

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



chicago jewish historical society society news

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MEETING WILL DISCUSS WHAT HAPPENED TO JEWISH WORK ETHIC



As we will remember her

In Memoriam Doris Minsky

1934-1988

Doris Minsky was a founding member, a many-term officer and, at her sudden death, Vice-President of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. She was co-chairperson of the 1976 exhibit, "My Brothers' Keeper," the event which stirred those who founded the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. One of our first organizational meetings was held in the Minsky home, merely one of many acts of hospitality on her part. Her contributions to the Society and to Chicago Jewry were many and varied.

Doris was warm and loving, with a pleasant smile always on her face. We will miss her.

--Norman D. Schwartz
President

Intergenerational Dialogue Will Be Part of Series on Work and Jews

The Sunday, March 27, CJHS meeting, to take place at Spertus College, will be the major event in the Society's participation in a series of public forums on Work and Jewish Chicago. That particular meeting will be devoted to the question, "What Ever Happened to the Jewish Work Ethic?" and will be in the form of an intergenerational dialogue.

On the program, which has been arranged by Professor Stanley Rosen of the University of Illinois, will be George Landman, fifty-five years a clothes presser and former garmentworkers' union official; Lee Walzer, law student at Northwestern University; Mollie West, typographers' union member and social activist; and Eliot Zasher, director of the Hillel Foundation at the University of Illinois in Chicago.

Follow Usual Program Format

The meeting will follow the Society's usual format with a social and refreshment hour beginning at 1:00 PM and the program starting at 2:00 PM, followed by discussion from the audience. It will be held in Bederman Hall on the second floor of the College at 618 South Michigan Avenue.

The program will constitute the third in a series of eight forums and a culminating conference on the general topic of Work and Jewish Chicago. The entire series of sessions, held at various locations over a five-month period is co-sponsored by the CJHS, the Jewish Labor Committee and the Chicago Labor Education Program of the University of Illinois. The Society's

[Continued on next page]

Tour Director Axelrod Twice Honored

Leah Joy Axelrod, the Society's indefatigable tour chairman and charter member of the board, has recently been honored twice for her work in historical preservation and distinction in a variety of other activities. She has been elected to the presidency of the Highland Park Historical Society and has been chosen for inclusion in Who's Who Among American Women.

As head of the Highland Park group, Mrs. Axelrod supervises a variety of activities involving public meetings, educational programs in the schools and the maintenance of a historical museum and old log cabin. Her inclusion in Who's Who represents recognition for her efforts in several public interest groups as well as commercial achievement in the field of local tour operation. For all but the first year of the Society's existence, she has directed our summer tours, always contributing her service. --I.J.S.

March 27 Meeting (Cont'd)

[Continued from previous page]

coordinator for the project is long-time CJHS leader Sidney Sorkin.

Remaining Programs in Series

In addition to two forums held earlier at Anshe Emet Synagogue and at the Chicago Historical Society, the forums listed below will follow the Society's March 27 meeting. All meetings are free and open to the public. For further information call 996-2623.

- Sun. April 10, 2 PM, Cong. Ezra Habonim
The Radical Tradition of Jewish Protest
- Wed. April 13, 8 PM, Meyer Kaplan JCC
Women, Work and the Jewish Family
- Wed. April 20, 3-6 PM, Kent College of Law
Jewish Religious and Ethical Values in Industrial Relations
- Sun. May 1, 7:30 PM, Temple Menorah
Organized Labor, Socialist Zionism and the Jewish Community
- Wed. May 25, 6 PM, Columbia College
Catholic, Jewish, Protestant: A Comparative Analysis of Approaches to Issues of Work
- Sun. June 12, 1-5 PM, Horwich/Kaplan JCC
City-wide Culminating Conference

President's Message

Learning from the Wall Street Journal

Headlines on two recent Wall Street Journal articles reinforce the reasoning behind the existence of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. I want to share the essence of these articles with you.



President
Schwartz

The first one is entitled "In Wake of Cost Cuts, Many Firms Sweep Their History out the Door." Perhaps it is expecting too much for corporations to have a sense of history. However, this same practice has been evident in our synagogues, Jewish communal organizations and Jewish homes. Many an item of importance has been lost to researchers and scholars of our Jewish history, who are frustrated by the dearth of records available to them.

The second article is entitled "Textbook Reform Impoverishes American History." A quote from the article reads, "Great acts of charity and wisdom, triumphs of technology and political genius, heroes and villains--they are all disappearing from textbooks and are being replaced by bland narrative and sociology lessons wrapped up in fancy, pictorial glitz." If the textbooks remove so much, we must at least preserve the source material so that the actual history will not be lost.

Please be with us in saving local Jewish history. In your own realm, you can help by speaking out about the need to retain items of historical value. You can help by joining the Chicago Jewish Historical Society and bringing in your friends.

--Norman D. Schwartz

Israeli Community Adopted by City Will Study Chicago Jewish History

The last issue of Society News carried articles on an early failed sister city project and a more recent successful project to twin Chicago with deprived Israeli communities in need of renewal assistance. Now we have learned that Ramat Eshkol, one of Chicago's two Project Renewal beneficiaries, will be teaching Chicago Jewish history to its youngsters in order that they might learn about Jewry outside Israel and also the history of the particular Jews who are assisting their community.

At the request of Ardie Goldman, the Chicago representative for Israel's Project Renewal, the Chicago Jewish Historical Society assembled materials to be used as a teaching tool. Participating in the project were Rachel Heimovics, who provided slides and a script; Dr. Irving Cutler, who provided written material including his book, Chicago, Metropolis of the Mid-Continent; and Norman Schwartz, who assembled the package.

Establish Doris Minsky Memorial Fund

The family of the late CJHS Vice-President Doris Minsky, remembering in the midst of their grief her deep interest in Chicago Jewish history, has asked that contributions in her memory be made to the Society. At the time of this writing, a few days after her sudden death, generous contributions have already begun to come in. They may be addressed to the Society at 618 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago 60605.

The Society Welcomes New Members

In addition to the annual inpouring of membership renewals, new members have been joining the Society in substantial numbers.

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society welcomes the following new members who have joined during the past few months. Their membership indicates their interest in preserving the history of Jewish Chicago and their desire to become a part of that effort.

