, Isadore (Americanized from Israel), operated his own shop as an engraver. The family enjoyed summering at a seaside cottage in Branford.

Dad became a bar mitzvah at Temple B’Nai Israel (a Conservative congregation), a Boy Scout, and a member of a high school fraternity. One of his close boyhood friends, with whom he maintained a lasting friendship, was Irving Ribicoff, whose older brother, Abraham, became governor, the nation’s first secretary of health, education and welfare in the Kennedy administration, and a senator.

My grandmother, Sadie, had four sisters and two brothers, all of whom gradually relocated to Los Angeles during the 1920s, as did their parents. In the summer of 1931, during the depths of the Great Depression, the Goodwins also packed up their belongings and drove across country to build new lives. Eventually, they succeeded.

While living at home and working part-time, Dad attended the tuition-free University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and graduated in 1936. After completing law school at the University of Southern California four years later, he began practicing with a Hollywood firm specializing in the entertainment industry. Helping it to become a powerhouse, he remained there for more than four decades.

Notes
Dad married my mother, Madeline Rosenthal, a Cincinnati native, in Los Angeles in 1946. My twin brother, Theo, and I were born two years later, and our sister, Betty, was born in 1954. She and her family reside in the home that our parents built in 1950 and enjoyed for nearly five decades.

Dad had never mentioned this essay he wrote on March 6, 1932, probably for a course in American history during his senior year at John Fremont High School. I found it among his papers after his passing five years ago. I believe that it is the kind of patriotic paper that many school kids in Rhode Island would have written. Perhaps they still do!

Though Dad considered himself a Californian, he remained proud of his New England roots. He and Mom enjoyed visiting Rhode Island numerous times, especially after the birth of their grandchildren, Martha and Michael. On a few occasions we visited New Britain and Branford, though few traces of his youth had survived. One bastion of privilege that had flourished was Hartford's Trinity College, from which Martha graduated in 2009.

Without limitations, the most interesting section of American History is the colonial period. The years from 1620 to about 1790 represent a chapter in the epic of America which, to me, is without parallel. It is not the colony of Virginia or Georgia which comes to my mind. Instead, I think of the New England Colonies as they appeared at that time.

It may be that if I had lived in the south I would be a staunch admirer of the Jamestown settlers. Be that as it may, I came not from Virginia, but from Connecticut. Like every other Connecticut Yankee, I have a feeling in my blood of respect and admiration for the handful of Puritans, who, having been cruelly persecuted in England, in 1620 settled in the New World to establish the foundation for these great United States.

I cannot boast that any of my ancestors came to America on the Mayflower. Neither can I console myself in that they merely missed the first boat and came over on the second. The fact that I was born and bred in Connecticut accounts for any pride that I have.

I could tell of countless landmarks and places of interest which make
New England stand out in my mind. One cannot help but absorb during his daily life much of the spirit of those early settlers, as in quaint Plymouth, Boston with its crooked streets, the wild Mohawk Trail, Yale College in New Haven, and Harvard in Cambridge. But they are not alone in their colonial atmosphere. Every little town and hamlet has marks centered around its cool village green which are reminiscent of the days during which New England set the foundations for this country. There is Wethersfield which is the oldest town in Connecticut, Granby with its old Newgate Prison and its copper mines, Guilford with its old stone house, Middletown, and Goshen. All have something to recall.

There is something vastly different in New England settlements from the typical Western town. Each one has its central green about which everything is nestled. There is the general store where one may have everything from green mint candies to buggy whips and mustard plaster. One corner of the store is usually reserved for the post office. The more progressive towns boast of an armory which was used to store munitions during the Revolutionary War. Then there are the white, colonial homes set way back from the highway, well cared for and fenced off with bright, white-washed stones and picket fences.

In presenting a picture of New England as it invariably appears, I must not leave the impression that the citizens of this part of the country sit back and become a part of the peaceful landscape. They are a hard race who rise early and work hard. There are mills to work, farms to plough, fish to catch, boats to build, stores to run, banks to manage, and factories to operate. Unlike the slow, self-satisfied southern neighbors, the stock I come from delights in hard work and progress.

Spring, summer, autumn, and winter. All four seasons present a different picture. Each season has a beauty of its own. April and May welcome the early blossoming of the trees and flowers, July and August witness the daily visits of the gang to the “ole swimmin’ hole,” October and November the harvesting of the pumpkins and apples, finally, cold stark December and January when everything is bleak and bare. Each season has another call to strive and work on.

Although there is keen competition between the individual towns and villages, there has always been a spirit of friendliness and cooperation between them. The New England Conference was one of the first alliances of the new world. It was an effort to have an understanding among the states for better government and protection.
It was New England that bred many of the early patriots with whom we associate the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Massachusetts contributed able lawyers to the cause of liberty. Rhode Island, Vermont, and Delaware gave us soldiers. Connecticut brought forth soldiers as well as statesmen. New England was the back-bone of the thirteen original states. It was an affair concerning Connecticut, New York and New Jersey which helped bring about the discarding of the Articles of Confederation and the establishment of the Constitution. Due to a misunderstanding concerning taxation and boundary lines, a meeting was called. This meeting resulted in the First Continental Congress.

I could go on indefinitely in telling of New England’s claim to fame. I must not unduly emphasize this one period during which this North-eastern group of states was active. During the War of 1812, the Civil War, the Spanish American War, and the World War, New England was always ready to excel. My purpose has merely been to bring out why I proudly boast of New England. If what I have said is not convincing, I recommend a trip to this section – not forgetting Connecticut – to awaken any dormant spirit of patriotism which one may have for these United States of America.
Tower Club, Brown University, ca. 1950; Moe and Barbara are kneeling in front row, center.
Never Far From South Providence, II:
*A Momentous Decade*

Morris P. Schwartz

This excerpt from Moe’s autobiography may also have been entitled “What did I know about tanks?” It includes, paradoxically, a vivid account of his quite ordinary military service at the tail end of World War II. Of course the author would never have dared describing himself in heroic or even patriotic terms. Essentially, he did what he was told and suffered only an infected fingernail.

While a dutiful undergraduate at Brown, Moe enjoyed belonging to Tower Club, the equivalent of a fraternity for Jewish commuters and recent graduates. Wow, did he flip over seeing a Danish starlet at one of its parties. His greatest pleasure, however, was meeting, courting, and marrying Barbara. This was destiny’s best reward.

**Classical High and Brown**

In 1940, when I was 14, I entered ninth grade at Classical High School. The curriculum was weighted heavily toward classics, favoring Latin, Greek, and ancient history. I was required to take two years of Latin, a requirement that served me well over the years. It certainly helped me accumulate a large English vocabulary.

I found my studies at Classical to be rather difficult, however. Most teachers gave a short quiz every day, encompassing the previous day’s lesson. That meant that I had to spend every evening after supper up in my room studying to prepare for the next day. This was usually a four-hour period. I did very well scholastically, graduating magna cum laude.

I made many friends and seemed to be well liked by my classmates. I participated in a limited number of extracurricular activities, but did not go out for sports. I wasn’t a joiner and, to this day, I am still not one.

I was picked by Miss Day, my English teacher, whom everybody feared, to act in a one-act play, “Cherchez La Femme,” which she wrote. It was my first and only theatrical venture. I was petrified, even though we only performed in front of our classmates. I guess I did all right. There were no catcalls.

I applied to Brown University and was accepted. I had saved $450, put-
ting away a little at a time from my earnings. It would have been just enough to pay for my first year.

I made a lot of close friends during my days at Brown, many of whom are still my friends to this day. Most of us were commuters.

The Jewish fraternity, Pi Lambda Phi, had some Providence kids, but most members were out-of-towners. Many of my friends joined a fraternity called Tower Club. We met at Faunce House every Monday night.

Both before and after World War II, Tower Club had formal dances at the Biltmore Hotel and hired 15-piece orchestras to play for us. Everybody got dressed up in tuxedoes, and our dates wore formal gowns. Each girl sported a beautiful corsage. It was the high spot of the school year.

I recently found a photo taken at one of those formals. My date, Barbara Amber, who would become my wife, and I are kneeling up front. She was beautiful, and I looked so proud to be her escort.

I easily recall one Tower Club dance. Mitchell Sugarman, a local bachelor who bought a ticket to attend, arrived with his date, a Hollywood starlet and model, Greta Thyssen, who had been a “Miss Denmark.” She sashayed in with a backless gown that came up over her knees. In Yiddish we would say, “Up to her pupik.” My brother, Abe, who graduated from Brown in 1941, also attended Tower Club parties. He and I were standing at the bar, so we got a good look at her. She was blonde, shapely, and left nothing to the imagination. What a stir she created!

Irwin Summer, another bachelor, bought a ticket. His date was also a looker – very petite and also a beauty.

**World War II**

On Sunday, December 7, 1941, when Pearl Harbor was bombed, I had taken my sister, Rozzie, to the movies at the Liberty Theatre on Broad Street. Four hours of entertainment, including a double feature, coming attractions, and a Buck Rogers serial, cost 10 cents. When we exited the theatre on a dreary winter day, we learned about the attack.

My brother, Abe, was one of the first to be drafted. After basic training, he applied for officers’ training school and was accepted into the Army Signal Corps. Eventually he ended up at the depot in Dayton, Ohio, where he remained over four years, until the end of the war.
I knew that I would be called up on my birthday, August 10, 1944. I had applied for the Navy’s special V-12 program, located at Brown, but did not qualify because of defective eyesight. I then decided to volunteer for the Army. With my induction set for November 17, I would be able to enter and complete one semester at Brown. I thought that I should major in engineering because I was an excellent draftsman in high school. I did earn an “A” in engineering drawing at Brown, but realized that I did not possess the qualities necessary to major in that field.

After having received orders to report for induction on my 18th birthday in Providence, I was sent to Ft. Devens, near Ayer, Massachusetts. My mother was so sad and cried so much that she developed a serious infection, which was treated by Dr. Webber. I was outfitted with a set of khaki uniforms, an M-1 rifle, and a duffel bag in which to store all my belongings. My test score to determine my classification was rather high. Along with inductees from all over New England, I was sent by train to Camp Wheeler in Macon, Georgia.

The trip took 48 hours, and the wooden seats were very uncomfortable. As soon as we were trucked to our training camp, all we heard were choruses of “You’ll be sorry, you’ll be sorry” from the trainees already there. We were just happy to arrive so we could be fed and could shower after such an arduous trip.

Basic training lasted 17 weeks. We Northerners shared barracks with a slew of Southern boys, some from farming and mountainous regions. It was not a homogeneous group to say the least. One boy probably had an IQ of 80. Another was so hairy that he looked like a bear. Having resisted taking showers for days on end, a group of recruits ganged up and pushed him into the shower, where they used GI brushes to get him clean. His bunk was always lumpy, so he never passed inspection. There were two brothers from Maine who seemed quite bright but were illiterate. I read their letters from home to them. I also wrote letters to their family. I was friendly with one other Jewish boy, Pearlstein, from New Jersey. I ended up in Europe, he in the South Pacific.

Our drill sergeant, a guy from New Jersey, was correctly named Moody. He had bright red hair and a personality to go along with it. Very demanding, he was not loath to hand out such punishments as 25 push-ups or latrine duty.

I got along with practically everybody in the platoon, except an Irish-American kid from Boston. We had a confrontation. I told him that I didn’t want to fight him to settle our differences. After a while he calmed down, and we
later became friends.

I learned from home that Burton “Inky” Himmelfarb, who attended cheder with me, was also at Camp Wheeler. We were able to get together and talk about old times.

The food at Camp Wheeler was relatively poor. We had “S.O.S.,” creamed and chipped beef on toast, practically every breakfast. It got so bad that the Italian-American guys on the upper floor of our barracks organized a boycott of the mess hall. So we did not report for our evening meal, even though we were required to take a sulfa pill at each meal to combat an outbreak of meningitis. When a captain questioned us about who led this disobedience, of course nobody spoke up. He then threatened to court-martial us for mutiny. The next day, we
were awakened at 5 and ordered to take a 5-mile run with our 40-pound field packs and our M-1 rifles. After that, the food quality improved.

We were a so-called “heavy weapons” infantry company. I was issued glasses that were supposed to bring my vision up to 20-20, but they didn’t help much on the firing range. I wasn’t sure which target I was aiming at! More often than not, I got “Maggie’s Drawers,” which was a flag indicating that I had missed my target completely.

One of the exercises on the obstacle course was crossing a small stream using a rope while carrying a 40-pound field pack and a rifle. Of course I didn’t make it, and fell flat on my back into the water. I was only afraid that my rifle would rust, which was considered the worst possible sin. I was allowed to return to my barracks to change my clothes, but before doing so I broke down my rifle and dried and oiled every part, particularly the bore. One of the benefits of this mishap, however, was that I didn’t have to complete the rest of the obstacle course.

We learned how to toss live grenades, how to shoot a bazooka at a disabled old tank, how to fire mortars using live ammunition, and how to fire 50-caliber machine guns. We even crawled under barbed wire while ammunition was fired above our heads.

When I started basic training I weighed 179 pounds. When I finished I still weighed 179 pounds, but most of my flab became muscle.

During December 1944, while I was in basic training, the Battle of the Bulge was underway. If I hadn’t received an extension to report for duty in November, I may have very well been in Europe at that time.

In the spring of 1945, the guys in my platoon definitely thought that we would be sent to Europe or the Far East as infantry replacements. It was Europe. Before departing, I came home on leave to Providence to say my goodbyes.

I was sent to Ft. Dix, in New Jersey, and then boarded a Liberty ship. A converted freighter, it wasn’t designed for comfort. I assume that there were several thousand GIs on board. We departed the East Coast in a large convoy with ships around us on all sides.

Our canvas beds were at the very bottom of the hold, where there was just enough room to slide into sleep. Mess times were staggered. After going through the chow line, we went wherever we could find a spot to sit down to eat. I tried to find a spot in the middle of the ship to avoid becoming seasick. As a
matter of fact, I got my sea legs after a few days. The voyage took 14 days, however. For our diversion there was the nucleus of a jazz band on board. A lot of guys played poker or craps, but I didn’t get involved. I read to pass the time.

We landed at Le Havre on May 1, 1945, a week before the war ended in Europe. After disembarking with all our gear, we were placed aboard a “40 or 8,” which was a boxcar designed to accommodate 40 men or 8 horses. I counted 35 of us, but nobody could sit down. It was a miserable night.

The train took us to Germany, where we arrived the next day. Three different armies had pounded Aachen. Not a house was standing. It was a picture of complete devastation.

We disembarked at Limburg, the site of a huge POW camp. Only a barbed wire fence surrounded thousands of Germans. Although I found a bed frame, without any bedding, to rest my weary bones, I was picked for guard duty the first night. My shift was supposed to be four hours on and four off. Everything was so disorganized that I never did get a relief. I walked the perimeter assigned all night long. It was pitch black and cloudy, and I was really scared. Was I ever happy to see daylight arrive! That duty lasted about a week.

We were then transferred to a summer bivouac in Mainz. We pitched our pup tents, spread pine needles on the ground under our blankets, and settled in. We were now officially infantry replacements for the 106th Division, which had suffered a huge number of casualties at the Battle of the Bulge. Two of its three regiments had been decimated. The remaining men, seasoned battle veterans, were waiting to be shipped home. They needed 75 points.

I spent quite a long time in Mainz, pulling guard duty or KP. The company sergeant liked to call my name. I didn’t think that he was a lover of Jews.

Unfortunately, I developed an infection in my right index finger just before our unit was to be deployed south on the Rhine River. I was running a fever, and a corpsman in the infirmary tent immediately gave me a shot of penicillin. When the Army doctor finally arrived, there was nothing he could do but abrade the area. I lost the fingernail, but it eventually grew back. I have no fingerprint on that digit, however.

As the men of the 106th were slowly shipped home, I was transferred to the 1st Armored Division and then to the 3rd Armored Division under General George Patton. I was now in a southern German town, Schwäbisch-Gmünd, east of Heidelberg. Having been trained as a heavy weapons infantryman, what did
I knew nothing about tanks. I didn’t know the first thing about driving a tank or how to arm or fire its weapons. All I did was stand guard in the motor pool and again pulled more than my share of KP. Ironically, the general who led American forces across Europe to victory died when a truck hit his car.

Soon my Army career took a turn for the better. I was friendly with a Jewish kid who worked in the company’s orderly room. Having looked over my records and seen that I had been to college, he asked if I would like to be an Army postal clerk. I said, “Are you kidding?” The next thing I knew, I was a member of the 175th Army Postal Unit and living in a little hotel in Bensheim. There were about 20 GIs, some of whom worked in the same building as the post office, but they disseminated Army literature. My hours were 9 to 5, with an hour off for lunch in our own dining room. We had a keg of beer on tap at all times, homemade ice cream whenever we wanted it and, all-in-all, excellent food. As a matter of fact, I would leave the Army weighing 215 pounds.

The first lieutenant in charge was very easygoing, and we all got along well. How could you not like it? We were about 30 minutes south of Frankfurt and about the same distance north of Heidelberg, where we often drove to see the movies or sightsee. When the lieutenant wasn’t using it, we had a jeep at our disposal.

I twice received three-day passes to visit Paris. I was even picked up by a young Jewish girl, whom I met in the city’s largest synagogue. Her family invited me to dinner, and she agreed to go with me to the Folies-Bergère. The family lived in a third-floor tenement in one of the poorest sections. After the theater we ended up in a pâtisserie on the Champs-Élysées. She was not used to such luxury. I promised to write to her when I returned to my base, but I never did.

While with the tank battalion, I had also received a one-week furlough to Switzerland. My friend had arranged it with the captain, but the top sergeant wasn’t aware of it. When I hadn’t answered to my name at roll call, he thought that I had gone AWOL. When I got back, everything got straightened out and I wasn’t punished. The week in Switzerland was wonderful. I stayed in luxury hotels in Basel, Vevey on Lake Geneva, and Bern. The food was wonderful, the pastry shops superb, and the scenery breathtaking.

The high spot of my stay in Europe and my short career in the Army, however, was two winter months in 1945, when I attended the American univer-
sity in Biarritz. This is a vacation destination on France's Bay of Biscay, not far from Spain's Basque region. The climate was temperate, but not warm enough to swim in the ocean. We had classes in a luxury hotel, and I was billeted at a lesser one. Army officers taught the classes, and I received half a credit for two courses I took when I returned to Brown.

I met Ernie Greenberg in Biarritz. When comparing our backgrounds, we realized that we were both Brown men. He later returned to College Hill and went on to become a doctor. He later married Libby Jacobson, my wife, Barbara’s, contemporary.

I was discharged from the Army in August 1946. When asked if I wanted to join the Reserves, I politely declined. It’s good that I did. I probably would have been called back when we entered the Korean Conflict in 1950.

Back to Brown

Luckily, I was able to reenter Brown for that fall semester and take advantage of the GI Bill. This time I majored in chemistry. What a mistake that was! Just an average student, I did not excel in my courses. My strengths were in languages and math, where I usually received “A’s.” So I suffered through four years of chem labs and lectures. However, there is something in my makeup that tends to make me see things through to the bitter end. This may be a good trait or a problematical one. Nevertheless, I did graduate from college with a 3.0 average.

My brother, Abe, who also returned from the Army in 1946, had graduated from Brown with a degree in classical studies. He always wanted to be a doctor. He did not have the necessary premed courses, so he reenrolled at Brown for two years to prepare for medical school. While waiting to hear about his applications, he and I were driving down Friendship Street in downtown Providence when we encountered his friend, Dr. Earl Cohen, a pediatrician. He had trained in Boston and knew of a six-year course at Harvard’s Dental School that also led to a degree in medicine. If Abe were interested, he would approach the dean on his behalf.

After Abe was accepted and completed his dental degree, he realized that he would be 31 years old when he went on for his medical degree. I believe that his decision not to continue haunted him the rest of his life. He did become a very successful, well-respected dental practitioner, however.
Work

After I graduated from Brown in the spring of 1950, the fun began. I applied at several companies hiring chemists, but nothing clicked. In desperation, I took a lab job paying $35 per week at Atlantic Tubing & Rubber Company. I measured the thickness and color correctness of vinyl film. This is where I met Ed Angelone, another Brown man, who would found his own vinyl distributing company. Later on, when I sold life insurance, he became my client. Fortunately, his wife received a considerable amount when he died prematurely.

I had been working at Atlantic Tubing & Rubber for only three weeks when I heard from Herman Goldstein, the manager of Warwick Chemical Company, whose laboratory was based in an old textile mill in West Warwick. I jumped at the opportunity to earn $50 per week, especially in a job for which I was trained- or so I thought. I was green as grass but did all sorts of experiments. The company applied for and was issued a patent in my name.

Ernest Nathan was the company’s vice-president, and his brother-in-law, Fred Regensteiner, was its controller. Both men were Jews who had left their native Germany in the late 1930s. Regensteiner was a sweet, pleasant man, and his son, David, eventually became my lab partner.

After the company decided to close its West Warwick lab, I commuted to its plant in Wood River Junction, near Richmond, Rhode Island. But this did not work out, so I reapplied for a position at Alrose Chemical, a division of Geigy, the Swiss company. Its Rhode Island founder had been Mark Weisberg, who had heard about my work at West Warwick. After joining Alrose, I worked on various pilot projects, some of which were briefly supported by government requisitions. I later worked on projects developing insecticides and fungicides, including an ingredient of what became Agent Orange.

Not happy working in a chemical laboratory, I determined that I did not have the inquiring mind necessary to become a successful researcher. Having experienced all sorts of stomach pains, I felt that I was under significant emotional strain.

Barbara

The most important part of my life occurred when I met my future wife, Barbara. Not having known any girls when I returned from the service, I asked my sister, Rozzie, if she had any friends I might meet. When she showed me
Barbara and I had a wonderful time seeing a musical, “Bloomer Girl,” at the Metropolitan Theatre on Weybosset Street in downtown Providence. Afterward, she invited me up to her living room, where we talked and only talked until 3 in the morning. I was smitten. She later told me that she had broken off a date with Al Jacobs, an acquaintance of mine, who later married one of her classmates.

Barbara changed my life. Up until we met, I never had such romantic feelings for a woman. All I could think about was her. I had dated other girls before the war, but none could hold a candle to Barbara. She was beautiful, and her outgoing personality was bubbly. I, by contrast, was somewhat shy and quiet. She had lots of male and female friends. I did too, but not as many as she. I was 21, and she was only 17.

Barbara, who had grown up in Brooklyn, had lived in a foster home to the age of 13. She knew her birth mother, but saw her infrequently. The Depression was hard, and apparently her mother had to give her up for adoption.

Willie and Rose Amber, my future in-laws, brought Barbara to Providence. It changed her life as well as mine. They were both loving parents who doted on her.

Although highly intelligent, Barbara had not done very well in school. Like a lot of other children, she fell through the cracks. When she graduated from Hope High School, it was not clear whether she would be admitted to Rhode Island State College. Barbara had street smarts and chutzpah, however. Vehement about her desire to attend, she obtained an appointment with the dean of admissions, who gave her a chance to prove herself. And she did, even when she had to...
Schwartz

Barbara dropped out for a semester to work in her father’s liquor store after he had a stroke. Barbara was determined, and she was able to graduate with her class in 1952.

Barbara had been a very shy girl. She hadn’t believed in kissing on our first date. Not until we had dated for quite a while did she even kiss me good night. However, I persevered. I wanted her to be my one and only. Apparently, she had other ideas. Even when I thought that we were going steady, she wanted to date other guys. So we broke up.

One summer, when she went away, I was miserable. I spent weekends at the beach in Narragansett, where I very often saw her parents. They were always very friendly toward me.

Early in the fall, when I was walking near my parents’ house, Mr. Amber saw me and asked me to get into his car. He wanted to know why Barbara and I were no longer seeing each other. I told him that it was Barbara’s decision, and that I didn’t want to see her again if it meant being rejected. He wouldn’t let me out of his car unless I agreed to call her.

I did, and we began dating again. I even drove down to Kingston quite often after work to see her.

During Thanksgiving vacation, I gave her my Tower Club pin. She came home all excited and burst into her parents’ bedroom, shouting, “I’m pinned, I’m pinned.” My future father-in-law then asked, “What’s a pin?”

Shortly thereafter, I gave her a diamond ring. Her parents hosted a lovely engagement party. We were engaged for a year and a half because Barbara wished to graduate from college. Rabbi Morris Schussheim married us on July 6, 1952 at Churchill House, near Brown, because Temple Beth-Israel was being painted. After spending the first night of our marriage at the Biltmore Hotel, we took a two-week road trip to New York City and Niagara Falls. We had a wonderful time, which I fondly remember to this day.
Romek’s Odyssey, Part II: *The Lodz Ghetto*

Ray Eichenbaum

Few articles published in this journal have been as powerful as the following excerpts from Ray’s memoirs. Although a witness to and a victim of unspeakable suffering and cruelty, he remained, miraculously, a compassionate, loving, and hopeful person. I am tempted to say “man,” but Romek was only a boy when he survived these horrors. Throughout his adult years he remained in some sense a child, for he continued to feel his departed relatives’ tight embrace. Perhaps they felt his too.

I dare not say much more because Ray’s own words eloquently suffice. Alas, the third part of his memoirs will focus on even greater trials he endured in the camps before his liberation in April 1945. That Ray chose not to forget remains for me an unfathomable mystery.

**Before the Fall**

If the summer of 1939 was an interlude before the fall, it also had a significant meaning in my life, which “cemented” us as a family. It provided the intimate bond that was so necessary for my survival later on. It also produced in me the sentimentality and sensitivity that marked me for the rest of my days and gave much to the meaning of my existence.

Late August found us, the three Eichenbaum children, scrambling to get back to Lodz from the countryside in Strelnia amidst rambling threats by the madman Hitler from the Reichstag in Berlin, which we could hear from every radio. In retrospect, the last week of August was full of anxiety, fear, preparation for the worst, and a feeling of helpless panic.

I had broken my left elbow in three places during a bicycle riding accident. My sister, Bronia, managed somehow to hire an old taxi, which took me to Brzeziny, a small town on the way to Lodz, where I was put in a hospital serviced by severe looking Franciscan nuns in foreboding habits. After an operation with full anesthesia, I stayed for two days. My mother did not come because Bronia did not want to worry her or because she was unable to travel due to the general mobilization in Poland. My brother, Moniek, arrived home by bus with our things a day later.

The last few days of August were filled with excitement for us children,
despite the fact that I wore a big and cumbersome cast and almost died from the itching. We practiced running down to air shelters in preparation for the real thing. Due to my good speed, I was made a messenger to deliver communications from block-to-block. I was very proud of my new position, for which I wore a specially designed armband over my elbow in a cast.

There was hoarding of food as well as long lines in front of food stores and bakeries. Meanwhile, the impotent Polish government was trying to make us believe that if the Nazis started the war, next month the Polish Ulans would ride into Berlin. But in our hearts, we all knew that our chances were very slim against the well organized Germans, and we were praying that France and England would not back out again, as was the case of Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia, but stand with Poland as promised against the hated Krauts.

**Attack**

September 1 arrived, and the war was upon us. The Germans attacked on all fronts. Bombing attacks in Lodz, which came that afternoon, caused panic and confusion. While engaged as a messenger, I was running to an air shelter when a bomb hit the street next to ours. I found myself literally plastered against a building’s wall by its impact. Right then and there, my being enamored with war came to an unpretentious and abrupt end. Badly shaken, I came to the realization that older people who had experienced and warned us about the cataclysm of war were right. There is no glamour in war.

Between September 1 and 3, as we “sweated out” the time until France and England would enter the conflict, a general mobilization was taking place. With tears in our eyes, my brother had to relinquish his new bicycle to the local police station. The men folk were called in as army reservists, although they returned nightly to sleep at home. My aunts’ and uncles’ families, consisting of 12 adults and ten children of all ages, descended on our house, and we all stayed together in very cramped quarters. Bronia, being the eldest child and having some nursing experience, took care of the babies, dispensed medication, and assigned places and chores to other children. The men folk would disappear in the morning, reported to military offices, and dug antiaircraft ditches and gun emplacements.
Occupation

This situation lasted until September 6, when the German troops entered Lodz. Polish troops, withdrawing amongst the usual panic, clogged the roads leading northeastward to Warsaw. Our men folk were dragged along with the remainder of the Polish grand army, which by now was a mass of robbing marauders and deserters. My father and all my uncles were away three days, and we feared for their lives.

