



chicago jewish history

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"PARIS GARTERS FOR MEN.

A. STEIN & CO., Center Ave. & Congress St."

Delivery Wagon, c. 1906. Photograph courtesy Elizabeth Stein

December 12—Save the Date! Robert Matanky to Speak on "The Jewish Community in West Rogers Park"

Robert W. Matanky, prominent attorney, realtor and civic leader, will speak about the history of Jewish West Rogers Park at the Society's next Open Meeting. The Open Meeting will be held at Spertus Institute of Judaica, 618 South Michigan Avenue, on Sunday, December 12 at 2 p.m., following a social hour and refreshments, beginning at 1 p.m. Members and guests are welcome, at no charge. ❖

President's Column



Walter Roth

IN RECENT WEEKS THE CHICAGO SUN-TIMES HAS BEGUN TO RUN STORIES describing incidents of note that occurred during the 20th century in Chicago. In a column about the year 1908, Bill Brashler wrote that in March of that year, an anarchist named Lazarus Averbuch “stabbed Police Chief George Shippy and shot Shippy’s young son during a home invasion before he was shot and killed.” Brashler’s recollection of

this news item rankles because it repeats a misrepresentation of the “Averbuch Incident,” even though a great deal of time and effort have been spent to set the story straight.

Last year, in a book we co-authored, Joe Kraus and I attempted to set forth the Averbuch story in detail. We reached a conclusion quite opposed to the hysterical reporting of the Chicago media at the time. Below is part of the letter that Joe Kraus sent to the *Sun-Times* on the subject:

“As Walter Roth and I argue in our 1998 book, *An Accidental Anarchist*, drawn from Walter’s exhaustive research on the incident, the story is considerably more complicated than either Brashler or the newspapers of 1908 report. Outside of Shippy’s statements, there is no evidence that Averbuch, a hard-working, 17-year-old immigrant, had any political or criminal motives for knocking on the door of Shippy’s home; several people who knew him speculated that he might actually have sought the equivalent of a letter of recommendation attesting to his good character and employability. There is also significant evidence that Shippy may not have been wounded in the attack, even though he claimed that he was. Walter and I do conclude that the mainstream Chicago newspapers of 1908 failed to explain all the circumstances of (Averbuch’s) death at the hands of one of the most powerful men in Chicago.”

The “Averbuch Incident” is another demonstration that historical “facts” once falsely reported at the time of their occurrence are difficult to refute nearly a century later, despite the evidence.

In a very different vein, recall the incident of Mrs. O’Leary’s cow. As originally reported, and for a century later, the cow was blamed for kicking over a lantern and starting the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. New evidence indicates it was not true. The blame seems to lie with the participants in a card game in the O’Leary barn. (Descendants of Mrs. O’Leary long sought, and finally received, an apology from the Chicago City Council.) Now, with the decorative “Cows on Parade” sculptures populating our tourist areas, cows have become beloved in our city. We can only hope that Lazarus Averbuch will somehow obtain righteous judgment in Chicago’s history books and media as has happened with Mrs. O’Leary’s cow. ❖



chicago jewish historical society

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Chicago Jewish History

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LETTERS *from our Readers*

Chicago, Illinois
To Norman Schwartz

Thank you for the issue of *CJH* about days long ago. There are a lot of us who are active in Jewish life who received our original impetus from Camp Avodah.

Almost no month goes by when I am not plugged in to one of my friends of yesteryear. Many of these former campers have made unique, enriching contributions to Jewish life here in Chicago and elsewhere.

Rabbi Frederick C. Schwartz
Resident Scholar, Temple Sholom

Winter Park, Florida
To Walter Roth

As always I read my newest issue of *CJH* with interest and pleasure. Extremely interesting were the stories of the "old" summer camps to which Chicago Jewish children went during the hot summers.

Do any of the Society members remember Council Camp which I attended in the 1920s? Or Camp Sunset? I was a resident, along with my brother and my sister, of the Chicago Home for Jewish Orphans at 6802 South Drexel Avenue, 1926-1929. The younger children were sent to Council Camp and the older ones went to Sunset. I have no idea where either of these camps was located. What I do remember is that I was extremely happy there, liked the activities and the positive attention I received, and was always sad to return to "the home."

Even though I have lived happily in Winter Park, Florida, for 28 years, I cling in some fashion to my Chicago roots. One of my "vines" is the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. You are doing a very fine job.

Natalie K. Roussman

Denver, Colorado
To Bev Chubat

My best memories of Camp Kinderland were the classes, learning Yiddish and having to speak in Yiddish on Saturdays—*for everything!* The campfires on Friday nights, making up songs to tease the counselors, and what seemed like hundreds of steps going down to the beach. These were happy times!

I feel that the summers I spent at Kinderland were a strong influence throughout my life, making me strong in my desire to be an active member of the Jewish community.

My sister was Doris Minsky, and my grandfather was the largest Jewish monument dealer in Chicago—Goldman Monuments at 2810 West Roosevelt Road.

Frances Goldman Wolpo

Calling All Campers!

In the Summer issue of *CJH* we published personal memories of just a few historic Jewish summer camps that no longer exist. We have heard from readers concerned that their historic, still-active camps were not mentioned. In the future, *CJH* may publish articles about other summer camps. Send us your stories! ❖

Society Welcomes New Members

Rita Demsetz
Rose Goldman
Philip Hoffman
Rochelle Levin
Celia Levinson
Mr. & Mrs. Dan Lipman
Arline Munvez
Leonard & Helene Pine
Lawrence Sherman
Ned Turner

Author Bea Kraus Describes Heyday of Jewish Resorts in South Haven



Bea Kraus

photo by Norman D. Schwartz

The scene was the Society's Open Meeting on October 10, at Temple Sholom. The mood was nostalgic for the sugar sand beaches of southwestern Michigan, as author Bea Kraus related highlights from her new book, *A Time to Remember: A History of the Jewish Community in South Haven*.

