



CHICAGO JEWISH History

Zolotkoff:

Although Almost Entirely Forgotten Today, Chicago's Representative to the First Zionist Congress was a Brilliant and Multi-Talented Activist with a Gift for Controversy to Match his Vast Energies

By Walter Roth

This coming August marks the centennial anniversary of the First Zionist Congress held in Basel, Switzerland, in August 29-31, 1897. The Conference had been called under the auspices of Theodore Herzl, who almost single-handedly conceived of and organized the details for the meeting. It was held in the Stadt Casino, a concert and dance hall adjacent to the local Historical Museum.

Aside from many interested spectators, the Congress was attended by approximately 200 delegates from fourteen countries: Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Holland, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Sweden, England, the United States, Algeria and Palestine. They were the ones whose collective vision produced the modern state of Israel. As Jacob de Haas, a leading disciple of Herzl, wrote of the gathering, "This was not a mere assembly of dreamers: the inward note was that of a gathering of brothers meeting after a long Diaspora."

With Zionists attending from all around the world, one individual, Leon Zolotkoff, attended as the official representative of Chicago Zionism. Although almost completely forgotten today, Zolotkoff proved himself a dynamic and controversial leader in ways beyond even his signal contribution to Chicago Zionism. As one of the first Russian-born Jews to gain political prominence, as a leading Chicago Jewish journalist, and as a gadfly of the first order, he played a key role in turn-of-the-century

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Video History Premieres on May 18; All Are Invited

The Society invites members and their guests to the official unveiling on May 18 of the Society-sponsored *Romance of a People: The First 100 Years of Jewish History in Chicago, 1833-1933*, produced, written, and directed by Beverly Siegel.

The screening of the video marks the completion of one of the Society's most ambitious projects of the last three years. The event promises

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- Oral History Excerpt of Max Targ, Philanthropist and Music-Lover
- From the Archives: Chicago Jewish Archives Boast Many Oral Histories
- Can You Help Us Identify Leaders of the Pinsker Relief Society?

President's Column



Walter Roth

On May 18, 1997 the Chicago Jewish Historical Society will present a film, long in the making, about the first hundred years of Jewish history in Chicago. While this is a first for our Society, other Jewish communities have expended their efforts and money to present films about their local histories. There presently exist, among others, video-films about the Jews of Boston, Los Angeles, and New York, which are available to the general public.

On a recent visit to Atlanta, Georgia, I had the opportunity to view a film at the new Atlanta Jewish Museum about the Leo Frank case. A short summary of this case is warranted because, while it took place in Atlanta, its impact reverberated throughout the entire United States.

Like the Averbuch case of March 1908, which took place in Chicago and involved a young immigrant boy from Russia who was shot to death by the Police Commissioner of Chicago, the Leo Frank case marked a sad moment in the history of American justice. It stirred anti-Semitism throughout the land, and it took seventy years to expose the truth.

A 13-year old white Christian girl was murdered in 1913 in Atlanta, her body found in the basement of a pencil factory owned by a Jewish family. Within a few days, even though the evidence pointed to an illiterate black janitor, the young Jewish manager of the factory was arrested for her murder. With crowds screaming "Death to the Jew," a jury found Frank guilty, and the trial judge sentenced him to be hung.

Despite appeals all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, the verdict stood. The Governor of Georgia, however, then conducted his own inquiry into the crime and, convinced

that Frank was not guilty, commuted the sentence to life imprisonment.

The Governor was promptly forced to flee the state ahead of raging mobs.

Shortly after the Governor fled, Frank was abducted from his jail cell, driven over 100 miles to Marietta, a suburb of Atlanta, near the home of the murdered Mary Fagan, and hung. His body was shipped back to New York for burial.

It is said that Julius Rosenwald, the Chicago philanthropist, paid for the funeral costs.

It was not until 1986 that a witness came forth and gave testimony on his deathbed that he had seen the janitor (the original suspect) carry the murdered body of the little girl to the basement, clearly absolving Leo Frank of the murder.

The President elect of the Southern Jewish Historical Society, Dr. Bruce Beeber, drove me to Marietta to observe the spot where Leo Frank was lynched. A small plaque placed there by the Jewish community of Atlanta simply states that Frank was hung at this spot and pardoned in 1986.

The film on Leo Frank can be viewed at the Jewish Museum in Atlanta. □

Letters:

Dear Mr. Roth:

Your article in *Chicago Jewish History*, Winter, 1977 ("Zionist Odd Couple") brought back some long buried memories.

In 1921, when Einstein and Weizman came to Chicago, I was in the 7th grade at the Francis Parker School, and like Madi Bacon, I heard and saw Einstein there.

I didn't know who he was, but I knew he was important because we were taken out of our regular classroom and sent down to the gym where we all stood in a large circle around this little man with a mustache.

He had a taller friend with him, and he spoke in German.

One of the students who had been

born in Germany translated.

I still don't know if he talked about peace, scientific research, or Zionism, but the session laid the foundation for later interest in the work — if not the theories — of Albert Einstein.

Many thanks for your article.

—Marian Despres

Editor's note:

Chicago Jewish History welcomes correspondence of all kinds. If you see a fault or an oversight in one of our articles, please let us know. If you enjoy something we have published, we are always glad to hear that as well.

We regret that we cannot publish everything we receive, but we are grateful for all of your contributions and feedback.

Corrections:

An article in the Winter, 1997 issue of *Chicago Jewish History* incorrectly identified the title of Harry Besser. He is the Department Commander of the Jewish War Veterans, Department of Illinois.