Esther Bernstein	Loryn B. Kogan
Rosalie & Marvin Fruchter	Labor Zionist Alliance
Richard A. Grifenhagen	Rabbi Norman Lewison
Carolyn B. Haas	Peggy Lin

BE CERTAIN TO RENEW MEMBERSHIP AND INSURE CONTINUATION OF BENEFITS

Only Current Members Will Be Sent Society's Anniversary Publication

Readers are reminded that the Society's mailing and membership lists are weeded out in the Spring when the names of those who have neglected to renew membership must be removed to control printing and postage costs. Membership Chairman Marian Cutler advises such persons to send in their 1988 dues within the next few weeks to be certain of receiving copies of Society News and future meeting notices.

"Only members in good standing will be sent the Society's latest publication, an illustrated history of the Society's first ten years," said Mrs. Cutler, "and from what I hear, it will be a worthwhile keepsake as well as an excellent record."

Membership benefits include, in addition to those referred to above, discounts on the Society's summer bus tours and purchases at the Spertus Museum store, admission to the closed annual brunch meeting and free or reduced admission to other events of Jewish historical interest.

Regular annual dues begin at \$15.00 per year. Senior citizens and students pay only \$10.00--less than three cents per day. The full schedule is on the last page of this issue. Renewing members need merely send a check addressed to the Society, being sure to give their full name and current address.

President Norman Schwartz advises that it is dues income that makes possible exhibits, the making of oral history tapes, the collection of archive material and other activities which help to preserve local Jewish history. "The reason we can do all this with a very low dues structure is that our membership continues to increase--our present members are loyal and they also bring us new members. We must keep it that way."

Hebrew Theological College	Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Meister
Lillian G. Izenstark	Beverly & Melvin Pinsel
Henrietta Klawans	Richard Ramis
Ethel & Philip Klutznick	Ruth Rosen
Charitable Trusts	Lawrence Sherman
	Stuart Starr
	--Marian Cutler

LURID McDONALD CASE MINGLES SEX AND RELIGION WITH MURDER

Jewish Wife Kills Young Lover; Gentile Spouse Protects, Rewards Her

by Walter Roth

During the early years of the twentieth century a number of arrests and trials involving Chicago Jews preoccupied Chicago newspapers and its populace. In 1901 Emma Goldman and a number of Jewish anarchists were arrested for supposed complicity in the assassination of President Cleveland. In 1907 Ben Reitman, a physician known as "King of the Hobos," was arrested and tried after leading a march of his cohorts in defiance of police orders. Then in January, 1908, occurred one of the strangest trials in the annals of Chicago history; this too involved a Jewish woman.

The trial of Dora Feldman McDonald (widow of Michael Cassius McDonald, a leading Chicago politician and gambler), charged with the murder of her lover, Webster S. Guerin, began on January 20, 1908, in a Chicago criminal court, nearly a year after the murder took place. Col. J. Hamilton Lewis, then a recently elected U.S. Senator from Illinois and one of the most flamboyant criminal lawyers in Chicago at the time, was senior counsel for her defense. The presiding judge was Theodore Brentano.

Sensational Trial Captivates Chicagoans

The trial was a sensation. For three weeks it captivated thousands of Chicagoans who crowded into Judge Brentano's courtroom to hear the sensational revelations of Dora's love affair with Webster and the many lurid details of their intimate relationship. Newspapers supplied their eager readers with banner headlines and accompanying first-page stories. Dora was nearly forty years of age at the time of the trial. Webster had been fifteen years her junior. Dora was Jewish, Webster was Roman Catholic. The third man in the affair, her husband Mike Cassius, had himself died at age sixty-six in the interval between Dora's arrest and her trial. He had had the last rites of a Catholic although apparently embracing Judaism during the years that he had been married to Dora.

Dora Feldman had come to Chicago from Kansas City, where she had married a Sam Barclay, a baseball player for the old St. Louis Browns. In Chicago she became a

Jews in Chicago's past were not all admirable characters and certainly the subject of this article was not someone to be proud of. But as we learn about Chicago Jewish history we take the bitter with the better. Walter Roth, CJHS board member and a practicing attorney-at-law, has unearthed yet another vivid tale of Jews and the law as they mingled in Chicago during the early nineteen hundreds.

chorus line dancer (some say at the Chicago Opera House) and Sam, whose baseball career was over, opened a barber shop. Dora and Sam had one child, Harold. She was described at the time as the "prettiest girl in town," with auburn hair, slim lines and a beautiful face and figure.

New Husband Had Been Unlucky in Love

Mike Cassius first met Dora in 1898 while she was dancing in one of her routines. At the time, Mike was a powerful gambler, politician and businessman who had amassed both a fortune and political power over many years. Some historians trace the beginnings of the Democratic political machine in Chicago to the "reign" of Mike Cassius. But in 1898 Mike was not happy. His first wife, Mary Noonan McDonald, known as "Tootsie" and a character in her own right, had caused him great grief. For many years she and Mike had owned the "Store" at Clark and Monroe Streets. The Store was a four-story gambling and lodging den that the rich and famous and others visited in order to place bets and to otherwise have fun. Tootsie had run away to San Francisco with "Billy" Arlington, a minstrel. Mike followed her and brought her back to Chicago, where he built her a huge new mansion on Ashland Avenue.

The mansion had its own altar for Mary's personal use, since she was now said to have repented of her recent sins. Mary arranged for her own priest, Father Joseph Moisant of Notre Dame Church, to join her in her daily prayers at the altar. However, she soon ran away again--this time to Europe and with the Reverend Moisant. It was said that Mike traced Mary to Paris, but he did not take her back. Instead, Mike divorced her and supposedly smashed Mary's altar to pieces because the Catholic religion had betrayed him. (Mary's Rever-

end left her six years later to enter a monastery in Belgium, and she returned to Chicago where she ran a boarding house.)

