

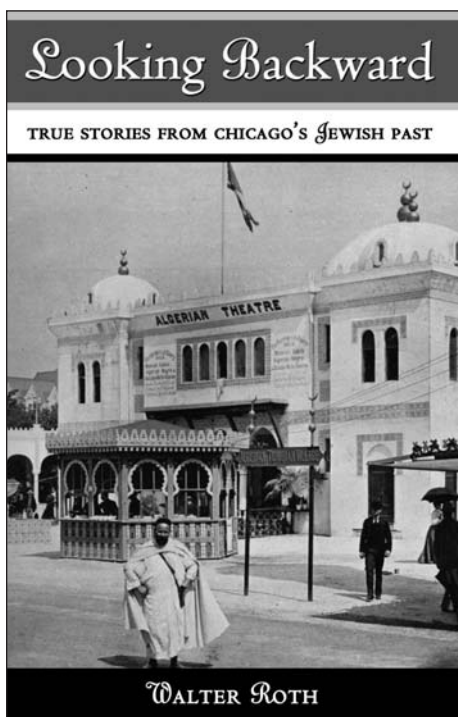


chicago jewish historical society

chicago jewish history

Sunday, September 17—Save the Date! *Thrilling Chapters from Chicago's Jewish Past:* *“Meyer Levin's Compulsion Trial and Ben Hecht's Zionist Pageants”*

The next open meeting of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society will feature a talk by our president, Walter Roth, marking the publication of the paperback edition of his book, *Looking Backward—True Stories from Chicago's Jewish Past*.



The meeting will be held on Sunday afternoon, September 17, in the chapel of Temple Sholom, 3480 North Lake Shore Drive, Chicago. The program will begin at 2:00 p.m. following a social hour with refreshments at 1:00 p.m. and a brief annual meeting with election of members to the Board of Directors. A book-signing will follow the program.

Mr. Roth will speak on two fascinating chapters of his book: one concerns author Meyer Levin's courtroom battle with Nathan Leopold over the publication of *Compulsion*, Levin's fictionalized account of the Loeb and Leopold “crime of the century;” the other tells of screenwriter Ben Hecht's transformation into an ardent Zionist and his subsequent authorship of two provocative pageants—*We Will Never Die* and *A Flag is Born*.

Admission is free and open to the public. The Temple Sholom parking lot is south of the temple, on Stratford Street, facing the temple entrance. For information call the Society office at (312) 663-5634. ❖

Sunday, October 29—Save the Date! *Chicago Architecture Foundation &* *Chicago Jewish Historical Society Program:* *“Remembering North Lawndale”*

Dr. Irving Cutler will present a lecture entitled “Lawndale—Then and Now,” on Sunday afternoon, October 29, in the John Buck Company Lecture Hall Gallery at the ArchiCenter, 224 South Michigan Avenue. The program will begin at 2:00 p.m. following a social hour with refreshments at 1:00 p.m. Admission is free and open to the public, but reservations are required for this event. RSVP ismith@architecture.org or phone the Chicago Architecture Foundation at (312) 922-3432 extension 224.

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President's Column



Walter Roth

A GERMAN-JEWISH DIALOGUE.

My wife Chaya and I attended an evening meeting on June 22 at the Selfhelp Home, 908 West Argyle Street, a retirement home originally established on the South Side of Chicago in 1950 for Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany. With the passage of over half a century, the Home today is greatly expanded. Its current facility houses one hundred-fifty Jewish residents, many of whom are neither refugees nor from Germany.

We were invited to the meeting by Gerald Franks, a member of our Society who co-chaired the event. It was sponsored by the American Jewish Committee and the German Consulate General as part of their ongoing series of German-Jewish dialogues. The chairman of the meeting was Deputy Consul General Peter Primus.

The principal guests were seven German high school students, thirteen to seventeen years of age, and several of their teachers.

They were introduced by David Sperling, who is associated with Northeastern Illinois University. He explained that the youngsters are visiting various cities in the United States to learn about American Jewry as part of a special project promoted by their hometown, Bünde, which is located in northwest Germany near Hanover.

Today Bünde has a population of about forty-five thousand, none of whom are Jews. By November 1938, at the time of *Kristallnacht*, many of the Jewish residents of Bünde had managed to escape from Germany; there were about two hundred-fifty Jews remaining in the town. Only three of them survived the Holocaust.

The students from Bünde have taken oral history interviews about their town's Jews and have participated in a "weeping stones" project—inscribing stones, each with a murdered Jew's name on it, and displaying them in the town. One of the teachers and some of the students gave short talks about their perceptions of what had occurred in Germany and what they had learned about Jewish life. It was a very moving experience, winding up with one student singing a beautiful lullaby in Yiddish.

The presentation was followed by a question and comment period, which was quite difficult. Some of the elderly members of the audience asked what the students had done to learn about their own families' roles during the persecution of the Jews. Most answered that their grandparents and parents did not want to talk about it at all, or claimed they knew nothing about what happened to the Jews. Sharp retorts from some in the audience, who wanted the students to become more involved, brought tears to the eyes of some of the youngsters. The boy who had sung the Yiddish lullaby, when pushed on the question about what he was doing with his family, answered: "I am learning how to convert to Judaism."

This brought applause from the audience, and basically brought an end to this immensely honest dialogue. I must add that the sharp

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Chicago Jewish History

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North Lawndale continued from page 1

Dr. Cutler, a founding CJHS Board member and author of *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*, will trace the history of Lawndale from its earliest settlement to the present. Members of our Society, many of whom are former residents of North Lawndale, will reflect on living in the neighborhood. As previously noted, please RSVP by phone or online to the Chicago Architecture Foundation, not to the CJHS office. ❖

■ CAF EXHIBITION

September 20–November 18

“Learning from North Lawndale: Past, Present → Future”

Cost Free

Location Atrium Gallery at the ArchiCenter
224 South Michigan Avenue

■ CAF BUS TOUR

Sunday, October 15 1:00 p.m.—5:00 p.m.

“Visiting North Lawndale with the Chicago Jewish Historical Society”

Cost \$40, \$35 students; \$30 for CAF and CJHS members

Location The John Buck Company Lecture Hall Gallery
at the ArchiCenter, 224 South Michigan Avenue

RSVP (312) 922-3432 extension 224, or reserve online at
www.architecture.org. Space is limited to 50 people.

Led by Dr. Irving Cutler. The tour of “synagogue row” along Douglas and Independence Boulevards includes three former Jewish institutions that are on the 2006 Ten Most Endangered Historic Places list, as well as the former Jewish People’s Institute (JPI), which is on the National Register of Historic Places. Other places of interest include the William Le Baron Jenney-designed Douglas Park, two major ethnic-founded hospitals, the historic Central Park Theater, the former Sears, Roebuck and Company headquarters complex, the Marks Nathan Orphanage, schools and youth facilities, and housing at Kedvale Square, Lawndale Manor, and along Millard Ave.