The article also incorrectly stated the time of an automobile parade commemorating the group's centennial. The parade took place on April 28, 1996.

A separate article misreported the title of the Minsky-Award-winning essay in volume one of the series by Beatrice Michaels Shapiro. The title should read *Memories of Lawndale*.

The editor apologizes for any confusion any of the errors might have generated, and invites readers to write if they uncover any errors. □

Video

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to attract one of the largest crowds in Society history.

Romance of a People is the first project of its kind in the Chicago area. Drawing loosely on the account of H.L. Meites's *The Jews of Chicago*, it tells a broad history of the Chicago Jewish community's first century.

Following a script written by Siegel with input from Irving Cutler, Adele Hast, Walter Roth, Norman Schwartz, and June Sochin, the video weaves several threads together. It tells a demographic history, a history of community institutions, and a history of community concerns.

The video features a range of historical footage, original music, and interviews with historians and individuals directly involved in the history they discuss.

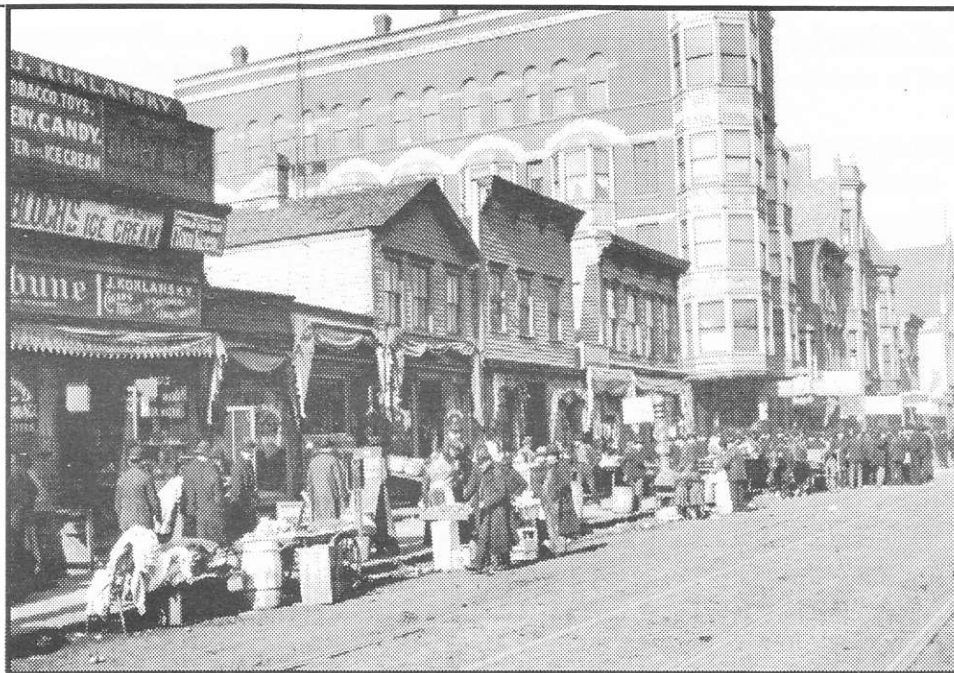
Among the video highlights is a sequence that Siegel recovered from the National Archives of the 1933 "Romance of a People" pageant directed by Cantor Avrum Matthews for the Jewish Day celebration during the World's Fair at Soldier Field. The virtually forgotten footage, which may never have been shown publicly before, shows dramatic dancing scenes of the pageant from which the video takes its name.

Another sequence, used with the permission of Peter Ascoli, shows the 80th birthday party of Sears chairman Julius Rosenwald's mother in 1915.

It has never before been made available to an audience, and it shows an unusual private perspective on one of the most prominent figures in Chicago history.

The closing sequence, contributed by the Jewish Federation, shows a Walk with Israel in Buffalo Grove from recent years, an image that Siegel says she thinks points toward the future of the Chicago-area Jewish community.

Siegel was also able to locate footage from Universal Newsreel of an



A Scene of Jewish Chicago: the view looking north from the Intersection of Halsted and Maxwell Street Early in the Century

anti-Nazi march from the 1930s, which shows an angry crowd of Jewish demonstrators marching up Michigan Avenue.

Other sequences include images of 1920s prosperity, immigrants streaming through Ellis Island, and the bustling intersection of State and Madison as it looked at the turn of the century.

Still photos come from the Chicago Jewish Archives, the Chicago Historical Society, H.L. Meites's *History of the Jews of Chicago*, Irving Cutler, Sid Sorkin, Sears, Roebuck and Co., the University of Chicago, the Jewish Community Centers, and Hebrew Theological College.

The original music was composed and performed by Elliott Delman, a well-known Chicago composer who has worked on a number of commercial and documentary projects.

"Elliott wrote the music, and he also is a one-man orchestra," Siegel said. "You'll hear him creating the French horn here and the cymbals there."

In addition to the original music he composed, Delman adapted

several Yiddish songs out of the Workmen's Circle song books.

Music from *Romance of the People* is included in the video, and Chicago favorites, the Maxwell Street Klezmer Band, contribute one of their *freilachs* to the soundtrack as well.

The video features interviews with Peter Ascoli, Ben Bentley, Marian Despres, Hamilton Loeb, Judge Abraham Lincoln Marovitz, Lorraine Moss, Jeff Stone, and Maynard Wishner, and as well with Society Board members Charles Bernstein, Sol Brandzel, Irving Cutler, Adele Hast, Walter Roth, Norman Schwartz, and Sid Sorkin.