His Supposed Conversion

Mike soon proposed matrimony to Dora, even though she was married and twenty-five years younger than he. To make it possible, he reportedly offered her husband Sam a \$35,000 divorce settlement, which was apparently quickly accepted. Mike now began to build a new mansion for Dora at 4601 South Drexel Boulevard, then a high-class Jewish neighborhood. To complete his transformation, Mike renounced Catholicism and apparently became a Jew. The details of his conversion are not forthcoming. Chicago historians uniformly accept the story of his conversion without giving any details. Whether the conversion was at Dora's behest or whether it was really "kosher" is not known. The lovers must have encountered some problems in securing a rabbi in Chicago to perform such a mixed marriage, for they went to Milwaukee where they were supposed to have been married in Jewish rites.

Dora and the Youth

Dora and Mike settled into their Drexel mansion. Mike, now almost sixty, was easing himself out of gambling and politics. Unknown to him, Dora, now in her mid-thirties, was having a secret affair with Webster, a young man in his late teens, who was a friend of one of Mike's sons by Mary. In mid-February, 1907, Dora asked Mike for large sums of money. This aroused his suspicions but apparently he still did not know of the affair with Webster.

On the morning of February 21, 1907, Dora told Mike, "I will settle in full today," and left the house. At 10:30 AM she went to Webster's office in the Omaha Building at 132 West Van Buren Street and shot him twice, killing him. What Dora had not told Mike (among other things) was that she had just learned that her young lover was about to marry a Miss Avis Dargon whom Webster had been seeing for some time behind Dora's back.

Husband Stands by Her but Dies

Dora collapsed after the shooting and was taken to the Harrison Street police station, calling for "Papa, Papa," her pet name for Mike. Mike came to her and apparently agreed to "defend" her. He retained



Dora Feldman
McDonald: Who
Done Who Wrong?

From Page 1, the Chicago
Tribune, February 8, 1908

J. Hamilton Lewis as her lawyer and took "other steps" in her defense. At Dora's trial many of those steps were questioned by the state as illegal attempts to subvert the judicial process. In any event, a coroner's jury did not accuse Dora of any crime, and she was released to a sanitorium at 5642 West Washington Boulevard.

Some months later, a grand jury, however, indicted Dora for murder. Mike's health suddenly declined. "He became broken in body and mind from distress over the murder charge against his wife," the Tribune wrote. He was taken to Saint Anthony de Padua Hospital at the end of May. Dora apparently saw him in the hospital a day before he died on Friday, August 9, with Mary and her two sons at his bedside. Dora was not permitted to be there, on doctors' orders, but had visited him the day before anyway.

Dora Well-Provided For

While in the hospital, Mike drew up a will in which he left one-third of his \$2,500,000 estate to Dora with the rest left in trust for his sons. He also pro-

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LURID McDONALD CASE

[Continued from previous page]

vided a defense fund of \$40,000 to defray Dora's legal expenses. Mary, crying at his bedside, was left nothing.

Mike was administered last rites by a priest on his deathbed and was interred in a Catholic cemetery. He was taken by a special funeral train (common at that time) to Mount Olivet Cemetery on August 12, 1907. Dora was not present. The evidence is fairly clear that Mike Cassius McDonald, Chicago gambler, gangster and politician, did not die as a Jew, whether self-proclaimed or not. Another religion has that dubious honor.

Religion an Issue in Trial

But Dora was born a Jew and had remained one. As her trial opened with the questioning of prospective jurors, her religion became an issue. The Tribune reported that "both sides have an understanding that no Jews will sit on the jury. It is repeatedly brought out in the examinations that Mrs. McDonald is a Jewess. Five Jews were among those excused from the jury box during the day."

"We don't want a Jew on the jury because it would place him in an embarrassing position," said Mr. Lewis. The attorneys for the state seem to have agreed for their own reasons: no juror of the Jewish faith sat on the jury. The defense also made a great effort to keep men of religious inclinations off the jury--such as ones who went to church. In one exchange with a venireman, Mr. Lewis inquired, "Do you believe in the old Mosaic law--an eye for an eye, a life for a life?" Defense attorney Day objected, "We are not trying this case under Mosaic law." While the prospective juror squirmed, Judge Brentano came to his defense with, "I think we had better stop discussing the Mosaic law."

J. Hamilton Lewis Star of Trial

Lewis was clearly the star of the trial, much to the delight of the crowd. While Dora sat morosely, her face hidden by a veil as if in mourning, Lewis paraded before the jury in a high-styled blue suit, his famous pink whiskers quivering on his face as he engaged in verbal pyrotechnics that the journalists eagerly reported.

With the completion of the jury, the trial began on January 27. The state's wit-

nesses pictured Dora as a selfish, immoral woman who had led a young lad into ruin and killed him in a jealous rage. It placed on the stand Archie Guerin, Webster's brother. He testified that his brother had met Dora when he was just sixteen and on his way to school. The relationship persisted over the years. Dora, Archie said, saw Webster on numerous occasions, once following him to California. Archie's wife, Avis (the same Avis that had so raised Dora's ire) took the stand to deny that she had had an affair with Webster, that it was all a fiction of Dora's imagination. An aunt of Webster then testified that Webster's mother had gone to Dora years ago, had fallen to her knees and begged, "Please let my boy alone." "Oh, won't you let me have him? I'll kill you! Look out!" Dora replied, according to the aunt.

State Claims Justice Subverted

Other prosecution witnesses asserted that Dora, at various times in a hotel room, in a restaurant and at home had threatened to kill Webster during fits of jealousy, and at another time had deliberately wrecked Webster's engagement to Dora's niece. The state offered testimony that she had bought the death weapon and presented witnesses who had seen her with pistol in hand at the time of the shooting.

The prosecution also accused defense attorneys of bribing witnesses, of causing detectives for the state to leak information to the defense and presented evidence that Mike, while still alive, had caused the then acting Police Commissioner and detectives working under him to suppress incriminating evidence, such as Dora's confession and on-the-scene statements. State's Attorney William E. Rittenhouse even called Lewis a "shyster" in open court.

At the close of the state's case, a policeman testified as to Dora's confession, given at the Harrison Street station one hour after the shooting, and said that she had stated that she expected to hang for it. Dora collapsed in court at the end of this testimony and had to be carried out of the courtroom amid great commotion.