The whole Jewish community: the pioneering farmers, the hard-working resort owners and the fun-loving vacationers are all recalled in this lively, illustrated history.

Ms. Kraus is a member of the board of directors of the Society, and she greeted the CJHS-Dawn Schuman Institute historic Jewish tour when it visited South Haven on August 29. This annual tour of southwest Michigan, expertly led by CJHS board member Leah Axelrod, is always an enriching experience.

Bea is scheduled to discuss her book at conferences and book fairs, and tells *CJH* that she is available for other speaking engagements.

The softcover edition of the book may be ordered directly from Bea Kraus, at 4840 Foster St. #413, Skokie, IL 60077 (847-675-1338). Send check in amount of \$20.00 plus \$3.00 shipping & handling. ❖

Elizabeth Stein, Photographer

BY WALTER ROTH

The recording of oral histories often leads one to discover unexpected treasures of Chicago's past. They are surprising and totally unanticipated. Our Society has for some time been looking forward to taping and transcribing the life story of Elizabeth Stein, a resident of Chicago's Gold Coast, who is a great-granddaughter of Marcus Spiegel, a Chicagoan who was one of the highest ranking Jewish officers to serve in the Civil War, and who was killed in battle.

Marcus Spiegel's family came from Abendheim, a small town near Worms, Germany. They immigrated to Chicago beginning in the 1840s. It was a very large family, and their descendants included the Greenebaums, Felsenthals, Josephs, Schaffners, Spiegels and Harts—leading members of Chicago's early German-Jewish community.

We met Ms. Stein in her apartment, and it was instantly clear to us that we were in a remarkable place. Her home is filled with unique and beautiful art objects, paintings, and above all—her photographs.

Elizabeth Stein, we learned, had been an art teacher for over forty years, and during that period she had also become a splendid photographer. Her pictures have been exhibited locally and in galleries around the country. While advanced in years, Ms. Stein is still actively engaged in camera art, photographing the wide variety of subjects that inspire her.

The most recent local exhibition of her work was held last summer at Art at Paper Boy at 1351 West Belmont. Featured in the show were her memorable color prints of the Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey

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Elizabeth Stein: Self-Portrait (with "cruncher"—equipment used in demolition of the Oscar Mayer meatpacking plant on the near north side of Chicago). Photograph from the series *Monuments of Destruction* © Elizabeth Stein



Elizabeth Stein: "Cruncher" at Oscar Mayer site.
Monuments of Destruction © Elizabeth Stein



Elizabeth Stein: *Two Clowns* © Elizabeth Stein

The "Paris Garter"

The history that Elizabeth Stein was most eager to share with us was not about Marcus Spiegel, nor about her artistic work. She really wanted to tell us the story of her father Ernest Stein and his three brothers who began a business in Chicago in the late 1880s and achieved great financial success by creating and selling the world-famous "Paris Garter."

Albert Stein (the oldest of the brothers) came to Chicago via New York when he was about 20 years of age. He began to work in a wholesale house. In 1887 he decided to start a business of his own, with his brother Ernest soon joining him. They rented a room on Market Street near where the Civic Opera House now stands. In this room they began to manufacture men's garters, which they sold throughout the city to mercantile establishments. They also began handcrafting garters for women and children.

But the real growth in their business came when they bought a patent for men's garters to which they gave the name that denotes sophistication and high fashion—"Paris." They improved the Paris design by replacing its clumsy metal holder with a comfortable fastener, and adopted the advertising slogan, "no metal can touch you."

Soon the business added other products—foundation garments for women; belts and suspenders for men.

In 1906 A. Stein and Company acquired real estate at 1143 West Congress, erecting the first unit of a five-story plant designed by Alfred S. Alschuler, a well-known Chicago Jewish architect. By the 1920s the company was reported to be the largest manufacturer of garters in the world. The company's products were sold worldwide and its advertising budget was immense for its time. The "Paris Garter" was a fashion "must" for the well-dressed man.

The company was said to have earned a profit in every year of its existence. It became a public company in 1929, shortly before the start of the Great Depression, and its stock was listed on the New York Stock Exchange. The company earned about a million dollars

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REPRINT This is a reprint of an article published in the November, 1978 issue of the CJHS *Society News* (predecessor of *Chicago Jewish History*). We present it to our readers, 21 years later, in connection with the articles about the historic Stein family featured in this issue.

UNIQUE ANNIVERSARY MARKED BY OLD CHICAGO FAMILY

BY CHARLES B. BERNSTEIN

Like most grandmothers, Society founding member Jeanette S. Freiler is proud of her grandchildren and great-grandchild. However, in Mrs. Freiler's case, they indeed have a unique distinction—they are sixth and seventh generation Chicagoans.

Mrs. Freiler, a fourth generation Chicagoan, is the daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Stein. Mrs. Stein, the former Ella Barbe, was a native Chicagoan who died in 1975 at the age of 98. Her parents were Mr. and Mrs. Martin Barbe. Mr. Barbe's Bar Mitzvah in January, 1851, was the second such ceremony to occur in Chicago. His wife, the former Lizzie Theresa Spiegel, was born in Ohio, but settled in Chicago with her mother after her father was killed in action in the Civil War. She was among Chicago Jewry's leading social service workers of her time.

Lizzie's father, Col. Marcus M. Spiegel, was killed in battle on the Red River in Louisiana. He was a brother of Joseph Spiegel, whose early Chicago furniture store evolved into the Spiegel mail-order firm.

In 1853, Col. Spiegel married Caroline Francis Hamlin, of Lymanville, Ohio. He then brought her to Chicago, where on August 21, 1853, 125 years ago, she was converted to Judaism. The ceremony was the first of its kind ever held in Chicago. At that time Chicago lacked the three rabbis necessary to compose the traditional collegium required to witness a conversion, so a learned layman, Samuel Straus, and a rabbi imported from Cleveland, Isidor Kalish, joined Rev. Ignatz Kunreuther, the ordained *shohet* and reader of KAM Temple, in officiating at the ceremony. Caroline was given the traditional name of Hannah, daughter of Abraham the Patriarch.