But on or about September 9, they came dragging back from this trek, trembling with fear and full of stories (as well as lice) about the cruel Germans who made them stand at attention for hours, beating up anyone whom they pleased, and generally showing inhuman, almost barbaric, behavior. The Jews, who were separated from the Poles, were treated still worse. But this was only the first visible occurrence of the Nazi hatred of Jews that we experienced.

Another occurrence comes to mind because, being a boy of ten at that time, I must have been very impressionable. When a Wehrmacht truck punctured a tire outside of our house on Killinski Street, all of us boys in the yard ventured out to see what was happening. The soldiers were kind of friendly, and we brought some water from the house so that they could wash their hands, but then a non-Jewish kid told them that we were Jews. All changed. They proceeded to chase us away with hatred in their eyes. So ended my first close encounter with our captors.

Another memorable thing occurred early in 1940, when a German soldier told us that, as Jews, we could expect a “tough going” ahead. He made a circular motion with his right hand, as if to indicate that soon all Jews will be caught in a vicious turbulence.

Otherwise, we were starting to feel the German boot by being forbidden to go out into the street after certain hours, restricted in our shopping, and the systematic confiscation of all our “special” possessions, such as radios, gramophones, cameras, and jewelry. All men between 18 and 45 were required to report for daily work—their task consisting of digging and covering up ditches. My father got out of this chore by volunteering to light office stoves early every day in a Wehrmacht-occupied business. This business belonged to his German-speaking acquaintance who was cashing in on the situation.

Our business, for which my parents worked so hard these many years, had to be “handed” over to a German Treuhandler—a “keeper whom we had to
trust.” This occurred on Friday, December 13, 1940.

The first year under Nazi occupation was sad and dreary. There was no Hanukkah party for the first time that I could remember. The men would still gather for their daily prayers, but all the synagogues were closed, so they met secretly in homes. There was this quiet, conspiratorial movement to pray to the God who was about to abandon them.

In early 1940, the name of Lodz had been changed to Litzmanstadt in honor of a German general from World War I. Rumors also began to circulate among Jews that we would be driven into a ghetto. Because Poland was partitioned into a German/ western part and a Russian/ eastern part, most of my mother’s brothers decided to leave with their families to Warsaw. Since my maternal grandparents were unable and also unwilling to travel, my mother, the eldest child, decided to stay in Lodz to look after them until other arrangements could be made. We children did not feel too good about this decision, especially because any trip away had usually meant adventure and an escape from boredom. Schools for Jewish children did not exist at that time.

So it came to pass that, after tearful goodbyes, we were left to take care of our relatives’ most valuable possessions, which we carried to our grandparents’ house. It started to look like a warehouse.

The Ghetto

Sure enough, in March 1940, edicts were posted on walls commanding all the Jews of Lodz to move into the ghetto, which was set up in the old part of town, bordering on Baluty and the old Jewish cemetery. The ghetto would be sealed on April 30, and any Jews found outside after this date would be shot on the spot.

My sister, brother, and I built sleds to move most of our furniture across the snow. Naturally, we could not move the heaviest things, such as a beautiful set of cupboards and a piano, which we gave to a Polish neighbor. We naively thought at the time that the move would be only for a short period. Little did we know that our home nest was being destroyed forever.

The Germans did not let us move any valuables. They would inspect the parcels and confiscate new materials right there. We attempted to bypass this process by rolling the new materials around our bodies and cover them up by the usual clothes. On numerous trips I felt like an Egyptian mummy. Somehow, we
transferred a goodly portion of our most valuable property to the ghetto under the direst circumstances.

Those days stick out in my mind since, almost overnight, I, a playful, carefree child of the ripe old age of eleven, was transformed into a young, watchful, and experienced man. But I sure felt important.

Although we could have waited to be assigned lodgings by a newly formed Jewish ghetto administration, my mother proceeded to “buy” a house from a Polish-German woman on Gesia Street No. 5. She had to vacate the premises anyway, but my parents liked the house and handed over a large sum of German marks to the woman for the keys.

The property consisted of a one-story, newer brick building painted bright yellow with a large yard and a beautiful little garden. Inside the yard was an older, two-story wooden structure, which actually contained four little apartments, but these were empty when we moved in. There were outhouses in the yard, which took quite a while to get used to, since our bathroom on Killinski Street was indoors.

One incident comes to mind when the Polish-German lady was leaving the house for the last time. As she was about to go, she looked at me and said to my parents, “Why don’t you let me keep the younger boy for you until the war is over. He does not look Jewish.” A hush came over my family. I was motioned to go into the other room. A muffled conversation proceeded between my father, my mother, and Bronia. I looked through the keyhole and strained my ears to hear. After what I thought was an eternity, I heard my sister answer to the German lady, “No thank you. He was born a Jew and a Jew he will remain.” These simple words are ringing in my ears to this day, and I am forever grateful for this to my family and to my God.

On April 30, 1940, when the ghetto of Lodz was officially sealed, our immediate family took up residence on Gesia Street No. 5. I was bright and eager, full of anticipation of what life had in store for me.

The first big room as you entered the house was given to my grandparents. The second, slightly smaller room, with two windows facing the street, was ours. Since there were five of us, we had to squeeze, but soon everyone had his “niche” in some corner or cranny. And since the kitchen and porch were spacious, we did not feel so cramped.

At first we had our meals together with my grandparents, but soon my
Aunt Ida and her husband Herman, having just buried their infant baby girl, joined my grandparents in their room. Feeding such a large number of people became unwieldy and impractical. A potbelly stove was put into their room for heating and for cooking. The spring of that year was very beautiful, and I started to explore the neighborhood, looking for kids to play with. I adored the garden, which, for a “city rat,” was something entirely new and absorbing. We planted radishes, carrots, and cucumbers and trimmed the new fruit trees—two cherry and one apple. I loved the new place on Gesia Street.

Soon after, the bad news started to reach us that the Nazis were victorious all over. They conquered Belgium and Holland, and then Hitler was in Paris. The Nazis conquered Denmark and Norway. Hitler predicted the beginning of a 1,000-year Reich. Our inner despair about our situation started to take root.

It appears that the Nazis, in their victory blush, became at first magnanimous toward the Jews in the ghetto. They permitted many civil liberties. Chaim Rumkowski, the eldest Jew who was considered a failure all his life, was given complete autonomy to put institutions into place and to organize work places, which were called Arbeit-Resorten. Jewish police, firefighters, sanitation men, and even Jewish chimney sweeps were organized. Knowing the German penchant for industriousness and hard work, Rumkowski made the Nazis aware that the ghetto could produce many items that they needed. It sounds bad now since it signifies collaboration with a sworn enemy, but this was 1940—Hitler’s glory days—and everybody was eager to please the conqueror and remain alive.

The center of the ghetto was on Balucki Rynek, an old marketplace converted into comfortable bright offices and even living spaces. It became the only entry and exit place for about 200,000 people. Rumkowski, who became “our king,” separated himself from us common folk and surrounded himself with henchmen and cronies—the Beirat Judenrath. He started to act royally by riding around the ghetto in a coach, and it will always represent the good and the bad about the Lodz ghetto from 1940 to 1944.

School

Wonder of wonders, the Nazis opened schools in Marysin, about three miles from where we lived. I passed an examination permitting me to start the first year of gymnasium (high school). Moniek was in the third year, and Bronia was about to graduate with her Matura, which is a bit higher than an American
diploma. Seven more girls and nine boys received this honor. I wonder if any of their certificates are preserved anywhere in the world. Our Bronia’s went up in flames with all our other documents and photographs on a memorable afternoon in August 1944.

The days in school were pleasant and cheerful, however. The instruction was first-class since there was an overabundance of highly qualified teachers. My subjects were Latin, geometry, and geography. As the youngest in my class, I did not dare to ask many questions.

I also studied Yiddish, which was a revelation to me since I thought of it as a jargon spoken only by poor, primitive Jews. However, I learned that it had a grammar similar to German and had a beautiful and extensive literature by such high-class writers as L. Perez, N. Bialik, Agnon Sforim, Sholom Aleichem, Sholem Asch, and many others. It was an eye-opener to me and provided me with a source of strength and pride early in life.

Work

Between the fall of 1940 and the spring of 1941, as we were building up the ghetto, there was no despair yet. We were gathered, enslaved, and made to work, but the worse was yet to come. Although the Nazis had us in their vise, they did not yet start to tighten the screw.

When the Russo-German War broke out in June 1941, the Russian Army was in massive retreat. According to rumors in the ghetto, they were crossing the Vistula River, near Warsaw, only 120 miles from us. When we learned that these rumors were unfounded, the suicide rate doubled and even tripled.

I was able to help get my father a job as a “reviewer” or a “frisker” in the woodworking factory on Drukarska Street, a position very much below his qualifications or expectations. But this gave him the means to feed himself with the midday soup. With her experience as a seamstress, my mother had no problem obtaining a position on Marynarska Street, where she sewed patches of materials into colorful quilts.

Bronia, inexorably drawn to work around the ill and disabled, landed a position in the hospital on Lagiewnicka Street. Her progress there was phenomenal. Within a couple of weeks, she was already dispensing medication and giving injections. In a month’s time, she became the head nurse of a ward, making daily rounds with doctors. Then she became an operating room nurse and finally a
ward nurse. Her good looks must also have helped. My mother was against her working all hours, in the presence of older men, whether they were doctors or not.

Since he was good with his hands, Moniek, who had a great capacity for mathematics and beautiful handwriting, became an apprentice in a metal factory. Soon he was operating all sorts of lathes and grinders.

Later, as a policeman in the Sonder Kommando, Moniek guarded food storage and distribution areas. Mostly he pulled night duty and slept most of the day. He was just too young and inexperienced to “push people around” and guard against experienced thieves.

So Moniek was soon transferred to the ghetto fire brigade. He cleaned and shined useless equipment and took part in training exercises, but German firefighters from the neighborhood were called in to quench large fires. The ghetto fire brigade was not trusted.

Moniek was loyal and devoted to me like a dog and always protective and supportive. I, for sure, did not do as much for him as he did for me. I tried to keep up his spirits by pointing out that justice will win in the end. At least this was the outcome in many of the stories and books I read. I am quite sure that I must have contributed something to maintain his optimism when our situation appeared hopeless in 1942 and ’43.

I obtained a job in a leather goods factory by presenting myself as 13, when I was actually only 11. I worked from 8 AM to 5 PM on a contraption called a “goat” because you had to mount it. It was actually a large vertical vise used to hold stiff leather pieces that were sewn to other materials. Being nimble-fingered and fast, I soon became a “star” of my group.

We younger workers were treated less harshly than our less fortunate older brothers, whose eager overseers would receive bonuses (usually in the form of food “talons”) when their production quotas were met. I worked long hours, sometimes as many as 12 a day, but I felt very proud and appreciated.

From the windows of the upper floors we could look across into the yards of Polish and German inhabitants. Especially painful for us youngsters were the sights and sounds of soccer games played by youth our age. Why were they so fortunate and not we? There was even a carousel for toddlers, and the happy sounds we would hear daily sounded so tortuously cruel to our ears.

The most rewarding moment at work came when, during the beginning
of the hunger period in 1942, I was given a “talon” for 100 kilograms of potatoes. Thus, for the first time in my life, I felt like being the family “provider” and was proud as a peacock.

Summer Camp

During the summer of 1941, our “savior,” Chaim Rumkowski, persuaded the German authorities to allow him to form a summer camp for underprivileged children in Marysin, a wooded area next to the old Jewish cemetery that was abandoned by the Polish population after the ghetto had been formed. Although the period of this Kolonia summer camp was all too brief, lasting only from April to early July of 1942, memories of these few happy months will stay with me forever.

Boys and girls had separate sleeping quarters, but the dining area was in the main big building. Our counselors were also our teachers, since we had daily classes in math and Hebrew. The rest of the time was devoted to playing games, such as soccer and volleyball. I became a leader of my group and was made the captain of my soccer team.

Another significant remembrance I have from this happy interlude is a festive banquet attended by Chaim Rumkowski and other ghetto administration bigwigs. We were told that we were the future of the Jewish nation, and there were some oblique remarks about the Halutzim (the pioneers working the land) of Israel. Toward the end of our stay, however, the portions dished out to us in the mess hall became very meager, and we were constantly hungry.

The Kolonia interlude came to an abrupt halt upon the outbreak of the Russo-German War. When Moniek came to pick me up, I shed some tears, but was soon persuaded to leave when he said that things are not so bad at home and that mother is missing me very much. I “lucked out” because the boys and girls who did not leave with me at that time were taken by the Nazis and sent out with one of the first transports from the ghetto.

Starvation, Lice, and Prison

Without pride in family and the life-sustaining bond it provided, one was soon lost in the ghetto. One could see many men or women on the streets traveling the “lonely road,” carrying all their possessions in a knapsack, living an animalistic, egotistical existence. Soon such figures would disappear. But we all
became more egotistical and self-centered because we were driven by constant hunger. Some of us started to become animals.

Our food rations were meager, but beginning in 1943, they were completely insufficient. At first, a small loaf of black bread (about one and a half pounds) would last for four days. Then the time period extended to six, seven, and finally eight days. The same applied to sugar, margarine, flour, and other staples. Some people would consume all their rations in two days and starve (except for midday, watery cabbage soup) for six.

One of the worst plagues, which practically always come alongside hunger and starvation, is lice. These little parasitic creatures gather and reproduce mostly on humans, who, under deficient sanitary conditions, cannot withstand their onslaught. How I hated these little bloodsuckers, which would get into hair on all parts of your body and into your clothes. Women with long hair suffered even more. Everywhere you went you could smell the odor of kerosene, which would supposedly kill the little bastards. It is still vivid in my memory how my mother and sister would declare a general war on lice, and we would all carry out the furniture, clothing, and laundry for cleaning and airing.

A prison, manned almost exclusively by Jewish police, came into being on Czarnecky Street toward the end of 1941. Any domestic crime was punishable there, but it soon became the “hole of Calcutta” for ghetto citizens. Conditions in the prison became so horrible that many prisoners tried to and succeeded in committing suicide. Although Germans sorted out and gathered victims for trips to various concentration camps, the prison was allowed to exert its cruel rule on fellow Jews until the end of the ghetto in 1944.

Rumors and Humor

There is an old Polish proverb: “While drowning, a man will try to hold onto an edge of a knife just to prolong life a bit.” We Jews of the Lodz ghetto, lost in utter despair, were hanging onto our rumor mills to prevent our moral demise. For example, there were rumors on many occasions about attempts on Hitler’s life. When the “real thing” came in June of 1944, we were unaware of it because we thought that it was another rumor. Unfortunately, the real occurrence did not bring us freedom and salvation.

Popular jokes poked fun at clumsy Germans but primarily at Rumkowski and his cronies. There was a joke about two Jews who meet on a ghetto street.

81  Eichenbaum
One says to the other, “I have some good news and some bad news to tell you.” The other Jews says, “Oh, good, first tell me the good news.” The first Jew then says, “The good news is that Hitler is dead. The bad news is that the good news is not true.”

Another popular joke was about an art dealer who brings his wares to a rich ghetto Jew and says, “I have something very special to sell to you, my friend. You see, I brought you the death mask of the famous composer, Franz Liszt.” The rich Jew asks the dealer, “Don’t you have something like this in Adolf Hitler?”

Deaths of Family

As 1942 was coming to an end, our little clan on Gesia Street diminished rapidly. After news reached us that the Warsaw ghetto was closed and the situation was bad there, my maternal grandparents suffered terribly. Their will to live and fight appeared to have gone out of them. They missed their sons very much. The first to succumb to a sudden heart attack was my grandfather, Raphael Worobiejczyk. He died during one of those bitter cold nights with frost shining on the walls of his room. When we buried him the same day, it was my first contact with death. He was a pious, God-fearing good man.

When Aunt Ida and Uncle Herman Bierman saw announcements on the ghetto walls, they decided to volunteer for working in Germany. Knowing his penchant for anything German, he probably persuaded his wife to go with him to this “cultural land.” Thus, the forlorn couple, still mourning the loss of their little daughter, went away from Gesia Street— not to be seen ever again.

Poor Aunt Ida, my mother’s younger sister, who was the Ophelia-like creature of our family. I hope that she finally found a resting place where no one will disturb her peaceful and innocent ways. I shall always mourn her, for her innocence was not for this cruel world.

My grandmother Keylal Worobiejczyk, born Rebejkow, who loved me very much, was next to die, in the spring of 1942. This long suffering, good soul was taken from us after suffering much from asthma and a weak heart. How she managed to stay alive as long as she did was a credit to her willpower. We buried her in Marysia not far from her husband’s grave.

My mother, who was so used to tending to her needs and to nursing her, took the loss of her mother very hard. She cried a great deal, especially when she wasn’t busy. The idle hours reminded her of the times when she had to care for
her mother.

Thus we had more room in the house on Gesia Street. Bronia and Moniek moved into the first room. But we missed the departed members of the family for a long time.

My noble mother, Basia Frejda Eichenbaum, born Worobiejczyk, was the first of us to succumb. She developed boil-like growths on the back of her that were somehow tubercular in nature. Despite some medication that Bronia was frantically bringing home from the hospital, nothing appeared to help and she was weakening day by day. There was no proper nourishment available when she had an appetite to eat, and soon she didn’t want to take nourishment at all. I recall these days with pain and tremendous heartache, but also with some pride. Imagine a 13-year-old boy carrying home daily from work a few cherished slices of potatoes. If one ever talks of sacrifice, what I did in those days was a prime example of it. I do not recall any greater sacrifice that I was called upon to make in my entire life.

Despite her pains and discomforts, mother was still optimistic, saying to us, “Don’t despair my children. For you there is a bright future. Soon the Allies will destroy the evil Hitlerites. My children will be free again and they will accomplish great things, I am sure of it.”

She admonished Bronia, the eldest, to take care of her brothers. Soon she was unable to move at all, and bedsores covered her small, emaciated body. Bronia washed her daily and had her hands full. When mother slipped into a coma, my sister, the nurse, decided to move her to the hospital on Lagiewicka Street. It was a smart decision because mother was taken better care of there, and we were not exposed to her sufferings and helplessness. I visited her twice.

The second visit, by which time she was diagnosed with spinal meningitis, will always remain vivid in my memory. Her mind was as though it was imprisoned- kept in a cellblock. I put my head on the pillow next to her face. Somehow, her hand reached my head and her fingers began to gently scratch the scalp beneath my hair, the way she used to do when I was small and she held me on her lap. To this day, I am in a quandary and in wonderment how she, despite her mind-blocking illness, could still experience and express the feeling of love for her child.

After being in a coma for about a fortnight, my dearest mother, a “super” Jewish mother, quietly slipped out of this life on Earth, a life full of giving and
great love for her family. Her life was full of hardships and worries and unfulfilled promise. We were all crestfallen, although her illness and suffering prepared us for this unavoidable finality.

We buried her on a cloudy afternoon at the Marysin cemetery. When her small beloved remains were lowered into the hole, a strong impulse of jumping into the grave with her came over me. I was prevented from doing this by the strong hands of my brother. Of all the bonds that bind one being to another, the bond for one’s mother is the strongest. I will always bemoan her loss.

Later, when I was thinking and dreaming of liberation and the time when the war ends, my “future” joy was always diminished by the thought that this person dearest to me, of all the souls on this Earth, will not be there for me. My father took mother’s demise very badly. He would still drudge to work daily, still wash in cold water every morning- even in the harshest winter weather. His optimism about the future began to wane rapidly, however. He became very remote and truculent in his relationship to us, his children. He became aloof and irritable. I sensed that half of his soul was gone.

About four months after Mother’s death, Papa started to cough and lose weight rapidly. Soon he became bedridden. Bronia brought a doctor to the house, and from their looks and muted conversations, I sensed that the prognosis was not good. Soon we knew that father had “galloping” tuberculosis, as cruel a sickness as there is- irreversible and fast. Soon his body was half its weight, and he was coughing up blood and essentially spitting out his lung tissue.

Father’s departure from this Earth was so speedy that I do not vividly recall many other details. He was gone in a matter of hours, so rapid was the progress of this devouring disease.

We were trudging through the muddy road to the final “good place” (in Yiddish), the resting place of Lodz’s large Jewish population. We put Papa in the hole there. A small wooden plank was all there was to be known of Chaim Jehoshua Eichenbaum, an honest, ambitious man who aspired and learned a lot in life, despite great hardships and limited education, a man of great vision. My honored Father.

_Dante’s Inferno_
Some of my most painful memories of the ghetto are connected with my way to or from work, when I would encounter people, sometimes neighbors and
friends, in whose eyes one could see their demise approaching. It was like a fever, a panic-stricken look, which marked these unfortunate souls. Sometimes, immediately prior to death, these people would actually be running in the streets, as if they were trying to get away from the “hand of death,” which appeared to have had a hold on them. Where they were running, no one knew. In their eyes there was the look of questioning, “Why God, oh why?”

It had gotten to be so bad that the rituals usually observed with the death of a Jewish person were no longer followed. The hearses that usually would carry one person to the Marysin cemetery were now filled with many bodies at a time. Since they were now pulled by men and not by horses, as was the case before the war, the Hevra Kiddusha (burial society) made fewer trips to the distant cemetery. A multitude of mourners had usually followed a hearse in a procession, but when death became so common, there was no one.

The subject of my nightmares to the present day are the sounds of human bones being broken after the bodies of the hunger victims were thrown into hearses from second and third-floor windows. These sounds are beyond description. I would choose a longer way to walk through the less populated streets of the ghetto to avoid these sounds and scenes.

The question of willpower to survive was not a problem in our home. Somehow, it was understood that our parents willed that to us children. We saw people of greater intelligence, higher education and cultural backgrounds go to pieces and disappear. Naturally, the uneducated fell into the gutter more quickly too. What makes up the proper mix of the determination to survive, no one will ever know.

The Nazis became desperate for people to deport and started to make selections on Sundays and on days when we were told not to report to work. During one of these days, we lost our friend, Mr. Rogozinski, the tailor and my chess teacher. He was becoming more and more depressed and looked emaciated. After the death of his wife, a saintly, quiet, and unassuming figure, he became very much indifferent to what was going on around him. He started to skip going to the factory, although he had a responsible position. This resulted in the loss of his only hot meal a day. Despite encouragements from others and me, he started to take to his bed and we saw him less frequently.

Imagine the horror when on one of these Sunday elections we saw the skeletal figure of Mr. Rogozinski being dragged out. Not only was he separated
from us, but he was also made to take small children from the bosoms of their wailing and screaming mothers and hand them to the Jewish policemen on the trucks. I watched at the agony of this man, this delicate human being who could not even harm a fly. This scene I shall never forget. Needless to say, we never heard of Mr. Rogozinski again.

The Sunday selections I saw were nothing short of scenes from Dante’s Inferno. One cannot imagine the type of humans – invalids, infirm, idiots, deformed – who were brought out from shelters or hiding places in a vulnerable, helpless condition. All these creations, with questioning eyes, were taken in large vans. Why? After the vans departed, only a few cries and soft wailing punctured the unnatural silence. Yes, we became indifferent to human suffering, but this was our only defense from going berserk.

**A Reprieve**

Then, early in 1944, a reprieve. We had been given notice that there will be no further deportations for three months. What euphoria. It appeared that all the trains taking war materiel to the Russian front made deportations impossible. Little did we know at the time that the real reason was the liquidation of the extermination camp at Chelmno, 35 miles from Lodz. The Nazis did not want to leave any evidence of mass destruction for the advancing Russian Army. Never had three months appeared longer to anyone alive. We started to believe in miracles again.

**We Siblings**

Moniek, Bronia, and I were only together during times of severe, ghetto-wide restrictions, when the Nazis squeezed the ghetto’s population into smaller and smaller areas. Although the bonds between us were as strong as ever, the conditions of our existence tended to make us very introspective and self-seeking.

Bronia could suffer hunger and adjust to all kinds of deprivation, but lack of sleep was her biggest enemy. As she approached her twenty-first birthday, her face lost some of its youthfulness but her full-grown figure was appetizingly lean. She was involved in many things in the ghetto about which she did not confide in me. I would not be surprised if she had been involved in the underground movements. I resented it when she would cut me off unexpectedly because nobody, even the people you love, was supposed to know. And I loved her as much as ever.
Human emotions led to an unpleasant incident between the three of us. It seems that, despite her undernourished condition, Bronia did not lack a joie de vivre. After her amorous affairs with Salek Davidowich and Marek Otomujci were over, due to their disappearances from the scene, she became involved with a man Moniek and I did not care for. Although I saw him only once, he was much older than Bronia, probably in his thirties. I also judged him to be of simpler origins, and he smoked a lot. Both Moniek and I did not like him, so we decided to tell Bronia in a dramatic fashion. We wrote her a long letter, the gist of which was that Mama and Papa, had they been alive, would not approve of this relationship. We implored her to stop. As far as the dramatic part, we signed our names in blood.

After reading the letter, our sister went into a rage, yelling, “If you don’t like it, I’ll move out of here completely and take up lodgings with him.” (To this day, I do not know his first or last name.) The argument continued until Moniek started to cry out that he saw the ghost of our beloved mother hover over the rooms, and she was crying and bemoaning her children. At this moment, the three of us fell into each other’s arms, crying and hugging for what appeared to be the longest time.

Bronia did not see this man ever after this. Although she did not have to account to her younger brothers, her love and devotion to us broke this strongest of human feelings, the physical attraction for a man. To this day, I wonder if Moniek and I had the right to do what we did. Had we known what was in store for us, how few were our chances for some happiness, would we have acted differently? Had Moniek really seen the ghost of our beloved mother? How little did we know that our days together were numbered.
## TROOP ENROLLMENT

**NOTE:** PLEASE LIST SEPARATELY BELOW: 1—OLD SCOUTS; 2—NEW BOYS; 3—TRANSFERS FROM OTHER TROOPS

Indicate Scout's rank as follows: T—Tenderfoot; S—Second Class; F—First Class; M—Merit

Indicate Associate Scouts by A, and Veterans by V, in addition to rank letter.

A Scout must be at least 12 years of age. No exception can be made. (Scout-Abacks must be at

<table>
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<th>Troop</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Age Last Birthday</th>
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**ARRANGE NAMES ALPHABETICALLY IN EACH GROUP**

**POST OFFICE ADDRESSES**

**Street**

**City**

**PREV.**

---

President Johnson with Eagle Mark Hochberg (beside him) at White House, 1965

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**SCOUT NIGHT**

"Scouting in our Community"

Presented for the Members of the Men's Club of Temple Beth El and their friends by TROOP FIVE, B. S. A. Providence

Tuesday, April 29, 1924

Written, directed, and acted entirely by Scouts and Officers of Troop Five

**CAST OF CHARACTERS** (Listed in Order of Their Appearance)

Announcer—A. L. M. Phillips

Pig—

Billy

Patrol Leader—A. P. L. Norman Martinez

Sword Craft

Sound Equipment

Chuckle—P. L. Joseph Gallo

The Hero—A. R. M.

The Mother—A. P. L. Norman Martinez

The Tsug另外—A. P. L. Norman Martinez

**OUR TALENT**

Violin—P. L. Joseph Gallo

Bagpipes—A. R. M.

Flute—A. R. M.

Bass—A. R. M.

**THANK YOU!**

A. P. L. Norman Martinez

P. L. Joseph Gallo

A. R. M.
Jewish Eagle Scouts:  
*Narragansett Council, 1923-2005*

Jewish Rhode Islanders have been actively and proudly involved in Scouting even before the Boy Scouts of America came to the Ocean State in 1913. For example, Walter Adler (1897-1991) joined the Rhode Island Boy Scouts in 1911. Herman Galkin (1898-1979) was so devoted to Scouting that he organized and led at least five troops sponsored by Jewish organizations.

Over the decades, many synagogues sponsored Cub packs and Scout troops. For example, three Providence temples sponsored troops: Beth-Israel, 10; Emanu-El, 20; and Beth-El, 10, 40, and then 50. The Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island (JORI), located on Summit Avenue in Providence, also sponsored its own Troop 41. Whether in small towns or suburbs, many Jewish Scouts also belonged to troops sponsored by schools and churches.

In 1941 the Narragansett Council organized its Jewish Committee on Scouting. Beginning in 1945, wherever they were based, hundreds of Jewish Scouts earned the Ner Tamid (Eternal Light) Award for their knowledge of and devotion to Judaism. Since 1953, several Jewish Scout leaders have received the Narragansett Council’s Silver Bear Award.

