

# Texas Jewish Historical Society

Preserving Jewish Heritage in Texas  
Est. 1980



Volume 7, Number 1, January, 2007

## The New TJHS Board of Directors



*TJHS members and the new Board of Directors, elected at the 27th Annual Gathering of the Texas Jewish Historical Society. Front row, left to right: Marvin Rich (immediate Past President), Beverly Trachtenberg (Vice President), Vickie Vogel (President), Mitzi Milstein (Vice President), Blanche Sheiness, Ben Pfeffer (Treasurer), and Barry Green (Parliamentarian). Second row, left to right: Selma Mantel, Shirley Rich, Lynn Greenberg, Mabel Massin, Sally Drayer (Historian), Rusty Milstein, Hollace Weiner, Joyce Gerrick, Nancy Hoffman, and Max Stool. Top row, left to right: David Bach, David Vogel, Sherry Zander, Barbara Rosenberg, Jan Hart (Corresponding Secretary), Charles Hart, Jack Gerrick, Ralph Marks, and Ed Katten.*

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# Fresh Beginnings

A Message from TJHS President  
Vickie Vogel

2007 is a new year for the Texas Jewish Historical Society and time brings change. Our news magazine has a new look, because we have a new editor. We send our thanks to Susan Elsner Furman who has produced our quarterly publication for the past few years. Our new editor is Alexa Kirk, who is actually a former



editor, and we welcome her back.

One small change we have made is in the numbering of the issues, which in the past has been inconsistent, which made it difficult to determine if you were missing an issue. We begin the year with Volume 7 (since this is 2007) No. 1, January 2007. We hope this will make it easier for you to organize your collection and be sure it is complete.

The major event for this year is the publication of our new book, *Lone Stars of David: The Jews of Texas*, compiled and edited by Hollace

Weiner and Kenneth D. Roseman. I know each of you will want to own a copy. Our book marketing committee, ably chaired by past TJHS president Barbara Rosenberg, can help.

A new directory of our membership is due out this year. It is your responsibility to check your listing for accuracy, and keep us updated on changes in your name, address, phone number, and email address. We want our directory to be as accurate as possible, for as long as possible. Send corrections or updates to [leonhb@flash.net](mailto:leonhb@flash.net).

Another change will be our meeting locations, which change every year. Have you ever attended one of our quarterly meetings? If not, you are missing out on a fun weekend of learning, exploring, dining, and visiting with interesting people. Our meetings are scattered throughout the state, so one will be convenient for you. Try a weekend getaway with TJHS!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Vickie Vogel".

President

TJHS Outgoing President Marvin Rich prepares to receive the Past President's pin from President Elect Vickie Vogel.



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## Got Cost-Codes? In Search of Kabbalic Accounting

by Greg Meyer

Do you have anecdotes about your family's business? Have you heard in passing about various cost-codes once used on goods for sale? The cost-codes were phrases typically totaling 10 characters, which represented numbers 1-9 and 0. Rabbi Floyd Fierman documented a few of these in his book, *Roots and Boats*, but I think we in the TJHS

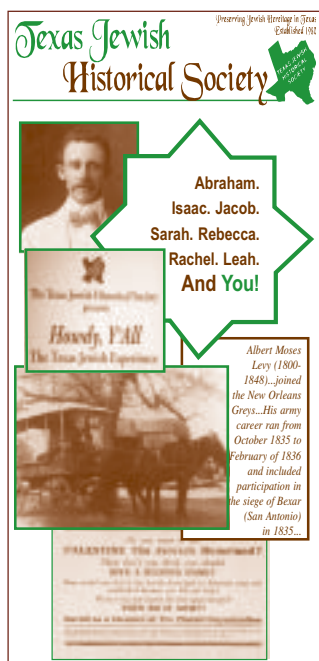
can do better!

Rabbi Fierman's work includes Zales using "DIRTCHEAPX," with DIX representing either \$120 or \$1.20. The sales clerk would then know how much of a mark down could be extended to the customer so the merchandise could be moved/sold and the store could still make a profit.

Levine's Department Store used

JEWISH LUCK. Do you know other cost codes use in Jewish businesses? Or do you know someone who may? If you have cost codes to share, please send them to Greg Meyer, P.O. Box 781254, San Antonio, TX 78278, or email to [gmeyer1@satx.rr.com](mailto:gmeyer1@satx.rr.com). Thanks for your help!