Copies of the video will be available for sale at the premier. Society members will be entitled to purchase one copy at a special discounted member price. There will be opportunities for non-members to join the Society as well.

The program in celebration of the release takes place at the Chicago Historical Society, which is co-sponsoring the unveiling celebration, on Sunday, May 18, at 2 p.m. Admission is free, but seating is limited. For more information, contact the Society at (312)663-5634. □

Zolotkoff

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Chicago Jewish life. For all of his early success, however, he remained dogged by controversy, choosing eventually to leave Chicago and public life in favor of a career as a writer. His legacy is a mixed one, full of remarkable accomplishments and yet marked by apparent shortcomings as well.

* * *

Zolotkoff is not entirely forgotten. In an autobiography published in 1939, Bernard Horwich, a leading Chicago Zionist spokesman and community leader, characterized Zolotkoff as one of the "Russian Intelligentsia" and a "man of high caliber, a brilliant writer, linguist and Hebraist." In addition, H.L. Meites recounts Zolotkoff's early life in *History of the Jews of Chicago*, originally published in 1924 and recently republished by the Chicago Jewish Historical Society.

According to his gravestone Zolotkoff was born on May 14, 1863 (though Meites lists it as May 15, 1867) in Vilna, Russia (Lithuania), the son of Judah Z. and Rebecca (Ostrichner) Zolotkoff. He received a classic secular and traditional Jewish education in the Vilna schools, showing in early childhood the literacy talents that were later, for a time, to make him one of the leading Yiddish journalists and writers in the United States.

At the age of thirteen, his Hebrew articles were already appearing in a St. Petersburg weekly. At the age of seventeen, he went to live in Paris, and studied at the Sorbonne while continuing to write for Russian periodicals. He returned to St. Petersburg for two years. In 1886 he made his way to London where he became involved in the Jewish labor movement and collaborated in writing a "Socialist Haggadah" for Passover in Yiddish. During this time he was also a frequent contributor to Jewish periodicals, most of them printed in Hebrew or Yiddish, in which appeared many of his short stories, plays and critical essays.

In August 1887 he immigrated to the United States, proceeding directly to Chicago. Within a few months, in early 1888, with his own type and accessories which he had brought with him from Europe, he founded the *Jewish Courier*, a Yiddish periodical which became Chicago's leading Yiddish newspaper for many decades. A prodigious worker and writer, he also published a Hebrew periodical *Keren Or* (the "Ray of Light"), but this paper failed after several issues.

He continued to write stories and historical narratives in Yiddish. He also wrote humorous stories, very popular with the new Jewish immigrants, under the pen-name "Zakoff-Gadol." Several plays that he wrote, *Samson*, *The Heroes of Zion*, and *Zalman Troubedour*, were produced with considerable success.

On December 18, 1892 Zolotkoff married Fannie Ogus, and they eventually had five children: Dina (deceased in 1919), Sydney, Hyman J., Albert Herzl and Julia. Six years after immigrating to the United States, he entered the Law School at Lake Forest University in 1893 and graduated three years later with an LLB law degree, thus adding a legal career to his journalistic and writing endeavors.

He also came to have a strong influence in his community. Meites notes, "He occupied a unique place in the community, for his profound intellectual attainments were blended with a charm of manner and utterance that placed him in great demand at all public functions. Practically every movement that was

Zolotkoff shouted: "But I know French and I know German. You don't know Polish, nor do you know Hebrew or the Talmud."

launched and every important meeting, whatever the cause, called upon him to act in the capacity of spokesman or chairman."

But there are hints that Zolotkoff could be abrasive and controversial. Horwich recounts an anecdote in his autobiography of a shouting match between Zolotkoff and Dr. Emil Hirsch, the Rabbi of Sinai Congregation and a spokesman for wealthy and elitist early German-Jewish settlers in Chicago. Zolotkoff apparently told Hirsch that he knew almost no Hebrew, to which Hirsch replied that Zolotkoff was a "greenhorn west-sider" who didn't know English. Zolotkoff replied that Hirsch didn't know Russian. "You don't know French and German," Dr. Hirsch retorted; to which Zolotkoff shouted: "But I know French and I know German. You don't know Polish, nor do you know Hebrew or the Talmud."

Apparently the argument abated before blows were struck, but Horwich recalls that a few days after this incident a long article appeared in the *Jewish Courier*, in which Zolotkoff "bitingly attacked the German Jews and Dr. Hirsch as only he could."

* * *

By 1895, Zolotkoff was the intellectual luminary of the new Russian immigrants, a brilliant writer in English, Yiddish and Hebrew, a gifted orator, publisher of the leading Yiddish newspaper in town, an active labor supporter, and a lawyer to boot. With these credentials, he now brought his influence to bear on the movement for

Jewish nationalism, Zionism.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, Zionism was stirring among Chicago's Jewry, particularly among the immigrants from Eastern Europe. The Dreyfus affair in France, and rampant anti-Semitism and pogroms in Russia had their influence in Chicago. Zolotkoff now became active with Bernard Horwich and others in organizing a Zionist movement in Chicago, probably the pioneer movement of Zionism in America. He was a leader in organizing a Zionist group called "The Chicago Zionist Organization, No. 1", which Horwich claims was the "first organized Zionist group in America," a like group in New York not being formed until six months later.

In the summer of 1897, the new Chicago group learned of Theodore Herzl's call for a Zionist Congress to be held in August 1897. (Herzl originally planned the conference for Munich but later changed it to Basel when some of Munich's Rabbis objected to the idea.) Zolotkoff was chosen by the Chicago group to be its delegate. The group was not yet an accredited member of the European-based Zionist organization; hence Zolotkoff probably went as a "representative" to Basel rather than as an accredited delegate.