For most Jewish Scouts and their leaders, a weekend, a week or a summer spent at Camp Yawgoog, in Rockville, Rhode Island, was a glorious experience. Founded in 1916, it is considered one of the nation’s finest Scout “adventurelands.” Since 1949, Yawgoog has had two Jewish chapels as well as other facilities donated by Jewish families. Rabbi Sol Goodman has been the latest of Yawgoog’s many Jewish chaplains, and Melvin Hoffman was a longtime physician-in-residence.

Many articles about Scouting have appeared in *The Notes*. In our 1977 issue, for example, Eleanor Horvitz gave a historical overview. In our 2012 issue, Jules Cohen reflected on his four decades of leadership in the Narragansett Council.

This roster of Eagles is based on recipients of the Ner Tamid Award, members of Jewish-sponsored troops, and Jewish-sounding surnames. Fortunately, several names were added as a result of a preliminary list published in the October 2, 2015 issue of *The Jewish Voice*. Alas, due to the Narragansett Council’s incomplete records and the passage of time, the names of many Eagles are probably missing from this honor roll.
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My Black Soul and White Skin: A Memoir
Alvin Rubin

A quarter of a century ago, when Eleanor Horvitz and Geraldine Foster wrote an article about Jewish farmers in Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts, they interviewed Alvin. A photo of his father, Arthur, and his uncles, Abraham and Ralph, taken before 1920, adorned the front cover of the 1990 issue. It shows them wearing overalls and hoeing a cornfield, but not smiling.

Although Alvin may never have worn overalls, he is widely known in South County as a colorful dresser. On the Fourth of July, for instance, he is often bedecked in red, white, and blue. His sense of humor may be a bit corny, but it accurately reflects his affable and easygoing manner. He could charm any standoffish person.

I met Alvin around the time of Eleanor and Jerry's interview, but not in a haberdashery or watching a parade. We were in a library, one of his favorite abodes, where he easily makes friends with all kinds of materials, librarians, and bibliophiles. Never having cared about social distinctions or hierarchies, Alvin is quite naturally a raconteur and a good neighbor.

All the people I associated with from the ages of one to six, with the exception of my parents, were people of color. Beginning in 1936, we are talking about the Cape Verdean village in West Wareham, Massachusetts. The settlement extended for about one mile along one side of Route 28 (Middleboro Road), next to a cranberry bog.

My father, Arthur, had a fruit stand in front of our house, with a sign reading “Boneless Bananas.” He wore denim overalls and a fedora and smoked cigars. His parents, Joseph and Ada, had been farmers in Norton.

My mother, Ada, was slim, very beautiful, and very loving and demonstrative to me. She had a significant effect on my personality, and I, her first-born son, inherited her looks.

We lived in a pleasant, small white house. We had an outhouse with two holes for my parents and a small one, in the middle, for me.

Our next-door neighbors were the Baptistas. (I know that this name means baptized, but believed that their ancestors were Jews.) Ciancia, the
Rubin's mother, took care of me as if I were her child, but she had her own children, Mary and Tedo. Ciancia once laughed uproariously and said, “You peed on my lap!”

The Baptista grandmother, Celena, sat in a rocking chair in the back of their big front room. She wore a bandana, had dark skin and blue eyes. She smoked a corncob pipe.

Mary and Tedo took care of me like a baby brother. They loved me, and I loved them. Mary said that I followed her like a little lamb.

Once my father took me to a restaurant in Wareham. While in his arms I loudly swore in Creole, “Porku-Diablo,” which means Pig Devil. This brought much laughter to the other patrons. My embarrassed father said, “I think we’d better leave, Alvin.”

Another incident in my multiracial childhood does stand out. After I poked a finger through a hole in a fence at a little girl, she responded, “You white rat, you!”

The multiracial environment of my childhood had a profoundly positive effect on me, however. I thought of myself as black, and black men and women have always been my friends. It was a blessing as I think back over my life.

During my boyhood in Middleboro, Massachusetts, Thatcher's Row started on Main Street and ended at the back of the Baptist church. Sometimes notices were posted on the back of the church for all to see.

One day a sign said: “Come Hear Jim Voss and Be Saved.” Everyone was talking about this lecture, so I wanted to go badly. Then I said to myself, “Suppose I came out of the lecture a Christian?” “What would my parents do if I came home and I was no longer a Jew?” I didn’t go to the lecture.

Another day I told my father that I decided to be like everyone else in Middleboro and become a Christian. He didn’t say a word. However, the next day I found myself a new member of B’nai B’rith Youth. The following day my father gave me a new book, They Were All Jews, which I still have.

Nevertheless, at my college baccalaureate at Bridgewater State College, I played Bach-Gounod’s Ave Maria on the violin. Earlier, I had taken piano lessons from a Maestro Houlihan.

While a Ford Foundation fellow at Yeshiva University’s Graduate School, I was called “the bocher from Boston.” As a Reform Jew, however, I didn’t wear a yarmulke. My fellowship involved teaching part-time at Morris High School in the South Bronx. Its student body was one-third Puerto Rican, one-third black,
and one-third white. One morning when I signed in at Morris, the secretary, Miss Unna, looked up and said to me, “Mr. Rubin, you have beautiful lips!” I was virginal and speechless.

After Yeshiva, I was accepted at Harvard for graduate work. They told me that I was too young to enroll, however. Instead, I was told, “Go across the Charles River to Boston University.”

I became a graduate student assistant in philosophy at B.U. Later, I was appointed an honorary fellow in its Human Relations Center. While living in Boston, one of my close friends was Chuks Admora, a Nigerian. Another was Rev. James McCallum from Greensboro, North Carolina. He was a sweet man, who used to tease me about the right woman for me!

Years later I was appointed by the African-American community to the Martin Luther King State Commission. I joined the Urban League and the NAACP. Jim Vincent, NAACP’s president, told me, “I could tell that you were a black man.”

Algernon Black, the leader of the New York Ethical Culture Society, invited me to an interview at Harvard. He offered me a position as leader of Ethical Culture in Massachusetts. I respectfully declined.

For 30 years I was director of education and recreation at the Dr. Joseph H. Ladd Center, a facility for the developmentally disabled in Exeter, Rhode Island. During many years that my wife, Barbara, and our children, Andrea and Daniel, and I lived in South County, I was president of the Pettaquamscutt Historical Society in Kingston. I also became a founder of the Italian Society of South County and served on the South Kingstown Library’s advisory board as well as the state’s advisory board for libraries. During the early 1990s, I was proud to serve as the founding president of the Aristides de Sousa Mendes Society, many of whose members descended from Jews persecuted during the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions.

My own Von Dreizenstock ancestors came from Cordoba, Spain. Having descended to some degree from Sephardim, I felt a bond with Touro Synagogue and served as a docent there.

I wrote a book about my family’s genealogy and lore. One distinguished relative was Sir Solly Zuckerman, who was born in South Africa but spent most of his life in Britain.

I have taught at many levels, including high schools in Bridgewater and
Needham, Massachusetts. I also taught at two of Rhode Island’s Catholic institutions, Providence College and Mount St. Joseph College.

While serving as an adjunct professor of gerontology at the University of Rhode Island, one of my best friends was Melvin Hendricks. He was the first chair of the Africana program. I once gave a lecture, “My Cape Verdean Childhood.” I owe much appreciation to Prof. Vanessa Quainoo, another chair of the Africana program, and I have donated many books and pictures to its library. Her husband, Bishop John Quainoo, from Ghana, was also my close friend.

Another cherished friend and teacher at URI was Harold Smith, a Native American. He once playfully kicked my shoe and said, “You ain’t white; you’re black.”

At a URI faculty meeting, we were told that a young Jamaican student from Detroit was afraid of white people. I raised my hand and volunteered to be his friend. Ibn Bakari and I are still friends.

Some years later, another of my close friends was George Lima, a Cape Verdean who was a graduate of a Southern college and Brown University. He was a political activist in Rhode Island. George said that he was 90% Jewish and 10% Cameroon.

I have corresponded with Henry Louis Gates, the chair of Harvard’s Africana program. In one of his letters he wrote, “Even though you are bald, you are still one handsome dude.”

I also had the pleasure of corresponding with President Obama. I have a beautiful letter from him.

My lifelong affection for all kinds of people has always felt quite natural to me. I must modestly mention, however, that in the May/June 2014 issue of Yankee magazine, I was dubbed Wickford’s “unofficial ambassador of good will.” Friends and strangers alike have also referred to me as Wickford’s “mayor.”
The author above, second from left
Alton: A Camp Beloved by Rhode Islanders

Ronald C. Markoff

Few experiences have been as rewarding for many boys and girls – young men and women too – as the fun, excitement, and friendships of summer camp. But how many such campers can look back at 15 consecutive summers at the same village in the woods? Indeed, how many alumni still gather decades after their idyllic, lakeside sanctuaries have vanished?

Ronald Markoff, a seasoned real estate attorney on the East Side, is one alumnus whose youthful memories have never faded. Over many decades, they have probably become more precious and endearing. In a heartbeat, he’d jump right back on that bus to New Hampshire’s Camp Alton.

A graduate of Classical High, Ronald fittingly earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in classics at Brown. He is a 1975 graduate of Boston College Law School. His ongoing devotion to our Jewish community has been demonstrated through his leadership of Temple Emanu-El, Jewish Family Service, and Brown-RISD Hillel.

Ronald’s love of camp was partially inspired by his mother, Florence, who was a counselor at Maine’s Highland Nature during the 1930s. Still going strong, it became Camp Mataponi. Ronald’s daughter was a camper there before frolicking at Maine’s Camp Laurel.

In last year’s issue of The Notes, there was an article about a “Camp Shandah.” Everyone knows that this Yiddish word means “disgrace.” Well, readers, the photo of “Camp Shandah” opposite the title page actually showed Camp Alton, which was nestled among the pines of Wolfeboro, New Hampshire, on the southern shore of Lake Winnipesaukee known as Alton Bay.

Although the editor of The Notes has assured me that last year’s article was about Stephen Logowitz’s unfortunate experiences at another camp, actually one in Massachusetts, I would like to set the record straight. Writing at the behest of all Rhode Island alumni of our beloved Camp Alton, I would like to tell readers why our camp was unlike any other and why, 23 years after its closing, we still honor and cherish it.

Founded in 1936 by Philip Marson, the head of the English department
at Boston Latin School (and rightfully called “The Chief”), Camp Alton was an
overnight camp for approximately 260 boys. Most came from comfortable and
well-to-do families. Some boys were as young as six, and the oldest were 15.
They were from Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York City, Long Island, Boston and,
yes, even Providence and its environs.

At first we all drove up to Boston Latin School, and in later years we
drove to the old Stop & Shop in Chestnut Hill to meet the bus and our counselor
chaperones.

In 1960, when my twin brother, Gary, and I were 11 years old, we began
attending Alton. Mel Alperin, a camper from the 1940s and ’50s, encouraged us
to attend. After being campers for two summers, we began our careers as coun-
selors and stayed another 13 years. So summer and Alton became synonymous
for us.

Whatever the year, another gorgeous day at camp began at 7 AM. Reve-
eille was played through a loudspeaker placed strategically along the bunk line.
Oh, that bugle! It was the signal to breakfast, lunch, and dinner; to
switch periods; to raise and lower flags; afternoon swim; evening activity; and
finally taps. Sometimes the loudspeaker broke down and ironically, yours truly,
a trumpet player, became the bugler. Or was it “bungler”? Trust me, I knew my
bugle calls very well even as a self-taught trumpeter. I had begun to play at the
age of eight under the tutelage of my brother Joe who showed me the fingerings.

Being classically trained and a music-lover, I never lost my passion for
trumpet through the years. I played professionally through college and law
school. Since becoming a cofounder in 2005, I have played with the Narragansett
Bay Symphony Community Orchestra. I am sure a lot of Altonites have stories of
this nature. Our camp had a great knack for allowing us to be ourselves and hone
our talents.

Alton was a big camp— almost 90 acres. The bunk line, consisting of
16 bunks, ran from A to P. Bunk A was a good three-fourths of a mile from the
waterfront. Located on a peninsula, our camp was surrounded by Lake Winnipe-
saukee on three sides. But boys occasionally left the camp proper for overnight
camping and mountain climbing trips along the Kangamangus Trail. These expe-
ditions taught boys to live with bears and moose and survival techniques as well.
Alton was also a rugged camp. There was no electricity or showers in the bunks,
although we did have our own toilet in the bunk. A camper needed a flashlight.
with plenty of spare batteries and shower shoes to walk to the common show-
ers located under the kitchen. Kids showered at least once per week but usually
soaped up in the lake with Ivory soap.

Our camp was unusual for its Color War. Unlike most camps, whose
Color War usually occurred at the finale of each season, Alton's lasted all summer
long. Although it pitted Greens against Grays (or vice versa) in every sport imag-
inable, Color War was also a friendly rivalry. Competition was spirited, but there
was no obsession with a “do-or-die” attitude. Each camper played on a team
commensurate with his ability, and the object of course was to have fun. While
there were no trophies for the winner per se, exemplary campers were enshrined
as “Prize Campers” and a plaque was hung in the rec hall each year with their
names.

Yes, some boys misbehaved, so their teams were penalized by a loss of
points. If a camper lost too many points, he received a visit from the seniors of
each team. It was amazing how a little pressure from these older campers turned
a disruptive camper into a very cooperative one.

“The Chief” never stressed water sports, although, in addition to swim-
mimg, we did have waterskiing, sailing, and canoeing. Land activities were big and
included hiking and camping. We also played a lot of basketball, baseball, and
tennis, which were “The Chief’s” favorites.

Alton’s numerous programs involving arts and crafts, drama, and music
were no less important than sports. Each age group put on skits, and the oldest
boys put on plays and, at the end of each summer, musicals. These included the
by Jury.” These shows were the real McCoy, and kids were extremely talented.
Some Altonites went on to find success in television and movies, including Andy
Cadiff, who moved to Hollywood and produced the TV show “Happy Days.”
Tuesday nights were music nights. We even had our own orchestra known affec-
tionately as “The Alton Offbeats.” The music counselor conducted and booked us
to play at other camps in the area.

Our camp also had a weekly newspaper, *The Alton Almanac*, put out by
counselors and campers working side-by-side. Each edition- part satirical, part
serious, and always entrepreneurial- was a gem. The paper’s motto was “All the
news that fits, we print.”

So what else separates Alton from other boys’ summer camps? Why did
so many campers return every summer? Why, after 30, 40 or even 50 years, is there an indefinable bond among Altonites? What is it about long-ago experiences that feel as if they happened yesterday?

The answer is very simple. It’s called tradition. Just like the famous song from “Fiddler on the Roof,” it was tradition that kept parents sending their sons back year after year. Not only campers yearned to return every summer. Like a magnet drawn to metal, many counselors, even from overseas, returned year after year.

Philip Marson, “The Chief,” brought many of following, unforgettable traditions to camp:

Flagrush was similar to “steal the bacon” (but please excuse the traif). Greens and Grays attempted to invade the other team’s territory, steal a flag posted on a stick, and bring it back before being tackled. There was no equipment; boys wore only bathing suits and sneakers. The swift-of-foot were charged with showing their prowess in avoiding and annihilating opposing team members. As crazy as it may sound, it was a badge of honor to be scratched, gouged, and impaled by the other team. Campers measured days, months, and years around Flagrush.

The true goal was to bring back the “50,” which was in the depths of the other team’s territory. Guarded like Fort Knox, it was a Herculean feat—similar to a fullback going all the way to the opposite team’s end zone—to capture the other team’s flag and bring it back over the 50-yard line.

On Wrestling Night, which resembled professional wrestling, the most athletic (not to mention masochistic) counselors went tête-à-tête. “Fatschtick Baboon,” for example, was the alter ego of a professional, “Haystack Calhoun.” “Doctor Doom” was named after “Doc.” Other catchy names were: “Health Maintenance,” “Organized Criminal,” “Don Coincidence,” and the ever-threatening “Voodoo Man.” Although kids screamed for their favorite wrestlers, “Robert Orbit” never won a match.

The frenzy leading up to Wrestling Night was as exciting as the event itself. Since the beginning of each summer, masked visitors kidnapped little ones from their beds (but all in jest). While they slept in their cozy beds, other kids had their faces mysteriously decorated with Magic Marker drawings. The same was true of some counselors’ bald heads. Just as on TV, masked marvels also interrupted scheduled events.
Circus, also known as “Circass,” was a field day of fun and games. It included dunking counselors and pie-eating contests. Another contest was who could eat the most hot dogs in a minute. Nobody went hungry here.

Sing was a very quiet day in the hectic daily schedule of camp life. Greens and Grays pitted voices against each other in a fierce medley of songs, including: “march,” “comic,” “anthem” and, finally, “fight song.” Having run Sing for umpteen years, I was personally tormented when I needed to tap a young man on the shoulder to tell him to mouth the words. Needless to say, it was traumatic for that young man as well.

On Trip Day, held on Thursdays, all good campers were lucky enough to leave their abode and go into Wolfeboro, Laconia or Rochester to see a play or a movie. Unfortunately, some boys also tortured merchants, which may have left a bittersweet taste in the mouths of town fathers.

Campfires were held on Sunday nights. Altonites did skits, and I was the “master” of ghost stories. These included such favorites as “Three-Fingered Willy” and “The Old Man on the Train.” I had the little kids jumping into each other’s laps. “The Chief” actually told me to temper my stories because the camp nurse indicated that some boys were having nightmares.

Visiting Day offered parents a little taste of what Camp Alton had to offer. We had activities galore for campers and their parents to enjoy together. It was also jokingly called “Palm Sunday” because counselors would stretch out their empty palms and parents would generously fill them with tips. Counselors would brag as to who collected the most.

A golf ball’s hit away from Alton was Camp Kehonka, a girls’ camp that has also closed. A private beach in front of a home separated the two camps. It was probably quite comical for the home’s owners to see boy counselors in the pitch black of night going to visit girl counselors and vice versa. It was like a tennis volley.

The director of Kehonka, who was quite anti-Semitic, did not appreciate Alton’s counselors visiting his domain. Not only did he write letters of protest to “The Chief,” but he also occasionally called the police about trespassing. To keep all counselors in the loop, “The Chief” would read these letters to us at meetings.

As a Jewish camp since its inception, Alton had some traditions of religious observance. For example, “The Chief” read the Bible each morning at assembly. Everyone listened intently. The same sense of respect imbued flag-
raising and lowering, which included a salute and the Pledge of Allegiance. Each meal was prefaced by “Bless this food to our use, Oh Lord.” Although food was not kosher, milk was not served with meat (only “bug juice” being allowed).

Friday night services, Reform in nature, used a lot of English and a bit of Hebrew. Dr. Michael Fox, a pulmonologist at Rhode Island Hospital, conducted them.

Every veteran senior counselor was on duty (“OD”) several nights each summer to patrol the bunk line and to keep kids safe. We counselors also organized evening assemblies and inspected bunks for cleanliness and neatness.

I was a tough inspector. If I did not like the way a kid’s shelves looked, I emptied his belongings into the center of the floor. This was affectionately known as a “tossed salad.” Then the boy was told to reshel his things neatly. Remember, this was Color War and each bunk lost points if untidy.

Although campers were mostly well behaved, there were aberrations. For example, in 1970, when I was on “OD,” the cute campers in Bunk A were making way too much noise after midnight. My earlier warnings to be quiet or else had been ignored. As I returned to Bunk A, I found shaving cream on the door latch. With my flashlight in hand, I stomped into the bunk but encountered absolute silence. I knew, however, that something was up. As I walked farther into the darkness, I tripped over a fishing line that these angels had tied along the bottom of their bedposts. I did a swan dive flat on my face. Then, after considering every conceivable punishment, I had these munchkins run laps around the athletic field until they begged for mercy. Subsequently, they cleaned the entire camp of every bit of litter and were docked from evening activities.

Very seldom did a boy behave so badly that he was sent home. Maybe one camper got to that point during all my years at Alton. In fact, disciplinary issues were infrequent, but I guess boys will be boys.

Over 15 years, I had the privilege of seeing almost every camper mature. This was an extremely gratifying experience.

I should explain that I was hardly ever away from the kids. Senior counselors had only three nights off each summer. We drove into Wolfeboro to do laundry or went to the movies in Laconia. In my later years as a senior counselor, I was fortunate to have my own car.

“The Chief” died in 1970. His son-in-law, a busy and well-known oral surgeon, was not interested in running a summer camp. Consequently, “The
Chief’s” grandson, Peter Guralnick, who taught classics at Boston University and became a world authority on Elvis Presley and rock music, took over. He was gung ho about Alton, but he never had the stamina or urge to continue it indefinitely.

Unfortunately and unexpectedly, Alton closed in 1992. It was a shock to all Altonites.

Perhaps kids had too many alternatives to summer camp, particularly a rough one. Alton had no high-tech activities- just plain old fun and games in the guise of Color War. The camp’s infrastructure too became antiquated, and cesspools on Lake Winnipesaukee needed to be replaced with septic systems. The costs would have been astronomical. It had always been Alton’s philosophy to keep tuition below other camps’, so increases would have been considerable. Actually, a group of counselors did want to purchase the camp and perpetuate its traditions, but nothing ever materialized.

Alton’s owners sold our beloved camp. Among them was Providence’s Robert Riesman, of blessed memory, whose family were neighbors of our beloved “Chief.” Now on the site of New Hampshire’s most beautiful camp lies a $49 million castle (which is for sale, by the way).

For 67 years, Camp Alton has had an annual dinner for alumni- campers and counselors alike. This past June, 40 hearty Altonites, including Mel Alperin and Bob Fine, gathered at a restaurant in Wellesley to share our favorite stories and memories. Always deeply nestled in our hearts and minds, they will never die. I dream of camp every year, though I have not been there for nearly 40. Trust me, I am not alone.

Partial List of Rhode Islanders at Camp Alton

| Mark Alperin | Mike Fish | Ron Markoff | Peter Scoliard |
| Mel Alperin | Marc Flink | Robert Mellion | Ed “Woody” Shore |
| Gary Berkson | Peter Flink | Barry Nelson | Larry Spindell |
| Neil Brier | Peter Freed | Jonathan Nelson | Steve Spindell |
| Andrew Chason | Ken Hak | Bruce Percelay | Paul Stanzler |
| Mark Chason | Andy Hoffman | David Percelay | Michael Stillman |
| Steve Field | Eric Hoffman | James Percelay | Alan Zametkin |
| Jeff Fine | David Hopfenberg | John Pranikoff | Mike Zametkin |
| Robert Fine | David Jaffe | Linc Pranikoff | Also of note is Richard Egbert from Newton. He was Buddy Cianci’s attorney, which may make him a partial Rhode Islander. |
| Steve Fine | Billy Kaplan | David Raphael | |
| Stuart Fine | Phil Korb | Peter Sadick | |
| Alan Finkelman | Richard Korb | Dick Sauber | |
| Paul Finkelman | Bob Krause | Greg Schneider | |
| Roy Finkelman | Gary Markoff | Steve Schneider | |
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Becoming a Jewish Writer and Storyteller

Mark Binder

The author may be familiar to many readers as an aspiring politician. In 2004 he ran unsuccessfully as an antiwar candidate against U.S. Representative Patrick Kennedy. Although Mark spent only $500 on his campaign, he won 26% of the primary vote. Eight years later, he ran unsuccessfully in District 4 to unseat the speaker of Rhode Island’s House of Representatives, Gordon Fox. Mark won 42% of the primary vote and, eventually, the speaker was unseated.

Some readers may know Mark from his rigorous exercise routines at the East Side YMCA. They may not know, however, that he is a third-degree black belt in Aikido, the Japanese martial art form devoted to peace.

But Mark is widely known and praised in still other art forms, which he addresses in this article. Indeed, over 30 years, he has written 10 books, recorded six live and studio albums, and has entertained approximately 185,000 viewers and listeners at more than 250 schools, 150 libraries, and numerous additional settings. He has engaged, intrigued, and astonished more people than the entire population of Providence.

Not surprisingly, Mark has won awards from the Rhode Island Council of the Arts and the Rhode Island Department of Education. He has not yet been honored by a Jewish organization, however. “The challenge with writing and telling Jewish stories,” he wrote in his book, My Life in Chelm, “is that half the people think you’re too Jewish and the other half think you’re not Jewish enough.”

As an author and storyteller, I’ve been privileged to cross boundaries and share my work in many Jewish settings and for every “flavor” of Judaism. I’ve told my stories to children, families and seniors at Chabad, Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Reform, and unaffiliated congregations around the country. I’ve also performed half a dozen times at the National Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, Massachusetts. My goal has always been the same, to transmit joy through the written and spoken word, and to build bridges between communities.

* * *
When I was a kid, my father, who was a doctor, moved around a lot. I was born in Newton, Massachusetts, and before third grade we’d lived in Boston, Cherry Hill, South Hackensack, San Antonio, El Paso, and Framingham before finally settling in Bethesda, Maryland. The synagogue we attended was Temple Shalom in Silver Spring, led by Ian Wolk, a member of the Guild of Liberal Singing Reform Rabbis with Guitars.

I never learned Hebrew. I could parse and pronounce the aleph-bet and some of the diacritical punctuation. We didn’t study prayers or the structure of the service, but I did get a pretty good education in the history and stories of the Jewish people. Hillel wasn’t just a rabbi; he was the rabbi who stood on one foot. Abraham was a young boy with a stick, banging on idols. And there were the villagers of Chelm, so dumb that they tried to catch the moon in a rain barrel and hired porters to carry them over the snow so they wouldn’t leave footprints.

My bar mitzvah, in 1975, was the first double bar mitzvah in the synagogue’s history because there were so many kids in my religious school class. Jeffrey, my partner on the bimah, had a wonderful voice.

Me? I sang like a frog- a sick frog. My vocal chords had been shut down a few years earlier, at Camp Waredaca (which stood for Washington Area Recreational Day Camp). At a campfire sing-along, the kid next to me whacked me on the shoulder. “Shut up,” he said. “You can’t sing.” I believed him so I stopped trying. Trauma is so easily inflicted when you’re young and stupid. One of my favorite tips from Rabbi Wolk was, “If you don’t know the words, just sing ‘Peas and Carrots.’” It didn’t help me learn Hebrew, but it still works.

To prepare for my bar mitzvah, my tutor, Mrs. Weissberg, gave me a 33-rpm LP (record) with my Torah portion. I listened to it over and over and over and over and over. The big day came. I was called to the bimah. My hair was shaggy. My glasses, part of that first generation of light-changing sunglasses, were semiopaque. I had a big smile.

My voice changed right in the middle of my chanting. I remember singing, and then a loud croaking, GLURP! sound. And then silence. There was this endless pause while I shifted from boy to manhood. Everyone was watching. Waiting. I lost my place. The rabbi pointed with the yad. Somehow I finished. Years later, I found the audio tape recording of the ceremony. The glitch that I thought had lasted ten minutes was about half a second.

The rest of my religious education is a blur. I continued with Confirma-
tion classes on Tuesdays with the rabbi. These were long and energetic discussions of ethics, history, and religion. We went on weekend retreats, singing and going for walks in the woods.

After my first year of college, though, I came home and found that the spiritual leader I’d respected had vanished. Nobody talked about him ever again. I stopped going to services.

* * *

From 1980 to 1984 I attended Columbia College in New York City, around the same time as Barack Obama, but I never met him.

My college goals were simple: no classes before 10 AM, no classes on Fridays, and study in as many departments as possible. Columbia has an intensive core curriculum with almost two years of requirements. As a sophomore, I went to see the dean and asked if I could major in general studies. He said I was missing the point. As a result, I “concentrated” in history, taking five, four-credit seminars over four years. In the end, I managed to take classes in 21 departments.

Looking back, I actually majored in mythology and storytelling. In addition to the core cannon, I read the Gilgamesh epic and the *The Arabian Nights*. I studied with T.H. Gaster, a disciple of Joseph Campbell, and enrolled in playwriting at the graduate Hammerstein Center. I even managed to wangle my way into a storytelling class at the School of General Studies (for older students) taught by Spalding Gray,¹ which of course became a story itself.

There was a lesbian from Amsterdam, who talked about squatting in apartments in London. A park ranger from the Statue of Liberty talked about terrorists. A Viet Nam vet discharged for psychological reasons told stories about being imprisoned in Guatemala.