■ SELECTED CAF LUNCHTIME PROGRAMS

Cost Free

Location The John Buck Company Lecture Hall Gallery
at the ArchiCenter, 224 South Michigan Avenue

Wednesday, September 20 12:15 p.m.—1:00 p.m.

“The History of Sears, Roebuck & Company”

John Oharenko, author

Wednesday, September 27 12:15 p.m.—1:00 p.m.

“Route 66 in North Lawndale: A Journey through History”

David G. Clark, highway historian and author of
Exploring Route 66 in Chicagoland

Wednesday, October 18 12:15 p.m.—1:00 p.m.

“The Transformation of Synagogues to Baptist Churches in Chicago”

Suzanne Morgan, founder, The Center for Religious Architecture

Wednesday, November 15 12:15 p.m.—1:00 p.m.

“Chicago in the Sixties: Remembering a Time of Change”

Neal Samors, author

Clare Greenberg Honored as a “Jewish Chicagoan of the Year 2006”



Clare (Chaikey) Greenberg.

Photograph by Joe Kus
for Chicago Jewish News.

Chicago Jewish Historical Society Board Member Clare (Chaikey) Greenberg has been named one of ten “Jewish Chicagoans of the Year 2006” by *The Chicago Jewish News*. Profiles of all the honorees appear in the current *CJN Guide*.

Chaikey personifies Jewish activism in her deep devotion to the welfare of the State of Israel through the Labor Zionist Movement and her commitment to the future of the Yiddish language and culture.

Her professional career as a librarian has benefited all seekers of information about Chicago, including our own CJHS researchers.

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Albert Davis Lasker

“The Father of Modern Advertising”

BY WALTER ROTH

This is the story of an extraordinary person who was born in Germany as an American citizen, came to Chicago at the age of eighteen, and lived here for over forty years. During that time, he developed new advertising methods that helped him amass a great fortune, win a place in Chicago's elite Jewish society, and become a great benefactor to charities. His name was Albert Davis Lasker.

He was born on May 1, 1880 in Freiberg, Germany, when his parents, American citizens, were visiting their German homeland. His father, Morris, born in 1840, was an immigrant of liberal views who had settled in Galveston, Texas. The family returned to Galveston when Albert was six weeks old, and he lived there until he left for Chicago.

Morris and the Lasker family originally came from a town named Lask, in what was German East Prussia, and is now Poland. They were peddler-merchants. In 1856, when Morris was 16 years of age, he decided to emigrate to the United States, as did thousands of Germans in the aftermath of the social uprisings of 1848. Anti-Semitism suddenly grew and made it hard for liberal-minded, educated Jews such as Morris to pursue an intellectual life. He landed in Virginia but decided to move on to Texas, which offered employment opportunities for the immigrant, if not intellectual ones.

When the Civil War began, Morris was living in a small Texas town which joined the Confederacy. He later wrote that he had no choice but to fight for the South in several battles despite his Union sympathies. After the war he and a partner became peddlers, riding a mule wagon on desolate Texas trails. Soon he found himself in Galveston, where he set up the Lasker Real Estate Company. He also opened a number of banks which became very successful.

Morris had an older brother, Eduard who remained in Germany and became a well-known lawyer, publicist,

and liberal politician. He was one of the first Jews strong enough to openly attack anti-Semitism. Eduard supported Otto Bismarck in his campaign to unite the German states, and he is often cited as one of the architects of the plan of unification. After the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, Bismarck succeeded in forming a united Germany, but he turned against the Liberal Party of which Eduard was a leader, and it became Bismarck's ambition “to break the hated Jew.” He did so after a bitter struggle, and in 1879 Eduard lost his seat in the Reichstag. Eduard, a revered figure in the family, came to visit Morris and his family in 1883, and died suddenly of a heart attack in New York the following year. The United States Congress passed a resolution memorializing Eduard for his devotion to “free liberal ideas.”



Young Businessman Albert Lasker.
American Business Hall of Fame.

Morris had married a young woman who was a third generation American of German Jewish parentage. Her name was Nettie Heidenheimer Davis (her father had changed his name from Schmulian.) and they had eight children. Morris's banks and a new milling business were prospering. Then, in 1893, a financial panic gripped the nation and his banks and real estate business collapsed. He sent his family to Germany for a year because life there would be cheaper. Albert stayed with his

father in Texas. They closed their large house, and father and son lived in a small rented room. In time Morris rebuilt his wealth. He became a shrewd grain trader and was elected president of the Galveston Cotton Exchange. Later, he served one term as a State Senator in the Texas Legislature.

Albert was a precocious boy with an interest in journalism. He decided to go into business on his own at the age of twelve. He wrote, edited, and published a four-page newspaper he called the *Galveston Free Press*, for which he also sold advertising. Copies of the *Free Press* are still available in archives.

While in high school, he also worked for his father, learning how to run a successful business. Upon graduation in 1896, he did not go on to college. Instead, the ambitious and impatient sixteen-year-old joined the staff of the *Galveston News* at a weekly salary of forty dollars, a large amount for the time.

His career as a newspaper reporter ended suddenly, in less than two years, after he wrote a review of a theatrical performance that he didn't attend. Albert had seen the actors and the play many times, so he felt confident in writing his review and going out of town for a brief escapade with a young lady. The next morning his review appeared, but the theater had burned down before the play was performed. He was humiliated and quit the newspaper. Father and son decided that Albert should leave Galveston temporarily.

Morris was owed a favor by an advertising agency in Chicago called Lord & Thomas. Representatives of L & T came to Galveston and offered Albert a position. He accepted the job with reluctance, as he was very close to his father. But he had to get away from Galveston, and his shame, for a while. Albert Lasker was to remain with Lord & Thomas for over forty years, making Chicago his chief place of residence and rarely returning to his home town.

Morris Lasker died in 1916 at age 76, leaving a substantial fortune. Albert, his executor, sold all of his father's extensive real estate holdings; he remembered Morris's devastating real estate losses in 1893. A huge oil field was later discovered on this land. It was said that if Albert had kept it he would have become a billionaire rather than the multi-millionaire he did become.

Albert began working as a clerk at Lord & Thomas in an office then located near Marshall Field's. His salary was ten dollars a week for the first year. Then he began soliciting accounts in person and was an immediate success. He also asked L & T to give him accounts that were losing money, and he was a success with these accounts, too. He began writing advertising copy. Within a very short time, his talents so impressed his employers, that in 1903, when Lord retired, Albert was able to purchase his share. He became a partner in Lord & Thomas at twenty-four years of age.

At this time, he met a Canadian, John E. Kennedy, who was writing successful copy for Dr. Shoop's Restorative, a patent medicine. Lasker later recalled that it was Kennedy who taught him a new concept: "Advertising is salesmanship in print."

The typical advertising of the day repeated the product's name with a catchphrase. Lasker dismissed this kind of advertising as "sloganizing." Kennedy taught him that in an ad, the unique benefit of the product should be identified and promoted (even though, in truth, the benefit might not be unique nor even actually beneficial). An illustration in an ad should not be "art for art's sake," but should add emphasis to the message of the copy, just as an editorial cartoon adds punch to the text of the editorial.