Nevertheless, after an arduous fund-raising campaign, the Chicago group raised enough money to defray Zolotkoff's traveling expenses to Switzerland. In Basel he had his first opportunity to meet Theodore Herzl and other legendary Zionist leaders, such as Max Nordau and Jacob de Haas.

In the ten short years before the conference, Theodore Herzl had used his charisma, arrogance, diplomacy, politics and writings to form a cohesive Zionist movement in Europe out of many fragmented and diverse Jewish groups. The Congress marked the peak of the accomplishments he would live to see.

Herzl received a tumultuous reception from his Congress audience. His first words to the assembly set forth the purpose of the Congress: "We want to lay the

Foundation stone of the house which is to shelter the Jewish nation." The Basel Program, which became the official platform of the Zionist movement, was adopted: "Zionism seeks to obtain for the Jewish people a publicly recognized, legally secured homeland in Palestine."

In addition to the Basel Program, Zolotkoff heard of the main points of a Constitution for the newly created Zionist Organization: the creation of a bank and a national fund for the purchase of land in Palestine. In three days, the Congress was over, and Zolotkoff traveled back to America, where he was met in New York by Bernard Horwich who had gone there to hear Zolotkoff's report of the momentous meeting.

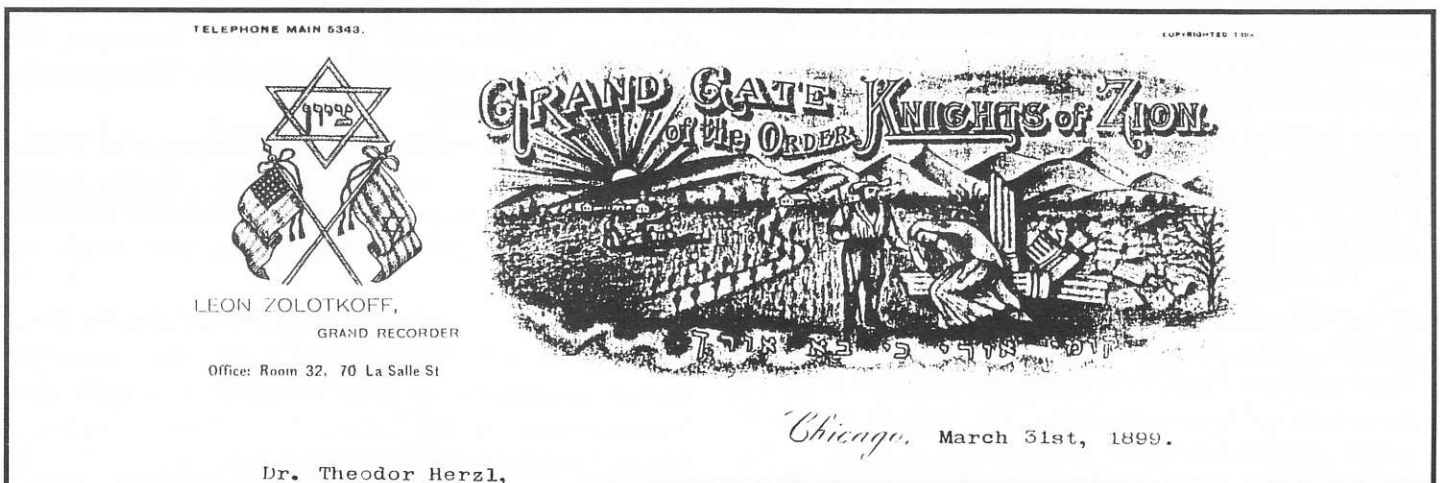
Back in Vienna, Herzl, in his diary of the Basel meeting, wrote on September 3, 1887: "Were I to sum-up the Basel Congress in words - which I shall carefully refrain from uttering in public - it would be to this: In Basel I founded the Jewish state. If I were to say this out loud today, everybody would laugh at me. In five years, perhaps, but certainly in fifty everybody will agree." It actually took six months longer than Herzl predicted: Israel declared its independence on May 14, 1948.

* * *

Inspired by Herzl's call to action, Zolotkoff helped in 1898 to organize the "Knights of Zion," a successor to the original Zionist group organized a year earlier. He became its first Grand Recorder and later served as Grand Master at different times. In a letter written in 1899, the original of which is in the Zionist archives in Jerusalem, Zolotkoff



Zolotkoff



Letterhead from the Grand Gate of the Order of the Knights of Zion, Leon Zolotkoff, Grand Recorder

wrote to Herzl that the clubs which constituted the Chicago Knights of Zion were patterned after fraternal lodges (like the Masons) and that these Zionist lodges ("Gates" as they were called) were spreading Zionist activities, writings and ideology.

Zolotkoff was also a Chicago delegate to the third, fifth, sixth and seventh Zionist Congresses (which were held annually in Western Europe) and continued his association with Herzl until the latter's death in 1904.

Throughout that time, the era of his most impressive accomplishments, Zolotkoff's problems continued. Horwich recounts a bitter argument the two had during the period over inter-political policy questions and reports that Zolotkoff accused him of being irresponsible.

* * *

Zolotkoff also became an assistant states attorney in Chicago in 1904 (a position he held until 1910), a feat of considerable magnitude for a relatively young Jewish immigrant. In March 1908, while in this position, he became embroiled in the Lazarus Averbuch Affair (the subject of a soon to be released book, co-authored by this writer and *Chicago Jewish History* editor Joe Kraus). In this affair, Zolotkoff was accused by some writers of not having done enough in his role as assistant state's attorney to clear the name of Averbuch, a young Jewish immigrant who was accused of having attempted to assassinate Chicago's Chief of Police, who had shot and killed him.

