

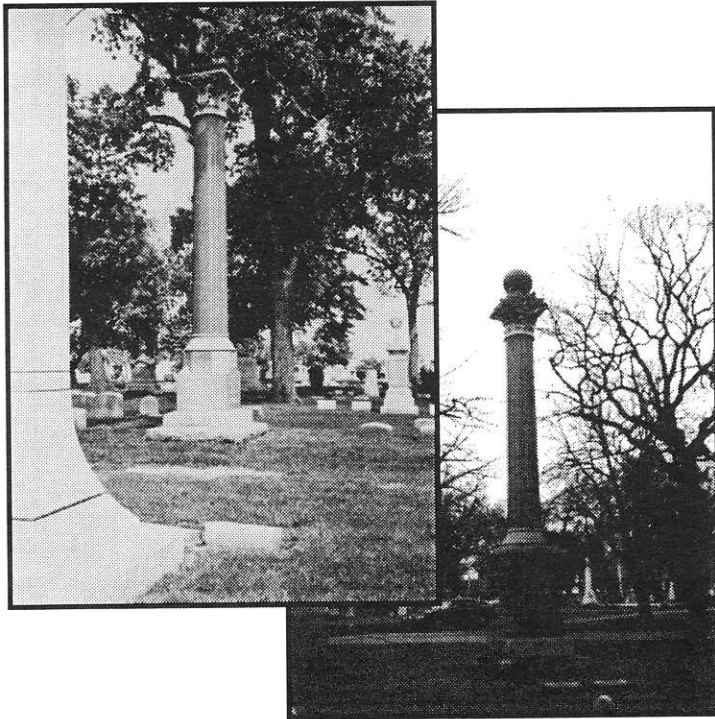
Look to the rock from which you were hewn
הביטו אל-צור הצבתם



chicago jewish historical society

FORMERLY SOCIETY NEWS
volume 20, no. 2, Summer 1995

CHICAGO JEWISH *History*



Annual Meeting Elects Three Board Members; Features Matthews' Singing

This year's annual Society meeting saw the election of three new board members and featured Society favorite Renee Matthews performing American Jewish music. In addition, Minsky Award-Winner Bea Kraus received her award and spoke about the sources and inspiration of her project.

The June 11 meeting at Temple Sholom drew a crowd of approximately 75 members and their guests.

Rabbi Daniel Leifer, Morene Dunn, and Mark Mandle were all elected by the membership to three year terms. Burt Robin and Clare Greenberg were re-elected to three year terms as well. Robin is currently the Society Vice-President

continued on page 3

A Tale of Two Columns: *One of the Two Magnificent Relics of Dankmar Adler's Central Music Hall Marked His Grave. But Where was the Second One?*

By Norman Schwartz

A tall reddish granite column in Mt. Mayriv Cemetery at Addison Street and Narragansett Avenue serves as the gravestone for the outstanding Jewish architect Dankmar Adler. The column came from the main entrance of the

continued on page 4

Inside:

- Memories of Rodfei Zedek by Carol Perel Colby
- Oral History excerpt with Peter Ascoli by High school Metro History Fair Winners
- Minsky Award Winner Bea Kraus Discusses the Sources and Inspiration of her History of Area Cantors

President's Column

On March 3, 1908 a young Jewish boy named Lazarus Averbuch, recently arrived in Chicago from Kishinev, was shot to death in the home of Chicago Police Commissioner George Shippy.

The police and the media of the day labeled Averbuch as an anarchist assassin, come to kill Shippy in his own home. Newspaper headlines screamed about an anarchist scare; there were reports that members of the police force punched Averbuch's body as it lay ready for an autopsy.



Walter Roth

The hatred many felt for Averbuch began as anti-anarchism but contained elements of anti-foreignism and anti-Semitism as well.

Acting Police Commissioner Herman Schuettler harassed immigrants and anarchists throughout the city, holding many in custody and he subjected Averbuch's sister to "sweating" techniques of interrogation to uncover the anarchist conspiracy he was certain existed in Chicago.

Politicians at the state and federal level picked up on the hysteria. Some like President Theodore Roosevelt proposed unprecedented limits on immigration; others like Oscar Strauss, the first Jewish Cabinet member, called for new powers to deport anarchists and criminal aliens.

For purposes of the hysteria that spread across the city and country, it hardly mattered that there was no evidence Averbuch had been an anarchist at all.

For all of their efforts, the Chicago Police Department never connected him to other anarchists and even had difficulty demonstrating he had set out to kill Shippy. Supporters of Averbuch managed to stir up heated debate about

the case -- debate that raised real doubts about how it came to pass that a young boy was shot and killed by the chief of police of Chicago -- but the incident has gone down in history as one of a series of anarchist actions from early in this century.

Some time ago, Joe Kraus, editor of our *Chicago Jewish History* and I collaborated in the writing of a book on this Averbuch incident. Rudi Press in Iowa City has recently expressed interest in publishing the book, and we hope it will be available as soon as this Spring.

Given the recent bombing in Oklahoma City, it seems worthwhile to remember the Chicago incident of 1908 as well as another incident of the era. The debate around the Averbuch affair was haunted by memories of the Haymarket Square riot of 25 years earlier. In 1887, someone tossed a bomb into the ranks of police who were there to quell an anarchist demonstration, killing and injuring a number of officers.

No one is sure who was responsible for the bomb, but eight leaders of the demonstration were put on trial and four of them were hanged.