Kennedy was hired by Lord & Thomas, and America's first advertising copywriting training program was born. The agency hired many reporters and taught them to write successful copy. When Kennedy left the agency in 1907 to open his own business, Lasker hired

Claude C. Hopkins, already a successful advertising writer. He worked closely with Lasker and remained at the agency for the next eighteen years.

Lasker worked for nearly four hundred accounts during his career in Chicago. Three brand names in

particular illustrate his new product advertising technique: Palmolive, Kotex, and Lucky Strike.

He took a soap developed by a small firm from palm and olive oils, named it Palmolive, advertised that its use would help any woman "keep that schoolgirl complexion," and made it a worldwide best-seller.

He created a merchandising as well as an advertising breakthrough for Kotex. Women had previously had to ask the pharmacist for sanitary napkins, which caused embarrassment. He commissioned the design of a Kotex box that could be displayed openly on store shelves, and created advertising—"How the Society Woman, the Debutante, Meets the Demands of Daily Modern Life"—that hit just the right note. Lasker made Kotex one of the largest selling products made by Kimberly-Clark (of which he became a major shareholder).

For Lucky Strike cigarettes, "Reach for a Lucky Instead of a Sweet," was an all too successful appeal to women, who represented a previously untapped market.



An early ad for Albert Lasker's agency.

Lasker *continued from page 5*

The American Tobacco Company, which owned Lucky Strike, became a huge client for Lord & Thomas. Lasker fought attempts by doctors and cancer prevention groups to put a warning about the dangers of smoking on cigarette packages. He felt it was an invasion of freedom of speech, and that Americans could choose whether or not to smoke.

Lasker's extraordinary energy and business talents brought him many successes outside the advertising world. The fortune that he amassed in the years prior to 1942, of course, helped him greatly in gaining status in the community.

He was particularly interested in politics. Like his father, he was a Republican, as were many Jews after the Civil War. Like his father, he also believed that European wars and religious strife should be avoided by America. He knew and liked Theodore Roosevelt. After the end of World War I, Lasker joined T.R.'s campaign against President Wilson in his struggle to bring The United States into the League of Nations.

Then, in 1919, Roosevelt died, Wilson suffered a stroke that incapacitated him, and the 1920 Presidential campaign then became a wide open affair. Lasker was a leader of the Republican National Committee, contributing a great deal of his money and advertising skills to the election of Warren G. Harding, with large posters of the handsome man, promoting him as an "old-fashioned sage" who could be relied on to return the nation to post-war "normalcy." Lasker was correct about America's isolationist mood, and Harding was elected. Lasker then resigned from the Republican National Committee and returned full time to L & T.

Baseball was a game he knew and loved. He became deeply involved in the sport in 1916 when he bought a majority interest in the Chicago Cubs; his friend William Wrigley purchased a minority interest. Then in 1919 came the notorious scandal involving the bribery of Chicago White Sox baseball players. Lasker almost single-handedly brought about the creation of a commission of club owners to deal with the scandal. He worked with a leading Chicago attorney, Alfred S. Austrian, and his partners at a leading Chicago Jewish law firm to have a Federal judge, Kenesaw Mountain Landis, appointed as the first Commissioner of Baseball with authority to deal with the pending scandal and future problems as they arose. For reasons not readily apparent (perhaps he disliked being associated with a loser), he sold his interest in the Chicago Cubs to Wrigley in 1925. But Lasker and

Wrigley did maintain a business connection; when the Wrigley Building was completed in 1924, Lord & Thomas was among the first businesses to move into the prestigious new skyscraper, the first major building north of the Chicago River on Michigan Avenue.

Lasker's sport then became golf, which he played with the pros at his own 18-hole course on his Mill Road estate in Lake Forest, for which he spent in excess of \$4,000,000. The estate was noted for its beautiful gardens, pools, hiking trails and wooded areas. At its center was a fifty-room French-style manor house. In 1939 he donated the estate to the University of Chicago as a research facility and for recreational purposes.

President Harding took Lasker away from business again when he appointed him to head the U.S. Shipping Board. There Lasker undertook the difficult job of settling a huge financial scandal and supervised the building of a new fleet of ships; his great leadership skills were again in evidence. In 1922, he returned to Chicago and his firm, where his fortune grew immensely. In addition to his Lake Forest estate, he built a beautiful house in Glencoe adjoining the Lake Shore Country Club. Later the Lasker family also resided in an eighteen-room townhouse at Burton Place and Dearborn Parkway on Chicago's Gold Coast.

As his wealth grew, he became friends with Chicago's Jewish elite. Among them was Louis Eckstein, the original donor of the land on which the Ravinia Music Pavilion stands. Lasker's closest friend was said to be John Hertz, the founder of the Yellow Cab Company, and a partner in his business ventures. Lasker credited John Hertz with selling most of the securities in their joint account just before the November 1929 stock market crash. Hertz owned a beautiful farm in Cary, near Lake Forest, where he raised racehorses, including a winner of the Kentucky Derby.

As the Depression deepened, Lasker helped many of his friends with financial aid. He was close to the Harold Foreman family, which owned a majority interest in one of Chicago's largest banks (and his daughter Mary was married to one of the Foreman's sons). Despite advancing \$2,000,000 to the bank, Lasker could not save it from being absorbed by the First National Bank of Chicago. Although he lost his \$2,000,000 investment, he did become a director of the First National for many years.

Lasker began to question some of the policies of the Republican Party, particularly those of President Hoover in the early 1930s. Later, with the rise of anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany, Lasker began to modify his isolationist attitude. He respected many of the policies of Franklin D. Roosevelt and met with him at the

White House. He backed the Lend-Lease program that assisted a beleaguered England. Many Republicans opposed the program. He broke with his good friend Robert Maynard Hutchins, Chancellor of The University of Chicago, who remained a staunch isolationist until the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

Lasker became politically active again in the 1940 Presidential election, as a floor leader of the Illinois delegation to the Republican Convention and in the campaign to elect the remarkable candidate, Wendell L. Willkie.

Although Willkie lost to Roosevelt, he influenced changes in the Republican party toward a more internationalist outlook.



Philanthropist Albert Lasker.
American Business Hall of Fame.

Lasker retired as president of Lord & Thomas in 1938 and decided to leave the company and Chicago in 1942. He resigned as Trustee of The University of Chicago, a position he had held for over five years, liquidated the firm so the name Lord & Thomas would cease to be used, and transferred to himself the cash and other assets of the business.

At the same time, he was instrumental in creating a new firm. Its owner-managers were three of the principal officers of Lord & Thomas: Emerson Foote in New York, Fairfax Cone in Chicago, and Don Belding in Los Angeles (none of them Jewish). Lasker solicited all of his clients to continue with the new firm, and all but one stayed with Foote, Cone & Belding.