Mrs. Freiler has donated a fascinating collection of family memorabilia to the Chicago Jewish Archives. The collection includes a booklet of memoirs written by Mrs. Martin Barbe, daguerrotypes of members of the family, letters written by Col. Spiegel while on active duty, and the commission of Brigade Major awarded to Colonel Spiegel by Ohio Governor Salmon P. Chase in 1859. ❖

CHARLES B. BERNSTEIN is a practicing lawyer as well as a genealogist. He is a founder of the CJHS and a board member and former officer and program chairman. He has authored or co-authored six books on Jewish genealogy, some commissioned by prominent families. He did much of the research for the Forward newspaper's recent scoop that Hillary Clinton had a Jewish stepfather from Chicago. He has chaired the CJHS's Minsky publication committee and led bus tours to Ligonier, Indiana.

Elizabeth Stein, Photographer

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Circus. In the August 12 issue of *New City*, reviewer Michael Weinstein wrote:

“Still an active photographer at age 92, Elizabeth Stein has been shooting in color for 60 years, producing powerful images in a variety of genres. This career retrospective focuses on her circa-1940 circus documentary, but also includes stunning architectural shots and her most recent seductive and absorbing mandalas. Time has honed Stein's vision; the mandalas—segmented yet seamless compositions of dense patterns of vegetables, flowers and iron grillwork—concentrate her native intensity, eliminating anything that might interfere with single-minded meditation. The mandalas mark a shift from Stein's familiar fascination with the beauty of destructive forces; she has learned to turn power inward to achieve heightened awareness, rather than delivering our senses to exuberant sublime abandon, as with her 1992 shot of fire fighters spraying cascades of water on a building engulfed in billowing smoke.”

Curator Ted Frankel wrote in his notes to the show:

“Art at Paper Boy is proud to exhibit a sampling of work by such an incredible woman. Through the years Elizabeth's photographs have been able to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary and document the times with a non-judgmental lens.

“I believe that Elizabeth Stein's ability to focus on a moment in time combined with her love of life and the eye of an artist has placed her forever on the short list of great women photographers.” ❖



A. Stein & Co.
1143 West
Congress Street.

The clock tower was a vital resource to riders on the nearby Garfield Park "el" line. They would write to the company and complain if the clock showed the wrong time.

The "Paris Garter" *continued from page 5*

that year. Albert Stein and Ernest Stein had died a short time earlier and another brother, Samuel Stein had become President.

In 1931 the Stein family decided to sell the company to the Kayser-Roth Corporation, a large industrial firm. The *Chicago Tribune*, in announcing the sale, reported:

"Owners of more than 55% of the common stock of A. Stein and Co., Chicago manufacturer of men's belts, garters and suspenders as well as foundation garments for women, Thursday agreed to sell their holdings to Kayser-Roth Corporation for \$16,135,000 in convertible notes."

Abraham Freiler, son-in-law of Ernest Stein, remained as Chairman. Other members of the family continued to be employed by the company. Needless to say, the sale was well-timed. Within a generation, garters would be relics, replaced by elasticized socks.

Elizabeth Stein's oral history—detailing her own remarkable life and accomplishments—is now being transcribed by the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. Ms. Stein wanted to make sure that the "Paris Garter" would not be forgotten. This article is written to reassure her that it will be remembered. ❖

WALTER ROTH is President of the Society.

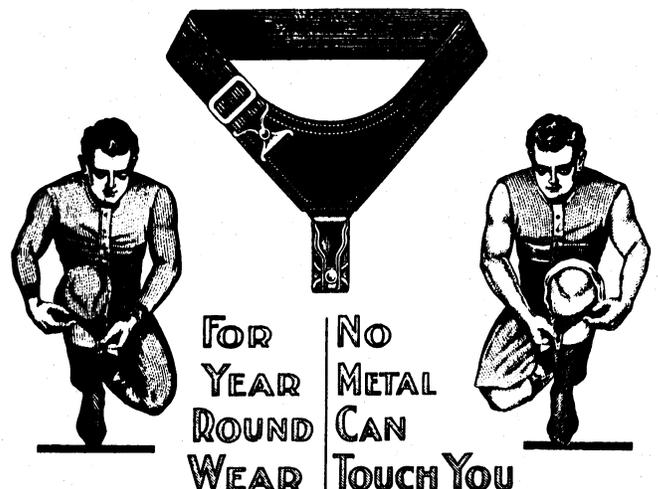
Bev Chubatz, editor of CJH also contributed to the articles. Many thanks to Janet Fisher and Bill Stein for adding their delightful anecdotes about A. Stein & Co. to those of Elizabeth Stein. Pictures on this page courtesy Ms. Stein.

Women's foundation garments manufactured by A. Stein & Co. included the Perma-Lift Bra, advertised as "the lift that never lets you down"—and the Perma-Lift Girdle that "stays without stays." Garters for women and children carried the Hickory brand. The West Side building was demolished in the 1940s to make way for the new Congress (now the Eisenhower) Expressway. In its last days, a section of the building was used by the University of Illinois, and the students fondly referred to it as "The Bra House."

PARIS GARTERS
PATD. DEC. 1906
OTHER PATENTS
PENDING

TRADEMARK
REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

COPYRIGHT 1908
BY A. STEIN & CO.
CHICAGO, U.S.A.