## Is Your Information Correct?



It isn't often that we call ourselves or look up our information. Then again, it takes a village to build the Texas Jewish Historical Society's Biennial Directory. As a member, you are part of the village. The new directory is being prepared! Add new information and correct errors using the form inside the back cover of this news magazine. Check the UPDATE box on the form and mail it by February 1st. Thanks for your help!

- **Name(s)** - spelling? Maiden Name (if applicable)?
- **Address** - including apt. number? Zip code?
- **Email address** - accurate? Same provider?
- **Phone number** - Area code?
- **Fax number** - If you have a fax, is it included?

Thank you for your help with this process and if you have changes, please email them to Leon Brachman at leonhb@flash.net. If you don't have email, then send your changes to TJHS, P.O. Box 10193, Austin, TX 78766-0193. Thank you very much!

## The Texas Jewish Historical Society Volume 7, No. 1, January 2007 Quarterly News Magazine

The Texas Jewish Historical Society News Magazine is published four times annually. Stories about Texas Jewish history, oral histories, and requests for assistance with research are welcome, as are photographs and historical documents. Please provide color photocopies or scan at 300 dpi or greater, in .gif, .tif, or .jpg format and send electronically to Associate Editor Davie Lou Solka at davielou@solka.net or mail to 501 Place, Corpus Christi, TX 78411, 361-852-5815. Make sure to include your name and contact information.

**Publisher-Editor** Alexa Kirk  
**Assistant Editor** Davie Lou Solka  
**Photographer** Marvin Rich

Note: The Texas Jewish Historical Society is unable to guarantee the safe receipt and/or return of documents or photographs. It is strongly recommended that only color photocopies of both color and black & white documents be provided. We welcome your comments and suggestions.



## MAZEL TOV to the following Texas Jewish Historical Society members:

**RUTH CLEARFIELD** of College Station, Texas, was honored with a Points of Light Award which was presented to her personally by President George H.W. Bush. The award was presented to Ms. Clearfield at the Bush Presidential Library and Museum in College Station on February 5, 2006. The Points of Light Foundation gives the award to outstanding individuals or organizations from across the country each day to give President Bush a "living report" on the foundation's progress.

**DOROTHY HARELIK** received the Hamilton (Texas) Chamber of Commerce Lifetime Achievement Award.

**JEAN AND MARVIN ROSENBAUM** of Baytown, Texas were selected as one of five finalists for 2006 Citizen of the Year.

*Please send information for this column to Davie Lou Solka at davielou@solka.net. Thanks.*

**The Texas Jewish Historical Society accepts matching funds from corporations. Please advise if your gift can be used in this manner.**

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# The Story of Morris Seligman

by David Seligman

Morris Seligman was born in Czarist Russia in a small town he called Altinovka. His town was in the state of Minsk in the Bobruikovo district. He was one of twelve children of his father and the last of three wives. His family farmed and had some cattle and perhaps other animals.

Morris had a minimum of education: a few years in a Heder and about five years of schooling. His father and the family spoke Russian as well as Yiddish common among Jews in the area. He continued his education on an informal basis for the rest of his life.

He evidently wanted to come to America to escape the draft of the Czar to which he would be subject when he reached nineteen. He was issued a passport in October, 1912, which was good for one year. A step-sister who lived in Houston, Texas agreed to sponsor him. Morris, who was then sixteen, traveled from his town to Bremen, Germany to catch a boat to Texas.

We believe that he made the journey from Russia to Germany with a cousin, Maurice Rifkin, who had a sponsor in Philadelphia. The ship, according to his ticket, was the Cassel, of the Norddeutscher Lloyd Line, which left Bremen on March 6, 1913. The fare was 140 marks.

Morris arrived in Galveston, Texas and entered customs through that port to join his sister in Houston. It is not clear if he worked in the Southern Pacific Railroad shops before or after he joined the Army. He declared his intention for U.S. citizenship in 1916. His Certificate of Naturalization was issued while in the



Quartermaster Detachment at Camp Logan of Ellington Field. He was honorably discharged in March, 1919.