Defense Claims Blackmail

Mr. Lewis then opened the case for Dora's defense. Many in the crowd had expected a plea of insanity, but instead

Lewis pleaded self-defense, that the shooting was "not by her hand but by the hand of the deceased while she was struggling to turn from her body the deadly hand which was leveled there." The Dora that Lewis depicted was a victim of blackmail who had paid thousands of dollars to Webster because of his extortion threats. "Hounded, broken, driven to desperation," was Dora on that day of the shooting.

The defense presented Dora's niece, Minni Sallinger-Hirsch, a recently married daughter of her brother, Harry Feldman. She testified that she had been Webster's fiancée but that "religious differences" and not Aunt Dora had caused the termination of their relationship. She also testified that letters written by Webster were designed to blackmail Dora. Minni's mother and Dora's sister-in-law, Mrs. Harry Feldman, then testified that Dora had bought the pistol used at the shooting as a present for her brother, Harry.

Perjury Accusations Made

While state's attorney Rittenhouse fumed and threatened perjury prosecutions, three tailors whose offices were close to Webster's testified that when they heard the shots and dashed to the scene, they saw Dora standing amidst broken door-glass and heard her say, "He shot himself. Please save him."

As the day arrived for the defense attorneys to present their closing arguments, 2,000 men and women fought and screamed to get into the courtroom. Women fainted and men lost their tempers and slugged policemen. A riot call went out, bringing two wagonloads of police. The Tribune wrote:

James Hamilton Lewis in that human drama, The Defense of Mrs. McDonald, was the attraction that drew one of the biggest crowds in the history of the Criminal court building to Judge Brentano's courtroom yesterday. With the art and grace of a consummate actor, Col. Lewis presented his part. Few left the courtroom unmoved at the vivid pictures he drew--one of the woman of sorrow--his client, and the other of the man without a heart--Webster Guerin.

Though self-defense was given as the basis of the argument upon which the jury will be asked to acquit Mrs. Dora McDonald of the charge of murdering

Guerin, nothing was omitted in the sketch of these two soiled and wandering human souls that did not leave insanity still open as a plea.

There never was a woman in all the literature of her sex who forgave as much and as often as did Dora McDonald, Mr. Lewis contended; and he admitted he could not explain it. The complex heart of woman is beyond his feeble comprehension. But there it was--the black story of the years that Guerin spent hounding and threatening the woman who had given him her affections--pure though her love was.

As to Webster's mother's plea to Dora, Lewis stated that the mother had come to Dora to stop the marriage of her son to Dora's niece because "she did not want the marriage of her son, a Catholic, with a Jew. She did not get down on her knees and plead for her boy's soul to Mrs. McDonald."

Dora's Religion Is Invoked

Dora's second lawyer, Patrick O'Donnell, added a religious tint to Dora's picture. Speaking on Saturday, he spoke thus:

The Sunday is coming on. Her ancestral people lit the candles at sundown last night. Somewhere in this city a light is burning where a Jewish mother is praying and hoping for her errant daughter. You are approaching the moment when you must do your great duty. You are here only to say whether she killed Guerin with a criminal intent in her heart.

A daughter of Israel coming to judgment. She may have been wayward, but we are not to judge her past life...."

The defense rested its case; Dora was never called to the stand. On Tuesday night, February 11, the Tribune reported: "Mrs. Dora McDonald, widow of Michael McDonald, the gambler, was acquitted last night of the murder of Webster S. Guerin. The jury returned a verdict in Judge Brentano's courtroom at 6:20 o'clock after five hours of balloting and arguing."

Aftermath of the Verdict

Dora, holding a bouquet of red roses, thanked the jurors and left the courtroom. A reporter asked her as to her plans.

"I want to go away where it is bright

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SOCIETY LEARNS ABOUT LITTLE-KNOWN JEWISH AGENCY AT JANUARY MEETING

Ex-Director Tells of Fifty Years of Fighting Employment Discrimination

The fifty-year history of an important but little known Chicago Jewish agency was the subject of the Society's January meeting at Spertus College of Judaica. Many in the audience who have considered themselves quite knowledgeable about Jewish affairs learned for the first time about the Bureau of Jewish Employment Problems.

Sidney H. Silverman, recently retired director of the Bureau, explained how widespread discrimination against hiring Jews in the job-short nineteen-thirties led B'nai Brith, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress and the Jewish Labor Committee to pool their efforts and their resources to study the causes and the methods of discriminatory hiring and promotion practices and to test methods and procedures to overcome them.

Now supported also by the Jewish Federation, the Bureau continues its efforts today, although many new emphases have been adopted as conditions have changed.

Mr. Silverman traced the disappearance of overt discrimination once typified by "Christians only" want ads and instructions to employment agencies and the changes brought about by enactment of fair employment laws. But he emphasized that wrong attitudes and stereotypes still persist and cannot be legislated away.

The Bureau's approach has always been to convince employers that it is good business to hire and promote based on ability rather than religion. Today it expends much of its efforts visiting big employers to sell this message and also to study employment records so as to inform corporate executives of discriminatory "pockets" within many large firms.

Because of its broad and varied base, the Bureau can and does speak for a unified and not unpowerful Jewish community. Mr. Silverman's presentation included a number of examples of discrimination, old and new style, as well as instances in which Bureau efforts have met with gratifying success.

Program Chairman Burt Robin introduced Mr. Silverman following the usual social hour. Refreshments at the social hour were supervised by Hospitality Chairman Shirley Sorkin.



January Speaker Sidney Silverman

LURID McDONALD CASE

[Continued from previous page] and sunny," she said.

"Why not Florida?" the reporter suggested.

"I never thought of that," she answered. "I'll do that."

On March 2, 1908, a young Russian Jewish immigrant, Lazarus Averbach went to the house of the Chicago Police Commissioner and was shot to death by the Commissioner as an alleged assassin. The police promptly went on a rampage against the new immigrants, there was other sensational "Jewish" news and Dora's trial quickly faded into history.

But years later the Daily News reported that Dora had gone to California and had married a man named Newcomb. She died in 1931 having apparently spent most of the money that Mike had left her in 1908. Dora had also been a poetess and Chicago newspapers had printed some of her verses. Aside from her trial, she may be remembered for one of the remarks made on one of her return trips to Chicago: "If anybody wants to know how I'm getting along, just tell them Dora is getting along fine."