For whatever reason, Zolotkoff and his family left Chicago in 1911, moving to New York, where he became editor of the New York City *Tageblatt*, the owners of which had purchased the *Chicago Courier*. In 1915 he returned to Chicago, resuming his editorship of the *Courier*. He also became the executive director of the Federated Zionist Societies in the Middle West, a position he held until 1920.

He appears to have moved back and forth during this time between Chicago, New York, England and Palestine, where he spent a considerable amount of time in Jerusalem establishing the Jerusalem Printing Press, the first Hebrew Press in Palestine for printing books in Hebrew for distribution throughout the world.

He returned to New York in 1924, resuming his career as a writer. He wrote many novels, both in Yiddish and English. One novel, *From Vilna to Hollywood*, was translated from Yiddish to English and serialized in 1932 in New York's *Morgen Journal*. The book is said to be autobiographical in nature, yet a reading of it leads one to the view that it was more like *What Makes Sammy Run*, a

later novel by Bud Schulberg which pictures the impact of American materialism on the lives of Jewish immigrants striving for quick fame and wealth.

* * *

After the first two decades of this century, Zolotkoff was no longer in an official leadership position in the Zionist movement. There may be a number of reasons for this. Many American Zionists caught in the intra-fraternal fights in the American Zionist organizations were displaced or resigned from the Zionist groups during this period, and this may have affected Zolotkoff.

It is also possible that financial setbacks in his attempts to establish his own publishing house in New York or Jerusalem caused his withdrawal from public life. It is possible as well that the Averbuch Affair cast a long shadow over his career.

His health began to fail in the mid 1930s, and he died

in New York on July 31, 1938 (though his gravestone marks the date as August 1). A funeral service was held in New York the day after his death, and his body was brought back

*Thus, the community marked the passing of
Leon Zolotkoff, Chicago's "representative"
to the historic First Zionist Conference
held one hundred years ago this year.*

to Chicago for interment at the B'nai B'rith cemetery, in a grave next to his wife, who had died two years earlier, and his daughter Dina, who had died in 1919.

Zolotkoff's remains were taken from the LaSalle Street Station to the Jewish People's Institute on Chicago's West Side where, for the first time in its history, the main auditorium was converted into a funeral chapel in order to accommodate the thousands of people who had come to pay their last respects.

Eulogies were delivered by Hyman Steinberg, who spoke of Zolotkoff as a Zionist; Peter Sissman, a lawyer and partner of Clarence Darrow, whose daughter was married to Zolotkoff's second son, who spoke of him as a lawyer; Dr. Mordecai Katz, who spoke of Zolotkoff's journalistic achievements; Dr. Abraham Levinson, the noted scholar and his surviving physician, who eulogized Zolotkoff's scholarship.

Rabbi Benjamin J. Daskal of Congregation Rodfei Zedek conducted the religious services. Cantor Joseph Giblichman sang memorial chants. Bernard Horwich, Zolotkoff's old Zionist friend, presided over the ceremonies.

From the JPI, the funeral party proceeded to the B'nai B'rith Cemetery for the interment. Thus, the community marked the passing of Leon Zolotkoff, Chicago's only "representative" to the historic First Zionist Conference held in Basel one hundred years ago this year. □

Local Authors Find April a Prize Month

The first week of April proved a remarkable stretch for two Chicago-area writers, both of whom received major literary awards.

Naperville resident Isaac Levendel won the Franco-European prize for his memoir, *Un Hiver en Provence (A Winter in Provence)* on April 3, and Lake County poet Lisel Mueller won a Pulitzer Prize on April 7 for her collection, *Alive Together: New and Se-*

lected Poems.

Levendel's book recounts the murder of his mother, Sarah, at the hands of the Nazis and their French sympathizers.

The book was the culmination of several years of research to uncover what happened to Sarah Levendel after she risked leaving her son in a country hiding place to try to recover what she could of the family's belongings.

She never returned.

Levendel left France for Israel in 1957. He has lived in the United States since 1974, and he is currently a software designer.

Un Hiver en Provence does not

yet have an American publisher, but its winning the prestigious European award makes it more likely that it will become available soon.

Mueller, the daughter of an anti-fascist dissident forced to flee Germany in the 1930s, is a well-known Chicago-area poet and teacher.

She was the poetry reviewer for the *Chicago Daily News*, and has taught at the University of Chicago and several other area colleges.

The Pulitzer Prize is probably the most prestigious award available to American poets.

Mueller's work is available at bookstores throughout the Chicago area. □

Minsky Award Committee Seeks New Manuscripts

The committee for the Society's Doris Minsky Memorial Award, given annually to a previously unpublished manuscript that makes an original contribution to the telling of Chicago Jewish history, announces that the deadline for submissions for the 1997 award is October 31, 1997.

The contest is open to anyone. Acceptable manuscripts will be between 12,000 and 32,000 words. They should be completed projects, typed double-spaced, and essentially ready for publication.

Winning manuscripts will be published as part of the Minsky Award winners series, distributed free of charge to all Society members, and the winning author will receive a \$1000 prize.

Resulting publications will be copyrighted by the Chicago Jewish Historical Society, and distribution and sales will be governed by the Society. Decisions on the winning manuscript are the sole responsibility of the Minsky Award committee.