Morris then went to work for Levy Bros. Dry Goods Co. in the packing and shipping department. He stayed in Mrs. Pepper's boarding house with other young Jewish men. At some time, he met Louise Landa, who was the daughter of a widow who had moved to Houston from Hallettsville in order to support herself and two daughters.

Morris and Louise were married by Rabbi Henry Barnstone of Congregation Beth Israel of Houston on June 18, 1922. Shortly thereafter they moved to Huntsville to go into business with Louise's mother, Mrs. Dave (Dora) Landa, and her brother, Louis Cohn, in the dry-goods business.

During the time he was in Houston, Morris made a great effort to become "Americanized." He believed

that if a person wanted to be an American, then he should be acquainted with the language and the customs. Even from my earliest recollections, my father never had a Russian accent but spoke perfect English.

My folks owned a Model T Ford in Houston but when they moved to Huntsville, they had to get an Essex (which had gears to shift) to accommodate the hills. Eventually, they settled in El Campo where they opened a store of their own. They were active in the community and had many Jewish friends. They played cards and visited friends in surrounding towns. Instead of staying at home on Sundays, many times they drove to surrounding towns to visit friends and family.

My father learned to play golf at a local course. He joined the Masons and eventually became 32nd degree Shriner. My parents were successful because of their likability and they continued to run their business until the Depression took its toll in the thirties.

Ever since his childhood, Morris loved animals. Growing up, we had a cow, chickens, and other animals in the backyard for many years. Unfortunately, the depression was not kind to us and we moved several times following my father's jobs with different stores in Rosenberg and Livingston.

Our final destination was in Edna, Jackson County, Texas. There, Morris went into the business of clothing and furniture with some friends and partners. He was always a friendly person with a positive outlook. He

*continued on page 10*

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# Speakers Bureau

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When an organization asks TJHS for a speaker, we will suggest those on our list who match the criteria. That organization is responsible for making contact with the speaker and handling any details. No re-

muneration (other than expenses, lodging, meals, etc.) is provided to the speaker. If you would like to be included in this database, please provide the following information:



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email (print clearly): \_\_\_\_\_

Topic(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Length: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Length: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Length: \_\_\_\_\_

Brief description of each topic (use back of sheet if needed):

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Distance you are willing to travel: \_\_\_\_\_

Restrictions or special requirements: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

*Mail this information to:  
Beverly Beck Trachtenberg, 5517 Shadow Crest, Houston, TX 77096,  
or email it to [Jake1924@aol.com](mailto:Jake1924@aol.com).*

# Temple Beth El's Former Building in Corpus Christi Now Has a Historical Marker

by Davie Lou Solka

The former building of Temple Beth El of Corpus Christi has been deemed eligible for a historical marker from the Texas Historical Commission. The dedication of the marker was held Sunday, October 16, 2005. The congregation built the first Jewish place of worship in Corpus Christi at 1315 Craig Street in 1936, and occupied the building until 1983 when it moved to 4402 Saratoga Boulevard.

The building was sold to the Montessori School of Corpus Christi, and then sold again in 1991 to the Metropolitan Community Church. Space was rented to Loving Spoon-

ful, a free kitchen and pantry for people living with HIV and AIDS, and the South Texas Interfaith Council. In June, 2005, the church sold the building to Loving Spoonful, but continues to hold services in the sanctuary.

The original chandeliers, stained glass windows, and rows of seats marked with a Star of David are still in place, which helped obtain the historical marker. The building is also recorded as a Texas Historic Landmark. This is the second historical marker for the Jewish community with Hebrew Rest Cemetery holding the first one.

The marker reads as follows:

"Jewish settlers came to Corpus Christi shortly after the city's founding in 1852. Several became prominent business owners and community leaders. In the 1870s, the Jewish community formed a Hebrew Benevolent Society. In 1912, they formed a congregation, which included both Orthodox and Reform families. Services were held irregularly in various places until 1928, when the Congregation officially organized, elected officers, and purchased this site.