I was a suburban kid with happily married parents and had no history of child abuse, alcoholism or attempts at suicide. My life was boring. I tried telling about my first girlfriend, Elizabeth, but my classmates criticized me, saying my story was so vague that I clearly didn’t care that much about her. I had nothing else to say. So I lied.

* * *

¹
After graduation, I spent four months crashing on the floor of a friend’s apartment and working as a word-processing temp, which paid $18 an hour. My plan was to move to London, where I would become a world-famous, internationally based playwright.

It didn’t work. London was cold and lonely. I moved back to New York, got my own apartment, and alternated between temping and writing. After a few more years, I still wasn’t getting anywhere, so I applied to the Trinity Rep Conservatory in Providence.

With two other students, I rented an apartment in a big red house behind the Columbus Theater on Broadway, which in those days was showing XXX-rated movies. At Trinity, I studied a blend of acting, directing, and playwriting. Naturally, I took a shot at performing.

* * *

After finishing Trinity Conservatory and receiving a master’s degree from Rhode Island College, I started to write for local newspapers, including The Providence NewPaper, The Pawtucket Times, and Rhode Island Monthly. These didn’t pay much, so I worked as a secretary at Travelers Aid.

Finally, I was hired full-time as coeditor of The Rhode Island Jewish Herald, then a weekly, for-profit newspaper. My job was simple: get the paper out the door by Thursday at 10 AM so it could be printed and delivered by Friday. I wanted to do more than that, and started a number of new features: a recipe column and an “Ask the Rabbi” column, for which I interviewed local leaders. I wrote a historical series, “50 Years Ago During the Holocaust.” The biggest news story we had was when Marty’s Kosher Meats was busted by the Vaad. I wrote headlines like “Kosher Kontroversy.” It was fun.

Then one Thursday morning, a freelancer didn’t turn in a story. We had a hole in the paper. In those days, the Internet wasn’t such a big thing. I didn’t have a slush pile of stories to fill the hole. So I sat down and wrote my first “Tale of Chelm.” It began:

The Cantor gestured furiously, and finally after much discussion, the three local businessmen realized that the Cantor, the vocal leader of the synagogue, was unable to speak.
“He's lost his voice!” said Reb Cohen.
“Who's ever heard of a Cantor with no voice?” exclaimed Reb Gold.
“We must help him find it!” said Reb Stein, decisively.
And so, the three businessmen and the Cantor began to retrace the path that the speechless singer of hymns had taken on his way home from shul.

– from “How the Cantor Lost His Voice”

Soon I was writing a Chelm story for all the supplements, including Hanukkah, weddings, and bar mitzvahs. If we had extra pages in the paper, I’d fill them with a short piece of fiction.

I was fired that spring because I’d proposed writing a completely humorous edition of the paper for Purim. We’d have two front pages (“Herald Adds Second Front Page!”). On the second front page, the lead story would be a piece of humorous fiction called “Transvestite Rabbis and the Women Who Love Them.” I had promised the staff that if anyone objected that we’d kill the piece. The paper’s manager didn’t share my sense of humor. He was Catholic, and it appalled him that I would poke such acerbic fun at religious leaders. After I’d been doing the job for six months without missing a deadline, he sacked me.

Naturally, as a new Rhode Islander, I appealed the ruling and got unemployment benefits. For the first time in my life, I was able to devote 100% of my time to writing.

Realizing that every major American city has a Jewish newspaper, I began writing Chelm stories for their supplements. For the next year I wrote and wrote and sold a few stories here and there. The characters in my stories quickly began to develop distinct personalities. They weren’t the generic “fools” of Chelm, but real people who were often boneheaded, but occasionally just misinterpreted.

Collecting unemployment is fine for a time, but it can stifle ambition. So, following a brief stint as an editor of a gourmet food trade magazine, I became a full-time freelancer, banging on doors to write for an assortment of magazines about computers, business, gourmet food, pizza, and beer. I wrote a four-part series on beverage dispensers and a world-famous, five-part series on ovens, both for Pizza Today Magazine. (Yawn.)

Fiction, however, was still my primary love. I wrote a short story for Pizza Today about a solitary owner of a Greek pizzeria and a young black boy who came in looking for work. It was rejected, but years later when I changed the
title to “The Pizza Boy,” it ran in Cricket Magazine and was picked up by several standardized testing companies.²

***

In 1999 I began a conversation with Vicki Samuels, the editor of The Houston Jewish Herald, which for several years had been buying every Chelm story I wrote. I asked Vicki if she’d be interested in a serialized novel about Chelm. I’d write a new installment every week until it was done. I had a rough idea about following the lives of identical twins, born in Chelm and confused from birth. I would target stories to run with the seasons and holidays. She said, “Sure,” but I don’t think she believed me. I know that she didn’t expect it to run every week for two years. It did.

The Brothers Schlemiel premiered in January 2000 with:

Eight-year-olds can be devious. Although the twins knew who they were, Abraham and Adam Schlemiel did their best to keep everyone else guessing. They never meant to hurt anyone, but they did enjoy the confusion. Getting into mischief could be great fun, and as they got older they got better – both at getting into trouble and at avoiding the consequences.

For example, they made a habit of never going into a room at the same time. Abraham would go in first, and then Adam, or the other way around. Then Abraham would duck out a window or another door and come in again. They could keep this up for an hour or more, until everyone else’s head was spinning.

Now, in any other city, this sort of nonsense would never be tolerated. Unfortunately, the villagers of Chelm had notoriously short memories, something that the brothers played upon mercilessly. And as they got older they kept getting better.

– from The Brothers Schlemiel, Unabridged Edition (Light Publications, 2014)

My process was simple. Every Monday morning I took my laptop to 729 Hope Street, a local coffee shop, and wrote for two hours or so. My writing is largely improvisational. I start with a rough idea and run with it. On Tuesday I would read the installment aloud to someone. This is incredibly helpful to find errors, typos, awkward sentence structure, and confusing or boring parts.
On Wednesday I’d rewrite and revise, and then seven weeks later I’d e-mail the installment to Vicki to be printed in the next week’s paper. The seven-week buffer gave me time to make changes if something better came along than my initial inspiration. It also gave me the ability to go on vacation.

* * *

Several months into writing The Brothers Schlemiel, Susan LeTendre, an acquaintance, invited me to tag along to a meeting of storytellers. The Little Rest Storytelling group met one Tuesday a month to socialize and share stories. Some of the members were professional storytellers, but most were just people who liked to talk and listen. I brought the pages of the latest installment and read them to the group.

After several months of listening to me, one of the members suggested that I try “telling” a story instead of just reading one. I shrugged. “What’s the difference?”

Several months later, though, I tried. I don’t remember what the first story I told was, but it was a profound shift.

When you read a story or a speech, the page (or pad) gets in the way. One of the reasons Mark Twain was such a popular lecturer was that he memorized his texts. When you take the visible text away, and simply speak to an audience, the relationship changes. If your presentation or your story is good, in a remarkably short time the distinction between listener and teller drops away. What’s left is the story, which floats in space, inhabiting the minds of everyone in the room.

Suddenly, an entire new world of possibility opened. I rehearsed and practiced, and on November 10, 2001, I found myself standing at the front of a room, telling stories to a group of parents and children. I was home.

At the time I was working as the part-time director of the East Bay Coalition for the Homeless. Then, in early 2002, I was hired by “Read Boston” to be part of its “StoryMobile” program. Sponsored by Mayor Menino’s office, storytellers would travel around Boston all summer, tell stories for a half hour, and give away books to children. I quit my day job and signed on for three shows a day, five days a week.

Following an intensive round of vocal lessons, I began performing-
without amplification— to audiences all over Boston, ranging from preschoolers to high schoolers, often in the same room. “Shows” were held in schools, gyms, churches, classrooms, community centers, boys’ and girls’ clubs, and sometimes in parking lots. It was trial by fire. I had to learn crowd control, pacing, and picking the right story on the fly. It was an exhausting, exciting, and challenging way to make a meager living.

***

One of my favorite pieces, “The Challah that Ate Chelm,” was inspired by an explosion of dough when I was learning to bake. I’d obtained a new recipe from a baker and followed it to the letter. Without thinking, I put six cups of water into a home Kitchen Aid mixer. What a mess!

In my story, “Muddle,” the apprentice to Reb Stein, the baker, adds so much yeast that challah oozes out of the bakery and down the main street of Chelm. Originally published in Jewish newspapers across the country, the story continued to evolve and transform because I keep telling and changing it. There are different endings and different recordings. The version printed in Cricket Magazine differs from the version printed in A Hanukkah Present. Even today, when I tell the story it slips and slides, like a gigantic ball of dough trying to become something new.

***

Only a few years ago did I finally discover the theme that connects my written and especially spoken stories. About a hundred artists had gathered at the Providence Casino to discuss expanding the arts in the future.

Sitting next to me was Barnaby Evans, the creator and director of WaterFire, arguably the largest and most successful public performance art in Rhode Island history. Bonfires are set in the middle of the rivers in downtown Providence, music is piped in through an elaborate sound system, and tens of thousands of people gather to walk, watch, listen, and enjoy. The primal blend of crackling fire, wafts of smoke, reflections on water, and the joy of being with so many people make it a powerful and compelling experience. Over the years, WaterFire has grown from a single event on New Year’s Eve to a regular occurrence throughout
summer. There were food vendors and dance stages, so for a few years I helped organize a storytelling stage.

At the Providence Casino meeting, I realized that I could never compete with the spectacle, diversity, and overwhelming sensation that Barnaby has created. But there was one worthwhile thing in my work that would become my guiding target. I could transmit joy.

Joy is intangible but can be experienced and gifted from one person to another. And it’s passed on best through direct human contact. You can’t receive as much joy from a movie or a video or a game or even a musical recording. But in live, face-to-face performances, whether musical or theatrical or spoken, there are an opening and a possibility— and in my case, an imperative— to transmit joy.

Transmitting joy is not something that I do in a manipulative way. I don’t have a set point in a script and say to myself, “Right at that moment, there, is when they’ll feel the joy.” It’s a more organic experience. Something delicious and intangible bubbles up with a smile when I begin telling a story.

1 Spalding Gray (1941-2004), who was born in Rhode Island, moved to New York City, and became part of Elizabeth LeCompte’s Performing Garage. He reinvented autobiographical storytelling as a performance experience. Although his photographic memory made the details of his work vibrant, it also was a curse because it kept the demons in his head alive. See, for example, his film “Swimming to Cambodia.”

2 When I first heard that my story was going to be on a test, I was overjoyed. At last, I thought, a wide audience of young readers. Then I remembered what it’s like to read a story on a standardized test. If you’re smart, you read the title, jump to the questions, then go back and quickly skim the story looking for answers. You’re not really reading, so much as data mining. Sad but true.
Rabbi Gutterman’s Study

Mel Blake

A distinguished era in Rhode Island’s Jewish history concluded in May, when Rabbi Leslie Y. Gutterman retired as senior rabbi of Providence’s Temple Beth-El. Having surpassed the tenure of his predecessor, Rabbi William G. Braude, by three years, “Rabbi Les,” as he is known far and wide, served his congregation and community for 45 years—his entire rabbinic career. Thus, he became Rhode Island’s longest serving rabbi.

But the strength, wisdom, and joy of Les’s rabbinate have been at least as important as its duration. Indeed, the position of senior rabbi had already been named and endowed in 2003 as the Gutterman Chair.

This past spring Congregation Sons of Israel and David celebrated its leader, teacher, pastor, colleague, and friend in additional, loving ways. These included, for example, a stirring concert, the publication of an anthology of his articles from The Providence Journal, and the naming and endowing of the Temple’s religious school in his honor. An exhibition case, highlighting his life and career, was also created in the Bernhardt History Gallery.

Nevertheless, Rabbi Les would be the first person to joke about his own importance. Perhaps in that self-effacing spirit, another tribute is found in the following photo essay, which is the thoughtful and creative work of our Association board member, Mel Blake. Another gentleman, he is also one of 16 Beth-El presidents whom Les mentored.

Rabbi Les’s study, which once overflowed with tributes, touchstones, trinkets, and tchotchkes, now belongs to his successor, Rabbi Howard Voss-Altman. Although the rabbi emeritus has moved to a smaller office, closer to the Fain Sanctuary, his gentle and towering legacy will always be treasured.
Shai at Qes Efraim’s home
A Small Window Between Two Distant Worlds: 
Qes Efraim’s Visit to Rhode Island

Shai Afsai

The author, who won the Eleanor Horvitz Award for his article on “Jews and Freemasons in Providence” in our 2013 issue, grew up in Providence and Israel. He earned a bachelor’s in English at the University of Rhode Island and two masters degrees: one in the art of teaching English at Rhode Island College, another in library and information studies at URI. A former high school English teacher, he is currently librarian at his alma mater, Hope High School.

Shai’s articles, editorials, and short fiction have appeared in numerous publications. These include: The Providence Journal, Rhode Island History, CCAR Journal, New English Review, The Jerusalem Post, and Nigeria’s The Sun.

The following article represents the author’s much larger and deeper interest in African Jewry. Indeed, he traveled to Nigeria three times in 2013 and 2014 to spend time with the Igbo who practice Judaism. His photography and text exhibition, “The Igbo Jews of Abuja,” was shown at Brown RISD Hillel in November and December 2014, and an abbreviated version was shown at Barrington’s Temple Habonim in May and June 2015. Shai has become Rhode Island’s Jewish ambassador to African Jewry.

I traveled to Israel in November 2012 in order to learn about and celebrate the Sigd holiday. An official state holiday since 2008, it continues to be observed mainly by the country’s Jewish community from Ethiopia, the Beta Israel (House of Israel),¹ which numbers upwards of 130,000. While there, I happened to come across a several months old copy of Yedioth Negat, an Amharic and Hebrew newspaper, which featured a front-page article about the ordination of the first Israeli-born qes (priest, kohen), Efraim Zion-Lawi.²

Following the Beta Israel’s mass aliyah to Israel, which began in the 1980s, men of the community interested in religious leadership have, like other Jews, elected to become rabbis. All of the qessotch (the traditional religious leaders of Ethiopian Jewry)³ reside in Israel, but their numbers are now fewer than six-dozen men.

To me, Efraim’s decision to become a qes, rather than a rabbi – although
he was born and educated in Israel – signified that the ancient Ethiopian Jewish religious tradition, including its priestly leadership, might nonetheless endure in the state of Israel. I very much wanted to meet this young man (he was then 26), but it took a full year before I was able to return to Israel and do so.

My Mother’s Influence

I sought out Qes Efraim when I attended my second Sigd celebration in Jerusalem, in October 2013. But before I get to our meeting, and to how that meeting led Qes Efraim to visit the United States and spend a week in Rhode Island, I probably ought to describe the Sigd holiday and the scene of the meeting. And before that, I should explain the source of my interest in Beta Israel religious traditions.

My mother, Sandra Ben-Ari, belonged to a small group of Rhode Island activists for Ethiopian Jewry. Prior to that, she had also been involved in activism for Soviet Jewry. As a child growing up in Providence in the early 1980s, I remember her giving slideshow presentations about Jews from Ethiopia, trying to raise awareness about the religious persecution they faced there and of the dire situation of those who had fled to Sudan and were languishing in refugee camps. When I began publishing articles and short stories in 2010, I wanted to see if there was a way I could also make my own small contribution in advocating for the Beta Israel.

Rather than focusing on the Israeli airlifts that carried the community from Sudan, or on its subsequent cultural and economic integration into Israeli society, I was much more interested in the religious heritage that the Beta Israel preserved and developed in Ethiopia over centuries, and which they brought to Israel. This was a branch of Judaism without Hebrew, rabbis or the Talmud. I was also interested in what has happened since the Beta Israel’s form of Judaism came into ever-greater contact with rabbinic Judaism, beginning in the 19th century.

Seeing this interest, my mother reached out to people in the Beta Israel community on my behalf. Beginning in 2012, five priests of the Council of kohanim of the Ethiopian Jews in Israel, the organization which represents the qessotch, took time to teach me about the Sigd and other unique traditions. Qes Semai Elias, the Council’s director, urged me to write and publish about the Sigd in English so that more Jews could learn about the holiday. He also encouraged
me to curate related photography exhibitions about the Sigd. One such exhibition took place at the Jewish Alliance of Greater Rhode Island’s gallery (401) in March and April 2013.

**The Sigd**

*Sigd* means “prostration” or “bowing down” in Ge’ez, the ancient Ethiopian liturgical language. The holiday commemorates and is patterned after events described in the biblical Book of Nehemiah. Following the Jews’ return from the Babylonian exile to the Land of Israel, in the 6th century BCE, they gathered in Jerusalem on the first day of the Hebrew month of *Tishre* (Rosh Hashanah) and requested that Ezra the Scribe read to them from the Torah: “So on the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the priest brought the Torah before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand . . . Ezra praised the Lord, the great God, and all the people lifted their hands and responded, ‘Amen! Amen!’ Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.” (Nehemiah 8:2-6)

The Book of Nehemiah also recounts another Jerusalem assembly that took place several weeks later, on the 24th of *Tishre*. It culminated in the Judean community publicly recommitting itself to the covenant between God and the Jewish people: “On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and putting dust on their heads. Those of Israelite descent had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the sins of their ancestors. They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Torah of the Lord their God for a quarter of the day, and spent another quarter in confession and in worshipping the Lord their God.” (Nehemiah 9:1-3)

Thus, the observance of the Sigd involves reading, translating, and expounding upon portions of the Bible, and prostration and the lifting of hands in prayer. It also involves fasting and a communal confessing of sins as well as reacceptance of the Torah. The holiday normally occurs 50 days after Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), on the 29th of the Hebrew month of *Marcheshvan*.

In a talk I attended at Bar-Ilan University on the eve of the Sigd, Qes Mula Zerihoon explained that one of its central themes is the Jewish longing to return to Jerusalem. In Ethiopia, he recalled, the Sigd was celebrated atop designated mountains: “When we climbed the mountain, we felt Jerusalem in our
heart of hearts. This deeply impacted our Judaism. Jews came from afar, two or three days on foot, on horses, and on mules, in order to have the chance to hear Torah from the qessotch. The people learned and were strengthened.”

In Israel the Sigd’s theme of Jewish unity continues, with Jews from other communities being welcomed to celebrate. On the day of the holiday, thousands of Ethiopian Jews from across Israel ascend to Jerusalem, primarily to the Armon Hanatziv Promenade, which overlooks the Old City. Dozens of qessotch assemble there under multicolored parasols, on a platform adorned with the flags of Israel and Jerusalem.

Beneath a “Welcome to the Sigd Holiday” banner written in Hebrew and Amharic, the qessotch chant prayers in the ancient Ethiopian languages of Ge’ez and Agaw, praising God and beseeching forgiveness and blessings for the Jewish people. Biblical passages describing the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai and the return of the Jews to Jerusalem from the Babylonian exile are read to the congregation in Ge’ez, and then translated into Amharic, the first language of many of the Beta Israel.

When the qessotch descend from the platform at the conclusion of the services, they are quickly surrounded by hundreds of congregants, who accompany them with ululation, applause, trumpet blasts, and dancing to a nearby tent. There, following repentance and renewal of the covenant, they communally break the fast.

Meeting Qes Efraim in 2013

When I arrived at the Armon Hanatziv Promenade in October 2013, I asked anyone I knew or met if Qes Efraim was there too. If so, would he please let the qes know that there was someone from America who wanted to speak with him? At one point during the celebration, as I walked around the Promenade, I turned and saw a man resembling the photograph of Qes Efraim I had seen in the Yedioth Negat article.

“Pardon me, are you Qes Efraim?” I asked in Hebrew.
He answered, “Are you the guy who everyone tells me is looking for me?”
“I’ve been trying to meet you for a whole year!” I replied.

After Qes Efraim found out that I had come from the United States solely for the purpose of celebrating the Sigd and meeting with qessotch, he said
to me, “Just as you have traveled here to celebrate the Sigd with us, I will travel to the United States to celebrate with you.” He also invited me to visit his mother’s apartment, which is where he lives with his family, in the city of Karmiel, in northern Israel.

My younger brother Amir (who lives in Jerusalem, where he teaches Hebrew at Sts. Tarkmanchatz Armenian School, in the Old City’s Armenian Quarter) and I drove to Karmiel a couple of days later. We were introduced to Qes Efraim’s mother, wife, baby daughter, and neighbor. We talked, watched DVDs of Qes Efraim’s wedding and his priestly ordination, and looked at photographs and Jewish books from Ethiopia.

Qes Efraim & family

Being the son of Qes Zion Lawi and the grandson of High Qes Lawi Zeno, Qes Efraim is heir to an illustrious line of qessotch. After a long and arduous journey from Ethiopia through the Sudanese desert, his parents made aliyah as part of Israel’s 1984 Operation Moses. Qes Zion Lawi served as the religious leader of the Beta Israel community of Karmiel, where Efraim was born in 1987. His father encouraged him to follow in his footsteps. Accordingly, at age nine, Efraim began studies toward ordination. When he turned 13, his father officially designated him as his future successor.

Although Qes Zion Lawi passed away only three years later, Efraim’s mother, Ahuva, urged him to carry on with his religious training. She sent him to study with two prominent qessotch, Qes Malke Azaria and High Qes Govesa Tesfahun, in southern Israel. They continued to teach him the traditional prayers, benedictions, laws, and customs of Ethiopian Judaism.

After completing military service, Efraim married his wife Fasika and was ordained a qes. He now serves the Beta Israel community of Karmiel and its environs by teaching and facilitating traditional observances, including those related to weddings, funerals, memorials, and the ritual slaughter of animals. Qessotch are not yet permitted to officiate at state-sanctioned marriages in Israel, however, and generally do not receive stipends from the state equivalent to those
given to rabbis. Younger qessotch, such as Qes Efraim, receive no government salaries at all.

Visiting Connecticut and Rhode Island in 2014

As my brother Amir and I left Qes Efraim’s apartment late that October night, some four hours after arriving, Qes Efraim repeated that he would strive to soon visit Rhode Island. I found out a few months later that the organizers of the Ethiopian Jewish Experience Shabbaton, an annual event held at the Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center in Falls Village, Connecticut, had been trying unsuccessfully for a number of years to get a qes to attend. Visits by qessotch to the United States have been quite rare. I realized that having Qes Efraim come to the Shabbaton could be a great way to get him to the United States- and to Rhode Island.

After much discussion with the Retreat Center’s CEO, David Weisberg, in which he assured me that the Shabbaton would accommodate the strict religious requirements of a qes, Qes Efraim agreed to attend. He also requested that his stay in the United States be extended for one week so that he could visit the Jewish community in Rhode Island. An anonymous donor paid for his airfare to and from JFK Airport, and Dr. Michael and Elissa Felder offered to host him during his stay in Providence.

This would be Qes Efraim’s first time traveling outside of Israel. Speaking to me from Israel in anticipation of his New England visit, Qes Efraim said, “I will visit the Jewish community of Rhode Island, and I will be pleased to meet there with whomever it is possible to meet. This entire visit, in my view, is one of getting acquainted and becoming familiar with another Jewish community. I hope that in Rhode Island I will be able to tell my story and expose its Jews to the Beta Israel community from a traditional religious perspective. I hope, with God’s help, to learn and to teach.”

There was a good deal of anticipation in Rhode Island as well. Congregation Beth Sholom’s rabbi, Barry Dolinger, saw the qes’s visit as “an incredible and rare educational opportunity.” The Jewish Agency’s shaliach (emissary) to Rhode Island, Matan Graff, expressed a similar opinion: “I think this is a very important trip. Having someone of Qes Efraim’s stature come to see our community and also help us learn more about his community should strengthen the ties between us. We can learn firsthand about this unique Jewish community in
Israel and its traditions, while he will see our American Jewish community in Rhode Island.”

And so, in March 2014, Qes Efraim fulfilled the promise he had made to me when we met in Jerusalem less than five months earlier. At the Ethiopian Jewish Experience Shabbaton, in Falls Village, he led portions of the Sabbath services, chanting traditional Ethiopian Jewish prayers in the ancient liturgical language of Ge’ez. He and I also delivered a talk about the Sigd, along with Matan Graff and Ilene Perlman, a Boston-based photographer who had gone with me to Israel for the October 2013 Sigd. Though Qes Efraim spoke in English, he initially relied on me to assist him in translating certain words and concepts from Hebrew. We were both surprised by how much his English speaking abilities improved by the end of his stay in the United States.

Following a great deal of preparation and scheduling, Qes Efraim spent the last week of March in Rhode Island. He participated in activities sponsored by the Providence Community Kollel (Center for Jewish Studies), Congregation Beth Sholom, Touro Synagogue, Congregation Sha’arei Tefilla, New England Academy of Torah (NEAT) girls’ high school, the JCC’s Early Childhood Center, Temple Am David’s Religious School, and the Jewish Community Day School of Rhode Island (JCDSRI).

All of these activities involved much planning, coordinating, and driving around. Not only was I working full-time as a middle school librarian then, but I was also taking 12 graduate credits at the University of Rhode Island to complete my MLIS degree. However, Matan Graff and I worked closely to make Qes Efraim’s visit to Rhode Island a success.

Accompanied by Rabbi Dolinger and Matan Graff, Qes Efraim was given a special tour of Newport’s Touro Synagogue by its spiritual leader, Rabbi Marc Mandel. Moved to be standing in North America’s oldest synagogue and before a 500-year-old Torah, Qes Efraim donned a tallit (prayer shawl) and chanted the Shema in Ge’ez. Rabbi Mandel later described it as a special day, adding that “it was a wonderful experience to meet Qes Efraim.” Referring also to a visit by two Igbo elders from Nigeria in September 2013, Rabbi Mandel said, “We have had a year of great visitors to Touro.”

Qes Efraim was quite shocked, however, by a tour of the former Shaare Zedek synagogue on Broad Street, which he was given along with Raphael Felder, Matan Graff, and me. Seeing the building’s dilapidation, Qes Efraim found it
difficult to understand how the Rhode Island Jewish community could allow so
grand a structure to fall into such disrepair.  

Dinners at the Felders’ home were filled with lively discussions about
Ethiopian and rabbinc Judaism. Qes Efraim explained that the Beta Israel did
not have all of rabbinc Judaism’s oral traditions (such as many of those codified
in the Talmud) because of their centuries-long isolation. As with other Jewish
communities across the globe, portions of the Beta Israel’s oral traditions were
also lost over time. Prior to the 20th century, Ethiopian Jews did not don tefillin,
nor did they celebrate Hanukkah. They also retained very little Hebrew, instead
preserving their holy writings (including the Bible) in Ge’ez.

Qes Efraim emphasized that, as an Israeli-born qes, he feels a special
responsibility to keep alive the traditions and practices that Jews maintained in
Ethiopia. At the same time, however, he feels compelled to explain to Ethiopian
Jewish youth in Israel, who now study Talmud, why their ancestors adhered to
their own Judaic system.

At Beth Sholom, Qes Efraim chanted three traditional Ethiopian Jewish
prayers in Ge’ez during Sabbath morning services, a completely new experience
for nearly everyone present that day. Services were followed by a delicious Ethiop-
ian lunch catered by Divine Providence and then by Qes Efraim’s talk.

During a seudah shelishit (the traditional third Sabbath meal, taking
place on Saturday afternoon) at Sha’arei Tefilla, Qes Efraim spoke about the
plight of the Beta Israel in Sudan before Operation Moses in 1984. Conditions
in refugee camps were so precarious that they concealed their Jewish identities
and practices, particularly regarding Sabbath observance. “These are very basic
matters of Jewish history, and I didn’t understand them well before this talk,” said
Rabbi David Schwartz. “Our shul has greatly benefited from Qes Efraim’s visit.”

As can be seen from the list of Rhode Island synagogues and organiza-
tions that welcomed Qes Efraim, it was the Orthodox Jewish community that
took greatest advantage of the very rare learning opportunity that he presented.  
Although American Jewry has stepped up to help the Beta Israel physically and
materially, it has by and large not demonstrated similar activism when it comes
to spiritual and religious matters. American Jews could benefit tremendously,
for example, from learning about and celebrating the Sigd, which, as Qes Semai
explains, contains the “essence of the tradition of Israel as it was expressed in the
Ethiopian exile.” I believe that more American Jews can move beyond a focus
on the Beta Israel’s “exoticism” as black Jews from the Horn of Africa to find out what lessons and insights this Jewish community, including its religious leaders and elders, may have to share with us.