The graves of the executed organizers came to be a rallying site for anarchists, socialists, and unionists. A monument erected in memory of the murdered police officers played a similar role for supporters of law and order.

Despite the fact that no one ever determined what the Haymarket Square incident was all about, it figured in the fears and proclamations of the people arguing about the Averbuch affair.

In a similar way, we cannot be certain what the David Koresh affair in Waco, Texas was all about two years ago. All we know is that a number of people were killed and that the United States Department of justice has had to examine its philosophies and

procedures.

Some have since come to see the Waco affair as an important (if badly handled) step toward controlling the spread of assault weapons and the cult of survivalism. Others see it as part of a government plot to impose greater control on American citizens.

The recent bombing of the federal office building in Oklahoma City echoed the Waco bombing in something of the same way that the Averbuch Affair echoed the incidents at Haymarket Square.

The Oklahoma City bombing grew out of more than the vague rage of Tim McVeigh and his associates; it grew out of one, limited understanding of what took place in Waco. Although no one can know what happened in Waco, McVeigh felt he knew enough to take other people's lives.

Whether we like it or not, the way we understand history shapes the present. In the case of the Averbuch affair -- a mystery no one has ever resolved -- the apparent accident of a young man being in the wrong place at the wrong time contributed to restrictive immigration policies and a national hysteria about anarchists.

In the case of Waco, an unhappy young man found a focus for his frustration and he set out to accomplish one of the worst terrorist attacks in American history.

The confusing story of Averbuch's murder strikes me as interesting and relevant today because it presents a challenge not only to understand what happened in history but also to understand how different people have used history in different ways. I believe our culture is stronger when we can accept that the truth is often hard to understand.

In other news, at our recent annual meeting our members elected three new board members: Morene Dunn, Rabbi Daniel Leifer, and Mark Mandle.

We welcome them to our Board and look forward to their contributions. I also want to thank all of our present Board members for their endeavors during the past year. □

Annual Meeting

continued from page one

and Program Director. Greenberg is currently Secretary of the Society.

Rabbi Leifer has been the director of the University of Chicago Hillel for the last thirty years.

He is interested in using his position on the board as a means of making connections between college students and the work of the Society. He says he would like to explore possibilities for students to make connections with members of the Society.

"I think there are more and more mentoring programs [in Hillel Foundations across the country] where students are looking to work with an older person."

He also hopes to attract some of the Society's open meetings to the new facilities at the Hillel House in Hyde Park. The new auditorium would not only be an incentive in its own right, but it would also draw the Society to a South Side location.

"I'm always interested in trying to get people to realize there is a thriving Jewish community on the South Side," he said.

Morene Dunn has been in public relations in Chicago for 20 years and currently runs her own firm. Her clients include 42nd Ward Alderman Burton F. Natarus -- whose appearance at the Feb. 5 Society open meeting she helped to arrange -- and Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem.

She has done work previously for the Midwest Israeli Consul General.

A native of St. Joseph, Missouri who arrived here 25 years ago, Dunn says she finds Chicago a rich source of Jewish history. "I've always been surprised at how strong the need is here for Jews to know about their city and neighborhood," she said. "It's the ultimate in Jewish geography."

In addition to her new position on the Board, Dunn has been active in a number of Jewish organizations in the city. She is on the board of *Maot chitim*, a group that provides Passover

packages to needy Jewish families in the area, and has served on several committees with the Jewish United Fund.

She imagines herself working on efforts to increase the visibility of the Society. She said that she herself was struck by the range of the Society's work when she encountered it during Ald. Natarus's speech.

"I'm new to the Society, but I've already seen that a lot of people don't know there is a Chicago Jewish Historical Society," she said.

"My aim is to make sure people know about the work we do and the resources we have," she said.

Mark Mandle is hardly a newcomer to the Society. He has served a number of terms on the Board since he first joined it in 1977 and he has been involved in numerous Society activities.

Mandle has served as the Society Membership Chair, the Treasurer, and the co-chair of the Oral History Committee.

He has also led walking tours of Lakeview and Hyde Park as well as bus tours including one of the Southwest Side.

Mandle comes from a long-time Chicago family. His ancestor Phillip Morris first came to Chicago in 1859 and joined B'nai Sholom Congregation (now a part of K.A.M.-Isaiah-Israel) when there were only two synagogues in the entire city.

Raised on the South Side, Mandel currently lives in Lakeview.

The Head Librarian for Crain Communications, Mandle says his chief hope for his tenure on the Board is to increase membership.

Renee Matthews's music served as the entertainment, with Jerry Presskill supplying the piano accompaniment. Her performance reflected a history of American Jewish music and she used material from a script by Rita Jacobs Willens of WFMT radio to narrate that history.

Matthews performed at the annual meeting a year ago as well and she is additionally known to Society members

because her father, Avrum Matthews, was a renowned Chicago area cantor.

In addition to the music and Board elections, Minsky Award winner Bea Kraus received her award and spoke about her history of Chicago cantors. [See page 9 for the text of that speech.]

"It's always good to bring our members together and get a sense of ourselves as a whole group," Society President Walter Roth said. "We look forward to another rewarding year." □

Society Welcomes New Members

We are always looking to add to our Society and we would like to welcome the new members who have joined in the last three months.

We welcome each of them separately and all of them collectively. The job of telling the history of our community is possible only when all of us participate in it.