As for unhappy-in-love Mike Cassius McDonald, no story about him would be complete without at least one more tale. Just before he enlarged the Store in 1873, a partner of his asked Mike if it would be too large, with too many betting machines. Mike supposedly answered, "Don't worry about that! There's a sucker born every minute." No wonder that Dora and Mike were meant for each other--at least for a while.

RECOLLECTIONS OF BEING YOUNG ON MILWAUKEE AND ASHLAND

The Jewish Northwest Side in 1918 As Viewed Through a Child's Eye

by Sydney A. Mandel

The world for this seven-year-old boy extended along Milwaukee Avenue from Ashland to Robey (now Damen). It was a big, fascinating world. Some of you, we hope, will recall the sights, the sounds, the smells, probably even some of the people from this really average yet exciting splinter of the Northwest Side of Chicago during the First World War. Many items herein described may seem trivial, but it is the trivia so indelibly engraved in our memory, the retelling of which recaptures the flavor of Chicago seventy years ago.

The Milwaukee-Downtown trolley cars loudly thundered by all day and all night. They also groaned as they returned from downtown, this time marked Milwaukee-Gale. We often pondered what we would find if we ever rode the car to Gale at the very end of the line.

Traffic Jams--Old Style

Since Milwaukee Avenue ran diagonally across the city, wherever it crossed another trolley line at a side street, it created a busy three-way intersection of six corners, which made for much activity, noise and traffic scrambles. (Traffic lights hadn't been born.) Streetcars dangled, automobiles honked, both to the accompaniment of the screeching iron-bound wheels of the large cartage wagons as they slipped in and out of the car tracks. The teams of horses pulling these wagons were driven by a teamster perched on a high seat who yanked on a cluster of long reins. We admired these hairy men who bravely sat out in the open in snow, in wind and rain, with a heavy blanket wrapped around their legs. And these same blankets were used to throw over the horses when the men climbed down to the ground. So the rumbling and bumping over the cobble-stoned street contributed to a constant din.

We will begin our itinerary at the busy intersection where Milwaukee Avenue cuts through Division Street and Ashland Avenue, creating a triangular island on which stood the triangular building of Klee Brothers, men's and boys' store.

The writer of these recollections, though born seventy-six years ago on the city's West Side, spent several formative years on the Northwest Side until his father's untimely death in 1920 resulted in eight years at the Marks Nathan Orphan Home. Like many other Marks Nathan alumni, he met his future wife there and went on to become a college graduate and a successful businessman. He and the former Bertha Vishnik, his wife of fifty-five years, are now living in Laguna Hills, California.

What makes these memoirs particularly interesting, apart from their evocation of the past, is that they were filtered through the eyes of a seven-year-old and that they record life not in an all-Jewish "ghetto" but rather in a neighborhood in which Jews were newcomers, a neighborhood which was and would remain a mixed neighborhood containing generous contingents of Christians of different central and eastern European backgrounds.

Let us begin, then, a boy's journey down the Milwaukee Avenue of seventy years ago and view the melting pot at work.

Across this intersection could be seen the Crown Theater on Division Street and a YMCA just beyond. The most prominent corner was occupied by The Continental, a family clothing store. Farther down the street were Wieboldt's Department Store and the Benson & Rixon store.

The show windows of these stores displayed their clothing on mannikins--window dummies, male and female, which stood stiffly in awkward postures. They were waxy, over-painted and glassy-eyed, had bad wigs and were a little scary. But we studied them closely, searching, hoping and imagining that they might make a move, wink an eye or look elsewhere--but they never did. They kept staring straight over our heads. They also had half-dummies without heads or arms, but they simply looked absent.

The Thompson Restaurant Routine

Across the street on another corner stood a Thompson's Restaurant. This long, narrow place was all white mosaic tiles, but no tables were anywhere in sight. One picked up his food in a tray from a counter in the center of the room and carried it to a row of armchairs. They were large, square wooden chairs but with only one arm, a wide one on which to place the tray,

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BEING YOUNG ON MILWAUKEE AVENUE IN 1918

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from which one ate. The man who handed you your food punched a hole in a ticket, and as you left the restaurant another man took the punched ticket and your money. This restaurant had a stand or high table upon which was the largest sugar bowl in the world and from which everyone dug sugar for his large mug of coffee.

Along the same side of the street were many smaller stores, mostly women's "cloaks and suits," which also sold dresses, all lined up one next to another. Then one noticed a large, square four-sided clock on a high pole near the curb in front of a jewelry store. That was Paul Lackritz, Jeweler. The big clock belonged to him and reminded people that they could purchase clocks inside.

The Local Skyscraper

About half a block farther on, a small street, Mautene Court, intruded itself into Milwaukee Avenue. There on the corner was a tall building, perhaps six stories, called the Palatine Building. It boasted an elevator, just like downtown, and housed numerous small offices, stores and shops. I knew this building well for I used to deliver for Papa brown job envelopes containing jewelry needing repairs to a shop called Cherry & Oster, jewelry repairers. Papa owned a small jewelry store a few blocks down from Lackritz's. Mr. Cherry wore a large black moustache and he limped. Mr. Oster was blond and bald and wore rimless thick glasses that magnified his eyes enormously. Even though he smiled a lot and patted my head, those staring eyes made me feel uncomfortable.

Paulina Street dead-ended into Milwaukee at about this point and revealed a small movie theater, the Paulina Theater. Between Paulina and Wood Streets there was a store known as Delson's, in which sweaters were knitted by machine and sold. And there was Bankes' Coffee & Tea Store. One could detect the odor of coffee even before reaching the store, for there were coffee beans in large burlap bags with the sides rolled down like collars standing around the store amid the whirring of a big red coffee grinder. The aroma was strong and good. But we could never remember smelling any of the teas. Mersbach's Bakery was next door. This was a special place be-

cause we could always count on receiving a complimentary peanut cookie. And it smelled better than any other store, even the candy store.

Fish out Front

Opposite the bakery, on the other side of the street, were two department stores, Iverson's and Feder's. Proceeding toward Lincoln Street (now Wolcott) we came to a delicatessen with wooden boxes of dried fish on the sidewalk near the doorway. The show windows usually displayed small wooden kegs of strange-looking fish. No other store gave off the smoky, pungent, fishy smells which startled you until you became accustomed to them. After a while they really weren't all that bad.