Lasker was active in Jewish affairs, particularly in civil rights and philanthropy. He was a director of the Jewish Charities of Chicago and a member of the executive board of the American Jewish Committee. The latter organization was active in the Leo Frank case, involving the unjust arrest in 1914 of a young Jewish businessman in Atlanta for the alleged murder of a young Christian girl employed at his factory. Lasker devoted almost a year of his time and contributed over a \$100,000 to defend Frank, who was, despite all efforts, found guilty and then lynched by a mob.

Soon thereafter, he contributed \$75,000 to the purchase of a farm in Pennsylvania where poor Russian Jewish immigrants could be taken from the city slums to be trained in agriculture. He also contributed money to Hadassah and other Jewish organizations.

He was married three times. In 1902 he married Flora Warner, who was Jewish. Though severely ill in the early years of their marriage, she bore him three children and lived until 1936. They had two daughters, Mary (Mrs. Leigh B. Block, after her divorce from Gerhard Foreman)* and Frances (Mrs. Sidney Brody); and a son, Edward. His second marriage, in 1939, to Doris Kenyon, a young screen actress, ended in divorce after about a month.

His third marriage, in 1940, was to Mary Woodard Reinhardt, a New York industrial designer, who initiated and supervised many of Albert's philanthropic projects. They established the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation to support medical research. In 1944, Albert spearheaded a fund-raising drive that nearly doubled the amount of

money spent on cancer research in the United States. He pursued the idea of getting the federal government more involved in medical research. Largely through Albert Lasker's efforts the National Institutes of Health was established in 1946-50.

In 1950, two years before his death, Lasker and his wife visited Israel. He called this trip the high point of his life. For the first time, he declared, he understood the concept of the Jewish people.

In spite of his successes in business, public service, and philanthropy, he was considered a "loner." During his years in advertising, a business in which Jews were a small minority. Lasker operated his agency without any partners. Albert Davis Lasker died on May 30, 1952. Private funeral services were held at the Lasker residence in New York City. His wife Mary died in 1994. ❖

WALTER ROTH, a practicing attorney, is president of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society.

* *Albert Lasker's daughter Mary and her husband Leigh Block were distinguished art collectors. In 1980 they donated funds to Northwestern University for the establishment of an art exhibition facility. The initial collection, which has grown through donations and purchases to approximately 4,000 works of art, is now housed in Northwestern's new Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, 40 Arts Circle Drive, Evanston, where a wide range of the university's fine arts activities take place.*

June 3 to August 27: Gail Shapiro Exhibit in Michigan City Celebrates Summers of Long Ago

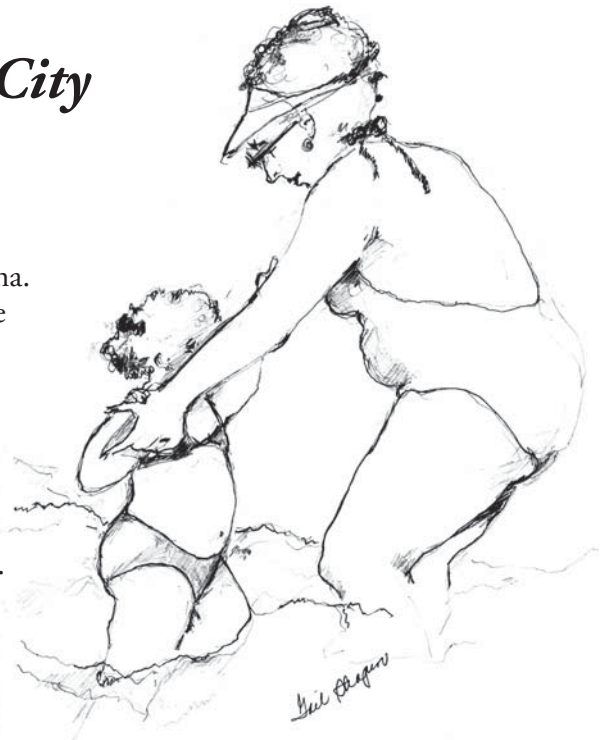
RECENT PAINTINGS by Chicagoan Gail Shapiro are on exhibit through Sunday, August 27, at the Lubeznik Center for the Arts, 101 Avenue of the Arts (West Second Street), Michigan City, Indiana.

Her exuberant acrylic representations of “vintage” beachgoers are inspired by her memories of Union Pier, Michigan in the 1940s. Gail Shapiro studied art with Leo Segedin at Northeastern Illinois University. She is a member of our Society.

Shapiro writes: “As a little girl I spent wonderful days in what is now so elegantly called Harbor Country. Back then it was simply an oasis for Chicagoans. No war or hot city streets—only freedom for women and children—while the men stayed behind and worked. Even during the Second World War we could spend a few months pretending the world was not on fire.”

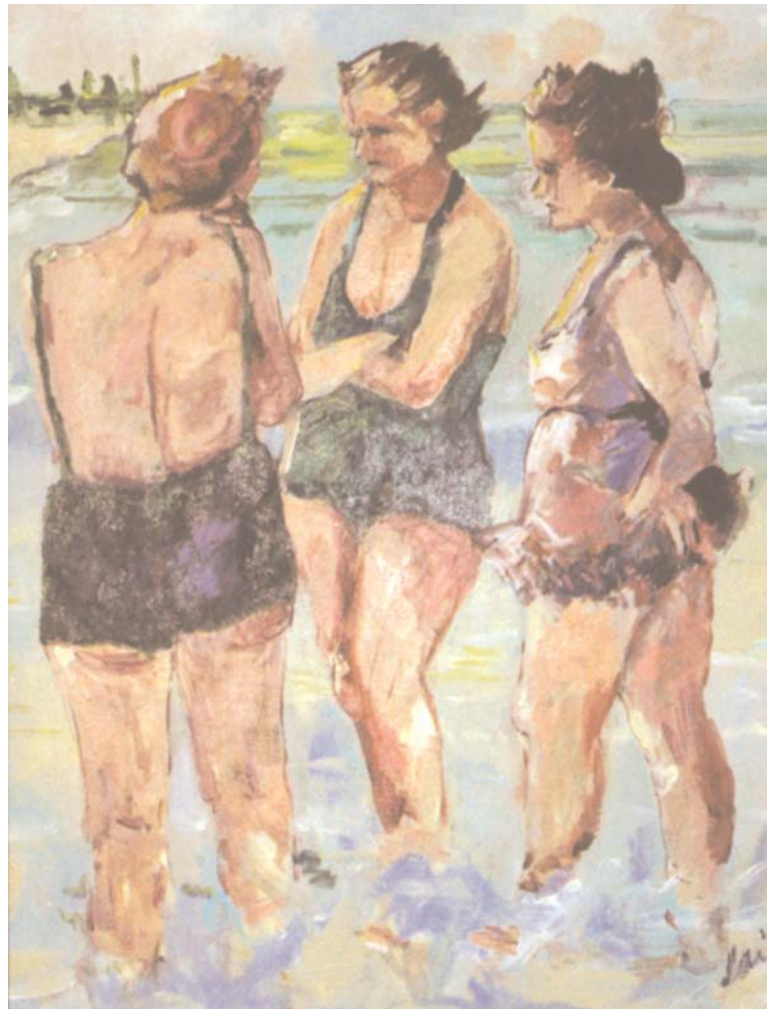
Sharing the gallery are new three-dimensional works by Shirley Engelstein.