We are grateful for our continuing members as well as the following new members:

*Diana Arbeit
Sylvie Bemis
Eve Groner
Lucille Hanpin
Harold Katz*

*Bea Kraus
Rabbi Ephraim
Prombaum
Mr. & Mrs.
Marshall Wolke*

We invite everyone to participate in all of our activities. See the newsletter and other mailings for announcements of our quarterly open meetings and consider participating in our oral history project, our proposed video history of the Jews of Chicago, and in the planning process behind the many events we undertake.

There are always opportunities to be part of what we do in the Society and we invite you either to take part in our ongoing projects or to let us know about other projects we might pursue.

What's more, we ask you to consider giving memberships to our Society to friends, family members or former Chicagoans who may have left the city but not gotten it out of their hearts entirely. □

Columns

continued from page one

Central Music Hall, once a landmark of downtown Chicago.

Music Hall was Adler's "Foundation"

It seems especially fitting that the column should serve this purpose since, as Adler wrote in an unfinished autobiographical sketch in the archives of K.A.M. Synagogue, "[the Central Music Hall] has proved in many respects one of the most successful buildings ever erected in Chicago, and I shall always consider it the foundation of whatever professional standing I may have acquired."

Indeed, it was the success of that building that led to Adler's and his partner Louis Sullivan's masterpiece: the still-standing Auditorium Theater Building at Michigan and Congress. That led additionally to Adler's reputation as the outstanding 19th century American designer of theaters, concert halls, and auditoriums.

Doubled as Church and Music Hall

The Central Music Hall stood at the southeast corner of Randolph and State Streets. In Charles E. Gregersen's book, *Dankmar Adler: His Theaters and Auditoriums*, we learn that "George B. Carpenter, a local promoter of concerts and lectures and a member of [Rev. David Swing's popular non-denominational Central] Church, conceived the idea of a building to be named in its honor that would provide a home for the church and also feature a concert hall, stores and offices."

Gregersen indicates that construction began in the spring of 1879 and on December 5 the somewhat

unfinished main auditorium was opened to the public. It became the city's premier auditorium.

Hall is Leveled; Columns Moved Away

In 1900 or 1901 (the authorities disagree but it was probably the former), the building was demolished to make way for the main store of Marshall Field and Company which still occupies the site. According to Gregersen, one of the columns from the Central Music Hall's State Street entrance was preserved and later placed on Adler's grave (he had died in 1900) in Mt. Mayriv Cemetery.

One source, Carl W. Condit in *The Chicago School of Architecture* writes, "Marshall Field saved one of the columns and had it erected over Adler's grave," but this is questionable.

Sonia Kallick in the *Metropolitan* of Lemont (March 22, 1979) says, "When the building was sold to Marshall Field for demolition, [Edwin] Walker acted quickly and acquired the two columns."

This information came from Tracy Walker, a grandson of Edwin Walker.

What Became of Second Column?

Walker's claim raised the unanswered question of what happened to the other column. Surviving photographs indicate there were two columns, but authorities writing about the matter mention only the one that marks Adler's grave. For purposes of the written, historical record, the other column was lost.

I learned from Helen Sclair, a local "cemetarian," that it could be found in Rosehill Cemetery at 5800 Ravenswood Avenue in Chicago. It was relatively easy to spot because of its two-story height and distinctive shape -- including the hybrid high Victorian and Corinthian capital with a lyre on it -- and color.

The only difference between the column at Rosehill

Walker's claim raised the unanswered question of what happened to the other column. Authorities writing about the matter mention only the one that marks Adler's grave. For purposes of the written, historical record, the other column was lost.

The Photographs:

The photographs on the cover of this issue show the two columns of Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan's Central Music Hall. The top, left photograph shows the column that marks Adler's grave in Mt. Mayriv Cemetery. The bottom, right photograph shows the one that marks the graves of Edwin and Mary Walker in Rosehill Cemetery.

Both photographs are by Norman Schwartz.

The photograph on the facing page shows the Central Music Hall at the Southeast Corner of Randolph and State Streets, currently the site of Marshall Field's Department Store. The two columns flank the main entrance of the building on the right side of the photograph.

The photograph was taken in 1889 by J.W. Taylor and is reproduced by permission of the Chicago Historical Society. □

and the one at Adler's grave is a red ball on top of the column in Rosehill. The Rosehill column marks the graves of Edwin Walker (1833-1910) and Mary C. Walker (1833-1901).

Who Were the Walkers?

Who were Edwin and Mary C. Walker? What was the connection between Adler and Walker that brought the second column to Rosehill?

The book *Lemont [Illinois] -- Its History and Commemoration of its Centennial* states that "Edwin Walker was born near Leeds, England, and with his wife emigrated to the United States in 1856. The couple spent one year in Philadelphia and then moved to Chicago."

He became a building contractor concentrating on large buildings and public structures. He soon purchased land in Lemont and quarried limestone for use in his contracting activities as well as for sale to other contractors.

Walker's Role in Building Music Hall

The book continues, "Among his most distinguished buildings, Edwin Walker is still remembered as the contractor who built the Chicago Water Tower and the Illinois State Capitol (upper part) in Springfield. Quarrying steadily demanded more and more of his attention, so that he moved his family to Lemont shortly after the Civil War.

