



chicago jewish historical society

# CHICAGO JEWISH HISTORY

## *Now Is the Summer of Our Contentment*

### CO-PRESIDENT'S COLUMN:

A package of two Jewish books arrived at the Society's office from Rosalie Schwartz of San Diego, California. Ms. Schwartz enclosed a letter dated April 3, 2021, and a copy of a *New York Times* essay of the same date by David Margolick entitled "Could I Save These Sacred Jewish Books?"

In Margolick's beautiful essay, he reflects on his rescue of abandoned sacred Jewish books from

a trash bin. He wonders who had owned the books and how they ended up in a sad state. He mentions the respectful Jewish tradition to bury a sacred book rather than discard it, and he expresses joy when at last he finds a potential Jewish home for the books.

Ms. Schwartz had the same impulses, but why did she send the books to the Chicago Jewish Historical Society? This is a poignant tale that *Chicago Jewish History* readers will appreciate. Ms. Schwartz writes:

"... I was browsing among the various offerings in a used book-

store in Oaxaca, Mexico, almost 20 years ago (2002) and came across an unlikely pair of books: an inscribed Siddur and *The Bar Mitzvah Companion*. ... Understandably curious, I asked the proprietor about them. He told me that a customer who was returning to the United States after living in Oaxaca had sold/given him a bunch of books. I bought the books and brought them home with me; I couldn't put them back."

The Siddur she acquired is *HaSiddur Ha-Shalem*, The Daily Prayer Book, copyright 1949 by

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A golden-winged warbler

Photo by Nathan Goldberg

### Summertime, and the Living Is Easier

The climes are a-changin'. To celebrate the coming of sunshine, warm weather, and the chance to partake of nature in a post-vaccinated world, the Society recently held the Zoom program "CJHS Presents an At-Home Birding Adventure." We are following up in early September with an in-person birding adventure in Wilmette's Gillson Park. Read details about both inside this issue.

## CO-PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

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**Dr. Rachelle Gold**

the Hebrew Publishing Company, translated and edited by Philip Birnbaum. Older shul goers are familiar with this “Birnbaum Siddur,” the classic prayer book used in Orthodox synagogues for decades before the editions of ArtScroll, Koren, and other imprints largely replaced it. The handwritten inscription reads “Presented to [name] on his Bar Mitzvah April 14, 1956, Iyar 3, 5715, by the Congregation Austin Jewish Community Center” followed by the signature “Rabbi L J Lehrfield.” The other book, *The Bar Mitzvah Companion*, copyright 1959, is an anthology edited by Sidney Greenberg and Abraham Rothberg.

In her 2002 attempt to repatriate the books, Ms. Schwartz did not find the Chicago connection. She explains:

“I tried to find some information about. ... [the name of the bar mitzvah] in Austin, Texas, to no avail. So, I put the books on a shelf. After reading Margolick’s article today, I opened the Siddur, read the inscription again, and did a Google search. What a surprise! Rabbi Lehrfield turned up at Chicago’s Austin Jewish Community Center, not Austin, Texas. The books are artifacts with a connection to Chicago’s Jewish community, so I am sending them to you. ... How many Jewish books travel from Chicago to Oaxaca to San Diego and back to Chicago? There’s a history in that journey.”

Indeed, there is.

Rabbi Louis Lehrfield was the longtime rabbi of the Austin Jewish Community Center, founded in 1938 at 116 South Central Avenue, until its closure in 1969. Many *CJH* readers have roots in the Austin neighborhood. It was the last West Side Jewish community, outlasting North Lawndale by more than a decade. According to esteemed *CJHS* board member Dr. Irving Cutler (*The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*), Jews lived in Austin, east and north of Columbus Park, between 1915 and the late 1960s. In the 1940s, Austin had a Jewish population of about 8,000. The community had three synagogues, Rambam Day School, and many well-known stores catering to the Jewish community. *CJHS* hosted a program “The Jews of Austin High School” on March 15, 2009, featuring speakers spanning classes 1947 to 1959. The Siddur’s association with Rabbi Lehrfield enhances its importance. The Lehrfield family is renowned in Chicago for its prominence in rabbinic and Jewish community leadership. Rabbi Joel Lehrfield, son of Rabbi Louis J. Lehrfield, is the founding rabbi and rabbi emeritus (1958–2016) of the Lincolnwood Jewish Congregation (now the Lincolnwood Jewish Congregation A. G. Beth Israel).

The last, and perhaps most remarkable, piece of this Jewish artifacts story is Ms. Schwartz herself. I needed to know, who is this sensitive and erudite donor? I managed to phone her, and she graciously accepted my call. I thanked her for sending the books and asked about her connections to Chicago, background, and interests.

Ms. Schwartz is a native Midwesterner—from St. Louis. She moved with her family to California during her youth. An aunt and cousin lived in Chicago, and she visited here many times.

Ms. Schwartz’s historical sensibility is more than casual. I learned that she is historian Dr. Rosalie Schwartz, a retired professor of Latin American Studies, who taught at several universities in California. Her PhD at the University of California San Diego focused on Cuba. A researcher and government advisor, she is the author of many books of history, including *Flying Down to Rio: Hollywood, Tourists, and Yankee Clippers*; *Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba*; and an historical novel, *A Twist of Lemon*. On March 21 of this year, she was inducted into the San Diego Women’s Hall of Fame.

My final thought, one that I know you share, is that this episode highlights the important role that the Chicago Jewish Historical Society plays in collecting our history, wherever it is found. Thank you to all who support the Society.



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Phone (312) 663-5634

[info@chicagojewishhistory.org](mailto:info@chicagojewishhistory.org)

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## Nu? Who's New?

### Getting to Know New Member Dr. Eliot Slovin

CJH continues our occasional series to introduce readers to new members of the Chicago Jewish History Society.

In this issue, we are pleased to interview Dr. Eliot Slovin of Arlington, Texas. A research chemist and scientist, Dr. Slovin recently retired from the University of North Texas, where he was an associate professor. Previously, he worked as a researcher and scientist at pharmaceutical companies in the Dallas/Fort Worth area and in Israel.

It was in Israel that Dr. Slovin, a graduate of Northern Illinois University, with a master's degree from Rice University and a doctorate in pharmaceuticals from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, met his wife, Lynn, a Torontonian. The Slovins have two married daughters and three grandchildren.

**CJH:** You have lived in Texas for more than two decades, but your heart and history are in Chicago. Please share your Chicago Jewish story.

**ES:** I grew up in Albany Park, where I attended Hibbard Elementary School, and then West Rogers Park, where I graduated from Boone Elementary School. I attended Mather High School, which was overwhelmingly Jewish. My graduating class was more than 95 percent Jewish. It was a very smart, challenging school. Any average student in my school would have been at the top of his or her class in an ordinary high school. We were all raised with the idea that education was the key to success.

My family attended Congregation KINS in West Rogers Park, where I went to Hebrew school and celebrated my Bar Mitzvah. I spent summers attending Camp Henry Horner, where I was a camper and then a counselor.

**CJH:** And your parents and grandparents?



Clockwise: Dr. Eliot Slovin, older daughter Ayelet, younger daughter Margalit, and wife Lynn

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## Nu? Who's New? Dr. Eliot Slovin

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ES: My parents grew up in Chicago—in the Division Street area, near Wolcott Avenue, that is now considered the West Loop or Wicker Park. One of my daughters, in fact, now lives three blocks from where my mother grew up, so my family has come full circle. My other daughter and her family live in Toronto.