Paris Garters Box Top



Philip M. Klutznick ^{Z"l}

Oral History Excerpt Philip M. Klutznick

Philip M. Klutznick was an attorney, real estate developer, investor, philanthropist and longtime leader in the Jewish community. He was national president of B'nai B'rith 1953-59 and president of the World Jewish Congress 1977-79. He held many government posts, dating back to the Depression, when he helped develop the federal government's first efforts at slum clearance and public housing. During World War II, he supervised construction of entire residential cities around defense plants. With his business partners he built the suburb of Park Forest and later the Chicago area's first shopping malls. He died on August 14, 1999 at his home in Chicago at age 92.

Following is the first published excerpt from the oral history taken by Society Past President Norman D. Schwartz on Wednesday, August 7, 1985 at the office of Philip M. Klutznick in Suite 4044 of the John Hancock Building in Chicago.

SCHWARTZ To set the interview off I would like to ask: What is your Jewish background?

KLUTZNICK I came from Kansas City, Missouri originally. My father loved the *shul* that we went to. I came from an Orthodox family. I was Bar Mitzvah. I didn't have modern teachers. In Kansas City, my teacher, as I remember him, had come from the Old Country only a year or two before. The strongest thing about him was his arm and the whip that he used when we missed something. I didn't fall in love with Hebrew. I'm sorry I haven't picked it up as much as I should in later years. As a matter of fact, I couldn't wait until I was Bar Mitzvah. I didn't go back. There was no advanced training. The school was in the basement of the BMH [*Beth HaMidrash Hagadol*], the little synagogue where my father was the treasurer. Actually, my father passed away at prayers in the synagogue, which had moved south by that time.

I had a letter only the other day from Don Well of the Hebrew Theological College here, who came from Kansas City. Apparently his father was a member of the same synagogue because he remembered my father leading the services in his later years. In terms of religious commitment, I am a generalist. I belong to Orthodox, Reform and Conservative institutions. My predilections are toward the Reconstructionist movement. Dr. Mordecai Kaplan of sainted memory was a dear friend and a wonderful teacher. I learned things from him in later life that I didn't learn as a young man.

SCHWARTZ Since you had a family that was devoted to Judaism, but with the traditional way of teaching

boys to become Bar Mitzvah and then really dropping the ball from then on, where did you get your feeling for being active in the Jewish community and the non-Jewish community in the way that you have? What inspired you?

KLUTZNICK The first real impact on me came when I was in high school. I was the editor of the high school newspaper and I got a call from the director of the Kansas City YMHA. The man's name was Herman Passamaneck. (He later became the director of the Pittsburgh YM-YWHA.) He said, "Look, I have to publish a little paper, and you have been the editor of a high school paper, so why don't you help me do it?" That's how I got into the YM-YWHA. Then, of course, I joined the club.

My high school was downtown and the only nearby club facility was the YMCA and I was a member of the YMCA Hi-Y Club. I was Vice President, and everybody thought I was going to be elected President. The director came to me and said, "You know we've never had a Jewish boy president of the Hi-Y, and I don't think it would be consistent for you to be President." That was my first contact of any significance with polite anti-Semitism. I never went back.

I was interested in organizations—it may have come from my father's side of the tree. My father, while he was a modest, very small businessman, always had time for his health and sickness benefit association. When there was a Yiddish show in town, he was one of the promoters of that show. I remember going with him and the family to see Shakespeare in Yiddish, and I'll never forget it. So that was the environment...

Nathan Minookin, the man who organized the first

unit of what later became the BBYO and the AZA of B'nai B'rith, was a Kansas Citian who had lived in Omaha for a while, and had moved back to Kansas City. He was a chemist. He and his partner discovered what later became known as Thiokol, imitation rubber of a kind. He wanted to organize a second chapter of what he had begun in Omaha, an organization called AZA—*Aleph Zadik Aleph*. So nine of us got together and we became the second chapter.

(Actually, we imitated the high school fraternity to which only two Jewish boys ever got admitted—I was one of them, and a buddy of mine, who also went into AZA, was another. AZA was really an imitation of DeMolay, the Masonic boys' movement.)

There was a third chapter of AZA that formed in Lincoln, a fourth one in Des Moines, and before we knew it, we had a national convention of four chapters in Omaha, Nebraska. That was 1924. In 1925 we had grown to about 12 or 14 chapters. I was elected the National President at the convention in Kansas City. From that time on, I have been involved in Jewish affairs in one way or another.

SCHWARTZ So there was an accumulation as you got more and more involved—you learned more of the history of Judaism, how people participated and what *tzedaka* means.

KLUTZNICK One of the functions of this new little youth movement was to practice *tzedaka*. For example, there was a Jewish orphans' home in Kansas City in those days. We would take the youngsters out to picnics and to the movies. And we contributed modest sums out of whatever our pittance was in those days.

After I finished my term as the International President—by that time we had a chapter in Winnipeg, and that made us international—I traveled all over the country in this connection. AZA had a volunteer secretary, an adult.

By that time the B'nai B'rith had taken AZA under its wing quite thoroughly. Dr. Boris Bogen, who was the Executive Vice President of the B'nai B'rith, a very famous Jewish social service worker, came to me together with the then Chairman of the Governing Council of the youth group and asked me if I would become the part-time secretary and move to Omaha.

I was in college then, which meant that I would have to transfer, but I was so impressed with the offer, that I accepted. I moved to Omaha before I was 19. I became the acting part-time professional in charge of development and whatever else needed to be done. I spent all my college vacations traveling around the

country organizing. I edited the organization's first publication, and we even produced an annual—a yearbook—all out of my experience from high school. As a result, even when I started practicing law in 1930, I continued to spend part-time doing this work until we could get someone to succeed me.

I became active in the B'nai B'rith from the time I was 21. I was President of my B'nai B'rith Lodge when I was 23 and of the Zionist District in Omaha about the same time. I matured rapidly in this kind of work. What else could you do when you are exposed to it and you saw what was happening?