"The Central Music Hall was contracted to Walker in 1879. The exterior facing was of the finest dressed Lemont stone, and flanking the building entrance were two granite columns each over two storeys tall. Ed Walker and Dankmar Adler became close friends working on the project."

Walker's Granddaughter Remembers

I wrote a letter to Marie Walker Polson of Lemont, granddaughter of Edwin and Mary Walker, asking her about the matter. In her reply of January 23, 1995 she wrote, "Yes, I knew of Mr. Adler and know that he often came to dinner at my grandparents' home. My father,



Edwin Walker, Jr., often talked of Mr. Adler also having time to play with the boys -- my father and his three brothers. They loved baseball.

"My grandfather supplied the stone from the quarry near my home for Adler's architectural plans. They were great friends."

An Enduring Friendship

Therefore, it is not too far-fetched to conclude that the close friendship between Adler, the rabbi's son, and Walker, the transplanted Englishman, resulted in a bond that, through their still sharing the matching columns from the Central Music Hall, continues after death.

Some Difficulties in Researching Mystery

I should add that my research was hindered by the fact that another prominent Edwin Walker died in 1910 and is buried in Rosehill. Moreover, the newspapers, books, and architectural digests of the day concentrated on architects and financiers rather than on contractors.

I found one helpful hint in Mary Walker's death notice. It mentioned that she was from Lemont. I then got in touch with the Lemont Area Historical Society and Sonia Kallick who were both very helpful.

It was fascinating to uncover this forgotten aspect to the life of Dankmar Adler. □

Norman Schwartz is the Past President of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society.

Information Request:

Seeking Material on Jewish Humor

Spertus Museum is looking for material for a forthcoming exhibition on Jewish humor. The curators are interested in any significant private collection of Jewish ephemera for

possible use. Among the items sought are humorous calendars, sign cards, posters, joke books, games, toys, and figurines.

Contact Spertus at (312)322-1747. □

Memoir:

Carol Perel Colby Recalls Community Atmosphere of Rodfei Zedek Family

The Society meeting of April 23, dedicated to the history of Congregation Rodfei Zedek featured talks by former Rabbi Ralph Simon, current rabbi as well as Society board member Rabbi Elliot Gertel, and long-time congregation members Norman Sider, David Newberger, and Carol Perel Colby. The following is the text of Colby's talk.

It is inscribed on the stones of Yad Vashem Memorial in Israel: "Remember the past. Live in the present. Build for the future." Those words have special meaning as I join other Rodfei Zedek friends today who also look to the future of a great synagogue with a very proud past.

Rodfei Zedek played a major role in shaping my adult life and giving it substance, a rather unusual choice of sculptures for someone who had come from a very different Jewish tradition.

My mother was born in Oakland, California, my father in Menominee, Michigan. His family moved to Chicago in the early 1900s. My father and his two brothers became lawyers and his sisters went to the university -- one to Chicago and the other to Wisconsin -- a rare accomplishment for women in those days. My parents married in 1924 and moved to Hyde Park and lived in the Copper Carlton Hotel. (It's now the Del Prado.)

Although they both came from more observant backgrounds, they were drawn to Sinai Congregation which, I believe, was one of the most Reform temples in the country. Services were on Sunday and membership was so large that we had two separate seatings for the High Holidays. There were 120 in my confirmation class and, though rare today with our mobile children, many of those confirmands are still friends.

I lived a very secure Jewish life. All of my friends were Jewish. All came from intact, comfortable homes. Most went to Hyde Park High School and then to college. Although some of my friends belonged to K.A.M. or Isaiah, I did not have one friend who came from a kosher home or who practiced traditional Judaism. Of course, we all observed Passover, Sukkot, Hanukkah (at least we lit the orange candles in our tin menorahs and ate chocolate candy -- mine in a small Fannie May box), but most also celebrated Christmas and many had a Christmas tree in their home.

We were very comfortable with our form of Jewishness and had never felt the sting of anti-Semitism. I truly felt that I was one of the Chosen People. Hitler certainly changed that!

When I married Bernie who came from a Conservative, observant family with a long tradition of Rodfei Zedek

membership, it was as foreign to me as marrying out of the faith. Bernie's parents had joined Rodfei Zedek in 1920 when the synagogue occupied a building between Michigan Ave. and Wabash. Bernie remembers the *shamus* Eliezer and a Hebrew teacher by the name of Elson. His brother Gene was Bar Mitzvah at this synagogue, but when Rodfei Zedek moved to 54th and Greenwood, Bernie's folks joined Beth Hamidrash at 51st and Prairie, where his father Meyer acted as cantor.

When the family moved into Hyde Park, they rejoined Rodfei Zedek and brother Bob was Bar Mitzvah under Rabbi Daskal's instruction and with Cantor Kittay officiating. After World War II, Bernie rejoined the family in Hyde Park at Rodfei Zedek's beautiful new home with Rabbi Simon as religious leader and with his cousin Jules Levenstein as congregation president.

When it became time for Bernie and me to attend holiday services, I viewed the occasion with much trepidation. I was relieved to find that Jews who practiced more traditional values and observances did not all have beards and wear kaftans and black hats. It was at Rodfei Zedek that I found a warm community of people with whom I felt comfortable, whose opinions I respected, and whose constant intellectual searchings I found challenging. My family had always been philanthropically involved with the Jewish community and instilled in me a strong sense of historical and ethical Jewishness, but the Rodfei Zedek congregants were spiritually a great deal more involved with Jewishness and I had a lot -- a very lot -- to learn.