My grandparents came from Minsk, Kiev, and Odessa. They spoke Yiddish, but my maternal grandfather spoke nine or 10 languages. He and my grandmother owned a candy store in the old neighborhood. My paternal grandfather was a tailor. He entered this country through Texas—in Galveston—and he sewed uniforms for the soldiers during World War I.

CJH: Your late brother, Ronald, also had a connection to the Chicago Jewish community, yes?

ES: My brother died last year. A longtime member of Yehudah Moshe, he owned EJ's Pizzeria, a kosher pizza restaurant in Skokie. Because my Conservative synagogue in Fort Worth is extremely small and a daily minyan was not available during COVID, I have been participating in the Zoom minyan at Congregation Rodfei Zedek in Chicago's Hyde Park to be able to say kaddish for him.

CJH: It sounds as if being Jewish in your part of Texas has had its challenges. Would you expand on this?

ES: When my daughters were going to elementary school in Arlington, they were two of only four Jewish students in the entire school. During holiday time in December, my wife would go to the school and distribute dreidels and talk about Chanukah with the children. The principal there was very openminded and respectful, consulting with us about potential conflicts between the school calendar and the major Jewish holidays.

CJH: Despite having not grown up in a large Jewish community, both of your daughters have strong Jewish identities.

ES: Both of my daughters attended Hebrew school and had Bat Mitzvahs in Fort Worth, and both attended Jewish summer camps. My younger daughter in Toronto, who has a master's degree in photography, is Orthodox. She spent several vacations in Israel studying at women's yeshivas. My older daughter in Chicago, who has an MBA from the University of Chicago and works in product marketing for media technology, was in the founding class of the now-defunct American Hebrew Academy, a Jewish boarding high school in Greensboro, North Carolina.

CJH: After all this time in Texas, have you adjusted to a community that does not offer a vibrant Jewish life?

ES: It's still an adjustment, but we do the best we can, given the situation. We raised our daughters in a kosher Jewish home, emphasizing our roots and love of Israel. During non-COVID times, we attend synagogue and socialize with people we know from shul and Chabad. Holidays are a bigger challenge, but we have found like-minded people who have become our local "family."

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### Welcome New Members

Brian and Amy Arbetter Weehawken, NJ	Nathan Goldberg Chicago, IL	Michael Levinson Chicago, IL
Jacalyn Berman Chicago, IL	Yra & Janice Harris Scottsdale, AZ	Rabbi Yehuda & Martha Meyers Lincolnwood, IL
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Josh Engel Evanston, IL	Mitch Levin Skokie, IL	Jeffrey Singer Beverly Shores, IN

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## Maxwell Street – Then and Now

DR. IRVING CUTLER

For many decades, the Maxwell Street Market had the third-highest retail sales in Chicago, exceeded only by downtown and the 63rd and Halsted shopping area. It was also the city's most colorful and bustling market, as well as Chicago's largest and longest open-air market for more than a century.

The market started when peddlers with pushcarts started selling on Jefferson Street right after the Great Fire of 1871. Although the fire started just a few blocks to the north on De Koven Street, the Maxwell Street area was untouched by the fire.

The area at the time consisted mainly of Germans and Irish, mostly immigrants who had built two large and beautiful Catholic churches on 12th Street (now Roosevelt Road). The German church, St. Francis of Assisi, was just west of Halsted Street at Newberry Avenue. The Irish church, Holy Family, was just a few blocks farther west. Its complex also contained St. Ignatius College, which later spawned Loyola University. Both remain active churches.

The market remained relatively small until 1880, when a great number of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, fleeing the pogroms and restrictions placed on them in Russia and neighboring countries, moved into the area. By 1925, some 55,000 Jews had crowded into the neighborhood of approximately a square mile—generally from Polk Street on the north, 16th Street to the south, and almost as far west to Damen Avenue. Greeks and Italians lived to the north, and Bohemians lived to the south. In later years, many Blacks and Latinx people moved into the area. The ghetto-like Jewish area had wooden shanties and brick tenements with insufficient light and few baths; they were surrounded by poor drainage and, quite frequently, piles of garbage.

The Jews recreated a shtetl-like atmosphere and greatly expanded the market. The market moved from congested Jefferson Street, with its horse-drawn transit cars, into residential Maxwell Street. Through the years, it expanded from Canal Street west to Halsted Street and then as far west as Sangamon (932 W) and also into the side streets. The street had been named after Dr. Philip Maxwell, who had served as a surgeon at Chicago's Fort Dearborn. Maxwell Street was officially recognized as a market street by a city ordinance in 1912, but through the years, the city did little to improve it.



A residential street in the Maxwell Street area, circa 1906.

The Maxwell Street area, also known as "Jewtown," in time came to boast kosher meat markets, a matzah bakery, grocery stores, tailors and seamstress shops, second-hand stores, record stores, bathhouses, sweatshops, peddlers' stables, a 'Cheat You Fair' store, Hebrew schools, Yiddish theaters, and 40 synagogues. Most of the synagogues were formed by landsmen, Jews coming from the same town or country.

The street had three tiers of shopping: the stores (some in basements), the wooden stalls on the sidewalks, and the pushcarts on the street. Merchandise was also sold from the backs of trucks or from newspapers spread on the ground. Some of the stores had pullers who would grab you and hustle you into a store. Every type of merchandise—old hubcaps, used toothbrushes, out-of-style shoes, hats, underwear, hardware, cheap watches, used toilets, meats, fish, fresh produce, and bird cages—could be found on Maxwell Street. Prices were negotiable.

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## Maxwell Street

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My mother, like most of the others, knew how to bargain. When she brought me there to buy a pair of pants, she would bargain with the store owner. If they couldn't agree on a price, she would start to walk out, only to be called back by the owner. A price would then be agreed upon.

Maxwell Street had its weekly shopping cycle. Weekdays were mainly for neighborhood people. Thursday was a big day for chicken and fish, as Jewish women prepared for the Sabbath meals. Sunday, by far, was the busiest day—and it was for everyone.

The stores on Halsted Street had mainly fixed prices. On that street, there were a few dress and shoe stores, dime stores, and two full-line department stores: the 12th Street Store on Roosevelt Road and L. Klein on 14th Street.

In addition to Maxwell and Halsted, the third major street was Roosevelt Road, which had many wholesalers who sold to the Maxwell Street vendors and to custom peddlers who brought merchandise often into local and rural areas.

Maxwell Street had a number of smaller department stores, including Gabel's and Mackervich's, along with Robinson's, which was owned by members of my family. I would go to Robinson's occasionally on Sundays, its busiest day, and I remember the owner, Joseph Robinson, would yell, in Yiddish, to "*varf di oygn*"—throw your eye—to watch against stealing.

The store had some very expensive merchandise, including beautiful, high-priced mah-jongg sets. So that the North Shore ladies would not have to pick up their mah-jongg sets on Maxwell Street, Robinson set up my wife as a distributor of the sets from our home in Wilmette. Robinson was a very religious man who kept his store closed on Saturdays and all the Jewish religious holidays. He was very philanthropic and civic-minded. He brought over a number of Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazis and gave them jobs in his store.