Previous prize winners include Beatrice Michaels Shapiro for *Memoirs of Lawndale* and Carolyn Eastwood for *Chicago's Jewish Street Peddlers* whose manuscripts were published together in a single volume.

Eva Gross's *Memories of the*

Manor and Morris Springer's *The Chayder, the Yeshiva, and I* were also published together.

Current Society board member Bea Kraus won for *The Cantors: Gifted Voices Remembered.*

The most recent winner, Rabbi Alex Goldman, won for *My Father, Myself: A Son's Memoir of his Father, Rabbi Yehuda D. Goldman.* His manuscript is currently under preparation for publication and distribution.

Submissions should be mailed to Doris Minsky Memorial Fund, the Chicago Jewish Historical Society, 618 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60605.

Anyone with questions can submit them in writing to the same address or call the Society office at (312)663-5634. □

Society Newsletter Seeks Memoirs of Jewish Chicago

If the Minsky competition sounds daunting but you still have a story to tell, consider submitting it to *Chicago Jewish History*, the newsletter of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society

We occasionally publish personal accounts of specific neighborhoods, events, practices, or individuals that

have some bearing on Chicago's Jewish history.

Examples of the sort of memoirs we publish include one man's memories of growing up as the grandson of a West Side butcher and one woman's recollections of helping to entertain Jewish soldiers at liberty stations during World War II.

Individual memoirs give us the opportunity to present history in its narrowest contours. The stories that you might recall from your childhood or from some unusual situation in

which you found yourself often prompt other people's memories to flow as well.

Keep in mind that manuscripts should be no longer than six double-spaced pages. Be certain to include a return address and phone number with your submission.

We will try to respond to any inquiries, but cannot guarantee publication.

Submissions may be sent to Joe Kraus at 1416 W. Catalpa, Apt. 2, Chicago, IL, 60640. □

Information Request:

Seeking Identities and Information on Pinsker Relief Society Officers

The photograph on the right, from the collection of Ethel Shulman, shows the officers of the Pinsker Relief Society.

The man on the left is Wolf Fratkin, Shulman's father; the man on the right is someone she remembers being named Ginsburg.

Anyone with information should call Sid Sorkin at (708)541-2188. □



Society Summer Tours a Good Way to Travel and Learn

The Society is again presenting a series of summer tours exploring the tradition and history of Jewish communities in the greater Chicago area.

Coordinated by Society Board member Leah Axelrod, the tours feature the expertise of a number of Society Board members, and promise to be a fascinating way to take in new history and old sights.

Sheldon Gardner and Norman Schwartz will lead a walking tour of the Loop on June 22. With its dense population and its history of demolishing and rebuilding new buildings, the Loop was host to a great deal of history that can be difficult to recover.

The tour runs from 1-4:30 p.m., beginning at the Spertus Institute, 618 S. Michigan Ave., and ending at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, 151 E. Wacker. The price for members is \$12 and for non-members is \$15.

Irving Cutler leads his popular Chicago Jewish Roots tour on July 27. Tracing the series of population centers for Jewish Chicago, the tour goes from the Maxwell Street area to Lawndale, Logan Square, Humboldt Park, Albany Park, and Rogers Park.

The tour bus will make several special stops along the way.

It begins and ends at the Bernard Horwich Jewish Community Center, 3003 W. Touhy.

The price for members of the Society or the Dawn Schuman Institute is \$21; for non-members it is \$24.

Finally, Leah Axelrod and Elise Ginsparg will again lead a tour of Jewish sites of interest in Southwest Michigan on August 10.

Traveling to the summer haunts of South Haven and Benton Harbor as well as rural communities, the tour provides an opportunity to learn about early Jewish farmers as well as the development of the resort communities.

Highlights of the tour include opportunities to hear stories from life-long residents of the area.

The tour runs from 8 a.m.-9 p.m. Participants should bring a sack lunch; a kosher box supper is included in the tour package.

The price is \$50 for Society or Dawn Schuman Institute members; for non-members it is \$57.

Axelrod urges anyone interested in the tours to register for them as soon as possible. Last year's filled up early, and many people had to be turned away.

To register or for more information, call Axelrod at (847)432-7003; Elise Ginsparg at (847)679-6793; or the Dawn Schuman Institute at (847)509-8282. □

Dawn Schuman Sponsors Fall Tour of Midwest

The Dawn Schuman Institute is offering a fall tour that may be of interest to Society members.

The "Autumn in Wisconsin" tour, led by Joyce Schragger, is a three-day trip through Southern Wisconsin. It offers the opportunity to trace Jewish history in Milwaukee, Madison, and rural communities, as well as to enjoy the spectacular fall colors of the area.

Participants will have the opportunity to meet several members of the Jewish communities along the tour, and will stay in beautiful lodgings.

Schragger is a long-time Institute favorite. She has taught a number of classes, and has led tours to New York, Washington, D.C., the Southeastern U.S., the Southwestern U.S., and Canada.

The tour costs \$425 with double occupancy. It is limited to one bus and is available only on a first come-first served basis. Anyone interested in taking part should be sure to make reservations as soon as possible.

The tour runs Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, September 16-18.

For more information or to make reservations, call the Institute at (847)509-8282. □

Archives Home to Several Sets of Oral Histories

The following is the first in a regular series of columns on items of interest in the Chicago Jewish Archives of the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies. This column is by archivist Joy Kingsolver.

FROM THE
CHICAGO
JEWISH
ARCHIVES

FROM THE
CHICAGO
JEWISH
ARCHIVES

One of the most important goals of the Archives is to preserve Chicago Jewish history through the individual stories of people who are active in the Jewish community. We do that, in part, by protecting and preserving the records they leave behind and the oral histories that volunteers have taken from them.