In the area between Wood Street and Girard Street (now Honore) I was close to home base because it was here that Papa's store was located. The building at the corner of Wood and Milwaukee housed Rissman's Pharmacy and, upstairs, doctors' offices. Among these could be found the offices of Dr. Buddan and Dr. McCabe, each of whom treated our family. Dr. McCabe was the one who wore the moustache and goatee and prescribed cod liver oil for us, a teaspoonful before each meal. We never forgave him.

The Kosher Butcher Shop

About half a block to the north on Wood Street was Goldman's Kosher Butcher Shop. The sign on the window consisted of two words, both printed in Hebrew characters. The two words read "kashoer basoer" which simply translates to "Kosher Meat." We did not know it at the time, but that is what it said. Mr. Goldman, who wore a black moustache and goatee with prominent gold teeth between them always wore a hat or a yarmulka. His wife worked right along with him behind the counter and chopping block as cashier and package wrapper. She was a pleasant woman with a very red face and a sharp red nose, which always appeared to be peeling. We recall them both as being frenetically busy and brusque. Perhaps it was because a kosher butcher did ninety percent of his business on Fridays and had no time for social amenities.

Just down the street was the music



A Sunday morning view of Milwaukee and Ashland Avenues about 1913. The Continental Clothing Store referred to in the text is the two-story building in the center. The tents are those of sewer workmen who could not work in the weekday traffic.

--Photo, Chicago Historical Society; by Kaufman, Waimer & Fabry

store of F. O. Pietsch. There you purchased sheet music, piano rolls, gramophone records, musical instruments, violin strings and guitar picks. Mr. Pietsch displayed the latest sheet music releases in his windows. We vividly recall seeing two popular war songs of the day, "Goodbye Broadway, Hello France" and "How You Gonna Keep Them Down on the Farm After They've Seen Paree." The Goodbye Broadway piece carried an illustration on its cover of General Pershing shaking hands across the Statue of Liberty with someone on the other side, probably General Foch. We were extremely patriotic and so naturally greatly stirred by this.

Disneyland--1918 Style

Otto Zuehlke's Custom Tailor Shop was a few doors away. Mr. Zuehlke was a tall man with a huge stomach and a large, reddish handle-bar moustache. His thin sandy hair was parted in the middle and plastered down. He smoked a curved pipe with a silver cover over the bowl. His shop was a wonderland of mirrors. The right-hand wall

held a floor-to-ceiling mirror and on the opposite wall was a facing floor-to-ceiling mirror. Between the two mirrors could be seen a reflection repeated hundreds of times in either direction until it disappeared into infinity. We raised our hands and over a hundred boys did the same. We waved our hats and hundreds of boys waved back at us. Such was our personal 1918 version of Disneyland.

And next door Max Lawton held forth as Max the Hatter. In those days, whether you wore custom-tailored clothing or the ready-made kind, every man wore a hat. Going without a hat was tantamount to going without shoes. And this was true of both Jew and Gentile. In winter men wore fedoras or derbies; in summer, straw sailors (the hard ones) or panamas, and the popular shape was the Optimo.

Spitting Nails

Max's neighbor Sam Brickman, Shoemaker repaired shoes and operated a shoeshine parlor. Since he had a double store, he

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The Jewish Northwest Side (Cont'd)

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was also engaged in the hat cleaning and blocking business. It is our guess that Sam sublet the shoe shining and hat cleaning to several Greek fellows because there were always Georges and Petes around. Both operations were carried on in the two show windows in full view of the passers-by. We children had plenty of time to stand outside and study Sam as he hammered on soles and heels, all the while spitting nails. It was fascinating to observe how he smiled, talked and laughed, continually spitting nails and never once swallowing one.

Sam was our next-door neighbor, for between his store and the Star Theater was wedged a small jewelry store and watchmaker. It was R. Mandel, Reliable Jeweler. That was our Papa. The name in large, wooden, gold-plated letters on a black background hung outdoors across the width of the store, which wasn't very wide! The exact address was 1453 Milwaukee Avenue and the telephone number was Armitage 4555. The telephone worked only when you put a nickel in a slot.

Doing Business by Catalogue

Actually, Papa spent more than half his time away from the store--downtown, buying, placing repair and engraving orders and the like. A small merchant could not afford a large enough inventory, so he sold jewelry out of several large, impressive hard-cover catalogues which were kept on the glass tops of his showcases. They were from Norris, Allister, Ball Co. and from Benjamin Allen Co. Papa would sell an item from the catalogue, then quickly and personally go downtown to the wholesaler and pick up the merchandise, which he took on "memo" or consignment. That's how they did it in 1918. That's how many still do it.

Naturally, with Papa away it meant that Mama stayed in the store to handle the business, if any, and we children went to school and came to the store after school. When both Papa and Mama were in the store, as on Saturdays, we usually spent our time traipsing and exploring all along Milwaukee Avenue, which, by the way, had very high curbs. This was at the very beginning of the automobile age and horse-drawn wagons, buggies and carriages were still widely in use. Their large wheels

made for higher vehicles which required high curbs. These were a little difficult for a small fellow to negotiate, but since we had strict prohibitions against crossing Milwaukee Avenue by ourselves it made very little difference to us.

The War and Milwaukee Avenue

Above our store, and reached by a steep flight of stairs, one could climb up to the Berlin Weavers. These weavers were Mr. and Mrs. Sam Hollander. Each of them sat in a separate second-floor window, in facing chairs, in the direct daylight, and both engaged in their joint occupation of reweaving burn-holes, rips, tears and other damages to the fabrics in fine garments. They were undoubtedly the pioneers in this business. Originally from Berlin, Germany, they now quietly and industriously plied their unique trade on Milwaukee Avenue.

At the height of the war hysteria, however, they were obliged to change their business name to Lin Weavers. This was expediently accomplished by painting out the "Ber" from their sign with white paint. These loving, gentle, soft-spoken Hollanders (actually Berliners) were compelled to act as if they had never come from Germany. Their two daughters were as American as apple pie. Incidentally, did you ever hear of Liberty cabbage? That was the absurd name they hung onto plain old sauerkraut during those war times.