Maxwell Street shoppers came from all walks of life, but mainly they were from different immigrant ethnic groups, a real melting pot. The immigrants settling in Chicago by the hundreds of thousands in the late 1800s and early 1900s were used to shopping in a bazaar-like atmosphere like Maxwell Street. Knowing little English and being generally poor, they felt out of place shopping downtown. The Maxwell Street merchants, mainly Jewish, would be helpful because many could speak a variety of foreign languages. They were also often quite persuasive.

The street also attracted people who enjoyed "slumming," along with tour buses of gawking patrons. Nelson Algren took his visiting French journalist girlfriend, Simone de Beauvoir, to the must-see Maxwell Street, and she later wrote about it.



The old Maxwell Street Police Station, now the University of Illinois at Chicago police station

There were also many places to eat, mainly hot dog stands whose roasted onions and garlic smells filled the air. The street had its hawkers and hustlers, gypsy fortune tellers, preachers, pitchmen selling cure-all products, and the elderly Black man with a tamed chicken on his head. There were also market masters who often accepted bribes from vendors wanting a better location for their stand, card table, or pushcart.

There were two major social service agencies that tried to help the local immigrants. These agencies focused on health and welfare, education, clean-up programs, sports, arts, social work, and camps. One was nearby Jane Addams Hull House, where Jews such as Benny Goodman, Studs Terkel, Sidney Hillman, and Arthur Goldberg spent some time. Hull House conducted many demographic and sociological studies of the area, mapping the ethnic groups and even locating the houses

of prostitution and noting how much each charged. There was once an open-air brawl between competing neighborhood brothels over prices.

The other important facility was the Chicago Hebrew Institute (CHI) on Taylor and Lytle Streets, which was the first major Jewish community center in Chicago. The CHI had a great variety of programs, with the main aims of promoting education, recreation, culture, socialization, and acclimation of Jewish immigrants to the American way of life.

There were also a number of literary, Zionist, and Hebrew-speaking groups in the area. The Jewish Training School, financed mainly by German Jews, opened in 1890 with 1,100 students. It was one of the first vocational schools in the country. The largest of the Yiddish theaters in the area was the Glickman Palace Theater, which existed from 1919 to 1931 and often featured actors from Europe. After a play, patrons would often go to the nearby Golds Restaurant on Roosevelt and Halsted. Its good food attracted entertainers, such as Al Jolson and Sophie Tucker, and gangster Jake "Greasy Thumb" Guzik.

While the Maxwell Street area produced companies that sometimes spread out into the city and even beyond—Vienna Sausage, Keeshin, Mages, Meystel, Chernin's, and Fluky's, among them—what the area produced, probably unmatched by any other neighborhood, were prominent Jewish people. Most of them were nationally known, including Arthur Goldberg, William Paley, Benny Goodman, Paul Muni, Saul Alinsky, Barney Balaban, Colonel Jacob Arvey, Meyer Levin, and two world champion prize fighters, Jackie Fields and Barney Ross. Some shady characters came from the area, too—not only Guzik, but also Samuel "Nails" Morton, Jack Ruby, and Joseph "Yellow Kid" Weil.

There were also many African American musicians who initially played on the street for tips and helped develop the Chicago blues. The best-known among them included Muddy Waters, Jimmie Lee Robinson, and Big Bill Broonzy.

To support themselves, many of the Jews worked in sweatshops of the clothing industry. Some worked in the cap making factories. Many became peddlers, bakers, butchers, tailors, small merchants, and artisans. Some later became teachers, lawyers, and doctors. They were the organizers of unions in the clothing industry and made up about 80 percent of the strikers in the prolonged, but ultimately successful, garment strike of 1910.

Through the years, there was talk of curtailing or closing the Maxwell Street Market. In particular, some wealthy Jews were ashamed of it. But the market continued to flourish until a number of factors precipitated its decline. One was the coming of the Dan Ryan Expressway in the 1960s, which knocked down part of the eastern section of the market. Then came urban renewal and the expansion of the University of Illinois at Chicago into the area. Changes in shopping habits also had an effect. Stores started opening on Sundays, and huge malls were developed, made accessible by the spreading expressway system. The foreign-born immigrant shoppers were also decreasing.

A major blow to the market was the extensive riots of 1968, which made some shoppers reluctant to come into the market. Some of the Jewish merchants closed their businesses. By the early 1990s, about half of the vendors were Black or Latinx. In 1994, after very stiff resistance from its vendors and others, the market officially closed. The bulldozers arrived. About 40 businesses and 400 vendors were lost in the 1990s. The market moved to a few blocks on Canal Street and, later, to a few blocks on Des Plaines Avenue between Roosevelt Road and Polk Street. But it was now only a Sunday market. Spanish is now heard mainly on the street; Yiddish is a language of the past there.



Vendor in front of 727 West Maxwell Street during a Sunday market, which would typically draw 50,000 customers.

## Maxwell Street

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### Maxwell Street Today

The Maxwell Street area of today has been completely gentrified. Signs of its past colorful history are hard to find. Instead of wooden shanties, there are now some homes that sell for almost a million dollars. Instead of the pushcarts and bargaining merchants, you now find Home Depot, Bed Bath & Beyond, Whole Foods, Best Buy, and other big chains, mainly along Roosevelt Road.

There are now two new large residential complexes that house workers from downtown, the university, the nearby huge medical facilities, and other institutions. One of the developments is the old South Water Market (1925–2003), which was converted into an award-winning residential area, University Commons, with numerous amenities. Next to it is the other, University Village. Still standing nearby, at 14th Place and Throop Street, is the building that once housed the Medill School, where so many of the immigrants were educated, especially at the school's evening classes. It is now the DeVry University Advantage Academy.

There are now some new single-family homes and townhouses, a large Jane Addams Recreation Center, and some public housing.

A couple of blocks away, at 943 W. Maxwell Street, is the old 7th District Police Station, built in 1888, and later renovated to serve as the university police station. It is where my mother was incarcerated for two days because, as a greenhorn, she was running a chicken store without a license. (See CJH, Spring 2020, "My Mother the Jailbird.") The exterior of this police station was used in the TV fictional series *Hill Street Blues*. The beautiful Anshe Sholom Synagogue at Ashland Avenue and Polk Street is still standing. It is now a Greek church.

A few buildings on Halsted Street have been renovated and kept as showpieces of the old area. Near these buildings are a large, new University of Illinois at Chicago auditorium and student dormitories.

Some of the well-known eateries on the street, such as Fluky's and Leavitt and Lyons (later Nate's Deli), are long gone, but existing now on Union and O'Brien streets is the Stefanovic family's busy, 24-hour-a-day restaurant, Jim's Original, serving its famous hotdogs, Polish sausage, and pork chop sandwiches. Also still in the market area since 1942 is an expanded Manny's Cafeteria and Delicatessen, now run by the fourth generation Danny Raskin.