In 1936, the Congregation, called Temple Beth El, hired architect Dex-

*continued on page 9*

## Can You Help?

*Can you help Mr. Martinez, who is researching the Sephardic Jewish Carvajal family?*

Roger L. Martinez is conducting his dissertation research on a Sephardic Jewish and converso family in Spain, Portugal, England and the Americas. Specifically, he is investigating the 500-year lineage of the Spanish Carvajal Family from 1200 to 1700. He is a doctoral candidate in the Department of History at the University of Texas at Austin, and is asking for help in obtaining critical historical manuscripts from the Inquisition records from the Canary Islands. He believes the manuscripts are in the hands of a private collector or institution, and would like for anyone who has information to contact him at roger.martinez@mail.utexas.edu, call him at 512-471-3166, or fax him at 512-475-7222.

*This letter was also received by TJHS.*

*If you have information that could help Mr. Cahn, please let him know!*

I am interested in tracing my family tree and am tracing the descendants of my great-grandfather's brother, David Cahn, who emigrated to the U.S. in 1882. I am nearly there. I have found out that his great-grandson (there is only one descendant at this level) was named Michael Livingston, and was living in Austin, Texas, in 1975 when his grandfather was buried in Dallas. He would have been born in the second half of the 1940s since his mother, Mary Kaufman Livingston, was married in 1945.

Michael had four children in 1975, so there are likely to be Livingston descendants aged around 30-35 in the Austin area. I wondered if you had any records of them or if they had been members of your association.

No Michael Livingston currently appears to be living in Austin (at least from a search of the telephone directory), so he may have moved away. In which case any indication of where he moved would be welcomed. Any advice or help from anyone in your group would be most welcomed.

With all best regards from the Carpathian foothills near Krakow.

Yours sincerely,  
Martin Cahn  
Martin and Agnieszka Cahn  
ul. Sikorskiego 8  
32-400 MYSLENICE  
Poland  
+48 12 272 2850  
martin@tf.com.pl

# 28th Annual Gathering: Midland/Odessa

April 20-22, 2007  
Permian Basin

by Susan Furman

Planning is well underway for the Texas Jewish Historical Society's 28th Annual Gathering, slated for the weekend of April 20, 2007. Chairman and TJHS Board Member Roy Elsner says, "Jews and non-Jews alike in the Odessa-Midland commu-

nity and surrounding area are excited to be hosting Jewish Texans from around the state. There is something about West Texas and the people who live here. Their pride is showing, and I'm certain their energy will be evident throughout what promises to be a fun, interesting weekend."

Co-chairing the 28th Annual Gathering is Temple Beth El Synagogue President Dr. Frank Kasman. "We formed committees several months ago and they immediately rolled up their sleeves and went to work planning events and activities," Elsner said. The Gathering promises to be entertaining, fun, and memorable for all," he added. People attending are easily served by Southwest Airlines, which frequently offers discounted fares ranging from \$34 to \$49 each way. The area is located 360 miles west of Dallas, 240 miles east of El Paso. "The area's Five-Star MCM Elegante will serve as host hotel. Our TJHS family will enjoy a wonderful weekend," Elsner said.

Relaxing, sight-seeing, and enjoying will be the theme for the April 20th weekend. The Elegante Hotel is the premier property in the Elegante line of hotels and suites. "The Odessa-Midland area is chock-full of West Texas hospitality, a priceless quality," says Elsner. This is one of the area's best hotels, with lots of down-home hospitality, so everyone is bound to have an excellent time.

According to Elsner, the agenda is filling rapidly. Scheduled activities include Friday evening Shabbat Services conducted by Dr. Sydney Zimelman of Ft. Worth, Temple Beth El's rabbi since 1999. Two outstanding programs have been tentatively scheduled. One concerns a famous American Reform Rabbi, Roland

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## Contributions

*The following donations have been received by the Texas Jewish Historical Society since July 1, 2006*

### In Honor of

Larry Schooler's Birthday

### From

Marcia Schooler

### In Memory of

Blanche Sheiness

### From

Mr. and Mrs. David Vogel  
Mille Zalim  
Ima Joy Gandler  
Diane Sheiness  
Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Leshin  
Dr. and Mrs. Larry Wilk  
Fred Zeidman  
Drs. Rosenblum  
V.F. Salinger  
Mr. and Mrs. Allen Mondell  
Merilee Weiner  
Mr. and Mrs. Larry Krasner  
Alice Music Study Club

### In Memory of

Libbie Stool

### From

Ima Joy Gandler  
Mr. and Mrs. Winston Heidenheimer  
Mr. and Mrs. Charles B. Hart  
Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Leshin

### In Memory of

Milton T. Smith

### From

Mr. and Mrs. Charles B. Hart  
Ima Joy Gandler  
Dr. and Mrs. Larry Wilk

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# Obituaries

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## Libbie Stool

© *El Paso Times – El Paso, Texas*

Libbie Stool, age 79, of San Antonio, died Wednesday, September 6, 2006.