It was at first through the Rodfei Zedek sisterhood that I found a loving Jewish home. Ruth Levenstein welcomed me into the fold, introduced me to the Rodfei Zedek family, and helped me to grow less fearful of this new environment. One thing I learned from Ruth right away was that, although Rodfei Zedek was a conservative place, there was an awful lot of ham around: No, not in the kitchen, but on the stage. Rodfei Zedek had a tradition of putting on great amateur musical shows. I can still remember the immoral Sylvia Levitt who was our home-grown Molly Picon. With the naivete of Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney, we would say, "We've got a great stage in Newberger Auditorium. Chevy Cohn will make the costumes. Ben Ehrman will build the sets. And we'll sell a thousand tickets." And we did.

Abbot Coburn. Sol Levine. Harold Dray. Gilly Marcus. Ann Lannin performed her wonderful *schlepping* and shopping routine. Sally Frooman was the *shiksah* of Araby. And I had the *chutzpah* to come out on stage wearing a bathing suit as the New Year Baby. Moon Siegel. Beebee Richard. I could go on and on.

There was no business like show business to cement friendships. Rodfei Zedek allowed me to use all of my talents and to develop many I did not know I had. Rabbi and Kelsey were always there to support any new project and to participate with enthusiasm. Kelsey walked many a runway for our sisterhood fashion shows with Tille Zax trying to instruct Beta Titleman, Bess Brown, Corky Dropkin, and

many other two-left footers how to glide down the runway.

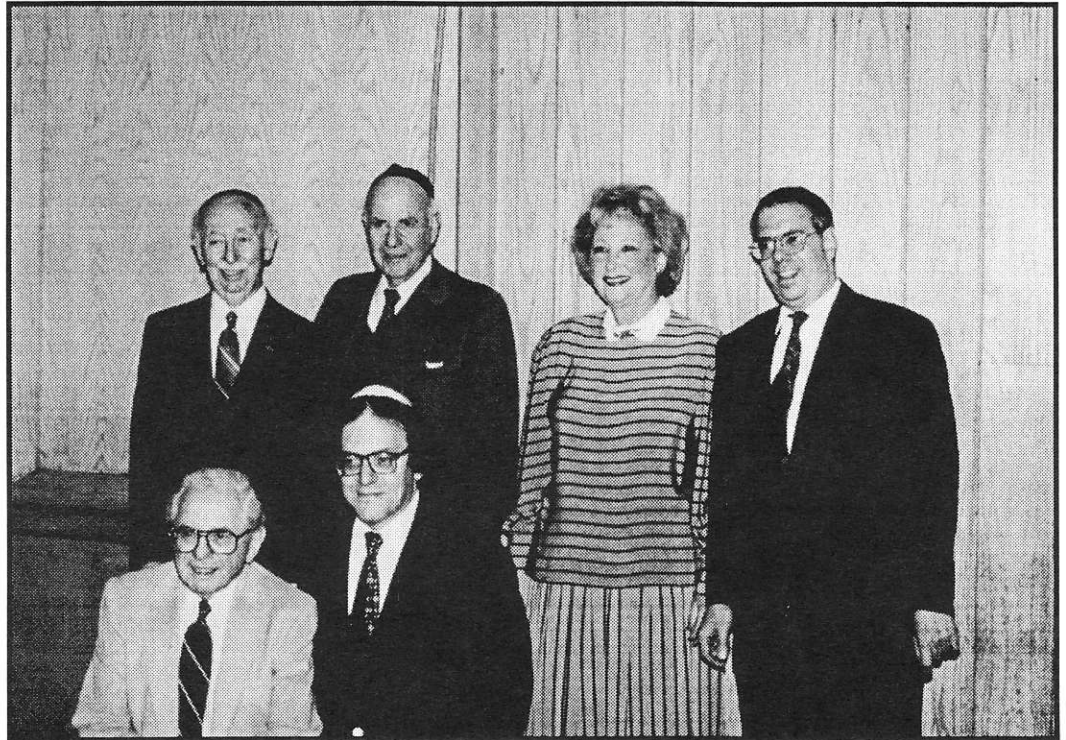
Then, too, there were the wonderful rummage sales. The Neirmans or Statlands would give us the use of an empty store. Lou Weiner would send over a load of Stratojacks. Irwin May would send bridal gowns. Arnold Newberger would send sweaters. And, already, we had the nucleus of a successful sale.

And, of course, there were the beautiful antique teas and pace-setting art shows under the chairmanship of Doris Patinkin and Lee Goldman.

I could write a book about those fun-filled days.

When I became sisterhood president in 1964, I felt a total commitment to the synagogue and sisterhood. They were wonderful years filled with Bat Mitzvah, Friday night and Saturday services with my whole family. Intensifying my involvement in the whole Jewish community was seeing Israel with Rabbi Simon and Kelsey, and knowing at the same time that Bernie and Stan Rubin were active in the Rodfei Zedek men's club *kallachs* and their heated discussions.

Arnold Newberger and I served as presidents during the same period, and Allen Dropkin served as men's club president. They helped me over the rough spots in saying the prayers or singing the *baruchahs* by singing loudly enough to cover my many flaws. Dawn Rubin and I went to conferences together at the Concord where the value of study was almost as important as the virtue of remarkable Jewish cooking.