Fortunately, the old Maxwell Street is not forgotten. After the strong grassroots campaign spearheaded by many diverse groups failed to save the market and adjoining area, some groups emerged to preserve and disseminate the area's important history. One such group that fought strongly to save the market and now to preserve its memory is the Maxwell Street Foundation. Led by such dedicated people as Professor Steve Balkin, Lori Grove, and others, the organization has collected a treasure trove of thousands of photographs, documents, artifacts, and even parts of Maxwell Street buildings so that future generations will know—possibly through exhibits, museums, books, and movies—the role that this important neighborhood and its people played in the evolution of Chicago. The Foundation has tried twice, without success, to have the Maxwell Street area listed on the National Register of Historic Places: once for its market and Jewish immigration, once as an entertainment venue that served in the development of the Chicago blues. I have been a member of the Foundation board of directors for many years.

A visit to the area on a recent Sunday revealed that the declining Sunday-only market on Des Plaines Street was still closed due to the pandemic. It has since reopened, but only on the first and third Sundays of each month. Maxwell Street itself has been curtailed to two blocks instead of the half mile of the past. It is a quiet street with a few restaurants and bars and several retail stores. Statues on the street include that of a man playing guitar, a street vendor holding up some tomatoes, and a woman on a bench holding a bundle of groceries.

The original Maxwell Street Market closed more than a quarter century ago, but its reputation continues. This is evidenced by the continued use of its name: numerous Maxwell Street hotdog stands and grills, Maxwell Street Records, the Maxwell Street Klezmer Band, and even Maxwell Street Days in Madison, Wisconsin. Part of the old area is now named University Village Maxwell Street, proudly reflecting its historic location. The legacy of Maxwell Street lives on.

## The Pride and Joy of University Hillels: University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Hillel Approaches Its Centennial

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) boasts the oldest Hillel in the country. Founded in 1923, it serves many of the approximately 4,000 Jewish undergraduate and graduate students on a campus with a student body population of 50,000.

Much of the history of Hillel in the State of Illinois was covered in a May 2015 CJHS-sponsored program at Anshe Emet Synagogue and in a subsequent article in the spring 2015 edition of *CJH*.

As UIUC's Hillel approaches its centennial in 2023, CJH is asking Society members who are alumni of the state's flagship university to reflect on their Jewish experiences at their alma mater. We are pleased to publish the first reminiscences here, and we invite other Society members who graduated from UIUC to share their thoughts and feelings as well.

### Mixers and Matzo Balls Beverly Chubat, Class of 1955

I was an entering freshman in the fall of 1951 when the Hillel Foundation building opened on John Street in Champaign. My roommate Marilyn and I, good friends from Chicago's West Side, attended the student welcoming event and had fun at the subsequent mixers.

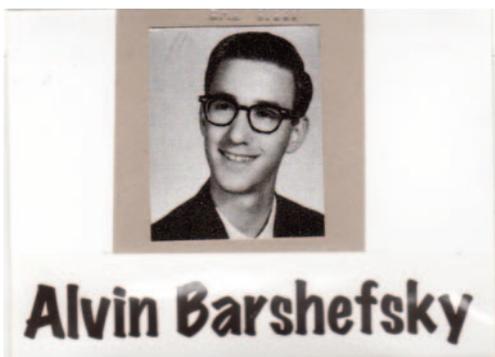
Rosh Hashanah: We lived at Busey Hall in Urbana. Sinai Temple was holding services nearby at Smith Music Hall, and we decided to attend a Reform service for the first time. There was a mixed choir in robes on the stage and a quiet, attentive congregation—not the familiar hubbub.

Passover: We required written permission to miss classes on the holiday. Marilyn and I joined hundreds of other Jewish kids heading up to Chicago aboard the Matzo Ball Express, actually one of the then-spiffy Illinois Central trains: the City of Miami or the City of New Orleans.

**At right:** The paddle given to seniors at Busey Hall. Chubat writes that she thought this "bizarre keepsake" was to be used "to *potch* pledge boys at frat hazings."



### The Low Rumbblings of Not-So-Genteel Antisemitism Alvin Barshefsky, Class of 1970



The writer's Von Steuben High School yearbook photo

My childhood on the Northwest Side of Chicago was dominated by my nearly all Jewish community, the first stop in the northward migration from the "Old West Side." Congregation Shaare Tikva, Peterson Elementary, and Von Steuben High made up that world. It never occurred to me that every place didn't look like that. I learned otherwise in 1966 at the University of Illinois—nothing overtly nasty, but a low rumble of troubling behavior.

In a freshman dorm, a floor mate, learning that four of us were Jewish, put up the sign "Heb Hall." I'm pretty sure he did that in jest, but a number of other floor mates took umbrage. The Jewish fraternity, ZBT, was routinely referred to as "Zillionaires, Billionaires, and Trillionaires." The private high-rise residence hall, Illini Tower, which was built while I was there, was more expensive than a dorm. It attracted students who could afford the extra cost and became known as "Kikes' Peak."

## University of Illinois Hillel

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Most interestingly, I had many fellow students, mainly from small towns, who, upon finding out I was Jewish, would say, “You’re the first Jew I ever met. Not what I expected.” To this day, I have no idea if that was intended as a left-handed compliment or not. Well, probably not.

My college years were largely devoid of Jewish practice. That didn’t change until our first child turned about 4. I set foot into the campus Hillel perhaps twice in four years. From what I understand of Jewish life on campus today, Hillel would be more important than ever.

### Farm-Fed Girl Meets Fellow Jews

Sybil Stern Mervis, Class of 1957

I grew up in Bloomington. I was a transfer student from Barnard College, where I had, as a country girl, all I could take of the weirdos in NYC. So I came to Urbana-Champaign in January 1954.

My parents insisted I go through sorority rush. One had to make a choice between Jewish rush and Gentile rush. Honestly! Having grown up with very few Jewish friends, I naturally chose Gentile rush. Of course, my parents objected, so I pledged Alpha Epsilon Phi, a Jewish sorority, and was happy to finally know some Jewish girls.

I never attended a sporting event, never wore slacks on campus because it was forbidden by the sorority, rarely wore my sorority pin, and did not drink coffee or beer. What a way to be a college girl!

There were two memorable experiences for me at Illinois. One was taking Professor Ludwig Zirner’s opera appreciation class, as he helped his students LOVE opera. The other, occurring on February 16, 1956, was meeting Eleanor Roosevelt, who came to speak on campus. Hillel held a reception for her, and I got to shake her hand! As an independent female leader, she was an early idol for me. Afterwards, I was confronted with having stayed out past curfew—9:30 p.m. on a weeknight—and had to scurry to find a place to sleep. I couldn’t go back to the sorority house, since I hadn’t signed out.

**Editor’s Note:** Are you a graduate of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign? CJH wants to hear from you. Please send us your recollections of Jewish life on campus. We will publish them over the next two years. Email your reminiscences to [Robertnaglermiller@gmail.com](mailto:Robertnaglermiller@gmail.com).

***“I had many fellow students, mainly from small towns, who, upon finding out I was Jewish, would say, ‘You’re the first Jew I ever met. Not what I expected.’”***

**Alvin Barshefsky, Class of 1970**



**The Hillel of University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, the oldest Hillel in the country, hosted a reception for former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt in 1956.**

*image courtesy of UIUC Hillel*

## The Kulle Affair: A Nazi Hiding in Plain Sight in Suburban Chicago

MICHAEL SOFFER

**Editor's Note:** *CJH* is pleased to publish the latter half of Oak Park and River Forest (OPRF) High School teacher Michael Soffer's account of a community response to the discovery of a high school custodian's Nazi past.