**Qes Efraim’s Return to Israel**

While Matan Graff and I were driving Qes Efraim to JFK Airport at the conclusion of his trip, he called Germaw Mengistu, the author of the *Yedioth Negat* article I had seen in November 2012, and put him on speakerphone. I told Mengistu that his article had led to my seeking out Qes Efraim, to our becoming friends, and to his historic visit to the United States. Mengistu was delighted to hear this, saying it was just such exposure that he hoped to facilitate by editing *Yedioth Negat* and having articles appear in it in both Amharic and Hebrew.

“The preservation of our religious heritage and the continuity of the qessotch are supremely important matters,” Mengistu explained.

Qes Efraim also phoned the chairman of the Council of kohanim, Qes Avihu Azaria, as well as its director, Qes Semai. I told them that I hoped the Jewish community of Rhode Island would soon host an official delegation from the Council, consisting of several qessotch. In addition, Qes Efraim called then-Member of Knesset Penina Tamanu-Shata, the first Ethiopian-born woman to serve in Israel’s parliament, and informed her of his trip.

“My community [in Israel] is very impressed and pleased that I traveled to the United States,” Qes Efraim said to me after he returned to Israel. “They tell me that I’ve done holy work. My family is also very pleased.” He added that he now has a greater appreciation for the interconnectedness of Jews around the world. “On a personal level, I think that the importance of maintaining connections among Jews is a high ideal. It wasn’t a given to me that the Jewish community in the United States would open its heart and mind to learn about a different type of Jewish community. American Jews made me feel at home and that Jews around the world support one another.”

The Beta Israel priest considered his visit a great success. “I’m pleased that I imparted new information to people about the Ethiopian Jewish community, which was able to preserve an ancient heritage,” he said. “I hope I was able to emphasize that fact as well as its continued longing for the land of Israel. We see both these characteristics in Israel today, and in my own life, too.”

Qes Efraim also sent me a Hebrew letter intended for the Rhode Island
Jewish community, which he asked me to translate and publicize. It was posted in English at the 401j website on June 26, 2014. Among other things, he wrote: “I believe that in the short time that I was in the United States, I was able to open a small window between two distant worlds and begin to create a meeting of Jewish hearts. I am full of prayer that my journey has not ended, but rather that in the future we will be able to strengthen these wonderful connections.”

My Return Visit to Israel in 2014

In July 2014, Qes Avihu invited me to attend a meeting of the Council of kohanim at its headquarters in Kiryat Malachi. Qes Efraim and I met at Tel Aviv’s Central Bus Station and went to the meeting together, which occurred during Operation Protective Edge. At one point in the meeting, sirens warned of rocket attacks and we were told to relocate to the building’s secure room. Later, when invited to offer some words to the Council, I reiterated my hope that the Jewish community of Rhode Island would soon host an official delegation from the Council, consisting of several qessotch. The meeting concluded with prayers for the welfare of Israel’s soldiers and peace for the nation of Israel.

I had hoped that the small window between distant worlds opened by Qes Efraim’s visit would soon widen. This has not happened. No synagogue or organization in Rhode Island has extended an invitation to the Beta Israel’s Council of kohanim, and the qessotch have not yet come. A further meeting of Jewish hearts, long overdue, still awaits us.
I have not used “Falasha” throughout this article, as “Beta Israel” was consistently used instead by all the qessotch I have met, including those mentioned in note 5 below.

See Germaw Mengistu, “The Israeli-born Qes: To Integrate into Israeli Society, but to Preserve the Way of our Forefathers,” Yedioth Negat 69 (May 2012): 1, 7 [Hebrew and Amharic].

Qes means “priest” in Amharic (plural: qessotch), an equivalent of kohen in Hebrew (plural: kohanim). In Ethiopia, the Beta Israel did not have rabbis; instead, their religious leadership was comprised of monks and priests.


Those five qessotch are: Qes Emaha (Amaha) Negat, Qes Mula Zerihoon, Qes Semai Elias, Qes Efraim Zion-Lawi, and Qes Avihu Azariah.

For an example of one such published article, see my “The Sigd: From Ethiopia to Israel,” CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly 61, 4 (Fall 2014): 149-168; and also my “Ethiopian Jewish Religious Leader Visits US,” The Jerusalem Post, 14 April, 2014: 14.


Rhode Island’s The Jewish Voice was unwilling to guarantee that it would run an article announcing Qes Efraim’s visit, though in the end it did run one.


Wondrous Rimmonim:
Ownership, Holiness, Beauty, Rarity, and Value

George M. Goodwin

It is sad enough when one Jewish congregation bitterly disagrees with another, but an even worse encounter began to unfold in 2012. Some congregants and observers have characterized it as a travesty.

Newport’s Congregation Jeshuat Israel, widely known as “Touro Synagogue,” had agreed to sell a stunning set of 18th-century silver Torah finials (known in the Hebrew plural as rimmonim) to Boston’s venerable Museum of Fine Arts for $7.4 million. Touro had lent these magnificent ceremonial objects to the museum in 2010, when it opened its dazzling Art of the Americas Wing. The rimmonim continue to occupy a place of honor within the Keane Family Gallery devoted to colonial Newport’s artistry, wealth, and sophistication.

Nevertheless, New York City’s Shearith Israel, North America’s oldest Jewish congregation, considers itself the ceremonial objects’ rightful owner. The Spanish and Portuguese synagogue’s permission to sell these exceptionally rare and beautiful examples of Judaica, crafted by North America’s first and foremost Jewish silversmith, Myer Myers (1723-1795), had never been sought. Shearith Israel does not dispute Touro’s ownership of a second set of Myers rimmonim, whose gift to the Newport congregation it had facilitated in 1892. Upon learning about the first set’s imminent sale, possibly through a Jeshuat Israel congregant and whistleblower, Shearith Israel sent Touro a cease-and-desist letter.

The Trial
So that neither congregation would bring a lawsuit against its sister, some brief discussions ensued. Shearith Israel’s proposal to bridge this chasm through a ruling by a bet din (a rabbinic court) was rejected by Jeshuat Israel, however. Then, when it seemed likely that the Manhattan congregation might file a lawsuit in New York’s federal district court to prevent the rimmonim’s sale, the opposite suddenly occurred. Jeshuat Israel sued in Rhode Island’s federal district court to assert its ownership.

After a lengthy period of discovery, when numerous congregational leaders and experts were questioned by two sets of lawyers, pretrial memoranda were
filed. On Monday, June 1, 2015, a bench trial (one without a jury) began before Judge John J. McConnell Jr., on the second floor of Providence’s august federal courthouse.

Five attorneys represented Jeshuat Israel, the plaintiff. Three were partners or associates in the New York-based firm, Kramer, Levin, Naftalis & Frankel. Gary Naftalis, who had earned a master’s degree in history at Brown, was the plaintiff’s lead attorney. The plaintiff’s Rhode Island counsel included Steven Snow of the Providence firm, Partridge, Snow & Hahn; and Louise Ellen Teitz, a professor at Roger Williams University Law School who is also a Touro member.

Five attorneys represented Shearith Israel, the defendant. Four were partners or associates in the New York office of the international firm, Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft. Its only courtroom speaker, however, was Louis Solomon, Shearith Israel’s current parnas (or president). Deming Sherman, who practices in Providence with the international firm, Locke Lord, served as Rhode Island counsel.

Each legal team also brought several support staff, including paralegals and computer technicians, who, among other tasks, uploaded hundreds of exhibits on computer screens for Judge McConnell, court staff, opposing attorneys, journalists, and spectators to see in the Providence courtroom. Each team also brought scores of boxes filled with documents presumably produced during the discovery phase of litigation.

Of the approximately four-dozen spectators, many included Jeshuat Israel members and their rabbi, Marc Mandel. It was not evident how many of these individuals supported or opposed its congregation’s case. A member of the staff of Rhode Island’s attorney general was also present to help prepare an amicus brief (one by a non-litigant in the case), if necessary.

Spectators could only speculate about how much the case would cost each side. The donation of services on a pro bono basis may not have been sufficient. Possibly, individuals supporting each side underwrote the considerable expenses.

When beginning the trial, Judge McConnell stated that, as a civil proceeding, the case did not revolve around religious law. Yet, for the Jewish opponents, religious and moral issues could never be ignored nor dismissed.

Although the rimmonim’s ownership was the dominant issue, many others were vigorously disputed. Particularly significant were whether Shearith Israel
was the outright owner of Touro synagogue and its contents, whether it served as a perpetual trustee for Touro or the Newport Jewish community’s larger interests or whether Touro was merely the synagogue’s lessor. The plaintiff’s lawyers also argued that Shearith Israel had served inadequately and perhaps negligently as a trustee, and that it should be replaced— at least in principle— by another congregation or authority. The defense’s lawyers argued, in turn, that the Manhattan congregation could terminate its lease with Jeshuat Israel and replace it— at least in principle— with another congregation representing “the Jewish Society of Newport.”

During the following seven days of testimony, Touro’s lawyers examined four witnesses— all current or former congregational officers— whom the defendant’s lawyers then cross-examined. Subsequently, Shearith Israel’s lawyers examined three witnesses— one officer and two individuals considered historical experts. They, in turn, were cross-examined. Strangely, the world’s leading Myer Myers scholar, Dr. David L. Barquist, who organized the 2001 landmark exhibition for Yale University Art Gallery and wrote its superb catalogue, did not testify for either side.¹

On Thursday, June 11, 2015, at the closing of the proceedings’ eighth day, when Judge McConnell asserted that the trial had been one of the highlights of his judicial career, he decided not to proceed with or even schedule closing arguments. Instead, he ordered each side to submit a post-trial memorandum, summarizing its arguments, in addition to inviting each side to file findings of fact.

On Friday, September 18, 2015, amidst the Days of Awe, Judge McConnell heard closing arguments. Each side was asked to focus on two major issues: the ownership of the rimmonim and the ownership of the synagogue and its contents (previously contested as “paraphernalia” and “fixtures”). Each side was allotted time for rebuttal, and Judge McConnell, endeavoring to understand every factual detail, asked many questions.

By afternoon’s end, however, when their words seemed almost drained of ordinary meanings, the lawyers seemed farther away than ever from reaching even a thread of mutual understanding. For example, they could not agree if the two disputed rimmonim belonged to two mismatched pairs or whether only their shafts had once been accidentally switched. Yet, the lawyers were ever more determined to convince Judge McConnell of the accuracy, logic, and inevitability of their arguments.

¹
Most likely, it will take many months before he issues his ruling, but I believe that Judge McConnell did his best to be evenhanded and even convivial. Of course either side could appeal his ruling to the First Circuit Court of Appeals. Thus, the fate of the magnificent *rimmonim* displayed at the Museum of Fine Arts may hang in limbo far longer than it took Myers and his assistants to make them.

Having been allowed to sit with journalists in the courtroom’s jury box, I was able to view most of the exhibits uploaded on computer screens and scrutinize lawyers’ faces and gestures. At my convenience, I was also able to examine photocopies of many of the legal documents. Throughout the trial, I took extensive notes with the intention of writing an overview for these pages. Eventually, I decided that I lacked sufficient legal understanding to write such an exceedingly complex article.

It may be possible to publish Judge McConnell’s ruling in the 2016 issue of *The Notes*. Depending upon its length and intricacy, it may be more useful to publish each side’s pretrial memorandum, which may be easier for laypeople to follow.

**An Art Historical Perspective**

I believe that I possess a perspective that none of the lawyers and most of the witnesses do not. As an art historian, I understand many of the points made by the defense’s first expert witness, Dr. Vivian B. Mann, a distinguished Judaica expert on the staff of New York City’s Jewish Museum and a professor of Jewish art at its parent institution, the Jewish Theological Seminary. Over many decades, I have seen some of the extraordinary exhibitions that she helped organize and have studied the catalogues of an even larger number.

Without question, Dr. Mann, a world-renowned expert on Jewish art, should have been treated more respectfully on the witness stand. Far better than anybody in Judge McConnell’s courtroom, she understands the nuances of provenance (the history of ownership) and how art historical catalogues are written. Yes, factual errors are occasionally made, but experts also have legitimate differences of opinion. The accusation that she presented a “revisionist” history to buttress Shearith Israel’s case is foolish because revision and reinterpretation are precisely what historians do.

She and I are not acquainted, though we chatted for a few moments about Providence’s Temple Beth-El and about a historian who is a mutual friend.
I would agree, however, with the impression left by Jonathan Wagner, the plain-
tiff’s attorney who quickly and mercilessly cross-examined her: Dr. Mann was not an
effective witness. She did not answer questions succinctly, and she interjected points not asked of her. She also admitted to misplacing or losing one of Shearith
Israel’s hundreds of archival documents entrusted to her.

Before Judge McConnell issues his ruling, I think that it would be useful to think more carefully and creatively about rimmonim by placing the disputed set in a far broader and richer context. This too is not a simple task, however.

Ownership Versus Holiness

The thrust of Jeshuat Israel’s argument for the ownership of one of Myer Myers’ five pairs of rimmonim was that it had been in its possession for approximately 130 years. The plaintiff’s lawyers also argued that, in the face of an “existential crisis” caused by extreme financial hardship and inadequate, if not negligent, oversight by Shearith Israel, it needed to raise a considerable sum to es-

Only the sale of its rimmonim to the MFA could establish such an anchor.

Although Shearith Israel’s lawyers sought to establish a clear record of ownership over a much longer period, they presented an even stronger, religious argument against the rimmonim’s sale. Like a Torah itself, the ceremonial objects associated with it—indeed, those actually touching it—are considered holy because they were made to beautify the Torah. Indeed, the Myers rimmonim displayed at the MFA look rather odd and diminished without a Torah’s presence.

Writing in the Mishneh Torah, the code of Jewish law that he compiled in the late 12th century C.E., Maimonides called such objects tashmishei kedushah (“implements of holiness”). He believed that they could be sold only to acquire replacements. Other rabbinic scholars have thought that Torah ornaments, but not a Torah, could be sold to ransom hostages or aid the poor.

A further reason for selling such ornaments was demonstrated in 1549, when a Roman congregation, the Scuola Siciliana, sold a pair of silver rimmonim to an individual, Giuseppe di Menasce, for the benefit of its own needs. This probably meant for the benefit of the congregation’s poor, however.

Neither Maimonides nor other Torah scholars had argued that tashmishei kedushah, other than yaddim (pointers), are required for Torah service. Does this mean, therefore, that Judaism has only one holy object or that most
other ceremonial objects exemplify a lesser degree of holiness? I believe that the latter interpretation is true.

Speaking from the depth of his religious and moral beliefs, Louis Solomon, Shearith Israel’s lead attorney, argued logically and passionately that none of Myer Myers’s rimmonim—including its own two sets—could or would ever be sold. Not merely old, delicate and beautiful objects, these embodiments of holiness do not belong in a museum—even a museum of colonial Jewish history that could some day be established within Touro’s walls. The world, Solomon declared, is already endowed with too many Jewish museums and historical cemeteries. The rimmonim’s only valid uses, he believes, are to enhance and embellish prayer and, consequently, to strengthen Judaism’s continuity and survival.

Solomon suggested that, except for agreeing to a somewhat arbitrary amount for insurance purposes, there is no way to measure rimmonim’s value. Even if a calamity occurred at Shearith Israel or another of America’s colonial Sephardi congregations, there would be no way to obtain objects in any way comparable to Myers’s masterpieces.

**Hiddur Mitzvah**

Most Jews would probably assume that magnificent ceremonial objects associated with the Torah, such as rimmonim, ketarim (crowns), tas (shields), and yaddim (pointers), have existed for millennia. Indeed, there is probably a widespread assumption that these gorgeous symbolic ornaments have become synonymous with and inseparable from the Torah’s display, use, and storage. This is far from true, however.

More accurate is the belief that holiness and beauty are closely, if not inseparably, entwined. If creation itself were not beautiful enough, then consider countless other biblical passages. Joseph Gutmann, an eminent historian of Jewish art, reminds us about Bezalel, the master designer and builder of the Ark of the Covenant. As described in Exodus (31: 3-5), he was “endowed” by the Lord with “a divine spirit of skill, ability, and knowledge in every kind of craft.”

The rabbinic concept of **Hiddur Mitzvah** does not merely accommodate the notion that ceremonial objects used in synagogues or homes be aesthetically pleasing. Rather, it demands visual reverence. Fragments of documents referring to the existence and use of Torah ornaments during the Christian medieval period have been unearthed in the Cairo Geniza. For example, a document from
1159 is an inventory of *rimmonim* belonging to the local Jerusalemite synagogue.\(^8\)

Showing remarkable resourcefulness, Vivian Mann has also identified a contract between the French Jewish community of Arles and Robin Asard, a Christian silversmith from nearby Avignon, written on March 24, 1439.\(^9\) This commission was for a Torah crown, however. Dora Bemporad, an Italian art historian, believes that the oldest extant Torah pointer, now in the Umberto Nahon Museum of Italian Jewish Art, in Jerusalem, was made in Ferrara, Italy, in 1488.\(^10\)

**Staves, Pomegranates, Towers, and Bells**

Many words have been used to describe *rimmonim*. Some of the more generic, having no Jewish connotation, are “headpiece” and “finial” (which are more commonly associated with architecture and furniture). In the Piedmontese region of northwest Italy, the term *coppia di pinnacoli* was also popular. In German-speaking lands, *Torauaufsätze* was common. The bulbous, carved or gilded shapes atop decorated Torah staves (or rollers) have also been called *tapuzim* because they resemble apples or suggest fruitfulness. Other bulbous shapes may more closely resemble pineapples.

The staves themselves have been called *Etz Hayyim* (“Trees of Life”), as mentioned in Proverbs (3:18). Because of their imagined resemblance to the two bronze pillars on the porch of Solomon’s Temple, they have also come to symbolize the temple. Guido Schoenberger has pointed out that these pillars, as described in I Kings (7: 18–20), were decorated with bronze, pomegranate-shaped capitals, which exemplified fruitfulness.\(^11\)

Torah staves have been portrayed in a few illuminated Jewish manuscripts from the medieval period, but the oldest surviving examples probably date from the late 15th century C.E. They belonged to Nathanael Trabat, a French Jew who later lived in Italy.\(^12\) More recently belonging to an Israeli family in Ramat Aviv, they were lent to Vivian Mann’s majestic and definitive exhibition, “Gardens and Ghettos: The Art of Jewish Life in Italy,” which was shown at New York City’s Jewish Museum in 1989.

Nevertheless, *rimmonim*, a word Maimonides used, means literally pomegranates. But many of the oldest surviving examples neither resemble vegetable forms nor suggest the number of *mitzvot*, 613, which Jews are commanded to obey. Rather, they have an architectural form that resembles a multileveled tower. Accordingly, as Schoenberger has also explained, this imagery may relate
to a verse in Psalms (18:3), in which the Lord is characterized as “my fortress” and “my rock in whom I seek refuge.” Before European Jews were permitted to become goldsmiths or silversmiths, however, it is quite possible that Christian artisans favored such architectural forms.

The meaning of rimmonim is further complicated by frequent references to bells, which have often been suspended from one or more tiers of the pomegranate or tower-like forms. As described in Exodus (28: 33-35), the lower hem of Aaron the high priest’s robes were decorated in an alternating sequence of pomegranates (blue, purple, and scarlet) and golden bells. Rather than alluding only to such garments, however, the sounds of bells may also suggest the joy of studying Torah. But bells, like the church spires that support them, also bear significant Christological meanings.

Cammarata and Palma

Dr. Mann, Shearith Israel’s expert witness so harshly cross-examined by Mr. Wagner, has determined through her research that many Jewish painters and silversmiths worked and thrived in Catholic strongholds during the 14th century, for example. This was particularly true within Aragon and Zaragoza. Silver smithy, she reports, may have been a preferred profession among Jews living in Navarre and Toledo. Indeed, she speculates that some Jews, revered for their craftsmanship, may have worked on royal as well as ecclesiastical commissions.

To illustrate the existence of Torah ornaments during a somewhat comparable period, Mann has pointed to a leaf from the legendary “Sarajevo” Haggadah, one of the world’s oldest Jewish manuscripts. Written and decorated in Barcelona in the second quarter of the 14th century (and belonging to the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1894), it shows an aron kodesh (ark) with three Torahs, which are wrapped within me’il (mantles) and adorned with ketarim (crowns) and rimmonim.

Mann has also identified a document from possibly the early or mid-16th century, in which a sage, David ibn Abi Zimra, while living in Spain or Safed (in Palestine), was asked about the proper ownership of ceremonial objects when a new congregation breaks away from an
established one. Replying in general terms, he wrote, “It will be your merit if you can make peace between the congregations and resolve their disagreement.” He further explained that ceremonial objects should remain with the original synagogue if they were donated for a recognized scholar’s use. Such objects could be sold, however, if the scholar has been given the prerogative to sell them.

As for the survival of ceremonial objects associated with the Torah, there are virtually no examples from the ancient or medieval periods (those associated with Christian, European or Middle Eastern art history). They are a more recent invention.

Cecil Roth, one of Britain’s great authorities on Jewish history, identified the world’s oldest extant pair of rimmonim. They were probably made for the Sephardi community of Cammarata, in Sicily, before 1493, when Jews were expelled from this colony ruled by the kingdom of Aragon. It is not known whether these rimmonim were the fruit of Jewish, Christian or possibly Islamic labor, for they were fashioned in the cross-cultural Mudejar style. But the ceremonial objects were probably brought as loot to the island of Mallorca, also under Aragon’s rule. Earlier in the 15th century, its own Jews had been forced to convert or flee.

Mallorca’s small pair of silver rimmonim, overlaid with delicate filigree and inlaid with semiprecious stones, is found not in a Jewish museum or even a local art or history museum but in the treasure-filled sacristy of Palma’s cathedral. Recycled for Catholic use, the rimmonim adorned the pinnacles of bishops’ scepters. Many Jews would argue today that, if the Church were sensitive to Jewish concerns, these ceremonial objects should be repatriated to Israel, particularly to its transcendent Jewish Museum- or perhaps a synagogue.

Other Early and Notable Examples

How old are the Palma rimmonim’s younger cousins? Many generations younger. None survives from the entire 15th or early 16th centuries.

One of the next oldest extant examples (catalogue no. 192) was included within Vivian Mann’s “Gardens and Ghettos” exhibition, which showcased 14 rimmonim from Italy’s Sephardi communities. This rimon, made in Tuscany during the 1580s, still belongs to Florence’s Jewish community. A silver ornament only 15-3/4” high, it boasts a domed, temple-like form (possibly inspired by Brunelleschi’s design of Florence cathedral) and assumes a monumental pres-
Not merely cast, this *rimon*, like most later examples, morphed through a complex retinue of techniques, such as embossing, chiseling, engraving, piercing, casting, and more chiseling. An inscription is indecipherable and the silversmith is unknown, but his hallmarks include a lion and horse. Alas, Florence’s companion *rimmon* was stolen—then lost—during World War II.

Although the majority of *rimmonim* in Mann’s “Ghettos and Gardens” exhibition were made during the 18th and 19th centuries, two date from the 17th. An exquisite pair, made in Venice in 1650, is also found in Amsterdam’s Jewish Museum.

During the 18th century, taller examples of the tower idiom evolved. Francesco Caglieri, a Florentine goldsmith, crafted an important example (Mann catalogue no. 195) in about 1732 for the city’s oldest synagogue, the Scuola Italiana. Nearly 18” high, it employs such simplified but expressive architectural forms as a dome and balusters.

An even more astonishing pair of *rimmonim* (Mann catalogue no. 197) belonging to the Florence community was made in about 1752 by four jewelers. Jews named Rimini (after the town on Italy’s Adriatic coast), they became members of Florence’s goldsmiths’ guild. This pair of finials, attached to a dazzling Torah crown (featured on the cover of Mann’s “Gardens and Ghettos” catalogue), is the world’s only example employing reddish-orange droplets of coral. Suspended like bells, they hang from each *rimon*’s four levels.

Toward the end of the 18th century, more Jewish craftsmen were admitted to Italian guilds. Turin, for example, had 17 Jewish silversmiths. Perhaps too large and heavy to be carried atop Torah staves, many *rimmonim* were probably displayed on a *bimah* (readers’ table). In some synagogues, smaller *rimmonim* may have then been temporarily placed atop Torah staves.

New York City’s Jewish Museum, founded in 1904, has one of the three largest collections of Jewish ceremonial art in the world. (The others are in Jerusalem and Prague.) Its collection of Torah ornaments is also one of the world’s largest. Dr. Mann examined the preponderance in her scholarly catalogue of 925 pieces.

One of the museum’s oldest pairs of 193 *rimmonim*, from Mantua, Italy, was crafted in the early 18th century by an unknown smith. It too has no fewer than four tiers of hanging bells and resembles a bejeweled sculpture.

By the end of the 17th century, Amsterdam’s Sephardic community chal-
lenged and possibly surpassed Italy as a center for the production of Torah ornaments. Indeed, Amsterdam’s Jewish Museum has a splendid pair of silver and partly gilt rimmonim (called siertorens in Dutch), which were created by Pieter van Hoven of that city in 1696. These pieces show a surprising combination and cross-pollination of pomegranate and architectural forms. Another remarkable pair of Dutch finials, belonging to New York’s Jewish Museum, was made in 1705. It too is adorned with four tiers of bells.

A splendid pair of rimmonim, made in Amsterdam in 1717, is known as the “Mendez da Fonseca Bells.” Having been commissioned by this Sephardi family, the finials are adorned with numerous examples of its crest and monogram. These three-tiered, hexagonal-shaped pieces belong to the distinguished and diverse Judaica collection begun by New York City’s Temple Emanu-El in 1928.29

The magnificent collection of Jewish art assembled by Jacobo and Asea Furman, of Santiago, Chile, beginning in 1971, has no fewer than 12 pairs of rimmonim, including exceptional examples from Italy, Germany, England, and North Africa.30 Three stunning pairs were made in Holland. The oldest, crafted in Amsterdam in 1697, is 17-5/8” high, but it conveys an architectural grandeur possibly derived from the Oudekerk or another local church tower. Alternatively, the tower form may represent an idealized notion of Jerusalem or, more specifically, the citadel known as David’s Tower.

Several 18th-century Dutch rimmonim are crowned, literally, with their own crown-shaped finials. These refer explicitly to the “Crown of the Law” (Torah), but may also refer to crowns of the priesthood, kingship, and a good name.

In 1757, Arnoldus van Geffen (perhaps a Jewish silversmith in Amsterdam) made a somewhat larger and more spectacular pair of silver rimmonim, which also belongs to the Furman collection. Its three-tiered, octagonal-shaped towers are festooned with alternating flower and scallop-shell motifs as well as gilded bells. The finials perched atop the Torah finials resemble tulip buds.

A pair of Dutch rimmonim, crafted in Amsterdam in 1772 by Willem Hendrik Rosier, has perhaps an even more exotic provenance than those in the Furman collection. Made for the Sephardi congregation of Zedek ve-Shalom in Paramaribo, in Dutch Guiana (the latter Suriname), this pair has been placed on permanent loan to the Israel Museum.31

A rare pair of Middle Eastern rimmonim, belonging to London’s Jewish
Museum, was made in an equally distant land—Persia or possibly Afghanistan—in the late 17th-century. These small silver and gilt pieces, featuring upper tiers that resemble umbrellas, are topped with turquoise shards.32

Only a few examples of 18th century, Ashkenazi rimmonim have survived. Richard Fleischmann, a Jewish silversmith in Prague, made a pair in a somewhat restrained neoclassical style between 1776 and 1784. (He also crafted two Torah shields during the same era.) These Torah finials were included in the extraordinary exhibition, “The Precious Legacy: Judaic Treasures from the Czechoslovak State Collections,” which toured North American museums between 1983 and 1986. In its catalogue, Vivian Mann wrote two chapters about Jewish ceremonial art and artifacts.33

By the early 18th century, London became a center for the production of Jewish ceremonial art. Its first Jewish silversmith was Abraham de Oliveyra, who made a three-tiered pair of silver and gilt rimmonim in 1716, eight years before he was permitted to register his hallmark. It belongs, fittingly, to London’s Jewish Museum.34 Embellished with octagonal bells, its top tier is decorated with a crown and above it a finial shaped liked a flaming vase. In 1724, de Oliveyra, probably a member of the city’s oldest Jewish congregation, the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue known as “Bevis Marks,” received its commission for a pair of rimmonim.35

A master silversmith, Gabriel Sleath, made another of England’s oldest pairs of rimmonim in about 1720.36 Commissioned by the Sephardi congregation Nidhe Israel, in Bridgetown, Barbados, it now resides in Bevis Marks, whose building partially inspired the illustrious Newport architect, Peter Harrison, in the design of Touro.