**Hours: Tuesday to Friday 10-5; Saturday & Sunday 11-4.
Closed Monday. (219) 874-4900
www.lubeznikcenter.org**



Welcome, New Members of CJHS

Rhea Bertelli
Shelley Davis
Ann Flower
Laurel Glickstein
Helen Goodfriend
Burton & Libby Hoffman
Sanford & Barbara Kahn
Myrna Knepler
Elaine Lieberman
Paul Malevitz
Dan & Gini Maxime
Dr. & Mrs. Roland Medansky
Bernard T. Meister
Jodi Oskin
Ellen Rosen
Sol & Carolyn Rosen
Stanley Rosen
Ann Suloway
David E. Young



Acrylic painting and pencil drawing by Gail Shapiro.

A Traveling Exhibition from the
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

“Varian Fry, Assignment: Rescue”
August 26 to October 26

Buchanan Center for the Arts
64 Public Square, Monmouth, Illinois

An exhibition about Emergency Rescue Committee volunteer Varian Fry’s rescue efforts in Vichy France during early World War II. Fry’s work helped save more than 2,000 people from the Nazis, including famous writers, artists, and intellectuals Franz Werfel, Leon Feuchtwanger, Marc Chagall, Max Ernst, Jacques Lipchitz, and Hannah Arendt.

With special thanks to the Len G. Everett Foundation and Monmouth Implement. The exhibit is supported in part by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.

Hours: Tuesday to Friday 9-5; Saturday 10-2.
Closed Sunday & Monday. Admission Free.
(309) 734-3033 <http://bcaarts.org>

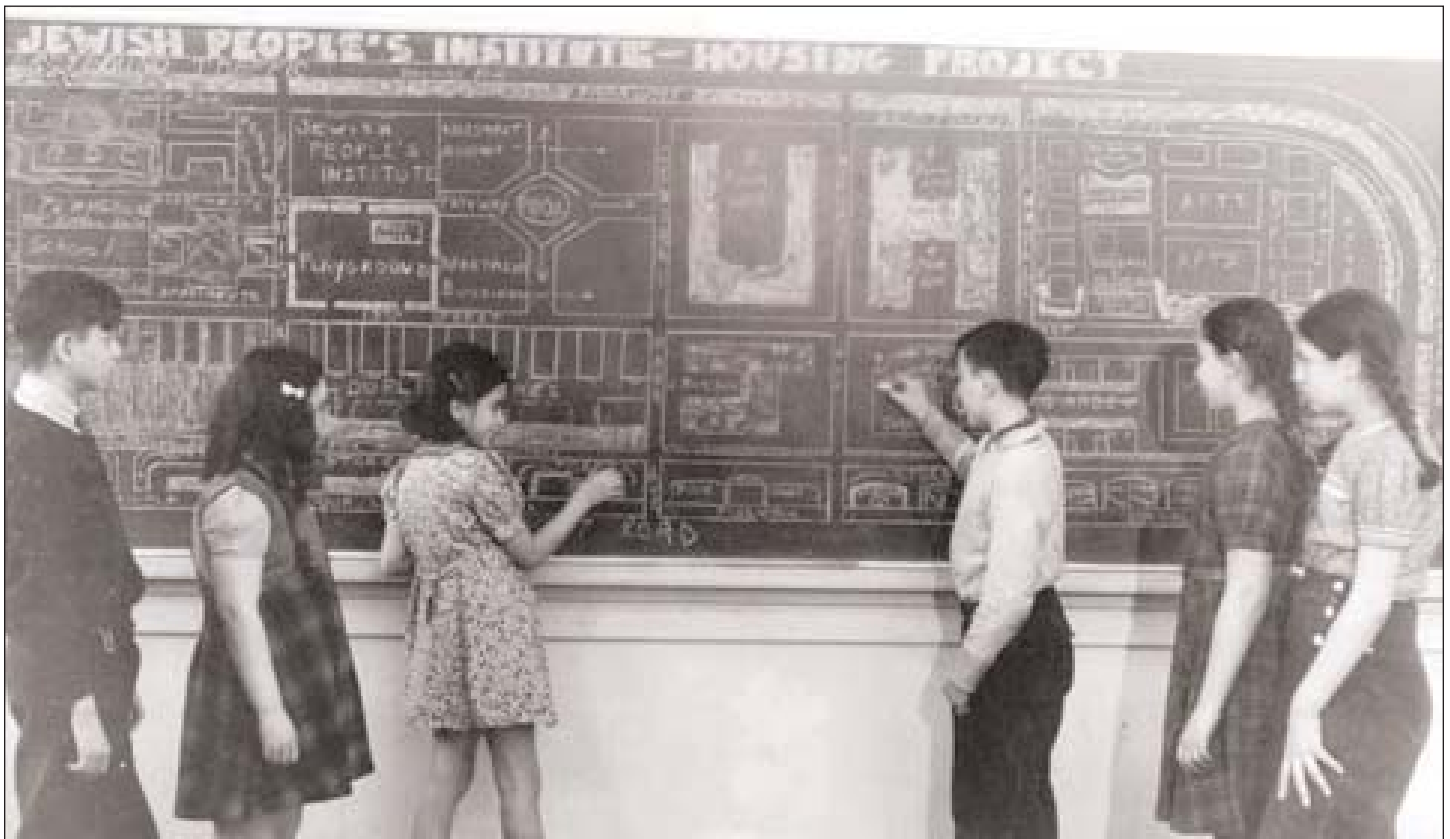
***“Common Ground:
Lawndale’s Shared History”***

Spertus Off-Site Exhibit Reopens September 5
at Lawndale Community Academy
(formerly the Jewish People’s Institute)
3500 West Douglas Blvd. at St. Louis Avenue

Lawndale was once home to roughly 40% of Chicago’s Jewish population. Today it has evolved into a vibrant African-American community. The staff of Spertus Museum has partnered with students at Lawndale Community Academy to create this exhibition that traces the history of their neighborhood and their school, which for decades housed the JPI, a major community center for Chicago Jewry recognized nationally for its successful educational, religious, vocational and recreational activities.

Reopens September 5 and remains on view
during regular school hours through the
2006-2007 school year.

This exhibition will be open from 9 to 3 during regular school session. Please check the CPS calendar to ensure that school is in session before visiting the exhibition.



Young people at the Jewish People’s Institute complete a map of North Lawndale, circa 1950.

Courtesy of Chicago History Museum.