The Neighborhood Theater

The Star Theater was many different kinds of theater. It featured vaudeville acts, it had burlesque, it showed movies--not all at the same time, naturally. But it provided an early education in all media. We spent many pleasant hours in this theater. While we were there, Mama knew precisely where we were--safe and involved and, consequently, off the street. The six cents admission charge was considerably less costly than a "baby-sitter" or whatever the equivalent for such caretaker was called in those days.

Continuing northwest, beside the Star Theater in a large gray building was Weinberg Window Shade Co., and next to them was I&J Gents Furnishings. It was owned by two partners, Itskovitz and Janovitz. The identical endings made these names unforgettable and explained the business use of I&J.

Across the street were Neiderman's Furniture, Pritikin's Grocery, Parvin's Dry Goods, Lakin's Dry Goods, Klein's Sugar Cone Factory and Stern's Restaurant. The man at Klein's knew who we were, so he would give us pieces of broken sugar cones at no charge.

Eating Meals Out

Stern's Restaurant was practically second home for all of us since we ate about as many meals there as we did at home. Mr. Stern, it seems, had more time to prepare lunches and dinners than Mama, who spent most of her waking hours in the store. This was undoubtedly one of the reasons Mama never really ever became what might be called "a good cook." Stern's menu included lots of soups--kreplach, mondlin, matzo-ball, noodle and farfel--all in clear chicken broth, and two kinds of borscht. Dishes like Wienerschnitzel, stuffed cabbage, chicken (any style) and flanken could be had. Sandwiches were also available from the delicatessen counter, but everything was served by waiters in black coats with long white aprons tied around their middles. They were always waiter, never waitresses.

Most of the nearby merchants patronized Stern's so that it became more like a club or meeting place. Papa took me along when he went to lunch, and as we left to pay our bill, he would hand me the usual toothpick and then select two Ben Bey cigars from the box. He would light one up but not before removing the band, which he handed me to slip over my finger. Cigar smoke smelled good. Ben Bey was a bearded Arab who rode a prancing white steed as he waved a rifle over his head. That is how he was pictured on the inside cover of the cigar box.

The Mysterious Drug Store

The corner store on Evergreen and Milwaukee was a saloon. We were not allowed in there, but next to it was Iver L. Quales, drug store. We lived very close to Quales and went there frequently. Mrs. Quales, who wore a skirt and a white "waist," helped her husband in the store. She would take down a large, square glass candy jar, remove a heavy glass lid and then invite us to put our hands into the jar and help ourselves to one fruit tablet. They were powdery white, so we could not tell the color or the flavor un-

til we licked off the powdered sugar. Trying to guess was a game we played. The fruit tablet jar was returned to the shelf next to the jars with the rock candy and the horehound drops.

Drug stores didn't display merchandise then, but there were usually apothecary jars and mortars and pestles. Quales probably had some of these, but what we recall are the large round and egg-shaped glass balls containing colored liquids, which we presumed was medicine. These colored globes were illuminated from behind and were very pretty and "drugstorish."

We can recall only two stores between Evergreen Avenue and Lincoln Street. On the corner of Lincoln was an ice cream parlor with the world's tallest glass bottles containing beautiful hard candies, the kind they told at Christmastime. The two bottles each had glass domes on top, and we tried to figure out how they put the candies into the bottles, for there were no visible openings. Next door was the James Davis Paint & Wallpaper Co., well known because they had previously had a great fire which practically burnt them out. But they had since rebuilt.

The Mechanical Man

The area from Girard Street to Robey Street had quite a variety of stores. We recall Desser's Moving Co. and Sakanovsky Tail Trimmings and Cutlery. In the corner of Sakanovsky's window stood a mechanical man sharpening a scissors on a grindstone to which both he and the scissors were attached. The grinding wheel turned continually, the man's legs kept pumping and he kept bowing back and forth, back and forth. This store was close to the Bell Theater, a movie house exclusively, which we attended only occasionally. This is where we saw "Intolerance," but all we can remember is that it contained what in later years became known as "a cast of thousands."

Across the street was an orthopedic supply store, and the name on their sign read "Diadul." In the window they featured a lady mannikin wearing elastic armbands, elbow bands, back-braces, corset, thigh supporters, knee-bands, ankle supports, arch supports plus other supporters. We pondered this sad state of affairs and resolved thereafter to look both ways before crossing streets to avoid the fate of that poor woman in the window.

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The Jewish Northwest Side (Cont'd)

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Gypsies Occupy Vacant Stores

Were there ever vacant stores along the avenue? Yes, there were. Businesses moved in and out all the time. But occasionally these vacant stores would be rented by gypsies. Curtains were usually hung across the windows of these stores, and gypsy women would stand in the doorways offering to tell fortunes. These women, girls and even tiny children all dressed alike, wearing colored silk kerchiefs on their heads, long, garishly-colored skirts and blouses, lots of beads, necklaces and earrings. They were swarthy, dark-eyed and certainly very different from what was usually seen on Milwaukee Avenue. We had been cautioned never to go near them. A gypsy man was never seen. Yet they were fascinating and terrifying at the same time. Gypsies would suddenly appear and just as suddenly disappear. This was our first exposure to strange people.

Just past Diadul's, at the three-way intersection at the corner of Milwaukee, Robey and North Avenue, was the Northwestern Pharmacy, a large drug store. Looking across the maze of cartracks, we could see the Banner Theater on Robey, 100 feet north of North Avenue. And in the opposite direction on Robey, south of North Avenue, was the Robey Street elevated terminal. Around the corner on North Avenue was Wenzel's Hardware Store, and down the block at about Hoyne Avenue was Frank Bodach Upholstery.

The Role of the Turner Verein

Directly across the street stood a large building that housed, among other things, a meeting hall and a German Turnverein, a full-fledged gymnasium. The building may have carried some name, but to us this was where John Barnickel operated the Turnverein. We attended regular classes after school with about fifty to sixty other boys aged six through fifteen. We all wore "Turner" uniforms (purchased at Wieboldt's) which consisted of gray flannel short trousers with a matching pleated tunic laced down the front with red silk laces. A wide canvas blue-and-white striped belt completed the outfit, which was proudly worn with long black stockings and black

gymshoes.