Although the pomegranate form was once popular, it was succeeded initially by tower-like forms and then by a combination of the two. Eventually, English rimmonim were topped with more flamboyant forms, resembling Baroque (Christian) architecture.

By 1800, however, as evidenced by a small pair of silver rimmonim in the Furman collection in Chile, some British silversmiths favored a spare, neoclassical style to supplant the Baroque. Some of these pieces were made by or are attributed to London’s Bateman family. Their work probably influenced the design of a contemporaneous pair by an unknown silversmith, “FR,” for a Sephardic synagogue in the British colony of Gibraltar.37
Myers and His Works’ Values

It is tempting to view Myer Myers’s distinguished career primarily through the evolving traditions of Jewish ceremonial art. Indeed, he created more rimmonim – 10 – than any of his predecessors or contemporaries and probably many of his successors.38

Though crafted over a period of approximately 30 years, from 1765 to 1795, Myers’s five pairs of rimmonim share many similarities. Made of silver and gilt brass, they tend to be small, only 13” to 14-1/2” in height. These ornaments can also be considered more traditional (or retardataire) in style because they employ pomegranate rather than architectural forms, which were superseded in later Dutch and English examples. Myers’s rimmonim may also appear somewhat less elaborate because they are adorned above with crown-shaped finials and their bells are suspended from only two or three levels. Nevertheless, Barquist believes that four of Myers’s pairs, with pierced and chased ornament, conform to the more fanciful and flamboyant Rococo style. This belief is affirmed by some of the surrounding objets d’art within the MFA’s Keane Family Gallery. By contrast, the youngest pair of rimmonim (no. 100 in his catalogue), which definitely belongs to Touro, exhibits somewhat more restrained forms as well as subtler bright-cut engraving. Thus, it belongs to a neoclassical style, which gained popularity not only in Britain but also in America after the Revolution.

In addition to being a celebrated producer of rimmonim, Myers was an important leader of New York’s Jewish community. He served five times as Shearith Israel’s parnas (president), and his name is frequently found within the congregation’s minutes, ledgers, and other financial records.

In 1746, however, when Myers registered as a goldsmith in New York, he was the first native Jew within the entire British Empire to have received formal training and to have opened his own business since the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths was established in London in 1327.39 By the 1760s, there were perhaps six Jewish gold or silversmiths working in the American colonies. Four had probably been Myers’s apprentices. None of their work is identifiable by name, however.

But Myers’s importance was far greater than as colonial America’s leading Jewish silversmith. He represents an even more surprising and fascinating phenomenon- somewhat akin to the survival of Cammarata’s rimmonim within Palma cathedral’s treasury. Myers was one of colonial America’s most accom-
plished silversmiths. In 1785, for example, he was elected chair of New York’s newly formed Gold and Silver Smiths Society. Only 11 of his 380 extant pieces are Jewish ceremonial objects, and only a few of his mostly wealthy or upper-middle-class customers were Jews. Indeed, only about 250 Jews lived in New York during the late colonial period.

Myers, his collaborators, and his apprentices produced an astonishing variety of objects, which included, for example: spoons, plates, bowls, beakers, bread baskets, tankards, teapots, coffeepots, sugar dishes, sugar tongs, punch bowls, sauceboats, porringer, candlesticks, candle snuffers, snuff boxes, small swords, shoe buckles, alms basins, and mourning rings. The scale, complexity, and ornamentation of Myers’s pieces varied considerably, as did, of course, their original prices.

If Myer Myers’s *rimmonim* have become priceless examples of Jewish ceremonial art and priceless symbols of American and British Jewish history, then how has their recent financial value been determined? There are no simple explanations, other than the fact that Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts initially offered to pay Jeshuat Israel $5 million for the set it borrowed. Having already consulted with Christie’s auction house, which had obtained an exclusive and confidential agreement to sell the *rimmonim*, congregational leaders rejected this offer in order to build a more substantial, restricted endowment. Instead, they proposed $7.4 million, which would have included a $400,000 commission for their agent. It should be noted, moreover, that Christie’s neither asked Jeshuat Israel to prove the *rimmonim*’s ownership nor conducted its own investigation.

Of course the financial value of all significant art has increased exponentially over the centuries, but especially within recent decades. As a result, the art market has continuously expanded to include all kinds of collecting areas and venues. Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that every new and relatively small collecting area sooner or later reaches its own plateau. Or does it? Perhaps the best counterargument is found in the work of some living artists. Their major pieces have sold for millions or tens of millions of dollars. Indeed, some leading Jewish collectors and founders of their own art museums have gobbled up much of this highly questionable output. Within this context, the MFA’s offer for the Myers *rimmonim* seems relatively inconsequential.

Needless to say, the availability of Myers’s work, especially important pieces, has grown ever more scarce. Many splendid examples, acquired through
gifts or purchases, belong to such major museums as Yale, the Metropolitan, Harvard, and the New-York Historical Society. It seems totally implausible that Shearith Israel or Philadelphia’s Mikveh Israel will ever part with any of its Myers rimmonim.

The American Jewish Historical Society, which relocated from the Brandeis University campus to New York’s Jewish History Center in 2000, owns a Myers circumcision shield (Barquist no. 62), which was made between 1765 and 1776 for Moses Seixas, Jeshuat Israel’s mohel during the 1770s. Dr. Barquist, the eminent Myers expert, believes that the shield is the only extant object known from an 18th-century, American circumcision set.41

In a 1922 issue of the Society’s journal, there was a brief article about Myers’s historical importance and a reference to one of his “massive silver tureens,” made between 1750 and 1760, which had sold in 1920 at New York City’s Walpole Galleries for $800. Barquist has determined, however, that a soup tureen is a form “unknown in surviving American colonial silver.”42

Barquist’s exhibition catalogue of 2001 included 104 items; some items included pairs or larger groups of objects. Of the 104 items, however, 47 were still in private hands. (A few collectors owned two or more items). Museums, libraries, and houses of worship owned the remaining pieces.

Nevertheless, as the availability of Myers’s important and lesser pieces dwindles, sales continue through auction houses and galleries. (The number of and outcome from private transactions can never be ascertained.) For example, at a Sotheby’s auction in New York of “Important Americana,” held on May 22, 2003, a Myers punch bowl sold for $131,000.43

But not all prices have been astronomical. At a Christie’s auction held in New York on January 19, 2012, a cann (or silver mug) only 4-3/4” high, made for Rev. Johnson Samuel, the first president of King’s (later Columbia) College, between 1754 and 1758, was estimated to sell for $7,000 to $10,000. It reached $16,250.

Even after news about the MFA’s aborted purchase of the Myers rimmonim may have leaked, the market for some of his lesser pieces did not skyrocket. For example, at Skinner’s Boston auction of European furniture and decorative arts held on April 6, 2013, a Myers silver milk pot became available. Made between 1760 and 1770 and 4-3/8” high, it was estimated to sell for $15,000 to $25,000. Buyers were not impressed with this piece, however, so it went for only
$14,400. Likewise, at the Sotheby’s auction of Mrs. Paul (“Bunny”) Mellon’s collection, held on November 20 to 23, 2014 in New York, a Myers salver (or waiter), made in about 1775 (Barquist no. 119), had an estimate of $20,000 to $30,000. It did not sell, meaning it did not reach the minimum amount set by the auction house.

On January 22, 2015, at Christie’s New York auction of “Important American Silver,” a Myers silver beaker (Barquist no. 88), only four inches high, was estimated to sell for $4,000 to $6,000. It went for $17,500, however. This piece would have been important to Judaica collectors, for it had been commissioned by Isaac Moses and Reyna Levy and descended in their family for at least four generations. The beaker had in fact been shown in Boston in 1953 at the MFA’s exhibition, “Early American Jewish Portraits and Silver.”

A staggering new auction record for Myers silver was set on January 24, 2015 at Sotheby’s in New York. This was at the sale of the Roy and Ruth Nutt collection, which had been publicized as “the most comprehensive collection of early American silver ever auctioned.” (Although it consisted of more than 400 lots, estimates for one-third of these were for less than $5,000.) The estimate for a pair of Myers bottle stands (Barquist no. 80), which had been made in about 1765 and had descended through ten members of the Samuel Cornell family, was $250,000 to $350,000. The gavel price was $389,000.

A second Myers piece, a silver coffee pot (Barquist no. 14), made between 1756 and 1766, was estimated to sell for $40,000 to $60,000. It went for $93,750.

**Collecting Judaica, Museums, and Values**

Although Myers’s work is too important and valuable to include within sales limited to Judaica, this area, in defiance of some aspects of Orthodox teaching, has grown fabulously- or perhaps hideously- in recent decades. Exactly how does one display, use or enjoy Torah ornaments, for example, within one’s home? Not surprisingly, such a fascination – or mania – would not have been possible without the evolution of Jewish scholarship, Jewish museums, and a wider distribution of Jewish wealth. Even more basic to its evolution have been a pride in Judaism’s cultural heritage and an eagerness by at least some Jews to share it with a larger world.

Just as there is no concept of a Jewish reliquary (a container for any portion of a saint’s remains), there is no concept of a synagogue treasury comparable
to those found in churches or cathedrals. Yes, many Jewish houses of worship have galleries- and there are more than a few fine examples in Rhode Island- but Jewish ceremonial art has always been made and intended for use rather than mere display. In this sense, Jewish ceremonial objects, having never lost their religious power and essence, mean something more than art or fortune.

The first public exhibition of Jewish ceremonial art occurred in 1878 within the Moorish-style Trocadéro Palace of the Paris World’s Fair. It consisted of 82 pieces from the collection formed by Isaac Strauss, a musician born in Strasbourg. In 1890 the Baroness Charlotte de Rothschild purchased this collection and presented it to Paris’s Cluny Museum, which had become France’s national museum of medieval art.45 Three years earlier, however, portions of the Strauss collection and the newly assembled Sassoon collection had been included in the Anglo-Jewish historical exhibition, held in London’s Royal Albert Hall, to celebrate Queen Victoria’s jubilee.

In 1893 portions of the Benguiat family’s collection, which had been formed in Izmir and brought to the United States, were shown at Chicago’s Columbian Exhibition under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution.46 Under Dr. Cyrus Adler’s curatorship, this collection, placed on long-term loan to the Smithsonian Institution, was shown again in 1904 at the St. Louis World’s Fair.

By 1895, Heinrich Frauberger, a Catholic who directed Düsseldorf’s Museum of Applied Arts and Crafts, became curious about Jewish ceremonial art and began acquiring pieces.47 In 1901, having founded a society for Jews and gentiles to study Jewish art, he also began publishing a journal. Meanwhile, Rabbi Max Grunwald helped establish Hamburg’s Jewish Museum and founded a journal devoted to the study of Jewish folklore. Such innovations also led Frauberger to establish a society in Frankfurt-am-Main for the scholarly study of Jewish art and artifacts.

In 1906 Boris Schatz, a Russian-born sculptor, founded the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem. Having begun to collect Jewish art and Judaica, he later established a museum.48 A portion of it was subsumed by the superlative Israel Museum, which opened its stunning campus in 1965 and now cares for approximately 500,000 objects.

Through Dr. Adler’s initiative, the Smithsonian acquired some of its own pieces of Judaica, which, though seldom exhibited, still fall under the purview of the National Museum of American History.49 America’s second Jewish museum
was founded in 1913 at Hebrew Union College, in Cincinnati, under the auspices of the National Council of Temple Sisterhoods.\textsuperscript{50} After Dr. Adler became president of the Jewish Theological Seminary, he acquired the Benguiat collection through Jacob Schiff’s generosity. The seminary’s Museum of Jewish Ceremonial Objects opened in 1931 and eight years later became the temporary custodian of the enormous collection belonging to Danzig’s endangered Great Synagogue, which had been formed by Lesser Giedzinski before 1910. After 1939, the museum became its permanent custodian.\textsuperscript{51}

Even before 1947, when JTS’s museum moved to the Warburg mansion on Fifth Avenue, Harry Friedman, who had studied briefly for the rabbinate at Hebrew Union College before finding success as an investment banker, became its largest collector-benefactor. By the time of his death in 1965, he had donated more than 6,000 objects.\textsuperscript{52} They included only a few examples of American rimmonim- those made in the 19\textsuperscript{th}-century.

Although America’s major art museums have eagerly collected important paintings and sculptures by major artists who happened to be Jews, they have had little or no interest in Jewish ceremonial art or artifacts until recent decades. One reason for this abrupt change has been museums’ efforts to build, if possible, truly encyclopedic collections. Another reason is to gain increased support from Jewish collectors and donors for a variety of purposes.

In 1997, for example, through the patronage of Harold and Mickey Smith of St. Paul, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts began building a Judaic collection and allocating a gallery for its display. Many fine pieces have been acquired, though most are relatively recent creations. For example, a fascinating but small pair of silver rimmonim was made in Morocco in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century.

Within the past decade, the North Carolina Museum of Art, the state-sponsored museum in Raleigh, has made significant strides toward building a fine Judaica collection. The Friends of Judaic Art have made this possible. In 2012, for example, the group purchased three, splendid Torah ornaments- a pair of rimmonim and a pointer- made by the English silversmith John Robins in about 1783 for Plymouth’s synagogue.\textsuperscript{53} Built in 1762, this was England’s first Ashkenazi house of prayer. Faced with an ever dwindling membership, however, the congregation consigned these three treasures to an auction at Bonham’s, in London, in November 2009. Their sale probably exceeded the equivalent of $300,000. This purchaser or another dealer later sold them to North Carolina.
Contrary to Maimonides' teaching, many of Europe's Jewish institutions have sold “implements of holiness.” For example, on June 1, 1999, Christie’s held an auction of “Fine Silver, Objects of Vertu, and Important Judaica” in Amsterdam, which featured a “magnificent” pair of George III silver rimmonim made in London in 1780 by Hester Bateman for the older of two Portsmouth congregations, which built a new synagogue. Considered the “queen of English silversmiths,” she was the widow of John and the mother of Jonathan and Peter—also silversmiths. In 1978 this pair of rimmonim, still belonging to the Portsmouth congregation, was lent to London's Victoria & Albert Museum for an exhibition of Anglo-Jewish silver. Subsequently, they were sold to a collector or a series of collectors. Christie’s estimate for them in 1999 was the equivalent of $160,000 to $266,000, but they sold for $343,000. It seems likely that this pair was lent to London’s Jewish Museum for an exhibition in 2006 to celebrate the 350th anniversary of Jews’ readmission to England.54

It turns out, however, that the Portsmouth congregation retained a second pair of Bateman rimmonim. These were made as replicas in 1785 for its breakaway congregation, which reunited with the original in 1789.

At a Bonham’s auction in London on March 24, 2005, a pair of mid-18th-century Dutch rimmonim, once belonging to England’s Brighton and Hove congregation, sold for only $69,000. But at a Sotheby’s auction of Judaica, held in Amsterdam on December 13, 2006, 27 lots of Dutch, 18th-century ceremonial silver were sold by Amsterdam’s Jewish community. The estimate for a pair of rimmonim made by Willem Hendrik Rosier in 1767 was $100,00 to $150,000, but an anonymous American collector paid $251,200. At the same auction, the North Carolina Museum of Art purchased a pair of rimmonim attributed to Rosier for $114,000, almost twice its high estimate.

The Jewish Historical Society of England, founded in 1893, orphaned still another treasure. In December 2012 it consigned a spice box to Kestenbaum’s, a New York auction house that has sold more than 28,000 pieces of Judaica. This piece fetched $314,000— a world record for such an item.

It should be mentioned that a record for a 19th-century pair of American silver rimmonim, made in New York in about 1850, was set at Christie’s in Amsterdam in 1999 (at the same sale as Heather Bateman’s Portsmouth rimmonim). This pair, made by Zalmon Bostwick, is “almost certainly” the only fully marked American pair of Torah finials extant from the 19th century. Indeed, it is the
only known example of Bostwick Judaica. The estimate for these *rimmonim* was $107,000 to $160,000, but they went for $436,000 to an anonymous purchaser.

Although the MFA has approximately 450,000 objects in its collection, only a smattering can be considered Judaica. Beginning in the 1980s, however, the museum began to overcome its long history of antipathy toward Jewish donors and board members.55 Much to its surprise, in 2009 it received and accepted a bequest from a Jewish benefactor who had a keen interest in building a Judaica collection.

Jetskalina Phillips, who had been born in the Netherlands and had lived in Curaçao, became a convert in Boston under Rabbi Roland Gittelsohn and married a Jewish physician. The couple, who settled in Kansas, is buried in Leavenworth’s Sons of Truth Cemetery. Mrs. Phillips’ gift to the MFA, exceeding $2.5 million, also provided for an endowed curatorship of Judaica, which is held by Dr. Marietta Cambareri, a specialist in European sculpture and decorative arts. It is not known what portion of Phillips’ bequest, if any, was designated for the purchase of the Myers *rimmonim*.

It should be mentioned that in 2013, again after the stellar Boston museum made its second offer to Jeshuat Israel, it received a “transformational gift of Judaica”56 from the Tulsa-based collector, Lynn Schusterman. It consisted of 119 ritual and decorative objects, dating primarily from the 18th through the 20th centuries, and made in Europe, the Middle East, Israel, and America. The gift also came with funds to conserve the objects and develop educational programs. Highlights of this notable collection have been shown in the museum’s Russell Gallery of 18th-century European art.

Mrs. Schusterman and her late husband, Charles, major Jewish philanthropists, had begun collecting during the 1990s. Over the years, they purchased, for example, 50 objects from Sotheby’s annual Judaica auctions in Tel Aviv as well as similar objects from Sotheby’s annual sister auctions in New York. No fewer than five of the Schustermans’ pieces came indirectly from the extraordinary Furman collection in Chile.

Although encouraged by the Phillips bequest, Mrs. Schusterman had not assembled her family’s collection with the intention of donating it to a major East Coast museum. Tulsa, moreover, has its own small but impressive Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art. She did not consider the possibility of a gift to the MFA until she visited there with a friend, Joyce Linde, a donor and honorary trustee,
whose late husband, Edward, had been the first Jewish chair of the Boston Symphony’s board of trustees. After her highly enjoyable visit, Mrs. Schusterman invited Dr. Cambereri and another curator to see her collection in Tulsa.

Finally, to place the MFA’s offer of $7.4 million for the Myers rimmonim in a still broader context, consider the astonishing sale of Michael and Judy Steinhardt’s collection at Sotheby’s in New York on April 30, 2013. (Like the Schustermans, the Steinhardts are among the nation’s leading Jewish philanthropists.) Sotheby’s promoted this offering as “the most significant collection of Judaica to be offered at auction in half a century” (since the sale of Michael Zagayski’s collection at Sotheby’s in New York in 1964). Staff members gave talks about the collection to prospective bidders in Brazil, England, Hong Kong, Israel, Italy, Russia, and Singapore before exhibiting the collection in Manhattan. The presale estimate for approximately 400 lots was $6 million. The results totaled $8.5 million. It became, in Sotheby’s words, “the most valuable auction of Judaica ever held.”

Eleven lots in the Steinhardt collection sold for $100,000 or more. By far the most expensive was a large silver and gilt Torah crown, made in Venice in about 1750, which sold for $857,000. An illuminated scroll of Esther, also made in Italy during the mid-18th-century, was the auction’s next most expensive lot. It sold for $653,000. The third most expensive lot consisted of three, early 18th-century, Venetian ornaments: a silver Torah crown with an attached pair of silver rimmonim. It fetched $437,000. The oldest piece in the Steinhardt collection was a 12th-century, bronze aquamanile—a lion-shaped vessel for washing hands—that had probably been made in Magdeburg, Germany. Only four such Jewish objects are known from this era. It sold for $377,000.

The results of the Steinhardt auction would have been even more breathtaking if a few lots had not been sold privately, for undisclosed amounts, days earlier. For example, the Israel and Metropolitan Museums—among the world’s finest—jointly purchased an illuminated copy of Maimonides’ Mishneh Torah, made in northern Italy in about 1457. Its paintings have been attributed by the Met to the “Master of the Barbo Missal,” whose additional work, if any, for a Jewish client is unknown. Considered one of the finest medieval Jewish manuscripts in existence, the estimated price had been $4.5 to $6 million. But the Steinhardt treasures, as coveted as they were, still fell short of the MFA’s second offer to Touro for its Myers rimmonim.
Coda

If its authorization had been requested, Congregation Shearith Israel would have probably agreed to Congregation Jeshuat Israel's loan of the contested Myers rimmonim to the MFA. If the ornaments' ownership had been properly identified, why wouldn't it? Over many decades, the New York congregation had agreed to lend its rimmonim to many museum exhibitions. The Torah finials would be protected, and tens of thousands of Jews and gentiles, over many years, would not only learn more about their use and meaning but could also savor their beauty and grandeur. Indeed, Myers's work could be viewed in a different and highly favorable light.

But Shearith Israel would never have even considered a sale of the rimmonim to the MFA or any other institution. There could be no basis for modifying its belief in and adherence to Maimonides' concept of “implements of holiness,” as expressed in his Mishneh Torah. In order to avoid a lawsuit, Shearith Israel had proposed a ruling by a rabbinic court, but its outcome would have been entirely predictable.

Later, in place of a rabbinic proceeding, North America’s mother Jewish congregation also suggested terms for stronger financial support to Jeshuat Israel. Such assistance would have eased the Newport congregation’s ongoing financial burdens. But Jeshuat Israel made its finances the fulcrum of the recently concluded trial. Its leaders convinced themselves that their congregation, as the rightful successor to Newport’s colonial Jewish congregation, owns the magnificent Myers rimmonim outright. These individuals also led themselves to believe that the terms of a trust created by Shearith Israel for Jeshuat Israel’s benefit had been violated.

Although his name was never mentioned in court- and presumably not in any legal documents- Ambassador John L. Loeb, who spent more than $10 million to erect a visitors’ center on Jeshuat Israel’s property, may have held the key to prevent the congregations’ acrimonious misunderstanding. Perhaps he has already planned another significant gift that will provide for Touro’s future. I truly hope so.

Judge McConnell has the awesome and unenviable burden of sorting out a myriad of complex and confounding historical and legal issues. Perhaps in another country, a chief rabbi would have held such a responsibility. I believe that Judge McConnell will do his best to execute his duties.
Unfortunately, however, Judge McConnell will be unable to make peace between the warring parties. And I am not sure how an appeals court could possibly do so, either. Perhaps a new group of Jewish leaders could reach some measure of mutual understanding, respect, and reconciliation. Their efforts need not be so costly.

Meanwhile, it remains almost incomprehensible to me how such small, ornate, rare, gorgeous, and joyful objects— the remnants of a long but nearly invisible Jewish past— have stirred up such animosity and anger. There should have been an alternative to this epic legal struggle— a way to honor Torah. Dare I say that the Lord expects better of us?

1 David L. Barquist, Myer Myers: Jewish Silversmith in Colonial New York (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). Additional essays are by Jon Butler and Jonathan D. Sarna. The exhibition was shown at Yale from September 14 to December 30, 2001; at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles from February 20 to May 26, 2002; and at the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum in Delaware from June 20 to September 13, 2002. I was privileged to see the exhibition at the Skirball on April 3, 2002. Myers had been the subject of Barquist’s Yale dissertation. Having served as the Yale Gallery’s assistant, associate, and acting curator of American decorative arts, he is now a curator of American decorative arts at the Philadelphia Art Museum.

2 As Mr. Wagner had also intended, he quite effectively undermined the defense’s second expert witness, Linford Fisher, a professor of colonial American religious history at Brown. Also hired by Shearith Israel at considerable, if not shocking, expense to fortify its arguments, he appeared to possess only a scant understanding of colonial Jewish history.


7 Gutmann, ed., x.
Visual art became so integral to Christianity that, until recent centuries, it was impossible to imagine one without the other. Likewise, the study of symbols and images is fundamental to Christian art. Indeed, the concept of iconography is derived from the study of icons, a word horribly misunderstood and abused in the computer age.

Within Judaism, written and spoken language has become sacrosanct. For many obvious and complex reasons, visual art, in turn, has played a subordinate or more submissive role. This is not to say, however, that Judaism has produced an anti-visual- or an iconoclastic- tradition.

Through the magnificence of painting, sculpture, and architecture— as well as music, costume, gesture, scent, and taste— Catholics, in particular, have used art to instruct, dramatize, sensationalize and, ultimately, glorify belief. At its best, such proselytization may produce a profoundly mystical experience; a way of knowing that somehow bypasses and in some sense supersedes verbal understanding.

Ironically, some religious art, when removed from an ecclesiastical setting and placed in a secular museum, can produce a similarly profound metaphorical and mystical experience. Some of the best secular art may also produce a deeply spiritual response. In view of the fortunes spent on it, a craving for any kind of art can become not only wasteful but also idolatrous.

I believe that Jewish visual art— so long absent from museums— has assumed relatively humble tasks. Rather than using images of martyrdom, miracles, last judgment, rebirth, and triumph to transfix and transport viewers, Jewish visual art seeks to elucidate, guide, and honor. Its rewards are awareness and insight rather than catharsis or rapture. Thus, I tend to think of Torah ornaments as nothing more- nor less- than embodiments of respect and adoration.

I must confess, however, that my own love of and need for visual art are boundless. In a catholic sense, I want to feel enthralled, overpowered, and swept away.

Notes

8 Mann, Crowning Glory, 11.


12 Mann, Crowning Glory, 5.


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16 Mann, Crowning Glory, 12.


The oldest extant illustrated manuscript from Ashkenazi sources, surviving in a book, is the “Bird’s Head” Haggadah, which was crafted in southern Germany in about 1300 and is owned by the Israel Museum.

18 Mann, ed., Jewish Texts, 80-2.

19 Cecil Roth, The History of the Jews of Italy (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946), 259. Cammarata is located in Val di Mazara, midway between Agrigento and Termini Imerese.

20 Mann, Crowning Glory, 9.

21 Mann, ed., Gardens and Ghettos, 294; Dora L. Bemporad, Sinagoga e Museo Ebraico di Firenze (Comunità Ebraica di Firenze, 2007), 41.

22 As symbols of nature’s bounty, pomegranates appear with other fruit and vegetables in Italian Christian art. For example, there are low-relief, marble carvings of pomegranates on the door jambs of Florence’s Dominican church, Santa Maria Novella, whose façade was completed in 1470.


24 Bemporad, Sinagoga, 42.

25 Bemporad, Sinagoga, 39.

26 The Florence community also has a yad made of coral, which was probably made in Livorno during the mid-18th century. Bemporad, Sinagoga, 44.


28 Grafman and Mann, ed., ix.

29 Detailed images of 18th-century Jewish ceremonial objects, costumes, services, and synagogues have also been preserved through engravings in Bernard Picart’s study, Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde, which was published in Amsterdam in nine volumes from 1723 to 1743. Picart, a French Calvinist who settled in that city, is considered a father of comparative religion.


31 A Torah crown, made by the Amsterdam silversmith Evert van Heerdan in 1679 for the same congregation, may be the oldest extant Jewish ceremonial object from the New World. It too is on permanent loan to the Israel Museum. AvRutick, 154. Still another pair of rimmonim, lent by Swiss collectors to the Israel Museum, comes from a distant corner of...
the Diaspora. Probably made in Iraq in 1742, they are the oldest dated finials from that area. These gilt silver
pieces, though monolithic and somewhat squat in shape, are exquisitely ornamented with floral patterns and
Hebrew inscriptions. At the top of each, a hand reaches toward heaven. Below, eight bells, resembling pods,
dangle from heavy chains. AvRutick, 154-5.

32
Rickie Burman, Jennifer Martin, and Lily Steadman, eds., Treasures of Jewish Heritage: The Jewish Museum,

33
The exhibition catalogue also contains a photo showing scores of stacked rimmonim, among 140,000 pieces
of Jewish patrimony from Bohemia and Moravia, looted by the Nazis in order to establish a “museum to an
extinct race” in Prague. The exhibition’s closest venue to Rhode Island was the Wadsworth Atheneum in
Hartford.