### Part 2

For many of Kulle's supporters, the past was irrelevant. What mattered instead was the man he had become. A dozen of his colleagues in Buildings and Grounds co-authored a letter defending Kulle, decrying that the local coverage hadn't explained enough that he was a hard worker held in high esteem at the high school, and that he took his work seriously. (In fact, such assessments were typical of the *Wednesday Journal's* coverage.) In what was likely a rebuttal to the accusation that Kulle had lied on his visa application, they added that Kulle was an "honest" man.<sup>28</sup> Another letter argued that America was a nation of laws; if Kulle wasn't deported, he should be judged only based on his merit as a custodian.<sup>29</sup> His opponents, including Roth and Lampert, decried the "good guy image" being cast on Kulle. Eichmann loved his own children too, one letter-writer observed.<sup>30</sup> Another asserted that Kulle's recent behavior was hardly an indication of the man he was: "[i]f I were a former Nazi SS concentration camp guard," she explained, "I also would have the smarts to become a model citizen in my new country....I would be the cleanest, nicest, and most reliable worker on my job. I would make myself indispensable."<sup>31</sup> In a retrospective in April of 1985, the Holocaust Memorial Foundation's newsletter said the rhetoric in Oak Park became increasingly "extreme."<sup>32</sup>

***In defending his father, Kulle's son said, Jews "need to give the Holocaust some rest." If only Jews "would live exemplary lives, I could perhaps be a bit more sympathetic to their cause."***

Other Kulle defenders argued that it was time to forgive. A student wrote that the school should be proud of Kulle, that he was friendly and kind and did not deserve the mistreatment he had received. After chastising a local rabbi for his "many unnecessary remarks" about the former camp guard, the student said, "I am sure that he is not proud of his Nazi background." The student wanted "Kulle to know that many students, myself included, greatly respect him for who he is."<sup>33</sup> Another writer lamented that Kulle had been tormented by his memories for four decades, which was punishment enough.<sup>34</sup> The activists did not see Kulle as regretful. Whatever the reason, Kulle had volunteered to be in the *Waffen SS*. He had trained other guards. He had supervised the prisoner transfer from Gross-Rosen to Mauthausen. After Mauthausen, when he could have walked anywhere, he chose to make the trek to Au An Der Donau to continue serving. He had not, at any point, apologized or asked for forgiveness. As he told Leah Marcus on her doorstep, he thought he had done "no wrong."

Still others relativized the Holocaust. One supporter, who would later help organize a fundraising campaign for Kulle despite having never met him, compared Kulle's position with that of a young American soldier, drafted into war; in the military, he explained, one obeys. A representative of an anti-abortion organization asked why Oak Park was not concerned about the "American Holocaust" of abortion.<sup>35</sup> Another prominent Oak Parker, who had clerked at the Supreme Court, compared Kulle to participants in Sherman's March to the Sea. In a full-page guest editorial in the *Wednesday Journal*, he explained that America has committed sins too, including the "the horrors that our own government caused the defenseless Southern people in the 1860s." Kulle should be allowed to stay "[i]n the name of all 20-year-old men who seek to defend their country in time of war," he pleaded.<sup>36</sup>

Another set of pro-Kulle arguments focused on the absence of direct evidence he had personally committed a crime. Several community members demanded that Kulle be considered innocent until proven guilty. One prominent Oak Parker argued that membership in the *SS* "is, by itself, no evidence of wrongdoing."<sup>37</sup> The fundraising organizer explained that nobody had produced "eyeball" evidence of Kulle committing murder.<sup>38</sup>

continued on following page

The pro-Kulle side sometimes veered into explicit antisemitism. After Kulle was eventually placed on terminal leave, the student council president asked Marcus why Jews could not forgive.<sup>39</sup> Neo-Nazis showed up to board meetings, as did Holocaust deniers, who brought literature from the Institute for Historical Review, and lauded Arthur Butz's *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*. Years later, a River Forest resident chastised the activists and "religious leaders" who "must now be enjoying the sweet taste of revenge."<sup>40</sup> A public official in the town remarked publicly that, after the Lebanon War, the legacy of the Holocaust was "no longer pure."<sup>41</sup> Kulle's son Rainer, then 35, wrote that the school board caved to a "special-interest group" of "outside agitators." He complained that his father had already paid his price, as he had "lost everything" when he immigrated to the United States. "A certain group of people," he wrote, "will not forgive." His father had simply "got caught up in Hitler's demagogic rhetoric"; it was merely guilt by association. And anyway, he wrote, Jews should stop acting like they're the only group who has ever been persecuted. Jews need to "give the Holocaust some rest." If only Jews "would lead exemplary lives," then "I could perhaps be a bit more sympathetic toward their cause."<sup>42</sup>

***Oak Park  
grappled with the  
meaning of the past,  
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man they knew.***

The strongest argument in Kulle's defense was proffered by some OPRF faculty members. Kulle, they argued, was born and raised in a particular historical milieu. Was it reasonable to expect the son of a German soldier in World War I, born in 1921, to have done differently? He was kindly, helpful, and upstanding. Whatever had happened four decades earlier was no longer relevant. And anyway, this was a matter for the courts; proceedings and hearings were ongoing. A faculty circular, signed by 200 faculty members, called for the school board to "reject the call for Reinhold's dismissal at *this* time."<sup>43</sup> To the activists, though, this argument too fell short. He wasn't simply in the German Army – he had volunteered to be in the Waffen SS, and the Totenkopf. He had participated in crimes against humanity. He was not the sort of man who belonged around children. This more tempered part of the discourse echoed the debates happening among scholars of the Holocaust, who contemplated the responsibility of the individual and the power of context.

Stymied by the inability to discuss personnel issues in open session, and facing a vocal majority of the town who supported Kulle, the activists needed a new strategy. At a December board meeting, their group submitted a letter to the board with 50 signatories. Recognizing that the board could not discuss Kulle personally, they broadened their question. "Should a person who has voluntarily served in the SS be considered a suitable employee of District 200?"<sup>44</sup> The question was simple, the answer unavoidable. Their issue was not Kulle himself, but the Holocaust. It did not matter if Kulle was deemed deportable. It was not about forgiveness, or the Department of Justice, or whether Kulle had literally killed someone with his own hands. It didn't matter if America's own past was checkered. The question was simple – should the high school hire former members of the Waffen SS?

But for the faculty members urging the Board to wait, the Holocaust was not the issue. When they heard anti-semitic comments, they rejected and denounced them. Reinhold wasn't a symbol; he was a person, someone they knew, someone with deep roots at OPRF, someone they couldn't imagine doing something wrong.