I recall when I was still in law school in 1929 and the Arab riots in Palestine took place. There was an emergency meeting called in Omaha to raise money for aid to the *Yishuv*. I recall that it was a very stirring occasion. I was still in law school and I was having a hard time making ends meet, but I pledged \$50. The man who was leading the campaign was Harry Lapidus, one of the leading citizens of Omaha. At the end of the solicitation he said, "Now that we have completed going around, is there anyone else who would give some more?" And a wealthy man stood up and said, "I think the need is so great that we ought to each give double." He had given \$25. I gave \$50, and didn't know how I was going to pay the \$50. But Lapidus sensed the situation and stopped the appeal. This taught me that all campaigns are not altogether 100% kosher.

Later on, when I was National Chairman of the UJA one year, I remember sitting in New York, in the Five Towns. We organized the usual UJA campaign. Cards were being called. When I was the speaker I always sat next to the Chairman and looked at the pledge cards. One fellow got up and made a big speech and said, "I'll double what I gave last year." I looked at his card—he hadn't given anything the past year! This was revolting, but it was part of the game.

In any event, I finally left the organization job. I practiced law in Omaha until I moved to Washington for 60 days—and stayed there for six years.

SCHWARTZ You mentioned that you were active in Zionism in the 1920s. That was not exactly the usual attitude of American Jews was it?

KLUTZNICK I'm glad you asked me that, because there are a lot of our johnny-come-latelys to Zionism who take it for granted that Zionism was the majority movement in this country among Jews. When I grew up, it was a distinct minority movement. I have said to you that I was President of my Zionist District. The

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Chicago's Jewish Diva: Remembering Rosa Raisa

Since our article about Mme. Raisa appeared in the Spring 1999 issue of *CJH*, we have been fortunate enough to gather additional anecdotes and pictures for a follow-up article about the legendary opera star.



Photograph of Raisa by Daguerre Studio, Chicago

"To Miss Elizabeth Stein Remembrance Rosa Raisa Chicago 1920"
courtesy Elizabeth Stein



Giacomo Rimini in 1924

*photograph from
History of the Jews of Chicago;
Jewish Historical Society
of Illinois, 1924*

Rosa Raisa made her Chicago grand opera debut at the Auditorium in the season of 1913-14. Her last local performance was at an outdoor concert in Grant Park in 1938. Only World War I or serious illness could keep her away from her adoring fans in Chicago.

The Yiddish-speaking Jewish opera-lovers of the West Side called her *Unzer Raizele* (Our Rosie), as she had been born humbly, as Raisa Burchstein, in Bialystok, Poland.

The director of the Chicago Opera Company, Cleofonte Campanini, had discovered Raisa in Italy, where she had come to live and study after escaping the 1907 pogroms in Bialystok. Campanini brought Raisa to Chicago, where he and his wife guided her career and acted as virtual parents to her until the impresario's death in 1919.

When Raisa arrived in Chicago from Italy for the 1916 season she brought with her the baritone Giacomo Rimini. They opened the season with *Aida*. That year Rimini and Raisa appeared for the first time in Chicago in *Falstaff*, with Rimini as Sir John and Raisa as Mrs. Page.

In 1920 Raisa and Rimini were married. They continued to sing together and later taught together.

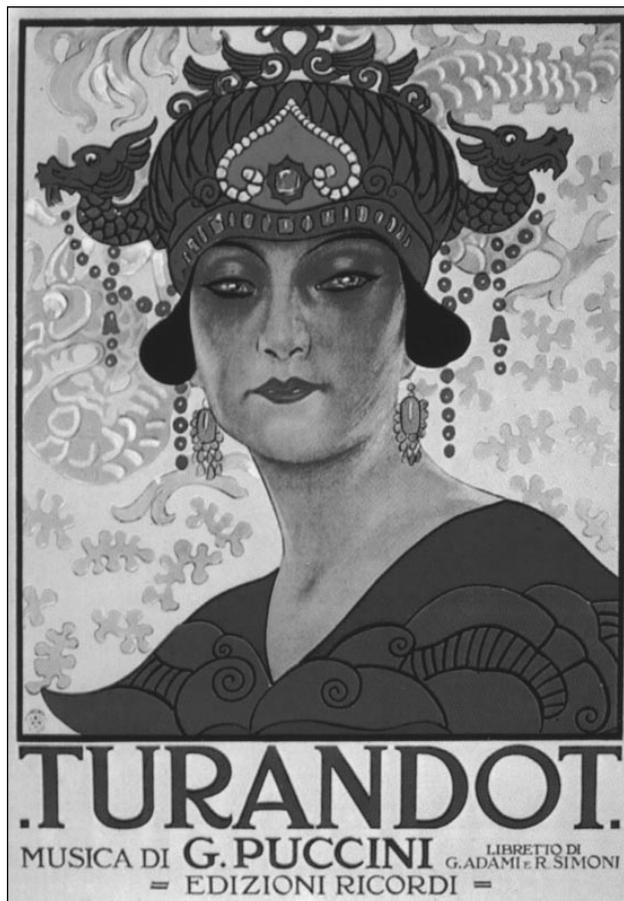


Raisa and Rimini in costume aboard ship

photograph courtesy Marston Records

The couple's Chicago home was in the Congress Hotel. One of Raisa's voice students in the late 1930s, Charlotte Pomrenze Handwerger, described the scene in an interview with *CJH*: "A beautiful fourth floor suite on the northeast corner of the hotel, with a bay window overlooking Grant Park and Lake Michigan. Mme. Raisa, impeccably groomed, dignified, wearing pearls, with pulled-back hair, would be seated at the piano. Giacomo Rimini was present, as well, during some of the sessions—a large, imposing man. Their daughter Giulietta (born in 1931), would sometimes pop into the room. Each summer, Raisa, her family and servants would pack up and move their household to Italy, to their villa near Verona."