34
Burman, Martin, Steadman, eds., 79.

35
A decade later, he crafted a silver hanging Sabbath lamp, which also belongs to the London Museum. Made
of six sculptural parts, the most impressive may be the crown, which is second from the top. An earlier hang-
ing Sabbath lamp, made in The Hague in 1764, was presumably crafted by Michel Derièe. Belinfante, 41.

36
Schoenberger, “Ritual Silver,” in Gutmann, ed., 75. This pair is also illustrated in Barquist, 159.

37
Furman, 35.

38
In his catalogue of the Yale exhibition, Barquist wrote extensively about the 10 rimmonim. He believes that
the oldest set (no. 63), not an actual pair, was made between 1765 and 1776 and had belonged to Shearith
Israel by 1833. This set is featured in the catalogue’s frontispiece. The next set (no. 64), not an actual pair,
was made between 1766 and 1776 and was in the possession of Yeshuat Israel (the colonial Newport congre-
gation) by about 1780.

There is no documentary proof that Yeshuat commissioned a pair from Myers, however. Nevertheless, My-
ers’s sister, Rachel, was married to Moses Hays of New York. They moved to Newport in about 1770 before
moving again to Boston in 1782. Hays’s sister, Reyna, also had a strong Newport connection because she
married Isaac Touro, who was Yeshuat Israel’s hazan (spiritual leader). It is known, however, that a pair of
rimmonim, held in trust by Shearith Israel since 1822, was returned to Newport for use by Yeshuat Israel in
1893.

Barquist believes that the two previously mentioned sets form two accidentally mismatched pairs. His inter-
pretation was based on differences in their height and appearance as well as on an inscription, “Newport,”
that was later made on two of the four shafts.

The art historian thinks that the third pair (no. 65) was made between 1765 and 1766, but possibly as late as
1771 or 1772. This pair was commissioned by Philadelphia’s Mikveh Israel congregation, which still owns it.
The fourth pair of rimmonim (no. 66) was made at approximately the same time for Mikveh Israel, which still
owns it. The fifth and youngest pair (no. 100), made between 1784 and 1795, was created for Samuel and
Judith Hays of Richmond and passed to their granddaughter, Caroline Cohen. Shearith Israel facilitated its
donation to Yeshuat Israel in 1892.

In his combative cross-examination of Dr. Mann, Jonathan Wagner, Jeshuat Israel’s lawyer, sought to affirm
that congregation’s ownership of the second set of rimmonim (no. 64) on the basis of Dr. Barquist’s research.
But the expert on Jewish ceremonial art attempted to explain that Barquist was not required to verify the
provenance or current ownership of every item in his Myers exhibition. He would not have had the oppor-
tunity or time to do so. Consequently, rather than interjecting himself within a complicated dispute, Barquist
accepted information provided by other historians and curators.
Barquist, 28.


Barquist, 152.

Barquist, 59.

Information about auction houses' estimates, sales, and related publicity has been obtained primarily from their websites. Unfortunately, each house does not maintain its own centralized data bank. Occasionally, it became necessary to examine every lot of an auction to find an important pair of rimmonim.

From April 17 to May 13, 1955, an exhibition, “The House of God,” in honor of the American Jewish Tercentenary, was held at the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design. Consisting of 69 items, it included ritual objects primarily from Providence collections and a small number of photographs of synagogues. It is not clear from the exhibition's eight-page leaflet how many of the four Myers rimmonim housed at Touro were included. I am grateful to Douglas Doe, the museum's assistant archivist, for his research. See also: Seebert J. Goldowsky, A Century and a Quarter of Spiritual Leadership: The Story of the Congregation of the Sons of Israel and David (Providence: Sons of Israel and David, 1989), 422, endnote 22.


Mann, ed., Jewish Texts, 158.


By the 1920s, largely as a result of purchasing the 6,000-piece collection belonging to Salli Kirschstein, who lived near Berlin, the College's Jewish Museum would become one of the two most important in America. In 1972 the College's Museum, having been shipped to its Los Angeles campus, was renamed the Skirball Museum in honor of Jack Skirball, an alumnus who was already the namesake of the College's new facility. See: Grace C. Grossman, New Beginnings: The Skirball Museum Collections and Inaugural Exhibition (Los Angeles: Skirball Cultural Center, 1996), 19.

See: Gunter Grass, Vivian B. Mann, and Joseph Gutmann, Danzig 1939: Treasures of a Destroyed Community (New York: Jewish Museum, 1980). This major exhibition traveled to seven American museums and
to Tel Aviv.

For an analysis of the destruction of Judaica in other European countries, see: Julie-Marthe Cohen and Felici-
tas Heimann-Jelinek, eds., Neglected Witnesses: The Fate of Jewish Ceremonial Objects During the Second
World War and After (Amsterdam: Jewish Historical Museum, 2011). Ms. Cohen’s chapter on the theft and
restitution of Judaica in the Netherlands is particularly useful for its numerical compilations. She believes that,
although 7,000 objects were probably plundered, the fate of only 5,711 can be documented. See: Table II,
252. These objects included, for example: 852 Torah mantles, 435 ark curtains, 308 Torahs, 290 rimmonim,
154 Torah pointers, and 25 Torah crowns.

52
Mann, ed., Jewish Texts, 165.

53

54
Burman, Martin, Steadman, eds., 80.

55
For a broader examination of these issues, see: George M. Goodwin, “A New Jewish Elite: Curators, Direc-
tors, and Benefactors of American Art Museums,” Modern Judaism, XVIII (February and May, 1998), 47-79,
119-52.

56
MFA, undated press release, found on its website; The Forward, “Lynn Schusterman Donates Judaica Collection

57

58
Six lots sold for under $999. Sixty-eight went for $1,000 to $2,999. Thirty-five lots went for $3,000 to
$9,999. Thirty-five sold for $10,000 to $49,000. Twenty-one lots went for up to $50,000.

59
23.

60
During the auction proper, the Met purchased two other objects from the Steinhardt collection. A pair of
rimmonim made in Georgia (adjacent to Russia) in 1896 was estimated to sell for $20,000 to $30,000, but
went for $43,750. An exceptionally large and intricate Torah crown, made by Andrea Zambelli in Venice in
about 1740 to 1750, was estimated to sell for $300,000 to $500,000. It fetched $857,000.
America’s Oldest Synagogue Wrestles With Court Battle and Its Own Decline

Paul Berger

The author, an investigative reporter, is well known to readers of the outstanding Jewish newspaper, the Forward. Never afraid of controversy, he has written several articles that have generated some of their own.

Two of Mr. Berger’s articles and two editorials by his colleagues, written in 2011, were reproduced in our journal that year. They dealt with the fate of the famous George Washington Letter, which Newport’s Congregation Jeshuat Israel mysteriously and inexcusably sold to the secretive Morris Morgenstern Foundation in 1949. The letter, written in 1790, was placed on long-term loan to B’nai B’rith’s Klutznick Museum, in Washington, DC. After the museum closed its doors in 2002, the letter has been exhibited infrequently.

The following article originally appeared in the Forward on June 26, 2015 and is reproduced with permission. Its point of departure was another fateful and hugely symbolic matter, the contested sale of a set of Myer Myers rimmonim, which was discussed in our journal’s previous article. Indeed, Mr. Berger may have planned his June visit to Newport in order to shed light on the trial in Providence’s federal district court, but his research went in a different and perhaps more troubling direction.

Rather than focusing on the fate of two exquisite Torah ornaments, he addressed Congregation Jeshuat Israel’s survival and that of Aquidneck Island’s scattered Jewish community. As with many of Berger’s stories and countless chapters of Jewish history, this has become a haunting but still hopeful tale.

Rabbi Marc Mandel’s voice filled Touro Synagogue one recent Saturday morning, drifting past the wooden columns that line the basilica and rising toward the women’s gallery, just as the voices of baalei tefillah, or prayer leaders, did 250 years ago.

Tourists stream through this, the oldest synagogue in America, five days a week. But it is during services that this majestic colonial building comes to life.

Two days earlier, on June 11, a federal judge wrapped up a two-week trial, held in Providence, Rhode Island, that could determine the fate of this synagogue as a living, breathing house of worship.
Congregation Jeshuat Israel, which prays at Touro Synagogue, is suing for the right to sell a pair of 18th-century silver ceremonial bells to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The bells, which normally adorn the handles of a Torah scroll, are worth an estimated $7.4 million.

Jeshuat Israel, which is losing congregants and struggling financially, says it needs the money to set up an irrevocable trust to ensure its financial survival.

Standing in the congregation’s way is Congregation Shearith Israel, of New York, the oldest congregation in America, founded in 1654, which says that it owns the bells and Newport’s synagogue building.

The spectacle of two icons of American Jewish history haranguing each other in federal court has drawn national media attention, causing angst and embarrassment among many of Newport’s Jews. “What a black mark on the Jewish community of North America in general,” Robert Friedman, who was born and raised in Newport but who now lives in Florida, told me.

The trial is more than a breakdown in communication. It is a symptom of a much larger problem, which is that Newport’s Jewish community is slowly dying.

It is a deathbed scene familiar to Jewish communities in small towns and cities across America.

A once thriving community falls on hard times. Children grow up, leave for college and never return. The few young families that do remain are not interested in joining a synagogue.

But Newport is different.

Home to legendary folk and jazz festivals, international regattas and Golden Age mansions, Newport remains a vibrant, desirable place to live.

It is different, too, because Newport is one of just six colonial Jewish congregations, alongside Savannah, Georgia; Charleston, South Carolina; Richmond, Virginia; Philadelphia, and New York.

If Jewish life disappears here- as well it could- a piece of American Jewish history dies with it.

When Friedman’s mother, Phyllis “Chickie” Friedman, thinks about the possibility of Touro Synagogue standing empty on a Sabbath morning, she feels sad not just for Newport’s Jews, but also for the entire American Jewish community.

“I feel very sad in particular for the people who are missing the experi-
ence of being there, because it’s- there’s an atmosphere in that synagogue you
don’t get anywhere else,” Friedman says.

Friedman, who is 86, sits in the lounge of Blenheim-Newport senior
living facility trying to find the words to describe the atmosphere inside Touro
Synagogue. She still attends services every week that she is able.

Her milky blue eyes stare into the middle distance as she reaches into her
memory to describe what it is like to sit in that sanctuary designed by the re-
owned colonial architect Peter Harrison and painted in colonial green. “It’s not
grand,” she says. Then she pauses and, almost in a whisper, her voice trails off:
“I don’t know what it is.”

Finally, Friedman says: “Maybe it’s history, because our history is written
into that synagogue.”

By “our history,” Friedman means American Jewish history. She says
that the leaders of the congregation, including her husband, who served multiple
stints as board member and president, and who died in January, “were doing it
not just for themselves, but for the future. So we would leave something that has
meaning.”

The Newport Jewish community’s disappearance is not only conceivable,
it’s happened twice before.

The city sits on the southernmost tip of Aquidneck Island, jutting out
into Narragansett Bay.

The first Jews arrived here in 1655 from Barbados, but after just 30 years
the community fizzled.

The next community put down roots in the 1730s, and this time they
held.

Both groups of Jews were Sephardim, who traced their roots to Spain
and Portugal and to ancestors who had been persecuted and expelled from the
Iberian Peninsula during the Inquisitions of the late 15th century.

With names like Aaron Lopez and Jacob Rodriguez Rivera, they made
fortunes in shipping, candle-making and banking.

On the first day of Hanukkah, in 1763, a procession of congregants and
non-Jewish dignitaries wound through Newport’s streets following three Torah
scrolls bound for the consecration of what would become known as Touro Syna-
gogue.

The celebrations were to be short-lived.
During the Revolutionary War, Newport was attacked and occupied. The city’s population, about 9,000 people, fell to about 4,000 people, and its industries were devastated.

The synagogue was one of the few public buildings to survive the damage, but its congregation never recovered.

Most Jews left the city before the revolution. After the revolution, Newport’s economy was so battered that there was little point in returning.

The event for which Newport Jewry is best known, the visit of George Washington, came at one of its darkest hours.

Washington visited Rhode Island in 1790. The warden of the synagogue’s much-diminished congregation, Moses Seixas, presented Washington with an address congratulating him on his recent election victory and asking for his assurance that Jews would be free to practice their religion in the fledgling United States of America.

Washington’s reply, in which he pledged that America would give “to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance,” is widely regarded as his most eloquent treatise on religious liberty.

Yet just 30 years after Washington’s visit, Newport’s Jewish community expired. The keys to Touro Synagogue and the deed to the building were given to Shearith Israel.

It took 60 years and an influx of Eastern European Jews before Jewish life was rekindled in Newport in the late 1800s.

By the turn of the 20th century, two rival Newport congregations fought for the right to pray at Touro Synagogue.

Shearith Israel helped the two congregations merge, and in 1903 it leased the building to the newly formed Congregation Jeshuat Israel for a nominal rent of $1 per year.

Joshua Nemtzow arrived in Newport with his parents in 1918 when he was 1 year old.

Now 97, Nemtzow remembers how during the 1920s and ’30s most Jews lived close to the center of the city off Broadway, on Burnside Avenue and Kingston Avenue. They were mostly merchant families, running grocery stores or similar businesses.

Nemtzow’s father, Harry Nemtzow, owned a hay and grain store. After the Great Depression of the 1930s, when many farmers went out of business, he
moved into the furniture business and later sold paints.

Nemtzow estimates that between the first and second world wars there were about 200 Jewish families in the city, enough to support two kosher butchers and a second, smaller Orthodox synagogue, Ahavas Achim, which prayed in a red brick synagogue a few blocks from Touro.

Nemtzow said Ahavas Achim’s founders were drawn from the older generation, who looked down on Touro Synagogue as “not Orthodox enough” because Jeshuat Israel’s rabbi gave his sermon in English.

The Jewish community continued to grow through the 1940s and into the ’50s, when the U.S. Navy made Newport the base for the Atlantic Fleet’s Cruiser-Destroyer force.

The Navy brought hundreds of families to Newport, quite a few of them Jewish. The ships also provided ample floating opportunities for such Jewish-owned businesses as liquor supply, clothing, furniture and printing.

Phyllis Friedman, who arrived in Newport during the late 1940s, recalled that during the 1950s and ’60s it was difficult to join Touro because the sanctuary was often almost at capacity and seats in the women's gallery were in short supply.

In those days, “the Irish rabbi,” Theodore Lewis, led the congregation. Tall and imposing, with a thick Irish brogue, Lewis was as popular among the Irish Catholics in Newport’s Fifth Ward as he was in the city’s thriving Jewish community.

In addition to being the rabbi, Lewis was the principal of Newport’s burgeoning United Hebrew School, which was run under the auspices of Touro Synagogue.

It is true that even during this heyday, some of the younger generation were lured elsewhere after college. But it wasn’t until 1973, and President Richard Nixon’s decision to move the Cruiser-Destroyer force out of Newport, that opportunities for ambitious young Jews shrank severely.

Overnight, the prime driver of Newport’s economy was gone.

During the decades that followed, Newport put greater emphasis on tourism, which was mostly seasonal and low-paid work.

To make matters worse, Newport’s desirable location as a resort for summer homes pushed up house prices, making life for working families less and less affordable.
Rabbi Marc Jagolinzer recently marked 40 years as spiritual leader of Aquidneck’s sole Conservative congregation, Temple Shalom. His synagogue is located about 3 miles outside Newport, in Middletown, an area that became popular for Jews decades ago as they were priced out of Newport.

During his early years in Middletown, Jagolinzer doubled and then tripled the size of his congregation, which peaked during the 1990s with 150 families. During the past 15 years, he has witnessed a steep decline. Today, he has fewer than 100 families, most of them elderly.

Jagolinzer says the departure of the Navy is not solely to blame. He believes there are at least 300 Jewish families on the island, but many of them simply do not join synagogues, as their parents’ generation did.

It’s a scenario that is playing out in Newport’s churches, too.

The Rev. John McNulty, of St Augustin’s Catholic Church, in Newport, said his congregation has shrunk from 750 families 20 years ago to fewer than 550 families today. “A lot of these families are widows and widowers,” McNulty said.

He blamed the lack of decent paying jobs as well as rising property prices for squeezing out working families. McNulty said that property prices have risen so much that most buyers these days are wealthy families from New York, Connecticut and Pennsylvania looking for a second home.

The changing demographics are mirrored in the Newport public school district, which has shrunk to about 2,000 school children today from about 3,000 in 1998.

“The children of the people who are the bedrock families in this community go away to college and they don’t come back,” Jim Gillis, a columnist at The Newport Daily News, told me. He said that this year 114 students graduated from the city’s high school. During the 1970s, that number would have been closer to 450.

Touro’s congregation declined to speak on the record to me for this story, citing the ongoing court case. U.S. District Judge John McConnell has asked both sides to submit post-trial briefs. He has scheduled closing arguments for July 20.

I attended services at Touro on a Friday night and Saturday morning. About 15 people attended the Friday night service. They included a couple from the United Kingdom who were on vacation in Newport and who wanted to experience the synagogue at prayer.

During the summer months, Touro gets lots of tourist congregants, as
well as second homeowners who want to attend services. During July and August, Touro has a morning minyan every day of the week.

On the Saturday morning I was in town, about 80 people attended services, the majority of them out-of-town guests who had come for a wedding celebration- or aufruf- of an elderly couple who were getting married that weekend.

Perhaps fittingly, the bride and groom were from out of town too. They live 80 miles away in Newton, Massachusetts, and like many other couples these days, they had chosen Newport because of the location and the symbolism of a wedding at Touro Synagogue.

Touro occupies a hilltop position, like an ancient lighthouse, looking out to sea.

During the service, light streamed in through the round-headed windows, and a sea breeze blew in through the open double doors.

As noted by an earlier Forward reporter, who visited in 2009, Jewish communities “have come and gone from Newport like the tide.”

Even with the slow fading-out of this latest Jewish community- Newport’s longest lasting one, at 135 years- the old synagogue built by Sephardic Jews 250 years ago will endure, ready to accept the next wave of Jewish immigrants, wherever they are from.
An Album of My Alums

Michael Fink

This article serves as a companion to Mike’s article, “Mr. RISD,” published in our journal a decade ago. Although he chose not to belabor a point, he has served longer than any of his RISD predecessors or contemporaries. Indeed, it seems highly unlikely, if not totally implausible, that Mike’s tenure will ever be surpassed. And this is to say nothing about the quality or artistry of his service.

While fortunate to have studied many summers at one art school and to have taught many years at another, I was never able to take a course with “Lady” Michael’s husband. But having gathered weekly for coffee with him and other friends for nearly a decade, I too feel like one of Mike’s alumni. Indeed, he has encouraged and mentored me in numerous ways, and I hope that he will give me permission to call me one of his protégés. That last word is derived from French, so Mike, being a Francophile, will probably not object.

Speaking further of Gallic culture, Mike may write an article in our next issue about the many women he has jilted and about a comparable number who wished him adieu. Yes, his unique blend of savoir faire and menschlichkeit has helped make Rhode Island his eternal home and habitat.

My career as a RISD instructor and professor, which began nearly six decades ago, has been richly enhanced by my friendships with former students. Many have in fact become my own instructors.

This article poses certain problems for me, however, because my vocation has been blessed with a nearly endless parade of marvelous alliances and collaborations with imaginative and creative people. I would hate to leave anybody out of this memoir, but omissions are inevitable.

In an art and design college, there is, perhaps, an enhanced sharing of lively adventures. As a liberal arts presenter, I have attempted to incorporate the poetics of literature into the educational mix of direct and oblique material. In my “World Literature” course, for example, I explain historical texts via popularized, perhaps trivialized, translations. These would include comics, motion pictures or sometimes the lyrics of popular tunes.

I once offered a course on “The French Novel,” in translation, which was an adaptation of my own undergraduate studies in English and American
literature at, of all places, the Sorbonne. I had read Hemingway in French and Poe translated by Baudelaire! This was an early elective, once the required curriculum had been expanded to include such free choices. One of my students, Bunny Harvey Muhly (master of fine arts, painting, ’69), remembered this class specifically, at a recent reception at Wellesley College, celebrating her retirement as a professor of painting after a 40-year career.

All of my students (who earned bachelor of fine arts degrees unless otherwise noted) become, in one sense or another, Jewish. They listen to Holocaust survivors, and they ask questions of Israeli officers who study at Newport’s Naval War College. They greet such visiting visual and literary artists as Leonard Baskin, Al Capp, Ruth Gruber, Isaac B. Singer, Art Spiegelman, and Roman Vishniac. My students hear me out and return to their homes with an entirely different perspective on the arts of Judaism— or so I hope.

I recently took the gilded elevator of the former Hospital Trust Bank, now the RISD Library, up to the archive where the collection of yearbooks is stored. I took out and pored over graduation portraits from 1958 through 2015. I searched for those alums who may represent the culture of their era, or the typical, perhaps unique, fates and destinies that awaited them. Or maybe I searched for students who remain staples in our shared lives and mutual community.

For example, I remember David Itchkawitz (painting, ’65), whose father, Herman, lived near Wayland Square and opened his studio to fellow artists. There I met so many local designers, painters, printmakers, and architects, many of whom were GIs from World War II and Korea. Some of them also ran galleries in town. David and Herman made me feel part of the Providence art scene, which extended far beyond classroom borders.

I remain in touch with many graduates whether they are Jews or not. For example, Alice Miles and Wendy Ingram belonged to the Class of 1959. I meet them and other friends weekly at a local coffee shop, not far from RISD, to continue discussing fascinating but irresolvable questions. We also have many laughs.

This year was the 50th reunion of the Class of 1965, and many students have kept in touch with me throughout this half-century. Robert Oppenheim (photography), whose parents came to Providence as refugees from Nazi Germany, was my student but also a neighbor. Having joined the minyan at my home upon my mother’s death, he brought a special and reassuring comfort to
me during shivah.

Jennifer Edwards (photography, ‘59) created a thesis about the Gypsy community of New York City. She married an Israeli, who was a second-generation Holocaust survivor. Jennifer asked me to help design appropriate questions for her in-laws when she turned her mind and camera to study similarities between Jewish and Gypsy travelers across national boundaries, particularly in Europe.

Karen Marcus (architecture, ’83) was the daughter of a Jewish father and a Japanese-American mother, who had been interned during World War II. She took my course on “The Jewish Narrative.” After graduation, she earned an architecture degree at M.I.T. and returned to Rhode Island, but not to establish a practice. Having brought her aging mother to Providence, she devoted her life to her care. Karen and I continue to visit and keep up our bonds and ties.

Karen’s RISD classmate and close friend was Jeffrey Weiss (sculpture), the son of a Holocaust survivor who had been hidden as a child. Jeffrey, who spent a postgraduate year traveling across the continent with a silent Zen master, kept in continuous contact with me by letter and postcard. He too became a Rhode Islander and purchased properties on the East Side.

My former student Patricia Allen ’65, who later married my friend Jim Weiss (no relation to Jeffrey), painted the Jewish social scene, including the Samderperil family, with which we were both friendly. She also painted my RISD colleague – the wizard, entrepreneur, and well-known inventor – Ben Weiss, Jim’s brother and fellow orphan, who thus later became her brother-in-law. Patricia also portrayed my own clan, including my wife, “Lady” Michael, our daughter Emily, and me at various ages and stages of our lives.

Yes, some of my former students have almost become family. For example, Amy Cohen (MFA, printmaking, ’90) bought a house on my street, Creston Way, uphill at the corner of Summit Avenue. It had been the dwelling of my grandmother and grandfather, Clara and Harry Fink, and of my aunt, Edith Fink Salhanick. Thus, Amy has become a neighbor who tends my forebears’ rose bushes. Sometimes, to get a quick giggle, I call her “Grandma.”

During the July break of 1962, David Weindel (industrial design, ’65), who grew up on a farm in East Greenwich, brought his canoe to my parents’ home on Narrow River in Narragansett. He showed me the history of the region’s waterways. David put in his time as an Air Force pilot, but he was drawn down
and back to depict his family’s way of life. While contributing his vision and skill as a designer at Hasbro, he created a toy version of the animals of his Frenchtown enclave.

Although RISD had begun as a local vocational school, it grew into an institution of national and then international standing and scope. Perhaps the liberal arts had something to do with its success. Artists and designers on the faculty would most likely question it, but we like to believe this claim.

In recent decades many students have come to us from over the oceans and beyond the blue horizons. Now we have many Korean students, and I can count allies from all continents and diverse islands. When I look at the walls of my office, my parlor at home, my studio lofts, and my summerhouse porch, I find so many souvenir reminders.

Tim Casey (’70), for example, sketched an egret on the bare wall of my rabbit-warren of an office even before it became a madhouse of clutter. He also fetched me one dawn to drive to Hartford and go ballooning! When Tim won a commission to do a painting for a Jewish museum, he asked my advice on what to choose as an appropriate symbol. I explained that we use a yad, a silver pointer, to make certain that we read Torah’s words precisely and correctly. I’m proud to say that he followed my guideline successfully.

I had a charming, eloquent and delicate student named Jane Scalia (’73) from Baltimore. She had attended Catholic schools, but after her RISD studies, she married an Orthodox Israeli and moved to Jerusalem! My student Gilbert Doherty (landscape architecture, ’71) married my wife Michael’s college roommate, Carol Glassman. We visited them this past summer in Washington, D.C. His classmate, Patricia Caine (painting, ’71), a farmer’s daughter from California, married Neil Rosoff.

Abby Gould (art education, ’72), the daughter of composer Morton Gould, sends me Hanukkah cards, which include news about her Orthodox children and grandchildren in Israel.

Ed Baranosky, originally from Newport, became a longtime resident of Toronto. He is a poet, who publishes verse in chapbooks, and sends them to me. Also a painter, Ed recently sent me a small seascape, which I keep with pride and poignancy on the knotty pine walls of my den.

Diane Chain (illustration, ’73) translated a photograph of my house into a fine, detailed painting. She also snapped a shot of me in my chair, beside my
tapestry-brick hearth, and transferred it into multihued oil on canvas.

Amalie Rothschild (graphic design, '67) illustrated my own travel journal of photographs taken in Romania. These were published in a RISD alumni magazine in 1968. We had planned to rendezvous in Bucharest, but could not find the place where we were to meet. It had been torn down! So I took a train to Podu Iloiaie, the village of my ancestors. There weren’t any cousins to meet me. Nevertheless, she found another traveler in the region and married him!

Elizabeth Ginsberg (textiles, '64) was another world voyager. Having rivers and canoes in common, we have become longtime companions. I was a guest at her wedding, and she has sent me invitations to her shows in New York, Italy, and Japan. She has also sent me wonderful bird books, illustrated and elegantly designed, for my course, “Birds in Books.” I’m changing the title to “Birds and Words.”

A teacher is like a low-key celebrity in the classroom. But like all stars, one has admirers and detractors, friends and foes. There are good years and less fabulous seasons. They are impossible to predict. Some RISD yearbooks feel especially, intimately, personal to me. Others, less so.

I can now count some celebrities- even icons of the great world beyond Rhode Island- who once elected to take my spiels. Some of my Hollywood hits are: Martha Coolidge (film, ’74), Gus van Sant (film, ’75), Bob Richardson (film,
I am especially proud of the costumes created by Fred Fraleigh (sculpture, '96), who dreamed up the plumage for a recent film, “Birdman,” and the monster masks for any number of horror fantasies. His best friend had been his pet iguana, which, I believe, inspired his entire oeuvre. Fred, who became a collaborator at Providence’s Big Nazo puppet studio, was once a guest at my family’s seder. His iguana did not attend. In my “Jewish Narrative” class, Fred had learned to say the proper prayers in Hebrew.

During a sabbatical semester, I planned to travel to Hong Kong to set up a DVD film library, featuring the history of Hollywood. Then a Japanese student, Tsuyoshi Kimoto (film, ’93), asked me to change my ticket to include a visit to his home in Osaka. He and I were then fortunate to translate a conversation between a rabbi and a Shinto representative.

Upon our return to RISD, we pursued more connections between Jewish and Japanese customs, credos, and courtesies. He invited me back to Tokyo to speak at his wedding!

As with Fred Fraleigh, it has become my own ritual or tradition to invite a student to my seders. He or she has shown a genuine interest based upon my class or has traced a tie between one branch of his or her family and a Jewish twig. For example, the current leader of our RISD Pigeon Club, Evan Fredrikson, has Gypsy, Jewish, and Norwegian grandparents. He was our Elijah only last springtime.