Photograph by Dr. Jack Stern

Back row, (left to right), Rabbi Ralph Simon, Norman Schwartz, Carole Perel Colby, and Rabbi Elliot Gertel; front row, Norman Sider and David Newberger.

I've spoken too long, but it takes a bit of time to express the regard with which I hold this remarkable synagogue and the wonderful men and women who have been its leaders. Rodfei Zedek has inspired many to move out into the larger Jewish community and do invaluable service. Many of our congregants have held important positions in every area of Jewish education and philanthropy. What I learned here gave me the courage to take on many roles for the Jewish Federation and to become president of a Brandeis University chapter of 2,500 members. Rodfei Zedek gives its congregation the inspiration to be *tzaddiks*. I hope that those who come to its sanctuary today will continue to be so committed to the tradition. □

Historical Society Plans Rogers Park History Meeting

The Chicago Historical Society will continue its "Neighborhoods: Keepers of Culture" series of exhibits with an exhibit dedicated to the history of the Rogers Park/West Ridge communities.

The Historical Society has planned the exhibitions focussing on the history of different Chicago neighborhoods as a way of recording a different kind of

history. The exhibits will be on display in the neighborhoods themselves and are being put together by teams of professionals and neighborhood residents.

Residents, former residents, or historians of the Rogers Park/West Ridge neighborhoods should consider attending the next planning meeting for the exhibit on August 2 at the Bernard Horwich Jewish Community Center, 3003 W. Touhy from 7 to 9 p.m.

The group working to pull the exhibit together has settled on the title, "Rogers Park/West Ridge" Rhythms of

Diversity."

They invite anyone interested in the project to join them either to discuss the project or simply to listen in on it during the planning stages.

Their exhibit on Douglas and Grand Boulevards is currently on display at the Chicago Historical Society, Clark Street at North Avenue.

For further information on either the Rogers Park/West Ridge exhibit or other exhibits in the Keepers of Culture series, contact Tracey Matthews at (312)642-5035, ext. 347 or Esther Hurh at ext. 348. □

Minsky Award Speech:

Bea Kraus Talks of the Origins and Inspirations for Her Cantor History

Skokie freelance writer Bea Kraus accepted the 1995 Doris Minsky Memorial Award at the Society's Annual Meeting at Temple Shalom on June 11 for her manuscript, The Hazzanut: Sounds of Jewish Chicago. In her acceptance talk she discussed the methods she used to uncover a history that had never received the treatment she brought to it.

The Doris Minsky Memorial Award is given annually by the Society to a monograph on an aspect of Chicago area Jewish History. It carries an award of \$1000 to the author as well as publication of the manuscript. Society members will receive copies of the book some time in the fall as part of their membership benefits.

Thank you.

I am pleased for the opportunity to publicly thank the members of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society and the Doris Minsky Memorial Fund for this award. When I was notified that my manuscript, *The Cantors -- Gifted Voices Remembered*, was accepted for publication, the thought foremost in my mind was that, due to my effort, a portion of Chicago's history would be preserved for generations to come. Of course, those who are members of this organization work toward that goal on an ongoing basis and deserve accolades for their efforts.

Inspiration for researching and writing about the lives of cantors came from many sources. I'll share one with you today. My first experience with an aspiring cantor was in a small four room flat in the East New York section of Brooklyn. When my brother was five years old, I was a few months short of four. I remember sitting under the dining room table as I watched him take a bath towel from the cupboard of our buffet. He would wrap himself in it, pick up any book that was nearby and start to sing. I cannot recall the sounds but the picture is vivid in my mind. For more than forty years, my brother, Irving Zummer, has been a respected cantor in Chicago and its suburbs, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and, until his retirement in June of 1994, in St. Petersburg, Florida.

As I followed his career and enjoyed listening to his music, as well as that of other cantors, I wondered about the lives of those whose names were recognized world

over, and those who were and are popular in the Chicago area. When I was encouraged to enter the Doris Minsky Memorial Fund competition by a former winner, Eva Gross, it didn't take long to decide on a topic.

It has been an interesting year!

My research began when I read a "letter to the editor" in the *JUF News* from Mr. Hy Schwartz of Northbrook. In his letter he commented about several items that appeared in an article about Chicago's old Jewish neighborhoods. He recounted how, as a teenager, he had the rare opportunity to hear the world renowned Cantor Pierre Pinchik make his Chicago debut. Additional references to cantors of those early years inspired me to call him for an interview.

Except for the fact that my tape recorder wouldn't cooperate, it was a productive meeting, particularly because Mr. Schwartz had a letter from Pinchik's cousin, Sadel Levy. She had written to him in response to *his* letter to the editor. I now had a name and an address -- a possible link to one of the most outstanding cantors who ever stood on a *bimah* in a Chicago synagogue.

Networking became an important mode of research. Pinchik's cousin led me to Brina Rodin. I sat around Mrs. Rodin's dining room table with six of Cantor Aaron Kritz's children and listened as they reminisced about their father. They brought him to life for me. They were enthusiastic and grateful that someone was finally preserving the story of his career. I met the same enthusiasm from family members of Cantors Tevele Cohen, Joseph Giblichman, and Todros Greenberg. Greenberg's grandson is Rabbi Alexander Graubert of Shaare Tikva.

I felt somewhat intimidated to call Cantor Dale Lind for an interview about his father, Joshua Lind, and his involvement with the Lind Brothers; I told him so. He put me at ease immediately and invited me to his home where we spoke for several hours. He too assured me that the subject I had chosen was long overdue for publication.