A few weeks later, the school board placed Kulle on terminal leave, and did not renew his annual contract when it expired at the conclusion of the school year.<sup>45</sup> After a series of appeals over the next three years that eventually made their way to Justice John Paul Stevens's desk at the Supreme Court, Kulle was deported to West Germany.<sup>46</sup> He was never prosecuted and died in Germany a free man.<sup>47</sup>

As the 1983–1984 school year concluded, parallel celebrations were held. Exhausted and exuberant, the activists held a dinner party at Nielsen's Restaurant on North Avenue.<sup>48</sup> A few months later, 150 of Kulle's friends and colleagues showered him with what they called a "retirement" party at the Mar-Lac House. They gave him a \$1,500 check, and serenaded him with a rendition of "Edelweiss," the song the von Trapps sing in *The Sound of Music* in defiance of pressure to join the Nazis.<sup>49</sup>

As Leah Marcus told the congregation from the West Suburban Temple Har Zion pulpit at Yom Kippur services in 1984, the decision to place Kulle on leave was “widely unpopular.”<sup>50</sup> Friendships and relationships were permanently altered, and neighbors looked through one another when they passed each other in the alleys. While the activists had succeeded in having Kulle removed from the school, their other primary objective – improving Holocaust education at the high school – was an even harder task. Though they secured a curriculum review, received commitments to improve Holocaust education, donated books and documentaries to the school, and even coordinated with the ADL to send a representative to work with teachers, it would remain an uphill battle. If the community had a stronger understanding of the Holocaust, and the role of the Waffen SS, would they have felt differently?

Still, village trustees established an annual Holocaust Memorial service, and planted a symbolic tree at village hall. The Kulle Affair also played a role in the transformation of the Oak Park Council of Churches into the re-named Community of Congregations, which included Jewish participation on equal footing. Other issues would arise later, including an antisemitic letter sent to a Jewish teacher, a slew of instances of antisemitic graffiti on the high school’s campus, and a swastika airdropped onto students’ phones at an assembly. The struggle for understanding and acceptance of religious diversity – even in a village that prides itself on its intentional efforts towards diversity – remained and remains a challenge.

The Kulle Affair has largely faded out of public consciousness in Oak Park, save for the occasional mention in OPRF classrooms, and an impressive History Fair project by a local student. But for 13 months, Oak Park grappled with the meaning of the past, the responsibility of the individual, and the legacy of the Holocaust – all embodied in a man they knew. The Kulle Affair remains a microcosm of American perceptions of the Holocaust.

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<sup>29</sup>William Propst et al. Letter to the editor. “Articles not fair to Reinhold Kulle.” *Oak Leaves*. August 31, 1983. Page 16.

<sup>30</sup>Fenichel, Stefan. Letter to the editor. “Nice or not, ex-Nazi deserves what he gets if charges are true.” *Wednesday Journal*. September 14, 1983. Page 10.

<sup>31</sup>Klonsky, Susan. Letter to the editor. “Let Kulle go to trial; let the truth emerge.” *Wednesday Journal*. September 21, 1983. Page 11.

<sup>32</sup>Graubart, Judah L. “The Nazis Among Us.” To Bear Witness. Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois. April 1985. Page 2.

<sup>33</sup>Juel, Karl. Letter to the editor. “Kulle one reason to be proud of school.” *Oak Leaves*. October 19, 1983. Page 21.

<sup>34</sup>Kinzie, Raymond. Letter to the editor. “Tormenting memories punishment enough.” *Oak Leaves*. December 21, 1983. Page 21–22.

<sup>35</sup>Spartz, Alice Ann. Letter to the editor. “Why not care about ‘American Holocaust?’” *Wednesday Journal*. November 30, 1983. Page 11.

<sup>36</sup>Knox, John. “ONE VIEW.” *Wednesday Journal*. July 4, 1984. Page 11.

<sup>37</sup>Kinzie, Raymond. Letter to the editor. “Tormenting memories punishment enough.” *Oak Leaves*. December 21, 1983. Page 21–22.

<sup>38</sup>Gockel, Galen. Interview by Michael Soffer. Personal Interview. January 18, 2021.

<sup>39</sup>Marcus, Leah. “Yom Kippur Speech.” Speech, West Suburban Temple Har Zion, River Forest, IL, October 5, 1984.

<sup>40</sup>Schlichting, Marvin. Letter to the editor. “What proof of Kulle’s crime?” *Wednesday Journal*. November 11, 1987. Page 15.

<sup>41</sup>Marcus, Leah. “Yom Kippur Speech.” Speech, West Suburban Temple Har Zion, River Forest, IL, October 5, 1984.

<sup>42</sup>Kulle, Rainer. Letter to the editor. “Kulle only guilty of serving his country.” *Oak Leaves*. March 14, 1984. Page 19.

<sup>43</sup>Faculty Petition to School Board. November 7, 1983.

<sup>44</sup>OPRF Board Meeting Notes. December 13, 1983.

<sup>45</sup>OPRF Board Meeting Notes. January 24, 1984.

<sup>46</sup>Associated Press. “US Deports Ex-Janitor Who Was Concentration Camp Guard.” October 26, 1987.

<sup>47</sup>Jewish Telegraphic Agency. “Statute of Limitations Exempts Nazi Kulle from German Trial.” November 6, 1987.

<sup>48</sup>Lunin Schultz, Rima et al. “Invitation to Nielsen’s Celebration.” February 5, 1984.

<sup>49</sup>Linden, Eric. “High school staff, other friends toast Reinhold Kulle’s 25 years.” *Wednesday Journal*. 5/16/1984. Page 1.

<sup>50</sup>Marcus, Leah. “Yom Kippur Speech.” Speech, West Suburban Temple Har Zion, River Forest, IL, October 5, 1984.

## Let's Dance

**ALBERT ZIMBLER**

The song is over, but the melody lingers on. It was during my high school days when I learned how to dance. Crane Tech was an all-boys high school. Dance was not taught in the gym program. For that effort, we had to go to Lucy Flowers, an all-girls high school. Once a week, for one semester, we walked the mile to that girls' school. There, the phonograph and the vinyl records were ready for the lessons.

Even before we got on the dance floor, we were given rules. Rule number one: "Do not put your right hand on the girl's back lower than the top of her butt." Rule number two: "Be sure to leave it there during the entire dance." Rule number three: "Escort her back to the chair she was sitting on when you had asked her for that dance." Other rules were also given: "Do not hold the girl too close to your body and no dipping of her at the end of the dance."

With all these directions, it was hard to follow the slow music on the phonograph. "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" and "Girl of My Dreams" were two of the songs I remember. There was no jitterbug dancing in vogue at that time.

It wasn't until about a year later that swing music came in. Big-time swing orchestras like those of Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller were starting to be noticed, and I got the message. I wanted to learn how to jitterbug. And so I sought out one of the guys who was a club member of mine. Club member, you ask? In those days, every bunch of young guys had a club. We would meet in someone's basement and have meetings and collect dues of five cents or more and talk about – what else? – girls.

Donny Boroff taught me how to do the jitterbug, and I became a Zoot suiter. I did wear a long chain on my pants. However, I didn't smoke cigarettes, drink, or chew gum. And the song that represented me during those years was "In the Mood," played by the Glenn Miller band. The follow-up to that favorite song was "I've Got Rhythm." Those two songs epitomize my musical and dancing skills and desires at the age of 16.



Al and Ruth Zimblers dancing the jitterbug at their wedding party



Al and Ruth Zimblers after more than 70 years of married life

Before I took that high school dance class and learned how to jitterbug, I was what one would call a "nobody" in grammar school and high school. I wasn't a top student, and I didn't hang out with the "in" crowd. But once I learned to jitterbug, I gained confidence in meeting those of the opposite sex. The fact that I attended an all-boys high school did not advance my skills with teenage girls. Crane Tech taught me woodshop, foundry skills, printing, electrical, and other crafts that did not lift up my grade point average. Few of us were planning to go to college, for this was during the late 1930s, before World War II had started.