Once, when I was reading a class list, I came across the name “Wallenberg.” “Are you by any chance related to Raoul...”
Wallenberg?” I asked. “Yes, he was my great uncle,” he responded. I asked Nicholas Carl-Gustaf Wallenberg (industrial design, ’06) to our house across from Memorial Road and took him to knock at the Adlers’ door. Gertrude, “Mrs. Adler,” had been saved in wartime Budapest by Nick’s relative. It was a dramatic and wondrous encounter, which led to Nick becoming another of our Elijahs. Somehow, stories come back and bring their own shapes, soutaches, sighs and amens.

Yes, nearly everybody at RISD has something for himself, herself or me to discover.

Fortunately, some RISD graduates find the rewards of their talents, their place in the sun of prosperity. Others leave in their wake, perhaps “chassidically,” something other than fame, celebrity or total gratification. I have collaborated with Providence photographers Jonathan Sharlin and Alan Metnick (MFA, 73). Rebecca Brenner (ceramics, ’84) took sound for “Here We Live Again,” my film study of Holocaust survivors of Rhode Island. I also purchase gifts for my wife Michael from among Rebecca’s remarkable jewelry at the RISD Museum gift shop.

Of course I felt honored when RISD’s alumni council named me an “honorary alumnus.” But whatever their fate, my alums have become my spiritual heirs, my companions in the quest for truth, beauty, goodness, and sweetness.

I recommended the Community Service Award to Max Frieder (painting, ’12), a student in several of my courses, whose contribution to our town and campus started with his collaborative mural done for “Occupy Providence” and
continued with such projects undertaken in Israel and even in Colombia.

I paddled in a paper canoe with Jed Cohen (furniture, ’16), attracting much attention along the Woonasquatucket River. It flows along the banks that share our various studios as well as our liberal arts spaces.

Perhaps the most moving account with which I can close this album of my calling is a story I heard this season from Anna Belle Kaufman, a former student who writes to me about her life’s innermost dramas. She bore a baby boy who required a blood transfusion, from which he was infected with the HIV virus, a then fatal ailment. Instead of helping and preparing her only child for life, she had to teach him how to let go of life. She published the poetic tragedy and attracted the attention of the renowned author, Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, who became her friend and ally. Anna credited me, of all people, with having encouraged her in the art of memoir, the thoughtful essay, and the transfer of visual clarity and descriptive honesty into verbal eloquence.

Thanks to my career and life at RISD, I have become deeply aware of the privilege of corresponding, visiting, and interacting with those who have listened to me, and spoken with me. I too have sought to save something from the years and decades of my bashert career, my destiny.
Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association

Invites You To

A Farewell Brunch

In Honor of Anne Sherman’s Retirement

Sunday, November 8, 2015

Eleven o’clock in the Morning

The Atrium at the Crowne Plaza Hotel

801 Greenwich Avenue, Warwick, Rhode Island
For Anne

Geraldine S. Foster

On November 8, a bright Sunday morning, more than 40 Association members gathered for brunch at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Warwick, to honor and celebrate the Association’s extraordinary office manager, Anne Sherman, who will soon retire. Three board members, Maxine Goldin, Marilyn Myrow, and Myrna Levine, organized this festive and colorful event. Mel Blake, another board member, took photos to add to the Association’s unrivaled archive.

Our current president, Ruth Breindel, welcomed guests, and Maxine presented Anne with a framed proclamation and gift as tokens of the Association’s heartfelt appreciation. George Goodwin, another of ten presidents Anne has assisted, lauded Anne’s numerous skills and achievements as well as her kind and loving manner. Jerry Foster, a president who preceded Anne’s lengthy tenure but one with whom she became especially close, delivered the following remarks.

Anne also spoke about the myriad sources of her deeply felt pride and satisfaction. Surrounded by family and friends, she was beaming.

It is 8:45 on a Monday morning, 15 minutes before office hours begin. The phone rings, but the answering machine does not pick up. Instead, a perky voice responds, “Rhode Island Jewish Historical.” Anne Sherman is there to answer the call.

Twenty-four years ago, the Association’s president, Stanley Abrams, realized the time had come for RIJHA to go high-tech. It was time to get a computer. Lyn Stepak, our fine secretary, decided to retire rather than face that new-fangled machine. So a small ad appeared in the pages of The Jewish Voice and Herald: “Wanted: a part-time bookkeeper/secretary, preferably with computer skills.”

One person responded, but she balked at working the required three days per week, three hours each session. It was too part-time.

Then RIJHA placed another ad. This time an applicant came in for an interview. She was a bit nervous, intimidated perhaps by a committee, not just one individual, sitting in judgment of her qualifications, which did not include computer skills.
To follow proper protocol, the applicant’s references had to be checked. One was Caroline Gereboff, a friend of mine, so it became my job to make the call. I cannot remember Caroline’s exact words, but in essence, she said that the young woman is qualified for the job because she is “a good person.” “That’s all that is important,” she added. “She’ll figure things out.”

And so it was that when Anne answered our call, the Association responded. Anne came to work at our office even though she had to drive all the way from Cranston to the East Side, three days a week, to work three hours per day. As days turned into weeks and months into years, we found out how right Caroline was about Anne having the necessary qualifications not only for the job, but, more importantly, as a person.

In addition to learning the office routine, Anne soon faced the major challenge—the fearsome computer. An expert, who was the comptroller of a major company, volunteered to teach Anne the intricacies of computing. Unfortunately, he lacked teaching skills. As a result, he sowed more confusion than enlightenment. With the aid of a friend, Anne was able to figure things out for herself, and her computing skills have never been in question.

Anne figured out a way to help Eleanor Horvitz, the Association’s beloved archivist and librarian, without encroaching on her space or her domain. Though not a trained archivist, Anne figured out our arcane archive and devised ways to improve the system. She made herself indispensable to any one interested in research, whether it was finding a long-lost cousin or creating a list of all
congregational rabbis in Rhode Island. She has been indispensable, especially to me, for any number of reasons.

It is no accident that at every one of RIJHA’s public meetings, there is a long line or a crowd gathered at the sign-in table, but not necessarily to sign the attendance sheet. Everyone wants to talk to Anne, be it small talk or inquiries. She is the go-to person.

And mention must be made of the fact that Anne brought with her an invaluable asset, the consummate volunteer, her husband, Jerry. He too has been so giving in his service to RIJHA.

We shall miss that perky voice responding “Rhode Island Jewish Historical” and the extraordinary lady who answered our call 24 years ago and all the years since. We thank you, Anne. Good luck and God bless.

Anne & Maxine

Three Mels: Topf, Zurier, Blake

Proud family members

Foster
Rhode Island Jewish Historical Association

61st Annual Meeting

Board member Mel Blake chaired the meeting held on April 26, 2015 at Temple Beth-El. More than 100 members and their guests participated.

Our outgoing president, Michael Schwartz, noted that the Arline Ruth Weinberg Memorial Fund sponsored the meeting. He thanked the board, executive committee, and Anne Sherman for their support during his three-year presidency. In view of the forthcoming holidays, Mother’s and Father’s Days, he encouraged members to ask their children to join the Association as gifts in their honor.

Our treasurer, David Bazar, reported that our organization, thanks to endowments, is on “strong financial footing.” More members and gifts would of course help strengthen our funding.

Michael Schwartz, reporting for the nominating committee, installed the new and returning board members: Mrs. Michael Fink, Myrna Levine, Lowell Lisker, Ruby Shalansky, Bailey Siletchnik, and Marlene Wolpert. The new presidential appointees are Susan Brown and Rabbi Barry Dolinger of Congregation Beth Sholom.

The Association’s new president, Ruth Breindel, reported on her accomplishments as vice president and her goals for her first year. These include: tape-recorded oral history interviews transferred to CDs; a monthly article in The Jewish Voice designed for school children and curricular packets for religious schools; circulating our fall meetings among congregations throughout the state; recruiting new members; and working with the Jewish Alliance to plan our new space. Ruth also encouraged members with new programming ideas to contact her.

Mel introduced the afternoon’s speaker, Rabbi Josh Breindel of Temple Anshe Amunim in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. (This Providence native may be related to Ruth.) His talk, “All the World’s Stage: The Surprising History of Jews and the Theatre,” was enjoyed by all.

Anne and Gerald Sherman were thanked for again making the collation a spring treat.

Respectfully submitted,
Maxine Goldin, Secretary

Notes
In Memoria

November 16, 2014 – October 23, 2015

Abrams, Stanley B., born in Providence, was a son of the late Frank and Pauline (Wexler) Abrams. He was predeceased by his son Andrew.

A graduate of Hope High School in 1950 and Colby College in 1954, “Stan” served in the Navy during the Korean Conflict. Always a bibliophile, he worked briefly for the Library of Congress. He was a co-owner of What Cheer Foods for 25 years before retiring 16 years ago. Previously a resident of Providence, he lived for 18 years in Cranston.

Stan helped strengthen numerous organizations. For example, he was a board member of Temple Emanu-El and the Holocaust Education and Resource Center, from which he received its “Never Again” Award. He also participated in Brown Learning Community.

A life member of our Association, he served as president from 1991 to 1994. He chaired the publications committee from 1998 to 2011 and wrote several articles for our journal. A key example of his gentle but effective leadership was guiding the publication of the anthology, The Jews of Rhode Island, which appeared in 2004.

Stan is survived by his wife, Sandra, to whom he was married 55 years, and their son Kenneth and daughter Susan Simon.

Died on September 1, 2015 in Providence at the age of 82.

Aronson, Dr. Stanley M., born in Brooklyn, New York, was the son of the late Elihu and Lena (Hasner) Aronson. He was predeceased by his first wife, Dr. Betty Aronson, and their daughter Lisa.

He graduated from City College of New York in 1942, served in the military, and graduated from New York University Medical School in 1947. He again served in the military during the Korean Conflict.

During the early 1950s, Dr. Aronson began his distinguished academic career as a researcher at Columbia University. From 1953 to 1969, he served as a professor of neuropathology and as assistant dean at the State University of New
York’s Downstate Medical Center, in Brooklyn. Among other breakthroughs, he developed a test for the early diagnosis of muscular dystrophy and studied Tay Sachs disease and related hereditary disorders.

In 1969, Dr. Aronson came to Rhode Island as chief of pathology at The Miriam Hospital and as founding dean of Brown University Medical School, which he led through 1981. That same year, he earned a master’s degree in public health at Harvard. In addition to mentoring numerous students and colleagues, he helped establish a partnership with Dartmouth Medical School and a mentorship program with Mississippi’s historically black Tougaloo College.

Dr. Aronson served numerous organizations, including the National Institutes of Health, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Liaison Committee of Medical Education. He was a cofounder in 1974 of Home & Hospice Care Rhode Island and Interfaith Health Care Ministries. Additionally, he served as president of the board of the Jewish Home and was a member of Temple Beth-El.

A prolific author, Dr. Aronson wrote more than 400 scientific papers, 15 textbooks, edited Rhode Island Medical Journal from 1989 to 1998, and coauthored Medical Odysseys with Mary Korr. As if he had time to spare, he also wrote a weekly column for The Providence Journal for more than 20 years, wrote a frequent column for The Jewish Voice, and contributed articles to our journal. He also enjoyed painting, woodworking, and sculpting.

Dr. Aronson received numerous honors, including the naming of a chair for neurodegenerative diseases at Butler Hospital and a fund for research and innovation at Brown’s Warren Alpert Medical School.

He is survived by his wife Gale and his daughters, Dr. Sarah Aronson and Susan Symons.

Died on January 28, 2015 in Providence at the age of 92.

Bieder, Audrey Bienenfeld, born in Chicago, was a daughter of the late Myron and Irma (Hesser) Benzion. Previously a resident of Cranston, she lived in Warwick for 25 years.

Mrs. Bieder, an agent with Fine Travel, retired two decades ago. She had belonged to Temple Sinai before becoming a member of Temple Beth-El and its Sisterhood. She was a volunteer for Jewish Family Service’s Lifeline Program, the Providence Convention Center, and was a mentor in Warwick schools.
Mrs. Bieder is survived by her husband Bernard and her children, Linda Cherney, Steven Bienenfeld, and Carol Mitchell.

Died on November 24, 2014 in Providence at the age of 88.

Brown, Prof. Phyllis H., born in Providence, was a daughter of the late Samuel and Gertrude (Woolfe) Rosen. She was predeceased by her husband Bertram, to whom she was married 65 years.

She began her studies at Simmons College and in 1944 earned a bachelor’s degree in chemistry at George Washington University. In 1968, while her children were still in school, she earned a Ph.D. in chemistry at Brown University. In 1973, after completing postdoctoral studies in pharmacology at Brown, she joined the chemistry faculty of the University of Rhode Island and taught there until her retirement in 2001.

Known as the “Mother of High Pressure Liquid Chromatography,” Prof. Brown wrote more than 200 scientific articles and authored or edited five books. Additionally, she was an editor of *Advances in Chromatography* for 25 years. Her numerous awards included a Fulbright Fellowship, the Tswett Medal in chromatography, the Rhode Island Governor’s Medal for contributions to science and technology, and the Csaba Horvath Medal for separation science. During sabbaticals she taught at several institutions, including Hebrew University, and was a mentor to numerous women chemists.

Prof. Brown is survived by her children, Charles, Ronald, Judith Pryor, and Elisabeth Groverman.

Died on July 8, 2015 in Providence at the age of 91.

Cohen, Maurice B., born in Providence, was a son of the late Aaron and Nettie (Paster) Cohen. He was predeceased by his wife Frances.

After graduating from Classical High School, “Moe” served stateside as an Army staff sergeant during World War II. He resumed working in his father and uncle’s business, Lowell Avenue Greenhouses, but in 1951, he and his twin brother, Gerald (older by five minutes), cofounded Twin Florists, on Park Avenue in Cranston. The business later moved to Gansett Avenue.

Moe and Frances worked together and lived for more than 60 years in Cranston. After retiring in 1988, he continued working on a freelance basis.
A former member of Temple Beth-Israel and Temple Emanu-El, Moe was commander of the Jewish War Veterans’ Post 23. He was also active in the Redwood Masonic lodge and in Touro Fraternal Association. Devoted to the Rhode Island Floral Association, he was also a participant in Rhode Island Senior Olympics and enjoyed bowling, stamp collecting, and making family photo albums.

Having volunteered two mornings a week from 1989 to 2008, Moe contributed joyfully and mightily to our Association’s success. No job was too big or too small for him. Indeed, he never considered any task a “job.”

Moe is survived by his three sons, Howard, Steven, and Stuart.

*He spent his final years in East Greenwich and died on April 5, 2015 in West Warwick at the age of 93.*

**Dressler, Abbott W.**, born in Providence, was a son of the late Joseph and Sarah (Weisman) Dressler. He was a resident of Providence and Jupiter, Florida.

A graduate of Providence Country Day School and the University of Miami, Mr. Dressler was an owner and president of the former Colfax, Inc. He served as president of AFOA, master of Redwood Masonic lodge, chair of Israel Bonds, and president of Admirals Cove Property Owners Association. He was also a graduate of Leadership Rhode Island.

Mr. Dressler was a member of Temple Beth-El and its Brotherhood and a member of Ledgemont Country Club.

He is survived by his wife Phyllis, to whom he was married 56 years, and their children, Sherri Klein, Gary, and Larry.

*Died on November 16, 2014 in Providence at the age of 77.*

**Emers, Herbert L.**, born in Providence, was the son of the late Charles and Nathalie (Hirsch) Emers. He was a graduate of the University of Rhode Island and served in the military during the Korean Conflict.

Mr. Emers was president of his own insurance agency, whose office in the Emers Building, on Wayland Square, had been built by his grandfather.

He is survived by his wife Jill Brody and their children, Michael, Dara Emerson, and Charles, as well as his stepchildren, Jhennah Sinclaire, Nola Kopfer, and David Riedel.
Died on August 14, 2015 in Providence at the age of 85.

Fain, Burton, born in Providence, was a son of the late Harry and Florence Fain. During World War II, he served in the Army Air Corps. Having resumed his studies in mechanical engineering at Brown University, he graduated with the Class of 1947.

Mr. Fain was vice president of Walco Electric for 20 years before establishing his own company, Burton Industries, which manufactured electronic motors, drives, and controls. In addition to operating plants in Rhode Island, Connecticut, and North Carolina, the company designed and built the motor drive system for a steel rolling mill in China, which became the world’s fastest. After selling his business, Mr. Fain continued working in sales and consulting at Safe-Way Electric Motor Company. He was a past president of the American Institute of Plant Engineers.

A member of Temple Beth-El, Mr. Fain served on the boards of St. Dunstan’s School and Mount Hope Day Care Center. He was also an avid supporter of Camp Dotty, for children with cancer, which was founded by his wife Lois and her sister Marion Goldsmith in memory of Dorothy Goldsmith Jansma. He was a life member of our Association.

His numerous pastimes included golf, fishing, tennis, cards, world travel, Chinese food, and wintering in Florida.

Mr. Fain is survived by his wife Lois, to whom he was married 65 years, and their children, Debra and Frederick.

Died on May 31, 2015 in Providence at the age of 89.

Fain, Rosalie, born in New York City, was a daughter of the late Charlotte and William Branower. She was predeceased by her husband Norman, to whom she was married 56 years.

Mrs. Fain was a graduate of Ethical Culture Fieldstone School and the University of North Carolina.

She and her husband were major benefactors of Temple Beth-El and The Miriam Hospital. Mrs. Fain was president of Planned Parenthood of Southern New England. Among numerous organizations, she also supported the Rhode Island Philharmonic and Music School, Jewish Family Service, Rhode Island Zoological Society, Gamm Theater, and was a life member of our Association.
Mrs. Fain is survived by her children, Wendy Feldman, Jonathan, and Martha Roberts.

_Died on August 27, 2015 in Providence at the age of 92._

**Feldman, Edward S.** born in Providence, was a son of the late Reuben and Augusta (Rothman) Feldman.

During World War II, Mr. Feldman served as a lieutenant in the Pacific. He was a production manager and a product designer for Charles Rothman Manufacturing before retiring in 1989. He was a member of Temple Beth-El and lived in Cranston, Warwick and East Providence.

Mr. Feldman is survived by his wife Zelda and their sons, Peter and Howard.

_Died on October 23, 2015 in East Providence at the age of 92._

**Galkin, Wini**, born in Providence, was a daughter of the late Benjamin and Esther (Gleckman) Blacher. She majored in art at Pembroke College and received an honorary doctorate in humanities from Rhode Island College. She was part of a four-generation family business, Natco Products.

Mrs. Galkin was appointed a Rhode Island Commodore and received the Laurel Award from the Preservation Society of Newport County. Her numerous interests included reading, travel, the beach, dancing, fashion, collecting, and entertaining.

Mrs. Galkin is survived by her husband Robert, to whom she was married more than 65 years, and their daughters, Jane Litner, Debby Krim, and Ellen Kenner.

_Died on June 2, 2015 in Providence at the age of 84._

**Goldberg, Bernard S.** was a son of the late Al and Tillie (Gerstein) Goldberg. A graduate of Brown University and Boston University Law School, he practiced with and was an executive of United Restaurant Equipment Company.

Mr. Goldberg was president of Cranston’s Temple Sinai and Touro Fraternal Association. He was also a Worship Master of the Masons. He summered in Narragansett and wintered in Boynton Beach, Florida.
Mr. Goldberg is survived by his wife Beverly, to whom he was married 56 years, and their son Alan and daughter Nancy Rubenstein.

_Died on June 19, 2015 in Narragansett at the age of 85._

**Goldstein, Jean E.** enjoyed cooking, bridge, and reading, and was a hospital volunteer. She worked at Sterling Shoes and Peoples Bank and was the original bookkeeper for and later a vice president of Kent/Town & Country Cleansers.

Mrs. Goldstein is survived by her husband, Gerald, to whom she was married 66 years, and their daughter Jill Allyn.

_Died on December 9, 2014 in Cranston at the age of 84._

**Horvitz, Dr. Abraham,** born in Providence, was a son of Jacob and Fanny (Krasnow) Horvitz. He was predeceased by his wife Eleanor, the Association’s longtime archivist and librarian, to whom he was married more than 60 years.

A graduate of Classical High School in 1928 and Brown University in 1932, he earned his medical degree at Columbia University in 1936 and was a resident in surgery at Washington University in St. Louis.

Dr. Horvitz served gallantly as an Army captain during World War II. He felt that his life had been miraculously spared during maneuvers preceding D-day. A day after the invasion of Normandy, he operated on American and German soldiers at Utah Beach. He was also active at the Battle of the Bulge and witnessed the liberation of a concentration camp.

In 1948, after further surgical training at Brooklyn Jewish Hospital, he opened his practice in Providence. Affiliated with The Miriam Hospital for over 40 years, he served as president of the medical staff in 1966. After his official retirement, he served as clinical associate professor emeritus of surgery at Brown Medical School.

Dr. Horvitz, a member of Temple Beth-El and a life member of our Association, is survived by his son, Leslie.

_Died on January 27, 2015 in Providence at the age of 103._

**Kotlen, Robert A.,** born in Providence, was a son of the late Harry and Pauline (Abrams) Kotlen. During World War II, he served in the Navy. Having graduated with the Class of 1949 from Brown University, he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.
“Bob,” the owner of Standard Jewelry in Providence, retired 30 years ago. He lived in Providence until moving to Cranston 17 years ago. He was a member of and longtime usher at Temple Beth-El and was a 32nd-degree Mason. He also enjoyed traveling, often to historical sites, near and far. He loved museums.

A life member of our Association, Bob served as president from 1989 to 1991. Always eager and handy, he installed the exhibition of artifacts and photographs in our former office. He assisted the Rhode Island Historical Society with similar exhibitions.

Bob is survived by his wife, Betty, to whom he was married 35 years. He is also survived by his children, Lisa, Lori Stark, and Richard, and his stepson David Basok.

_Died on August 18, 2015 in Providence at the age of 88._

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**Luber, Arlene R.**, born in Providence, was a daughter of the late Martin and Ada (Schwartz) Bernstein. Previously a resident of Cranston, she lived in Delray Beach, Florida for 10 years.

Mrs. Luber, a teacher, was a member of the National Education Association. She was also a member of Temple Beth-El and Crestwood Country Club. She enjoyed golf, bridge, and bowling.

Mrs. Luber is survived by her husband, Dr. Robert Luber, to whom she was married 39 years. She is also survived by her children, Richard Decof, Bethany Decof-Hazlett, and Lee Decof.

_Died on February 14, 2015 in Delray Beach at the age of 83._

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**Markoff, Roslyn**, born in Providence, was a daughter of the late Barnett and Katie (Sirk) Falcosky. She was predeceased by her husband, Burton.

Mrs. Markoff, who attended the University of Rhode Island, was a member of Temple Beth-El and a life member of Hadassah. A former resident of Pawtucket, she lived in Cranston for 15 years.

Mrs. Markoff is survived by her children, Susan Dressler, Caryn O’Connor, and Nancy Chodak.

_Died on February 15, 2015 in Providence at the age of 84._

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Nelson, Dorothy, born in Providence, was the daughter of the late Samuel and Ruth (Urdang) Markoff. She was predeceased by her husband, Dr. Walter J. Markoff, and their son Bruce.

Mrs. Nelson graduated from Hope High School in 1931 and Pembroke College in 1935. She was an editor at and executive vice president of Paramount Greeting Cards in Pawtucket.

A past president of Jewish Family Service, she was active on many boards and in many organizations, including Temple Beth-El and the National Council of Jewish Women. She was a life member of our Association. Her favorite pastimes included bridge, the arts, world travel, and learning.

Mrs. Nelson is survived by her children, Sheila Greenbaum and Deborah. 

Died on December 13, 2014 in Providence at the age of 100.

Rand, Marcus, born in Providence, was the son of the late Saul and Betty Finkelstein. He lived in South County for most of his life.

During the Korean Conflict, Mr. Rand served in the Coast Guard. He earned a bachelor’s and a master’s degree at the University of Rhode Island and taught high school in North Kingston. For 29 years, he served as associate dean of undergraduate admissions at his alma mater. Mr. Rand was president of the Guidance and Personnel Association of Rhode Island and Indian Lake Shores Fire District.

He is survived by his wife, Eleanor, to whom he was married 61 years, and their children, Susan Celico and Michael.

Died on December 2, 2014 in Narragansett at the age of 84.

Rosen, Barbara F., born in Providence, was a daughter of the late Gates and Sarah (Kaplan) Feital. She was predeceased by her husband, Herbert.

Mrs. Rosen was a member of Temple Emanu-El, a life member of Hadassah, and a member of The Miriam Hospital Women’s Association, in which she volunteered for more than 50 years. A life member of our Association, she lived in Providence and later in Pawtucket.

Mrs. Rosen is survived by her son Max.

Died on December 10, 2014 in Providence at the age of 87.
Salmanson, Donald, born in Providence, was a son of the late Barnett and Elizabeth (Salk) Salmanson.

In 1946 he joined his family's business, Adams Drug Company, which had been founded by his father in Woonsocket in 1932 and was also led by Donald's older brothers, Leonard, Samuel, and Charles. Headquartered in Pawtucket, Adams expanded rapidly after World War II and included the Brooks Drug Company name. Mr. Salmanson served as president of Adams from 1975 to 1984, when the 435-store chain, operating in ten states with 4,500 employees, was sold to Pantry Pride, a Florida supermarket chain. He joined the board of advisors of Rhode Island Hospital Trust and remained active in his family's real estate business and as an independent investor.

Mr. Salmanson was a trustee of The Miriam Hospital, the former Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, the former Jewish Home, and supported numerous other organizations. He was a life member of our Association. Mr. Salmanson and his family were major benefactors of The Miriam, Brown Medical School, the Jewish Home, and Bryant College.

For many years Lisle Whiteley was Mr. Salmanson's companion.

Died on September 7, 2015 in Providence at the age of 91.

Sapinsley, Lila, born in Chicago, was the daughter of the late Jacob and Doris (Silverman) Manfield. She was predeceased by her husband, John, to whom she was married 69 years.

Mrs. Sapinsley graduated from Wellesley College in 1944 and later served as class president. She began her prominent political career in 1964, when she chaired "Democrats for Chafee" to reelect the governor. She was appointed to the board of trustees for the state's colleges and eventually became its chair, but the board was abolished in 1972. That year she ran successfully as an independent for the state senate. Later, as a Republican, she became the senate's first female minority leader and continued to champion women's issues, government transparency, and ethics as well as mentor women leaders.

In 1984, after running unsuccessfully for lieutenant governor against a Democrat, Richard Licht, she chaired the state's Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation. Thereafter, she served as a delegate to the state's constitutional convention and on the Public Utilities Commission until her retirement in 1993.

Notes
Mrs. Sapinsley, a member of Temple Beth-El, supported and served on the boards of numerous organizations, including the American Civil Liberties Union, Butler Hospital, Mental Health Association of Rhode Island, Dorcas Place, Planned Parenthood of Rhode Island, Trinity Repertory Company, and Providence Public Library.

She was elected to the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame and received honorary degrees from Brown University, the University of Rhode Island, and Rhode Island College. She and her husband donated Sapinsley Hall, a performing arts center, to RIC.

Mrs. Sapinsley enjoyed golf and bridge and found time, like her husband, to write an autobiography.

She is survived by her daughters, Jill Mooney, Carol Rubenstein, Joan, and Pat.

*Died on December 9, 2015 in Providence at the age of 92.*

**Spindell, Dr. Edward,** born in Providence, was a son of the late Simon and Jeanette (Sokol) Spindell.

A graduate of Classical High School and a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Brown University, he earned his medical degree at Boston University in 1953. From 1955 to 1957, Dr. Spindell served as an Air Force captain.

Always skillful with his hands, he practiced orthopedic surgery in Providence for nearly 40 years, serving as a senior attending physician at The Miriam, Rhode Island, Memorial, and Roger Williams Hospitals. From 1992 to 1997, he was chief of orthopedic surgery at The Miriam.

Dr. Spindell, who was a member of Temple Beth-El for more than a half-century, served on its board and chaired its religious school committee. He was also president of the Bureau of Jewish Education from 1994 to 1997.

Dr. Spindell is survived by his wife Judith, to whom he was married 30 years, and his children, Marcia, Ahvi, and Stephen. He is also survived by his stepchildren, Dr. Faith Tobias, Chaim Cohen, Julie Corwin, and Pamela Greiner.

*Died on June 24, 2015 in Providence at the age of 87.*
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