Perhaps my most important interviewees were the least confident that anyone would be interested in my thirty year history of the cantors who sang in Chicago beginning around 1930.

My brother suggested I call Cantor Mort Pliskin of the Lincolnwood Jewish Congregation. Having grown up in a cantorial home, he provided information that was vital to this monograph. Cantor David Brandhandler of Ner Tamid synagogue offered guidance on a continuing basis.

In all, I interviewed eight cantors, several former choir members and numerous cantorial music

enthusiasts.

My research also took me to the archives of Asher Library at the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies where Dan Sharon was never too busy to answer my questions, to seek out long-forgotten publications, or to direct me to material that could have information for me. He was a constant source for names of people who could help.

Editing a manuscript can be arduous and sometimes boring, but it is always essential to make an author look good. I extend thanks to Irwin Suloway and Walter Roth for their comments and suggestions. Charles Bernstein, your liaison for the Doris Minsky Competition, was a true source of inspiration as I completed my manuscript. From his first comments when informing me that I was the sole winner of the competition through several months of editing, he was always complimentary and reassuring. I'm grateful for his willingness to take the time from his busy schedule to confer with me when I called his office or his home. Sometimes we even negotiated on a moot point and that was okay, too.

Before I close, I must acknowledge the work my lifetime partner for forty-seven year contributed to this project. No request was too difficult. If it meant spending a beautiful Sunday amidst the dusty *Jewish Sentinels* in Asher Library, he was willing. If I needed him to come with me to an evening interview in a



Minsky Award Winner Bea Kraus receiving her award from Society President Walter Roth

neighborhood that was unfamiliar, he made the time. No distance was too great and no time was too lengthy. His participation in the editing process was ongoing from the introduction to the very last word. And, when we received the good news, he said, "I told you from the start that you would win." With a vote of confidence like that, how could I lose. □

Space Available on Remaining Summer Tours

With several weeks remaining in the summer season, the Society summer tours have spaces remaining for interested members or guests.

The two tours still scheduled for the summer are of Chicago's Near Northside and Ligonier and South Bend, Indiana.

The tour of the Near Northside will be on July 23 and is led by Society Board Member Mark Mandle. The bus will stop at the Bernard Horwich Jewish Community Center, 3003 W. Touhy, at noon and return at 5 p.m. It will also stop at the Marriott Hotel, 540 N. Michigan at 12:30 and return at 4:30 p.m.

The tour costs \$18 for members and

\$21 for non-members.

The tour of Ligonier and South bend is on August 13 and is led by Society Board members Charles Bernstein and Leah Axelrod.

The bus stops at the Bernard Horwich JCC at 8 a.m. and returns at 9 p.m. It also stops at the Marriott at 8:30 a.m. and returns at 8:30 p.m.

The cost for members is \$48 and for non-members is \$55. Dinner, but not lunch, is included.

For more information on either tour, contact Leah Axelrod at (708) 432-7003. □

Consider Donating Jewish Mementoes

One way you can consider helping the Society in our efforts to preserve and retell the history of the Jews of Chicago is to donate archival material

that you have tucked away in old drawers, trunks, boxes, or attics.

Given the constraints of our own limited archival storage space, we unfortunately cannot take most documents relating to individual families. What we are looking for instead are documents relating to the history of the larger community. This might include synagogue directories, programs from Jewish events, records of *landmenshaften* or other Jewish community groups, or photographs depicting vanished sites of Jewish interest.

In writing local history, it is never easy to know what documents will unlock the riddles of how the every day life of our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents went. If you have such material and are willing to share it, we will see that it is preserved for future historians. □

Oral History Excerpt:
**As Historian and
Grandson, Peter Ascoli
Reflects on Julius
Rosenwald's Legacy**

In the most recent issue of Chicago Jewish History, we ran an excerpt from an oral history interview of Marion Ascoli taken by Walter Roth and Sid Sorkin of the Society. Luong Lam and Sam Tsyrlin, students at Von Steuben High School, used portions of that interview as part of a Metro History Fair project and set out to clarify portions of it by speaking with Peter Ascoli, Marion's son and a historian in his own right.

Marion Ascoli was the daughter of Julius Rosenwald, the chairman of Sears Roebuck for many years and perhaps the leading Jewish philanthropist in Chicago history.

The following excerpts are from an interview of Peter Ascoli by Lam and Tsyrlin conducted on April 29, 1995 at the Ascoli home.

Interviewers (Luong Lam and Sam Tsyrlin): Could you tell us a little bit about Mr. Rosenwald's donation to the Museum of Science and Industry?

Peter Ascoli: Do you know the story about that? They [the Rosenwald family] were living in Munich, Germany for a while. My grandfather would allow the two youngest children to pick some place they wanted to go to, and he would go with them. William [the youngest son] would always choose this industrial museum, so J.R. thought that it would be a nice idea to have something like this right here, in Chicago.

This happened around 1913, so this idea germinated for a long time, because it wasn't 'til the mid-twenties that Rosenwald offered to [endow] the museum.

Interviewers: One of the things we noticed during our research is the conflicting information about his total monetary contribution. One encyclopedia said it was over \$70 million, while another said it was around \$63 million. How much do you think he donated?

Ascoli: I am not sure of the exact amount, but I think it was probably around \$63 million.