Charlotte chose to marry young and raise a family instead of pursuing an operatic career—much to the disappointment of Raisa, Rimini and Charlotte's parents. (Her father, Dr. Herman M. Pomrenze, was a leading figure in the Labor Zionist movement.) She did go on to sing for many years, in choruses, including Max Janowski's. Her husband, Robert Handwerger, was the cantor at Temple Emanuel for 43 years (1945-88).



Raisa as Princess Turandot

Full color poster (reproduced on postcard) for world premiere of Turandot, April 25, 1926, Milan

CJH spoke with another visitor to the Raisa-Rimini home in the 1930s, Tybee Hyman Grais.

Tybee would accompany her good friend and cousin, the late Shirley Hyman Cotton, to her voice lessons, and would help out by turning the pages of the music as Shirley sang. Tybee remembers Raisa as being a wonderful, gracious lady, who included the girls in the dinner parties she held in her suite. Giacomo Rimini would act as cook, preparing heaping plates of pasta. Tybee remembers the thrill of going from the hotel through the underground passage—called "Peacock Alley"—beneath Congress Street, directly into the fabulous Auditorium for an evening of opera.

Despite Mme. Raisa's hopes, Shirley did not pursue further operatic study—although, like Charlotte, she did continue to sing professionally.

Rosa Raisa was a star in Chicago's first golden age of opera in the early decades of this century. Before her death in 1963, she encouraged and applauded the beginnings of Lyric Opera's current golden age. ❖

Philip M. Klutznick *continued from page 9*

only reason I was President is they couldn't get anybody else. They came to me and they pleaded with me to take it. I had just finished being President of the B'nai B'rith, and they needed someone that had some status in the community. I went on to become Vice President of the Southwest Regional District of the Zionist Organization of America. The idea of Palestine as a national Jewish home was a point of conflict. Lessing Rosenwald and I met on several occasions, and yet I had to head a committee that condemned him as chairman of the opposition. I chaired the then NCRAC committee on negative statements that had been made by the American Council for Judaism with respect to a Jewish State.

SCHWARTZ What do the initials NCRAC stand for?

KLUTZNICK That was the National Community Relations Agency. Today it is much larger than it was then. I was chairman of that committee that reviewed some of the statements that were issued by Lessing Rosenwald as the head of the American Council for Judaism. I'll never forget telephoning him and asking him to appear and discuss it with the committee. I had met him on several occasions. He said, "No, I will not appear before that committee. I don't respect what they are doing, but if you will come and see me at Germantown, I'll be glad to talk to you about it." I told him I could hardly do that as chairman of the committee without having them with me. So we issued a public condemnation of the Council at that time.

The B'nai B'rith International had a very simple rule. It was neutral on the issue of a national Jewish homeland—and that continued, mind you, until 1941. Henry Monsky, a fellow Omahan, became President in 1938. Finally, in 1941 we got a resolution through the executive committee acknowledging the importance of the support of a national Jewish homeland. As a result of that, Monsky was able to issue a call for the American Jewish Conference in 1943.

There was no recognizable majority view in this country for the movement. And to this day, the ZOA struggles as an organization. The State of Israel is one thing, but the ZOA does not have the strength that many of the other organizations have today. I think it is a holdover from those days when Zionism was fighting to stay alive in this country.

SCHWARTZ Do you think that the reluctance to endorse Zionism had to do with the fact that Jewish

people felt they had come to America and were assimilated at least to the extent that they were much more accepted here than other places and were afraid that if Palestine became a Jewish State, they would be asked to leave—to go back to Israel?

KLUTZNICK That was a minor aspect of it. First of all, Zionism was a European movement. Chaim Weizmann didn't come from the United States... We forget that the American Jewish community was the tail that wagged the dog of Zionism. If it hadn't been for Weizmann, who knows if it would have gotten the recognition that Great Britain gave it? That was one thing...

We were a new community in every sense of the word...with the influx of the Eastern European immigration. The Western European immigration, and the Sephardic which came ahead of it, much of it had already integrated into the community and some of it was lost about the time the Zionist movement began to take hold...some through conversion; some through lack of interest; some because they were second or third generation and had drifted away...so what you had was a young Eastern European community, which really started in the 1880s and hadn't taken over.

There was a B'nai B'rith Lodge in Kansas City that wouldn't take a Russian-born Jew into it. There was a temple that wouldn't consider taking an Eastern European Jew into it. And this was not atypical. There was a kind of schism in the community that was quite real. Now among those who had it made, certainly there was an element of worry. That's where double loyalty came in. How can you be loyal to a Jewish State and live here?...So the whole concept of a Jewish homeland seemed like a nice, romantic dream even for many that supported it.

SCHWARTZ But not for those who didn't support it.

KLUTZNICK It was no dream—they were against it. The descendants of the early immigrants to this country were against it. And there were, of course, a lot of those who came from Eastern Europe who just didn't think of it...the notion that there could be a resurgence of Jewish nationalism. The movement was essentially Western European and moved into Russia and Poland. But those communities, as I read the history of the Russian and Polish communities (my grandmother came from Bialystok), had a life of their own. Bialystok was a great Jewish community. I've got pictures that I've gathered wherever I go... They lived a full life, and they weren't thinking of going to Israel either.

SCHWARTZ Not until the pogroms?

KLUTZNICK Even the pogroms drove them this way. They had no Israel to go to. It was only that small, devoted, committed group that really has been largely forgotten today. Their idealism was something that made it possible... It wasn't until 1943 that a first united conference of any kind endorsed a national Jewish homeland. Organizations came together that had never even thought in those terms...

SCHWARTZ You made the comment in your interview with the *Chicago Tribune* that we have to learn about the past so we can go on to the future...

KLUTZNICK People without a memory are in trouble... There are individuals, of course, who don't give a damn about it. Besides which, history is very exciting to read. It's more exciting than novels.

SCHWARTZ Well, you've been in Chicago a long time now. You indicated that you came here because you thought that there was opportunity here, and you still think it is a very viable community—even if we are the Second City with problems in terms of declining population. I know you have been active with the Anti-Defamation League. You mentioned some earlier instances of anti-Semitism. Do you want to make any comments about anti-Semitism in Chicago?