THE JEWS OF MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL

CJHS June 4 Open Meeting: Marshall High School “Reunion” Featured Talks by Notable Alumni



Bernard Horwich JCC, June 4, 2006. (From left) Irv Bemoras, Izzy Acker, CJHS Program Chair Charles B. Bernstein, Seymour H. Persky, Ronnie Orzoff Robbins. Photograph by Sidney Bass.

An audience of over one hundred-fifty persons attended our June 4 open meeting at the Bernard Horwich JCC, 3003 West Touhy Avenue, for the program: “The Jews of Marshall High School.” CJHS Vice-President Burt Robin opened the meeting, noting that he is a Calumet High alumnus. (This was followed by murmurs of “South Side” from the crowd.)

Our Society’s Marshall heritage then emerged: Membership Chair Dr. Rachele Gold (Mather) pointed out that both her parents are Marshall alumni. Program Chair Charles B. Bernstein (Bowen) told us that his mother is a Marshall alumna, class of January 1932.

This program was suggested by Board member Harold T. Berc (January ’32). He addressed us briefly about his belief that the best historians of Jewish achievement are those who learned their civic duty and their place in the world during their high school years.

Ned Lufrano (June ’50) stepped up to lead us in singing *The Marshall Loyalty*, and promised to conclude the program with *The Commandos’ Fight Song*.

Then we heard from our four guest speakers.

Seymour H. Persky (June ’40) is an attorney, real estate developer, architectural historian, and art collector whose philanthropy benefits the Jewish community and the city at large. He served in the Army Air Force in World War II, then earned a BA from Roosevelt University and a JD from the DePaul University Law School. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society.

Mr. Persky began his talk in Yiddish, thanking such a big crowd for attending his bar mitzvah! (When the laughter died down, he told us that his actual bar

mitzvah took place in back of a candy store at 1611 South Spaulding, where his impoverished family lived.)

He spoke movingly about coming to Marshall as an inadequately prepared elementary school student. He joined the Boys’ Glee Club, where he met fellows who introduced him to literature, culture, and self-respect, preparing him to go on to success in college and later life, able to provide for his family and himself.

Izzy Acker (January ’42) was a member of the Marshall Juniors (height: five feet, eight inches and under) basketball teams that won ninety-eight straight games over four years. He attended the University of Michigan for one semester, enlisted in the Marines, and served for three and a half years. He returned to Michigan for his degree in Education, and taught school for a year, but found that it did not suit him. He worked as a route man for the Crib Diaper Service, then became a partner in the business until his retirement.

Mr. Acker took us back to 1936 when he played basketball daily at Lawson playground and at the nearby ABC (American Boys’ Commonwealth, funded by Jewish Charities, where the director was Bosco Levine, assisted by Joe Tadelman). Teams at the ABC competed among themselves and at tournaments around the city. Izzy’s teammates were bound for Marshall High; he lived in the Manley district. Izzy’s father talked to Jake Arvey, and Izzy got a permit to attend Marshall.

The game of basketball at that time was slow and low-scoring, requiring a jump ball after every basket. Marshall’s team was good, but poorly coached by the hot-tempered Ernie Wills. Izzy was a sub without

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THE JEWS OF MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL

Late 1940s to 1950s: The Last Years of Marshall's Significant Jewish Presence

BY RONNIE ORZOFF ROBBINS

Following are edited excerpts from the talk given by Ms. Robbins at our open meeting on June 4, 2006, published in this form with her permission.

Our Marshall area was known by various terms, including “The Great West Side.” The area had been a golden ghetto. Unfortunately, by 1950, the edges were fraying and the gold was tarnishing. Newer, more gleaming ghettos were beckoning upwardly mobile Jewish West Siders—Albany Park, Rogers Park, South Shore, and even Austin.

Whereas, in earlier times, transfer permits to Marshall were often issued to Jewish students living in the neighboring Farragut and Harrison districts, by the late 1940s, there were Jewish students who desired a more “elite” high school with snob appeal; they sought permits to attend Austin High. In my opinion, they were foolish. In the years I attended Marshall—from September 1946 to June 1950—the education we received was superb.

The majority of Marshallites were enrolled in the College Preparatory curriculum. We studied Algebra and Geometry, followed by Calculus and Trigonometry; Biology, Botany, and Zoology, followed by Chemistry and Physics, with serious labs in these science classes.

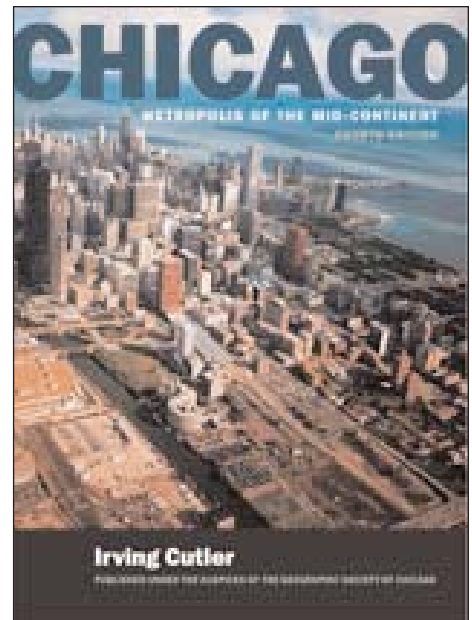
A foreign language was mandatory and French, German, Latin, and Spanish were offered. (Until the early 1940s, Hebrew had also been offered at Marshall, taught by Samuel Seligman. In our time, he taught only Latin and Spanish.) Latin classes overflowed with aspiring doctors and lawyers; it was advised that one study Latin before entering those disciplines.

There was another “foreign” language spoken at Marshall, originating in the neighborhood I came from, Franklin Park. Located west of Crawford, our park was bounded by 14th and 15th Streets and Tripp and Kolin Avenues. We created our own semi-backward language known as “Kraflin Karp Speak,” acknowledged in the neighborhood and spoken by Marshallites and others. It was a fun, “in” thing; even North Siders were aware of our language. Marshall became “Sharmall,” and at basketball games we would cheer our wonderful team: “We togga niw! We togga niw! Tel’s og!”

Marshall had a full symphony orchestra and concert band. My classmate, Samuel Magad, was our orchestra’s concertmaster. He went on to become concertmaster of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The art department was headed by the legendary George Weisenburg. An Art Major was offered, and Mr. Weisenburg nurtured his talented, ambitious students. We had modern dance and ballet groups, a glee club for boys and one for girls, and a mixed chorus led by the formidable Waldemar Zutz.

We students produced high quality publications: a four-page newspaper, *The Marshall News*, and a yearbook, *The Marshall Review*. Juniors could take Journalism in place of English. The best writers in the class would be chosen to staff the *News* and *Review*. The Journalism teacher and *News* advisor was Michael Brady. He told me: “You can write, Ronnie!” With his

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New Edition of Cutler Book

The fourth edition of *Chicago: Metropolis of the Mid-Continent* by Irving Cutler has been published by Southern Illinois University Press.