In class we marched and did calisthenics. Then, split off into small groups under the leadership of a larger boy, we were assigned to use the various apparatus-like Ropes and Weights, Parallel Bars, Horizontal Bar, High Jump, Rings and Ladders or Bucks and Horses. Each session the assignments were alternated so that in time we were familiarized with all the equipment. We always finished off playing group games such as throwing a volleyball into a circle of boys who surrounded another group within the circle. Object of the game: hit the boys within the circle, for as one was hit he was disqualified and had to leave the circle. The quicker the circle was cleared, the quicker the positions were reversed. This was great fun and we eagerly awaited each session. We recall that this entire building, including the large gymnasium located in the basement, smelled strongly of stale beer. After a time we got used to it. We supposed that if it didn't smell of stale beer, it probably wouldn't have been a Turnverein.

Neighborhood Institutions Important

About one block farther west on North Avenue near Leavitt Street stood the Association House, affectionately known as "The Sose," a community center with athletic facilities. Our first "lie-berry" card came from there. We lived around the corner and behind "The Sose" in a flat at 2151 Alice Place (now Concord). The elevated tracks ran in the alley between us and "The Sose."

We attended the Sabin School at Leavitt and LeMoyné Streets. On our way to school we would pass the Eleanor Club on the corner of Pierce Avenue. This was a working women's club which engaged in community activities. Sometimes we went there to join in their community singing. We were led in patriotic songs like "Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag," "Over There," "K-k-k-katy" and "Keep the Home Fires Burning." These were some of the musical sounds of the times.

Familiar Sounds Were Comforting

And there were other sounds of the times, not necessarily musical ones. They were familiar neighborhood sounds.

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Hospital Memorializes Young Refugee Physician Slain by Patient in 1956

The story of Dr. Bruno Eric Epstein, a young intern at Cook County Hospital who was killed in 1956 by a distraught patient was related in the December, 1984 issue of Society News. To commemorate the tragic death of this promising physician who with his parents had fled the Nazis in Austria and then become a dedicated student of medicine, the hospital for many years after gave an annual award to outstanding residents and interns.

Terence Norwood, Cook County Hospital archivist and author of the article on Dr. Epstein, has recently reported that in place of that discontinued award, the hospital has formally dedicated in Bruno Eric Epstein's memory a room to be used as a medical library in the hospital's Karl Meyer Hall.

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The knife-sharpener created a melodious tune as he pushed his grinding wheel through the alley-ways. A four-note bell was somehow attached to the wheels so that as he rolled along it gave out a distinctly rhythmic chime. Then there was the cry of the junkman. It came through as "rags-o-lion," which we later learned was a time-worn perversion of "rags, old iron."

The sound of organ grinder music signalled that the monkey man had come. This called for a request to Mama for a penny so that we could personally hand it to the monkey, who would snatch it, pocket it and then tip his hat. If we were unable to run down to the monkey, Mama would allow us to throw the coin from the window tightly wrapped in a piece of newspaper. After extracting the penny, the monkey would still go through his act. Of course there was also the bellow of the iceman together with the sound of his scraping and chopping on a block of ice. The milkman arriver very early in the morning before we arose, but his rattling bottle basket could be heard and it was a snug, comfortable sound.

This young boy and his family were of course much involved in becoming Americans in these patriotic years, but among the polyglot population along Milwaukee Avenue

DECEMBER SPEAKER RELATES HISTORY OF RECONSTRUCTIONISM IN CHICAGO AREA

The history of Reconstructionism in Chicago was the topic discussed at the Society's December meeting. Leroy Shuster, one of the movement's national leaders and a pioneer in its growth in the Chicago area, addressed the gathering at the Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation in Evanston.

Reconstructionism, Judaism's newest and smallest branch, was enunciated as a creed by Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan in the thirties and was first publicized locally by the late Rabbi Solomon Goldman of Anshe Emet Congregation. A study group at Anshe Emet led after World War II to the later establishment of the Niles Township Jewish Congregation in Skokie and the Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation in Evanston. Mr. Shuster, a past president of the National Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Chavurot, informed his listeners that a third local congregation is in the process of formation.

Much of the discussion period which followed was concerned with making clear the differences between Reconstructionism and Conservative and Reform Judaism.

The speaker was preceded by a brief presentation by Edward Bernstein, son of Society founder Charles Bernstein, who spoke of his winning entry in the annual History Fair for high school students. The entry dealt with his grandfather, the entertainment writer and critic Sam Lesner.

Program Chairman Burt Robin introduced the speakers. Refreshments were served by Hospitality Chairman Shirley Sorkin at the social hour before the program began.

in 1918 there were many reminders of their Jewishness. The kosher butcher, Stern's Restaurant with its Jewish cuisine, the many Jewish-owned businesses have been mentioned. And there were others. A Jewish Educational Alliance center operated on Wood Street, and I remember attending a "shul" on Lincoln Street north of Division with my father before his abrupt death in 1920 shattered forever the reality if not the memory of being a happy youngster on Chicago's vibrant Milwaukee Avenue.

Make our next ten years even better!

Renew your membership now.

ABOUT THE SOCIETY

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society was founded in 1977 and is in part an outgrowth of local Jewish participation in the American Bicentennial celebrations of 1976. It has as its purpose the discovery, preservation and dissemination of information concerning the Jewish experience in the Chicago area.

To this end the Society seeks out, collects and preserves appropriate written, spoken and photographic records; publishes historical information; holds meetings at which various aspects of Chicago Jewish history are discussed; and offers tours of historical Jewish sites. Muriel Robin Rogers was the founding president.

Membership in the Society includes a subscription to Society News, discounts on other Society publications and at the Spertus Museum Store, information about Society meetings and other activities, and the opportunity to learn and inform others concerning Chicago Jewish history and its preservation.

Membership in the Chicago Jewish Historical Society is open to all interested persons and organizations. The membership year is from January to December; however, non-members may join at any time.

Committees currently active and seeking members include Oral History, Archives, Exhibits, Photography and the Speakers Bureau. Requests for additional information and membership inquiries may be addressed to our office (Phone 663-5634).



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Make checks payable to the Chicago Jewish Historical Society and mail to our office at 618 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60605.

society news

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