KLUTZNICK Well, first let me make a comment about anti-Semitism generally. You know, everybody in his lifetime remembers things that stand out. I had said to you earlier that I consider Mordecai Kaplan an enormous influence in my life. When his book *Judaism as A Civilization* was published in 1934, I think it was around then, I read it. It's a classic to this day. One part of it which represented his philosophy and which I accepted very quickly is that too frequently Jews consider their problems in terms of the negatives.

I don't think there is a Jew that hasn't experienced at some stage of his life a modest amount of anti-Semitism. I've always said I never felt it. I don't think I was telling the truth. I did feel it in high school when I resigned from a fraternity because they wouldn't admit another Jew. I felt it in the YMCA Hi-Y club... But the one lesson that I learned from *Judaism as A Civilization* is that there are enough positive things in life that you can address yourself to that overcome all the negatives you live with...

Therefore, sure, anti-Semitism is something that we must always be alert about.

I think we overdo it—but we overdo everything... When we get into something, we have energy, we have devotion, we fight it...

Of course, in my generation, the international impact of anti-Semitism created an entirely different situation. I mean Hitler and his thugs, many of whom we had in this country, were fearsome because it was more than social anti-Semitism. I remember those days when Dick Gutstadt moved here as the head of the Anti-Defamation League... Dick Gutstadt used to make some of the most moving speeches during that period of time and when I'd go home I'd have to look under the bed to see if there was an anti-Semite there. That man and the ADL here created a Jewish situation that gave life to this community...

SCHWARTZ You've been in Chicago a long time.

KLUTZNICK Since 1946.

SCHWARTZ Communities often compare themselves—let's say to New York or Los Angeles, and so forth. What do you think are the strong points of the Chicago Jewish community?

KLUTZNICK Well, I'm a Chicagoan by choice, and therefore I think I may have a more objective viewpoint than some people who had no choice... It's true I could have gone to New York when I left Washington and become the head of a big company... Maybe I would have made it; maybe I wouldn't. I knew the community. But, as a Midwesterner, I knew Chicago better. When I lived in Omaha, I used to come here frequently. When I was president of this ZOA District, the headquarters were here. And I liked the spirit of the Midwest. I liked the openness of the people more. They were easier to meet and work with.

Aside from that, the project that was offered to me, to come here, excited me. It was more than running a factory, or a company that would run a factory to prefabricate houses...

So how does Chicago compare with other communities? You get lost in New York... I nearly moved to Los Angeles. In 1934 I was offered an opportunity to practice law there. I love to visit Los Angeles. I couldn't stand the place if I had to be there all the time—too sunny...

I mentioned Dick Gutstadt, Ben Samuels, Louis Mann—these are the people that I had known. And Sam Blumenfeld, who headed Jewish education here. And it was not the largest Jewish community. We are not the Second City anymore—we're the Third, and that's not important to me...

Sure we have our percentage of no-goodniks. What city doesn't? For a Midwestern boy it was the place to be. That's why I came here. ❖

FROM THE
CHICAGO JEWISH
archives

The Minnie Graner Collection

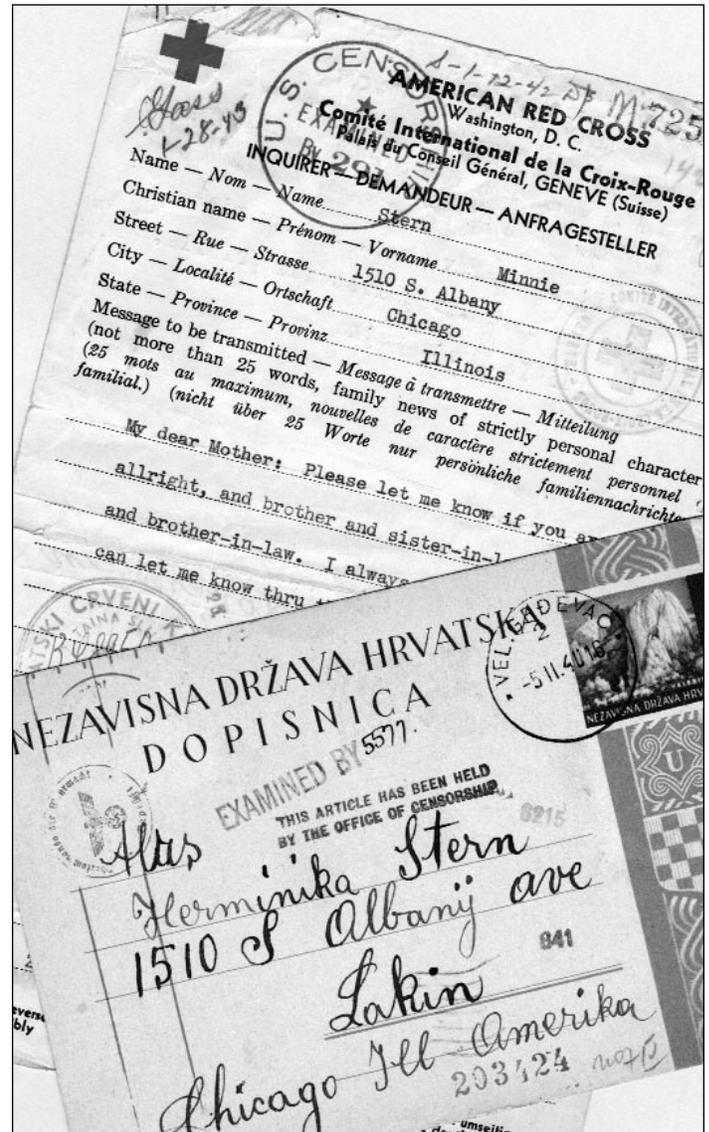
By Joy Kingsolver

Everyone knows that archives collect the records and photographs of important people and organizations, but what about the letters, diaries and documents of ordinary people? Should they be preserved in an archive, too? Archivists face this question every day. The Chicago Jewish Archives, for example, holds the papers of architect Alfred Alschuler and writer Jerzy Kosinski. But the personal papers of ordinary people can be just as significant for the study of history as the papers of the famous and powerful. They help to create a fuller picture of the Jewish experience in Chicago, in all its diversity.