Dr. Cutler skillfully weaves together the history, economy, and culture of the city and its suburbs with a special emphasis on the role of the many ethnic and racial groups that comprise the “real Chicago” of its neighborhoods.

This book is available through major retailers, online vendors, and independent booksellers. (400 pages, 294 illustrations, \$22.95 paper)

FROM THE CHICAGO JEWISH archives

There is no article by Archives Director Joy Kingsolver in this issue. She is writing a follow-up to “A Mysterious Douglas Park Festival” (*CJH* Spring 2006) for our fall issue. Yes, sharp-eyed readers, the pictured Bikkurim Festival took place in 1939, not 1959.

ED MAZUR'S PAGES FROM THE PAST

This new *CJH* feature presents selections I have gathered from local Jewish periodicals of the past. I think they bring a “you are there” immediacy to the long-ago happenings in our community. My source was the Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey Microfilm Collection at the Harold Washington Library Center, 400 South State Street.

In the autumn of 1936 the Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey was organized under the Works Progress Administration (WPA) of Illinois. The purpose of the Survey was to translate and classify selected news articles appearing in Chicago's foreign language press from 1861 to 1938. The Survey was officially sponsored by the Chicago Public Library and had the support of the Newberry Library, the Chicago Historical Society, and the John Crerar Library. The History departments of the University of Chicago and Northwestern University endorsed the project.

Financial curtailments in the WPA program ended the Survey in October 1941. The Chicago Public Library published the work in 1942. The project consists of a file of 120,000 typewritten pages from newspapers of 22 different foreign language communities in Chicago.

Yiddish is the foreign language of the Jewish press in the Survey, with articles from the *Jewish Advance* (weekly), 1881; *Jewish Daily Courier*, 1906-28; *Jewish Daily Forward*, 1919-32; *Jewish Labor World* (weekly) 1908, 1916-19; and *Jewish Standard* (weekly) April 1908-July 1909.

English language periodicals are also included—the *Chicago Jewish Chronicle*, Chicago Hebrew Institute *Observer*, *Occident*, *Reform Advocate*, and *Sentinel*—as well as the publications of our charitable institutions, communal organizations, and synagogues. In all, 16,298 pages of the Survey illuminate the Jewish experience.

DR. EDWARD H. MAZUR, a member of the *CJHS* Board of Directors, is an urban historian, professor emeritus at City Colleges of Chicago, and consultant to the International Visitors Center of Chicago.

“RUSSIAN AND TURKISH SHOWER AND TUB BATHS.

Singer's Bath House, 1100 W. 14th announces that beginning November 1, 1921, our prices for baths and beds for resting will be 25 cents. Tub baths and kosher Mikvah for women every day from 7 a.m. until 12 Midnight. Turkish baths for Ladies every Wednesday, from 2 p.m. to 12 Midnight.”

—*Forward*, November 1, 1921.

“**The cornerstone of the new Hebrew School** which the Orthodox Congregation Kehilath Jacob is erecting at 15th Street and Hamlin Avenue, was dedicated last Sunday. The new building will provide facilities for 800 children and will house various communal activities. The Kehilath Jacob Hebrew School is already considered one of the most modern and efficient in the country, and the new structure will enable it to extend its work.”—*Sentinel*, week of May 9, 1924.

“**A contribution of \$3,000,000** made recently by Julius Rosenwald to the Museum of Science and Industry, to be located in the reconstructed Fine Arts building in Jackson Park, has been increased to \$5,000,000. This became known when Leo F. Wormsor filed a brief in the Supreme Court at Springfield to remove the last obstacle to the rehabilitation of the Fine Arts Building.”—*Chicago Jewish Chronicle*, April 11, 1930

“**The Jewish People's Institute** has undertaken a tremendous piece of work which should receive the whole-hearted cooperation and support of all who are interested in the future of the Jewish youth of our great city. With the closing of Crane Jr. College, a large number of Jewish boys and girls who have started out on a professional career are unable to continue their studies. Dr. Philip L. Seman, Executive Director of the Jewish People's Institute, realizes the necessity of helping these ambitious Jewish students of small means, and is organizing a first class Jr. College where the curriculum will be of such high standing that credits will be given to graduates by acknowledged universities. For those residing in the immediate vicinity of the JPI, which is located at Douglas Boulevard and St. Louis Avenue, in the heart of the Lawndale district, this Jr. College will be a God-send, as it will not only save them time and carfare, but also a considerable amount in fees which, to poor students, is an item of consequence. The fees at the JPI, for Jr. College students, will be less than other similar institutions charge, while the curriculum will equal that of any of the accredited colleges.”—*Chicago Jewish Chronicle*, September 29, 1933

Robbins

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coaching and his critiquing, I wrote and wrote! I was appointed Feature Editor of the *News*, and throughout my life I have continued to write.

Students in the Commercial curriculum had a full range of business and technical classes and workshops, but the basics were required of all students: English, Math, Science, History, Civics, Music, and Art.

In Civics class we were taught how our government works. We learned the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. We could hardly wait until we were old enough to vote.

During my Senior year I was one of a select group of students who were privileged to sit around a large u-shaped table in Frances Farrell's American History class. We were in a college seminar environment rather than in the usual rows of desks and seats. Our texts were primary sources, not superficial high school-level history books.

We would read our assignments at home, then Mrs. Farrell, a true intellectual, would question us and lead us in a critical discussion and exploration of the assigned topic.

I can see the faces of my inspirational teachers, Mrs. Farrell and Mr. Brady, as clearly now as I did then.

At that time there were students at Marshall who could *not* see. We were one of the few city high schools where visually handicapped students, perhaps twenty-five of them, attended classes with the rest of us. They navigated the school corridors on their own, took notes in class with a special Braille stylus, and received help from student volunteers, of which I was one. We would read to them from texts that had no Braille editions. They would

dictate their homework to us and we would type it up for them to submit.

It was in Ralph Lewis's freshman orchestra class, where I was learning to play the cello, that I met my first African-American friends, four girls who were bass players. I admired the way their instruments responded to their touch. Inez Jones would pluck her strings and twirl her fiddle and I would stand in awe. My cello and I were always reluctant partners.

My class entered in September 1946 with approximately three hundred students; about ninety percent were Jewish, the rest Christian. We had perhaps ten black students and a few Asians. When we graduated in June 1950, the percentages remained about the same. The African-American students now numbered about fifteen. We were probably the last class that had almost unchanged demographics from entry to graduation.

After graduation, I was living at home with my family and attending the University of Illinois at Chicago, then located at Navy Pier. Racial residential patterns were changing in our segregated city as working-class African-Americans sought better living conditions. One evening my parents told me the neighborhood news: an African-American family had "crossed Crawford." They had bought a house on Komensky and 14th, a block west of Crawford Avenue. Within the same week, another home was sold to an African-American, this time on Karlov, two blocks west of Crawford. This was the beginning of the "blockbusting" phenomenon in our neighborhood. Fearful of "the other," landlords began planning to sell their houses and apartment buildings; tenants began moving.