In my youth, I was able to show off while doing a jitterbug by throwing my left foot

into the air aimed at my dance partner's face. Everyone who saw this was amazed and worried that I might hit my partner's face with my foot. It never happened. And my two favorite songs were the ones that I spent a lot of money on. To me, it was a lot of money when I had to put a dime or a quarter into a jukebox to listen to those two songs that made me believe I could dance, join the crowd on the dance floor, and feel as if I belonged there.

Most couples celebrated their marriage by doing a slow dance after their wedding ceremony. My wife, Ruth, and I did a jitterbug on the dance floor.

These days, I don't jitterbug. I do dance at weddings and Bar and Bat Mitzvah parties. It's back to the old days of right hand on the back and not too close to my partner's body. But I cheat all the time because my dance partner is still my wife and, although we are a few pounds heavier and a few inches shorter, I've still got rhythm and am always in the mood.

**Editor's Note:** The late Al Zimble, who went on to become a successful certified public accountant and, in later years, performed standup comedy, was, with his wife, Ruth, a longtime member of CJHS. He died in March 2020 at 95. Ruth died two months later. The couple had been married just shy of 74 years. "Let's Dance" originally appeared in one of Zimble's many short-story humor books that can be found on Amazon. It has been reprinted here with the permission of one of his children, Phyllis Zimble Miller, who recently contacted the Society about her father's work. Zimble Miller, who works in the entertainment industry in Los Angeles, is the creator of "Thin Edge of the Wedge," a free Holocaust project to combat anti-semitism and hate ([www.ThinEdgeoftheWedge.com](http://www.ThinEdgeoftheWedge.com)). Many of her father's stories can be found on her website, [www.MillerMosaicllc.com](http://www.MillerMosaicllc.com), where her new podcast about antisemitism can also be heard.

## CJHS members ... YASHER KOACH!

*The Hebrew phrase means  
"More Power to You."*

Board member **Dr. Irving Cutler** was named Distinguished Geographer at the recent annual meeting of the Illinois Geographical Society.

This past April, CJHS Co-President **Dr. Rachelle Gold** talked about the historic significance of Chicago's Three Patriots Monument on WGN's Outside the Loop program hosted by Mike Stephen.

CJHS member **Eric A. Gordon** has launched an eight-book project of English translations of fiction by Portuguese writer Manuel Tiago (pseud. for Álvaro Cunhal). The first two releases are *Five Days*, *Five Nights* and *The Six-Pointed Star* (International Publishers).

Board member **Joy Kingsolver** presented "Digitizing Your Photographs and Organizing Your Digital Files" to the Jewish Library Network of Metropolitan Chicago this past May.

CJHS member **David Matlow** was the focus of the May 26, 2021, article "Toronto Collector of Theodore Herzl Artifacts Aims to Reunite Families with Their Documents and Heirlooms," which was published in the *Toronto Star*.

Board member **Rabbi Moshe Simkovich** was interviewed for a radio segment on the history of Chicago bagels. The story aired this past April on Curious City, a regular segment on WBEZ, Chicago's NPR affiliate. Rabbi Simkovich recalled his early-morning visits as a child to North Shore Kosher Bakery, a longtime West Rogers Park enterprise that his family had owned. Board member **Dr. Irving Cutler**, a distinguished demographer, author,

and authority on Chicago Jewish history, was also mentioned in the segment.

CJHS member and artist **Miriam Socoloff** was widely quoted in the *Chicago Sun-Times* article "Restored Mosaic on the Far North Side Highlights Jewish Immigrants' Struggles," which was published in April. Socoloff, along with artist Cynthia Weiss, who was also quoted, commented on the restoration of the "Fabric of Our Lives" mural, which adorns the Bernard Horwich Jewish Community Center. Both artists participated in the creation of the mural and in its restoration. Co-President **Dr. Rachelle Gold** wrote about it in the Winter 2021 *CJH* issue ("A Mural Thrives in Chicago").

Members, we want to hear from you! Please send news of your honors and achievements to *CJH* Editor Robert Nagler Miller at [robertnaglermiller@gmail.com](mailto:robertnaglermiller@gmail.com).

## Zoom Program Recap: Jews for the Birds

A prevailing fiction about American Jews is that we're not among the world's greatest outdoors enthusiasts—unless you count walking down the block to pick up bagels and the Sunday newspapers.

CJHS member, avian maven, and naturalist Joel Greenberg can readily disabuse holders of this myth. Greenberg and fellow bird lovers Josh Engel and Nathan Greenberg did that very thing this past June, when they waxed ornithologic during the Zoom program “CJHS Presents an At-Home Birding Adventure.”

Serving as emcee of the program, Greenberg, author of *A Feathered River Across the Sky* and *A Natural History of the Chicago Region*, among other books, kvelled over the plethora of birdwatching activities throughout the Chicago area and beyond.

Engel, a Greenberg mentee and the founder and chief guide of the Chicago-based bird-touring company Red Hill Birding—so named in honor of his mother's side of the family, the Rosenbergs—conjured up childhood memories of early-morning birdwatching with his maternal grandfather in Crabtree Nature Center in Barrington. Bar Mitzvah-present binoculars, which he “borrowed” from his brother, and a passion for travel, including a Bar Mitzvah trip to Alaska, where he observed many fine-feathered species indigenous to the region, propelled him in the direction of birdwatching as a serious profession. “There was no turning back,” Engel said.

Goldberg, who recently signed on as a Red Hill team member, said he always loved collecting and making lists as a child. This passion soon found expression in counting the number of bird species. A graduate of Cornell University, famed for its Lab of Ornithology, Goldberg recently earned kudos and media coverage for setting the state record in Illinois for the number of bird species sightings in a single year—341—and for documenting in the LaBagh Woods nature preserve on Chicago's Northwest Side a broad-billed hummingbird, which is generally found in this country's Southwest.



A piping plover



Black-bellied whistling ducks

Photo by Nathan Goldberg

Greenberg, who is currently writing a book on Jewish naturalists, as well as Engel and Goldberg, agreed that Chicago's ornithophiles included a disproportionate number of Jews. They pointed to the local Christmas Bird Count, an annual nationwide event during which enthusiasts and volunteers participate in a census of birds.

Listen to the entire program at [www.chicagojewishhistory.org](http://www.chicagojewishhistory.org).

Photo by Nathan Goldberg

## That's Some Good Birdwatching



A tree swallow

Photo courtesy of Joel Greenberg

The Society invites members to our first in-person program since early 2020. Join us as veteran birdwatchers Joel Greenberg and Paul Quintas share their passion for our feathered friends. We will walk Lake Michigan's shoreline, which provides some of the best birding in Illinois. Land-bird migrants collect along the edge of the region's largest natural feature, while the lake itself provides habitat for a host of species. Gillson Park encompasses 60 acres of varied vegetation, low dunes, beach, and a harbor that often holds ducks and other waterbirds. Fall migration is spread out more than it is in spring, but the first half of September is a perfect time for maximizing the species we might see. A good variety of thrushes, warblers, and sparrows can be expected. The lake itself is apt to yield gulls, terns, and ducks, while the shore could host a few kinds of sandpipers.