Interviewers: Did the fact that Mr. Rosenwald donated so much money hurt his family in any financial way?

Ascoli: No, it did not hurt his family. When he died, all

of his children were grown up and married, and had jobs, and they were not hurt at all. During his lifetime he always ensured that they had enough.

Interviewers: Then, do you agree with J.R. that third and fourth generations should not receive inheritances?

Ascoli: Do I think he was inconsiderate? Not really, no. But he ... he left his children not penniless. He did leave them some money, but he felt that it was a Jewish belief that one has to be charitable, and he took it very seriously. It is very interesting because he never started giving away large sums of money 'til around 1910.

Interviewers: Did any of his children follow in his footsteps of philanthropy?

Ascoli: His sons and daughters *all* followed in his footsteps. They were very charitable-minded, and they were in charge of the Rosenwald Foundation, which lasted for a while. And, you have to understand that he was very influential in his time. He would write articles in *Atlantic Monthly* about why he gave money away, and in one he talked about why he helped the African-Americans.

Interviewers: Could you tell us some of the contributions towards African-Americans that interest you most?

Ascoli: It all started in 1910, when he was approached and asked if he would donate toward the building of a Black Y.M.C.A. in Chicago. He said he would donate \$25,000 if they came up with \$5000.

Interviewers: One article we read accused Mr. Rosenwald of supporting Jim Crow policies. It accused him of segregating the African-Americans by donating money to specific causes just for them. What is your opinion on that claim?

Ascoli: I know. This is an argument which is still continuing today. I think we need to look at this from a historical perspective.

In the days when he gave away his money, Jim Crow policies were the law of the land. He was not a revolutionary; J.R. wanted to work within the existing system. He did study the ways whites segregated the African-Americans and how they could be changed.

I, frankly, think that this argument is not looking at things in historical context. They are placing the arguments of today in the past. I think that this is what is called anachronistic, and I think it's, frankly, incorrect. He *did* give money to Black schools, but that was because there could not be any mixed schools in that period, and in the South they felt pretty strongly about not having integrated schools. Since he wanted to do something for Black children, since he had this idea -- actually, it was Booker T. Washington who gave him the

idea...

Do you know who he was? He wrote a book called *Up From Slavery*, and it inspired J.R. to give to Black causes.

Interviewers: Do you think that all his business and philanthropic life prevented him from being with his family?

Ascoli: They took vacations and I ... I think ... it's difficult to say. I think he was very busy, and active, and didn't see his family as much as he would have liked. To him, family was of great importance. I mean, he would constantly talk about members of his family, and they were truly one of the greatest influences on his life. His mother, too, was of enormous importance to him.

Interviewers: How did the fact that he was famous affect his family?

Ascoli: He was famous in his lifetime, and shortly after his death. Today, almost nobody knows who

Rosenwald was. He was not a man who wanted things named after him. He *refused* to have the Museum of Science and Industry named after him.

The only building that bears his name in Chicago is in the University of Chicago. He was out of the country when they decided to name it after him, so he didn't have much say in the matter.

But, in general, he refused to have things named after him. If you said, "Rosenwald" today, I don't think anyone would have an idea of what you were talking about. Has his name affected the members of the family? I doubt it.

Interviewers: We read an article which accused J.R. of having paid low wages to his female workers, causing them to go into prostitution. Do you think anything like that could have happened?

Ascoli: Well, there was a commission that studied prostitution, and I read their transcripts. The two things that struck me were, first of all, that in other businesses, women were paid comparable wages. And J.R. was a *businessman*. He believed in paying the going rate and he paid women what everyone else paid.

The second point is that he was friends with people like Jane Addams, and that she would have hardly remained friends with a man that treated his female employees poorly.

Interviewers: We also read that he protected his female workers from sexual harassment by making separate lunch tables for them.

Ascoli: Yes. He had very strict rules in the cafeteria.

Once there was a young woman who insisted on sitting with a man. It turned out that it was her father and, so, [J.R.] made a special exception for them so they could sit together.

He also established a pension plan, which was novel in his day. Workers got Sears stock, so they had ownership in the company. The company would reward workers each five years with a bonus.

Interviewers: Could some of the criticism that he received be related to the fact that he was Jewish?

Ascoli: That is a very interesting and difficult question. He was acutely aware of the discrimination, and he would not enter clubs that would not allow Jews in them.

I suppose [what you ask] is possible. I don't think *he* would have said that. Other people who were friends of his might. Judaism was important to him, but he was not a very religious man. He was not a Zionist as you probably know. □

He was famous in his lifetime, and shortly after his death. Today, almost nobody knows who Rosenwald was. He did not want things named after him. He refused to have the Museum of Science and Industry named after him.

Assignment in History Class Grows into Bigger Project

When Luong Lam and Sam Tsyrlin, sophomores at Von Steuben High School, learned they would have to prepare a project for the Chicago Metro History Fair, they joined forces and looked for a subject that interested them. A friend of Tsyrlin's parents suggested they look into someone named Julius Rosenwald and they were on their way to

some real success.

"At first we were just trying to get good grades in class," Lam said. "We wound up being lucky enough to go to regionals, city, and state." The two won at state but did not go on to nationals for technical reasons.

Tsyrlin, a Russian immigrant, has since moved with his family to New York State. Lam, an immigrant from Vietnam whose family comes originally from China, will begin his junior year in the fall. □