These oral histories can be valuable

tools for research and can help to preserve the stories of people who otherwise would not be included in the history books. In recent months the Archives has added two major collections to its oral history section.

The first was the Chicago Jewish Historical Society's Oral History project, comprised of over 200 interviews on audio cassettes. Many of the interviews have also been transcribed, making them easier to use for some researchers, and ensuring that they will be preserved.

Interviewees include judges, rabbis, journalists, and many others. Almost half of those interviewed are women, so the collection is a valuable resource for the study of Jewish women's history as well.

The second new collection is the Stanley Rosen Chicago Radical Jewish Elders Project, which includes about 70 interviews on video tape.

Rosen, an emeritus professor at the University of Illinois and a former board member of the Chicago Jewish

Historical Society, has worked for many years to record the history of the Jewish left in Chicago.

The project was completed with the aid of a grant from the Illinois Humanities Council.

The Archives also has several other collections of oral histories. The National Council of Jewish Women conducts interviews with Soviet Jews; the interviews are preserved on audio cassette and are also transcribed. This collection is still growing.

The American Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Committee also conducted interviews with prominent Chicago Jews.

All of these collections are being preserved in the Chicago Jewish Archives. A database has been created which will index all of the oral histories in the Archives. When it is complete, it will help make these resources more easily accessible to researchers. The Archives is grateful to all those whose time and effort created these valuable collections. □

Society Welcomes New Members from Last Quarter

With the many Society members renewing their membership, this quarter is traditionally slower than others during the when it comes to recruiting new members.

We are please to announce that we nevertheless welcome several new members:

Eddie Brandes
Janet Bryant
Marlen Iglitzen
Peter Orlinsky

Mr. & Mrs. Morris
Perman
Gerald Specter

We look forward to their participating with us in our continuing projects and to their helping us to devise new ones as well.

We are grateful to our new Society Scholar members who have increased their dues to the \$250 level. They will

receive copies of Board member Irving Cutler's *The Jews of Chicago* as a premium in the near future.

We encourage others to consider a similar increase in their dues.

We would like as well to encourage all of our members to help us raise our profile as an organization.

Mention to friends, neighbors, synagogue members, and family that we are involved in telling a story that encompasses all of them.

Tell them about our open meetings. Tell them about some of the benefits of membership, including a free copy of each year's Minsky-award-winning manuscript and reduced prices on Society produced publications such as the forthcoming *Romance of a People: The First 100 Years of Jewish History in Chicago*. Tell them about receiving four copies of *Chicago Jewish History* each year. Consider giving Society memberships as gifts.

Help us to keep growing and to keep telling our history. □

Call for Volunteers: Archives Seeks Help Maintaining Newspaper Files

Would you like to help the Chicago Jewish Archives from the comfort of your own living room?

The Archives needs a couple of volunteers to clip articles from local newspapers for our clipping file.

The Archives maintains extensive files of newspaper articles on issues and events important to Jews in Chicago. These files are available for research.

Examples of recent events documented in our clipping file include the interfaith efforts of Joseph Cardinal Bernardin and the trial of Bronislaw Hajda, convicted of Nazi activity.

If you are interested in helping out, please contact the archivist, Joy Kingsolver, at (312) 322-1741 for further details. □

Oral History Excerpt:

Max Targ Recalls Working to Promote the Study of Great Music in Israel and Chicago

The following is an excerpt of an oral history given by Max Targ to Society Board member Moselle Schwartz on August 21, 1980. Targ was a music distributor and philanthropist who founded and guided Americans for a Musical Library in Israel and would later endow the Targ Music Center of the Spertus Institute for Jewish Studies.

Max Targ: I was born in a very small town, 5000 population, in Poland ... near the border of Germany. At that time it was the border of Germany and Russia. At that time it belonged to Russia, Russia rather than Poland. So the official language of the country was Russian. The courts were conducted in Russian, the government, the schools, they were in Russian. But Polish was the language we used daily in our relationship with people, in business, in offices, everything.

So, naturally, I had to learn ... it was natural to speak Polish, natural to speak Yiddish. And my folks at home, my relatives, my entire family, everyone that I came in contact with, spoke Yiddish. A few, some of them, spoke Hebrew also, but Yiddish, Polish, Russian were the three languages that everybody knew. You could speak to anybody. The inhabitants of the town were also Slavic, Bohemians, you know, so you get the way they were very close to the language of Polish and Russian, so you got to know and understand the others...

Moselle Schwartz: So you had the use of many languages, didn't you?

Targ: And German was also a required subject in school, being so close to Germany. And my father, a business man, was very frequently in Germany. I used to go with him, too. So I learned German ...

I was fortunate also that my father was a Talmudist. He spent all of his spare time — he was a business man, but come a holiday or pre-holiday, his time was no-business, there was no such thing as business. It never entered his mind. He picked up — he thought that he had to finish a certain subject, you know, topic of *Gemarah* that we studied at the time. He took it very seriously.

And the Sabbath, Sabbath, Friday night, going to *schul*, Saturday afternoon, after our meal, we'd sit down and we'd study the *chumash*, that's the Pentateuch, the Five Books of

Moses. The *parsha*, the chapter for that week, was the one that we'd always study...

I was fortunate in that my father would lecture to me. Sometimes he took a particular legend. You know, I had three brothers and three sisters. We were seven children in all. So, my three brothers — and the oldest was also very, very studious — an *hooie*, outstanding in his studies. The second one, the one that brought me to the United States, Sam, didn't care for it. ...