The Chicago Jewish Archives has recently received a small collection of the personal papers of Minnie Graner, born in Croatia (Yugoslavia) as Hermina Loewenstein, in 1900. Her father died in 1923, and before World War II began she emigrated to Chicago, leaving her mother, three brothers, two sisters-in-law, and her twin sister in Yugoslavia. Her papers tell us the poignant story of the loss of her family in the Holocaust and her life in Chicago.

The collection contains several types of historical documents and artifacts: letters, postcards, a funeral home visitor's book that has been used as a journal, certificates, Red Cross inquiry forms, and seven collages of photographs and newspaper clippings put together by Minnie after her husband's death in 1975. The postcards and letters are written in Croatian and have been only partly translated at this time.

In one letter, Minnie's mother Berta describes her loneliness: "I have everything I need," she writes, "except you." The letters stopped coming in 1941. In January, 1942, Minnie began to inquire about her family through the Red Cross. "My dear mother," she wrote, "Please let me know if you are all right...I always think of you." A second inquiry, sent in November, 1942, indicates that no word had been received. In fact, her mother had responded, but communication was so delayed by the war that her response was not received until the summer of 1943. Each inquiry form is marked by stamps and notations from various government and Red Cross offices, recording the long journey to Yugoslavia and back to Chicago.



Red Cross inquiry form and postcard to Minnie Graner from her mother

Finally, in 1946, Minnie received a letter from the Chicago HIAS office. "We regret to advise that we have received the following report from our cooperating agency in Paris, which they in turn received from their representatives in Yugoslavia: 'Loewenstein, Berta, Simon, Rose, Mary and Herman were deported and did not return. Loewenstein, Oscar died at the camp

Jasanovac.' ” Though some doubt remained as to the fate of Minnie’s twin sister and her husband, eventually it was concluded that they had also died in the camps.

Minnie had found a new life in Chicago, but the loss of her family, “the deep scar that never healed,” was always on her mind. She married Irving Graner in 1944 and worked at the BMZ of Chicago Jewish Home for [the] Aged, retiring in 1968 after 30 years. In 1975 her husband died; there were no children, and she was alone. But Minnie found expression for her grief in writing a journal and in the collages she made. Carefully cutting words out of the newspaper, she arranged them with cropped photographs and put them together with glue and tape. These fragile collages, though made by techniques we don’t recommend for long-term preservation, are vivid expressions of her feelings. Minnie’s story brings the Holocaust to a personal level; in the future, collections like hers will be even more important, as generations grow up who have never met a survivor of the Holocaust and who feel distant from it. Some details of Minnie’s story are still unknown; the archives still needs volunteer help to translate the rest of the letters and postcards, and there is no written record for many of the years she spent in Chicago.

Minnie died in 1982. In her later years, Minnie was alone, but she found a loyal friend in Eva Harris, who cared for her when she was ill and arranged a Jewish burial after she died. Minnie left this small collection of documents to her friend Eva, who donated it to the Archives so that it could be preserved. This collection will be part of an exhibit featuring items from some of the collections of family papers housed in the Chicago Jewish Archives. This exhibit, opening in March 2000, will be on the 6th floor of Spertus Institute, 618 South Michigan Avenue, open to the public 9-5 Monday through Thursday and 9-3 on Fridays. ❖

JOY KINGSOLVER is Director, Chicago Jewish Archives at the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies. The article is illustrated with photography and scans by the author.



Minnie Graner: Collage of cropped photographs and newspaper clippings

About the Society

What We Are

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

What We Do

The Society seeks out, collects and preserves appropriate written, spoken and photographic records; publishes historical information, holds public meetings at which various aspects of Chicago Jewish history are treated; mounts appropriate exhibits; and offers tours of Jewish historical sites.

Volunteer Opportunities

Would you like to become more involved in the activities of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society? We'd love to have you! Following are the various committees on which you can serve. Contact the Society at (312)663-5634 or any of the Chairpersons listed here.

■ PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Do you have a great idea for a meeting topic? If you are organized and creative, friendly and outgoing, the Program Committee would welcome your help in planning and implementing our bi-monthly and annual meetings. Contact Burt Robin (773)667-6251

■ MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

The Society's membership continues to grow, and you could help us introduce Chicago Jewish history to even more people. Share your ideas and energy! Contact Elise Ginsparg (847)679-6793 or Janet Iltis (773)761-1224

■ TOUR COMMITTEE

Bring your creativity and organization to planning and promoting our popular roster of tours on Jewish history. Contact Leah Axelrod (847)432-7003

■ EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Do you like to write? Are you a great proofreader? You can contribute to our quarterly publication, *Chicago Jewish History*. Contact our editor, Bev Chubat (773)525-4888

Membership

Membership in the Society is open to all interested persons and organizations and includes a subscription to *Chicago Jewish History*, discounts on Society tours and at the Spertus Museum store, and the opportunity to learn and inform others about Chicago Jewish history and its preservation.

Dues Structure

Membership runs on a calendar year, from January through December. New members joining after July 1 are given an initial membership through December of the following year.

Life Membership	\$1000
Historian	500
Scholar	250
Sponsor	100
Patron	50
Family	50
Senior Family	35
Individual	35
Synagogue / Organization	25
Senior Individual / Student	20

Make checks payable to the Chicago Jewish Historical Society, and mail to our office at 618 South Michigan Avenue. Dues are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.



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