By 1957, the Marshall student body was approximately fifty percent African-American. At this point the

racial change in North Lawndale was complete; now began the change in East and West Garfield Park—from Independence/Hamlin to Cicero. By the very early 1960s there were no more Jewish students at Marshall.

I will conclude with a comment made to me by the late Sanford Kirsch, a fellow "Sharmallite" from Franklin Park, who was my neighbor in Highland Park, and for many years a fellow attorney on Chicago's LaSalle Street.

Returning from court one day and reminiscing about our youth, Sandy said: "Ronnie, we West Siders were all poor—but the fact is—we didn't know it!"

True, Sandy, we were cash poor—but we knew we were rich in learning, spirit, and ambition instilled in us in our Jewish homes and at Marshall High. ❖

Greenberg

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She served as director of the Newspaper Division of the Municipal Reference Library in City Hall from 1957 until her retirement in 1990.

This invaluable clip file was her creation, and it was named the Clare P. Greenberg Newspaper Collection in her honor.

Chaikey brings her professional expertise, generous spirit, and lively interest in all things "Jewish Chicago" to the volunteer work she continues to do for our Society. We remember her late husband, Danny Greenberg, who was also an active member of our Board of Directors. Both Clare and Danny contributed articles to *Chicago Jewish History*. ❖

Marshall High

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playing time. The rules of the game changed in 1938, but Coach Wills did not. Change came to Marshall in 1939 when Wills announced he would no longer coach basketball. His replacement was the thirty-three-year-old, soft-spoken, amiable Lou Weintraub.

Coach Weintraub initiated a “fast breaking offense” and a physical conditioning program. The team began scoring 40 to 50 points a game, and went undefeated in their division. Manley won its division, too, so two West Side teams—ten Jewish kids—competed for the City Championship. Marshall won and began the ninety-eight game win streak. A *Chicago Sun* sportswriter dubbed them the “Commandos” and that became the official team name.

Five teams participated in the ninety-eight game streak. They are all commemorated at the Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Massachusetts. Lou Weintraub is in the Illinois Coaches Hall of Fame.

Irv Bemoras (January '49) also got his start at Lawson and the ABC, where his basketball talent was first recognized by Marvin Rose—who was in attendance at our program.

Bemoras led Marshall's Seniors to the City of Chicago Basketball Championship and a trip to the “Sweet Sixteen” State Tournament in Champaign in 1948.

He told us what led up to that great year: after the Juniors had won the Public League Championship in 1947, their star, Seymour (Bimbo) Gantman, was moved to the Senior team. He was their first “point guard,” passing to Bemoras for his jump shot.

Stardom at Marshall gave Bemoras a springboard to the University of Illinois, where he played on Big Ten Championship teams in '50-51 and '51-52, and the Army Championship Team during his two-year service. He earned a degree in Economics at Illinois, and has a



Elizabeth Stein: Self-Portrait, circa 1993. Ms. Stein is shown with a “cruncher”—equipment used in the demolition of the Oscar Mayer Chicago meatpacking plant. From her photographic series “Monuments of Destruction.”

Remembering Elizabeth Stein

Elizabeth Stein, artist, art educator, and benefactor of young artists, died at Northwestern Hospital on May 5, 2006, at the age of 99. An alumna of the School of the Art Institute and longtime teacher in Bloomington, Illinois, Ms. Stein's last home was an apartment on North Lake Shore Drive.

Walter Roth and Norman Schwartz of CJHS visited her there in 1999 for an oral history interview, intending to discuss her notable forebears, the pioneer German-Jewish Chicago families: the Greenebaums, Felsenthals, Schaffners, Spiegels, and Harts.

Ms. Stein directed them to a different story, about her family's business. A. Stein & Co. manufactured the Paris Garter for men and Perma-Lift foundation garments for women. The factory, with its impressive clock tower, was located at 1143 West Congress Street. We think you will enjoy reading the resulting article (*CJH* Fall 1999), available on our website. ❖

successful career in the insurance business. He has been active in the “M” Club alumni, the B'nai B'rith Sports Lodge, and most recently, in the fast-growing social and charitable GVS (Great Vest Side) men's club.

Ronnie Orzoff Robbins (June '50) was a pioneer—the only girl in her Marshall class whose uninterrupted career path led from high school to college (BA, Roosevelt University) and directly to law school (JD, DePaul). She became an attorney and practiced law for many years. *Excerpts from her talk start on page 11.* ❖

President's Column *continued from page 2*

questions I mentioned did not necessarily represent the views of many others in the audience who felt that the sincere efforts of these young students are good for German-Jewish relations.

David Sperling reminded the audience that Bünde was the birthplace of Samuel Rosenwald, the father of the great Chicago Jewish businessman and philanthropist, Julius Rosenwald. Samuel left Bünde in 1854 to immigrate to America, where his eldest son, Julius, was born. (We also learned that David Sperling is a distant relative of Julius Rosenwald.)

On the evening of June 27, not long after the meeting at the Selfhelp Home, Chaya and I attended a program at the Newberry Library, co-sponsored by the Chicago Jewish Historical Society, where Peter Ascoli discussed and signed copies of his recently published biography of his grandfather, *Julius Rosenwald: The Man Who Built Sears, Roebuck and Advanced the Cause of Black Education in the American South*. Mr. Ascoli is a member of CJHS, and we were pleased to help launch his fine book.

Let me take this opportunity to wish our membership, families and friends *shana tova*—a Happy and Healthy New Year. ❖

Calling All CJHS Writers, Artists, and Performers!

November is Jewish Book Month. Every year the fall issue of *Chicago Jewish History* features a complete list of the Society's own publications as well as other published works by our members. We are pleased to see the list grow longer each year! If you have published a book, or illustrated one, or have published a music or spoken word recording, send us the details on the form below. ***If your work was listed in the Fall 2005 issue, it will be included again this year. But if you wish to inform us of any information updates—in price, format, description, or ordering—please do so on the form below.***

Mail this form or a photocopy to the Society office.

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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 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 invite you to take part. Please contact any of the committee chairpersons listed here.

■ Membership Committee

Dr. Rachele Gold
(773) 338-6975 and
Mark Mandle
(773) 929-2853, Co-Chairs

■ Oral History Committee

Dr. N. Sue Weiler, Chair
(312) 922-2294

■ Program Committee

Charles B. Bernstein, Chair
(773) 324-6362

■ Tour Committee

Leah Axelrod, Chair
(847) 432-7003

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/Family	50
Senior Family/Synagogue/ Organization/Individual	35

Make checks payable to the Chicago Jewish Historical Society, and mail to our office at 618 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60605. Dues are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

www.chicagojewishhistory.org

The Society is now online! Browse our web site for information about our upcoming programs. Read past issues of our quarterly journal.

Discover links to many interesting Jewish sites. Use the printable membership application. We welcome your inquiries and comments.

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Look to the rock from which you were born
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