The rest of my family, my brothers and sisters, remained at home, and they were all annihilated, died in the Holocaust, all of them. They were all married and had families, children, and none of them survived. I had one cousin that survived by virtue of the fact that she was away all this time. She went to Palestine and she married there. ...

Well, my brother and I visited our folks for their fiftieth wedding anniversary. That was in 1939. That was the year Hitler was already — Hitler's name was already all over Germany. We pleaded with our brothers and sisters to come to the United States. We wanted to bring them all to the United States. They didn't listen to us. They survived World

War I; they survived, you know, all kinds of obstacles.

My father was very wealthy. He practically owned half of the town, and with money you can do anything. You can bribe, pay off, what have you. He wasn't afraid that anything would happen to him. But it all started and Hitler outsmarted him. His brother, too, thought that nothing could happen to him. And my younger brother was a lawyer. He enjoyed the kind of stature in the town, not only the town but what could be called the country.

Schwartz: Yes, the *gubernya*.

Targ: Yes, the *gubernya*, that's right. They enjoyed the prestige, the respect of the people that they were around. My father was constantly asked for advice, was always helping people, always called to be a judge, a moderator, you know, a witness, or what have you. And so, they wouldn't think of coming to the United States. They had a very poor opinion of the United States.

The truth of the matter was, it wasn't bad manners, at that time. Two generations ago, America was only known for making money. That's all. It didn't appeal to an idealist, to an intellectual. The schools didn't have the reputation of the schools in England — Oxford — and schools like Heidelberg University in Germany. Those were the countries for intellectuals, but the United States wasn't. Even Harvard and Yale. ...

Schwartz: What do you see as the need of an organization such as the Americans for a Music Library in Israel? Who

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provides now any of those services that AMLI provided before?

Targ: The need today in Israel for musical equipment is great if not greater than when AMLI began. The population has grown a great deal, and the many immigrants that came, especially from the Soviet Union — very talented, promising musicians — can't teach or perform because of a lack of instruments. It's important to bear in mind that the study of music on an instrument is to a great extent dependent on the quality of the instrument. He may be Isaac Stern, but if it's a cheap instrument, he'll never get the tone out of it. And I would say this applies to any others.

So the need is great. Those that have gotten a start years ago are advanced enough to do better, need good quality instruments. And, of course, with many children being born all the time, it's important that beginners' instruments are also continuing to go to Israel. The government of Israel is not in a position to provide these instruments for them. However, I regret to say it may take many years before they can afford to do that. So, it's up to people who are interested in the music life to promote the music life of Israel, to provide them with instruments. ...

I'll tell you what I have done in an effort to perpetuate the work of AMLI there. I have undertaken to subsidize all the music libraries, ten altogether, to the extent that they can buy the most urgent needs of music: music books, text books, etc. With the help of my brother and my daughter, we have been — since AMLI has been dissolved — we have been sending annually a budget to each of these libraries, enabling them to get the urgent requirements. This is the extent of help that AMLI has at the current time...

Basically, behind all this is a philosophy. It's a desire on the part of anyone to promote music for all mankind, because of our sincere conviction that nothing else, no other media, can provide the advantages that music does. We believe in it wholeheartedly. We worship the advantages of music and want to spread it to the world. That's the satisfaction that I receive from having been in the music business for fifty years.

I think that if I had been just an ordinary businessman, wanting to make money and that's all, that I would have been a real wealthy man today. But that was not my mission. I enjoyed my work in music because of what it could do for others. I never sold a musical instrument — and I have instructed all of our salesmen, many of them for the fifty years that we were in the wholesale music business — “You do not sell an instrument for its own sake. You

sell the instrument for its performance, for what it will do for the person who buys the instrument.” In other words, we sell the importance of music, not the equipment itself.

I enjoyed my work, and we were successful in our business because of the fact that it was a slower process this way. Ultimately it gained for us a reputation, prestige. In addition, of course, you have to have money for a livelihood and to carry on a business, but that phase of it was secondary.

Schwartz: It's no wonder that your interest in music for the performer and for performing was disseminated so many times in organizations that came from your ideas, the organization, for instance, that started the whole idea of band shells for the public.

Targ: My interest in music was quite extensive. In the city of Chicago, I was chairman of the Music Committee of the Chicago City Club. That's a civic organization in existence for many years, over a half century, I would say. For years I was responsible for supplying musical instruments and music to the

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houses ...

Schwartz: Settlement houses?

Targ: Settlement houses. All the settlement houses of Chicago. And, I was responsible for several seasons for music in the parks. Jackson Park, Lincoln Park, had music shells, music bands. They gave concerts free to the people that couldn't afford to go to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, etc.

I had organized what was called the Chicago ... with the aid of the Chicago Park District ... I don't recall the name of the organization ... It existed for several years. And then when we stopped doing things, things were not done. In other words, it takes someone to promote and carry through, follow through on it. Otherwise, people not knowing, won't miss it. ...

I wanted to turn over all the material, records, and all the experiences that we [AMLI] have had, the background so that they could carry on with much less trouble, much less difficulty, than we had. And I couldn't find anyone in all my efforts at this. It was heartbreaking for me, the fact that we couldn't. Everyone would like to see it go on, and no one would like to do the work to keep it going. ...

Schwartz: You've given them a very hard-to-achieve example.

Targ: Very difficult. Moselle, I could go on talking of the satisfaction that that I got from AMLI, and the importance that I feel it has and will have. ... I get the greatest satisfaction from knowing that we have started something that will go on as long as Israel is in existence. □