**When:** Sunday, September 12, 8 a.m.

**Where:** Gillson Park, Wilmette. Meet at the south end of Michigan Avenue, at the park's western edge

**RSVP:** Email Rachele Gold at rachgo6@aol.com. Respond soon, as there is a maximum of 20 participants.

**Reminder:** Please bring binoculars so that you do not miss viewing any of our more elusive avian friends.

## Humboldt Park Memories

Society member David Nix of Tucson, Arizona, recently shared with the CJHS a 1929 family photo of his grandfather's butcher shop in Chicago's Humboldt Park—at 2621 West Division Street. He writes, "My grandfather, Zishe/Sigmund Fuenfer, is behind the poultry counter on the left. After much debate, my cousins and I concluded that he is butchering a goose. The man on the far right is Herman Stone, the grandfather of thriller writer Joseph Finder. The Black man at the rear is Ulysses Stevens, who was the chicken flicker



(plucker)." Nix acknowledges his cousin, Fern Platt Hall, who holds the original family photograph. Have old Chicago Jewish images you want to share? Email them to [Robertnaglermiller@gmail.com](mailto:Robertnaglermiller@gmail.com).

## The Sporting Life: Chicago Jews on the Courts

DR. EDWARD MAZUR

Northbrook native Jon Scheyer has been named head coach of the Duke University basketball team. Scheyer replaces another Chicago native, Mike Krzyzewski, Coach “K,” who graduated from the now-defunct Weber High School, part of Chicago’s Archdiocese, and who was an all-time leader in coaching victories.

Scheyer was the star player on the Glenbrook North state championship basketball team of 2005. In 2006, Scheyer received 217 first-place votes—200 more than the next closest player—and was named Illinois’ Mr. Basketball for that year.

Scheyer’s father, Jim, is Jewish, and Scheyer was raised as a Jew. The 2005 Glenbrook North team that won the state championship by defeating Carbondale 63–51 featured an all-Jewish starting lineup.

Scheyer won the National Jewish Sports Hall of Fame’s Jules D. Mazur Award in 2006 as the Jewish high school athlete of the year. Four years later, he received the Marty Glickman Award as the Jewish college athlete of the year. According to the Hall of Fame, Scheyer was the first male athlete to receive both honors. He went on to play professionally for Maccabi Tel Aviv. His Jewish faith allowed him to become an Israeli citizen so he would not count against the team’s cap of four non-Israeli players.



***Jon Scheyer,  
now the head coach  
of Duke University’s  
basketball team, was  
an Illinois state  
champion in 2006.  
He was also a member  
of an all-Jewish  
starting lineup at  
Glenbrook North in  
suburban Northbrook.***

Some related musings for our readers:

Do any of you know the names of the four other Jewish starting players on Glenbrook’s winning championship team in 2005?

Did you know that the filmmaker John Hughes, an alumnus of Glenbrook North, shot a number of his movies, including *The Breakfast Club* and *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*, there?

Have there been other Chicago and Chicago-area high schools with significant Jewish populations with all-Jewish starting line-ups? In Chicago, these schools may have included Marshall, Austin, South Shore, Hyde Park, Bowen, Roosevelt, Von Steuben, Sullivan, Mather, and Senn. In the burbs, they may have included Highland Park, New Trier, Niles North, Niles West, Niles East (now defunct), Deerfield, Buffalo Grove, and Stevenson.

Write to us at [info@chicagojewishhistory.org](mailto:info@chicagojewishhistory.org) and let us know!

## Recent Letters

Regarding the article “Beer, Hot Dogs, Ice Cream, and Cracker Jacks: The Stories of Chicago’s (Jewish) Ballpark Vendors” (Winter 2021), the two of us were also ballpark vendors—in the early 1950s, about 10 years before the folks featured in your article. We were younger, maybe 13 or 14 years old. Because of our age, we couldn’t join the union, so we paid a fee for a one-day pass, perhaps a quarter. We made a few dollars on a summer afternoon—enough for L fare and something to eat. And we got into the ballpark free. The ballpark and union were not too generous to us. On cold days, we were given ice cream to sell; on hot days, peanuts. At the end of the day, when we went to cash in, the payout guy never had change. When the financial transaction went down, we were always on the short end by at least 50 cents, or way more than carfare. It was great fun, though. We kept going back.

Howard Zar and Marty Pick  
(then residents of the Austin neighborhood)

Professor Cutler,

Your memoir (“Growing up in North Lawndale,” Winter 2021) in *Chicago Jewish History* was a treasure.

For my current research project, I consult your *Chicago, Metropolis of the Midcontinent*, 4th edition, frequently.

Michael Ebner

**Editor’s Note:** The writer is the James D. Vail III Professor of American History, Emeritus, at Lake Forest College and the author of the prize-winning book *Creating Chicago’s North Shore: A Suburban History* (University of Chicago Press, 1988).

What a wonderful article (“Beer, Hot Dogs...”). But Levin, Rutsky et al. are just babies to the game. My good friend John Keller and I started vending in 1952 at Wrigley Field, Comiskey Park, and Soldier Field. What fond memories. We were young; worked for just two seasons; and didn’t work long enough to be old enough to vend beer or high-income items. Low on the seniority pole, we were relegated to soda pop, peanuts, and popcorn, but loved and admired the full-time characters who were so great at hawking.

As I recall, the main contractor was Consolidated Concessions, but I couldn’t name the local representatives. We got the job through John’s father’s political connections. We also were able to park cars for Consolidated, at Gus Allgauer’s (restaurants) in Lincolnwood and on Ridge Avenue in Chicago. We turned in all tips and got paid by the hour. God forbid if the doorman heard any silver rattling in our pockets at closing time.

At Soldier Field, we worked the annual City High School Football championships and got to watch Abe Woodson perform his broken-field magic.

John attended Lane Tech; I, Sullivan High School. We needed a steady income to support our auto maintenance—I drove a 1939 Plymouth four-door sedan that was rotting from the inside out—so we worked the next two years at Ashkenaz Deli on Morse Avenue. Steady pay and good eats! Kudos to all the Jewish vendors who came after us.

Ron Tarrson

## We Want to Hear from You!

We at the Chicago Jewish Historical Society love kibbitzers, yachnas, and every variety of person who has a thought, feeling, and opinion to share. Write to us in response to one of our articles—better yet, suggest a story idea yourself. Email us at [info@chicagojewishhistory.org](mailto:info@chicagojewishhistory.org) or [robertnaglermiller@gmail.com](mailto:robertnaglermiller@gmail.com).

Look to the rock from which you were hewn

הביטו אל-צור חצבתכם



## chicago jewish historical society

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#### Our History and Mission

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society, founded in 1977, is in part an outgrowth of local Jewish participation in the United States Bicentennial Celebration of 1976. Forty-four years later, our mission remains the discovery, collection, and

#### ABOUT THE SOCIETY

dissemination of information about the Jewish experience in the Chicago area through publications, open meetings, tours, and outreach to youth and others interested in the preservation of Chicago Jewish history.

**Tribute Cards for Celebrations or Memorials** The card design features the Society's handsome logo. Pack of five cards and envelopes is \$18. Individual cards can be mailed for you from our office at \$5 per card, postage included. Mail your order and check to the CJHS, P.O. Box 597004, Chicago IL 60659-7004. You may also order online at our website.

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