Judaism and Civic activities were very important to her. Libbie and Max spent most of their married life in



Del Rio. She was president of the Val Verde County Library Board when the new library was constructed. Libbie was a founding member of the Pan American Round Table. She was an active parent in the 4H Club, the PTA, and a member of the Val Verde Friends of the Arts, who purchased a new 9-foot Steinway concert Grand Piano. She was also co-founder of Family Planning in Val Verde County. Libbie was Val Verde County co-chairman for the successful campaign to elect Ann Richards for Governor. She was a member of the National Council for Jewish Women. Libbie had many friends who enjoyed her good humor, intellect, and cooperative ways.

She was preceded in death by her brother, Dr. Louis Polsky. Survivors are: loving husband of 59 years, Max Stool; sons, Ethan Stool and wife, Patti; and Ben L. Stool and wife, Michele Ritter; daughter, Elizabeth Friedman and husband, Dr. David Friedman; grandsons, Justin Stool, Samuel Friedman and Asher Friedman; granddaughters, Rebekah Stool, Sydney Friedman and Rachel Friedman. Grandma Libbie will always be lovingly remembered.

Libbie was laid to rest in Ft. Sam Houston National Cemetery, 1520 Harry Wurzbach San Antonio, TX US 78209, 210-820-3893 on Monday, September 11, 2006 at 10:30 AM.

## Milton T. Smith Austin

Milton T. Smith, Past President of the Texas Jewish Historical Society, died October 29, 2006, in Austin, Texas. Milton was a true gentleman, a mentor and a man known and loved for his philanthropic and humanitarian way of living. He was a true example of a Mensch.



Milton Theodore Smith was born September 11, 1911 in Detroit, Michigan to Harry and Lillian (Pincus) Smith, and when he was three months old, the family moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. They then moved to San Antonio, Texas in 1924, where he attended school and apprenticed with cabinet and furniture makers. He moved to Austin after his graduation from high school and started Economy Upholstery with his father and two younger brothers. This developed into Economy Furniture Industries and was the largest and most successful industry in the Southwest.

In 1938, he married Helen Gross of Brooklyn, New York, and they were married 64 years until her sudden death in 2002. Together they established the Moshana Foundation, and have contributed time and funding to many organizations, including B'nai Brith and B'nai Brith Women, Goodwill Industries, Hillel Foundations at the University of Texas and Texas A&M, Hospice, Austin's Christopher

House, Ronald McDonald House, the People's Community Clinic, and the Weizmann Institute of Science.

Milton and Helen were members of Congregation Beth Israel in Austin, where Milton served as President from 1953-55. They were responsible for bringing the Leon Uris Collection to the Ransom Center at the University of Texas, and contributed scholarships in other academic studies and programs. In 1967, Congregation Beth Israel named the auditorium for Helen and Milton Smith in recognition of their generosity through the years.

Milton is survived by his daughters and their husbands, Lonnie and Albert Taub and Tina and Paul Gardner; grandchildren, Brian and Mary Karotkin, Leslie Karotkin, Michael and Beth Karotkin, Todd and Stacey



Gardner; his bonus grandchildren, Toni Taub, Carolyn Hyde, Tina and Arnie Montemayor; and his great-grandchildren, Wesley and Jennifer Karotkin, Avery Gardner, Gabi and Carmen Montemayor; his sister-in-law, Shirley Weinberger of Washington, D.C.; Richard S. Karotkin of Fort Worth, Texas; and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins who always held a special place in his heart.

Milton T. Smith was buried at Beth Israel III, Cook-Walden/Capital Parks Cemetery in Pflugerville, Texas.



## Midland Civic and Community Leader Dave Hoff dies at age 83

The West Texas Jewish Community suffered a severe loss on September 30, 2006, with the passing of David (Dave) Hoff, age 83, of Midland. Dave died as a result of complications from heart disease. He was laid to rest on Sunday, October 1, 2006, in the new Temple Beth El Gardens in Odessa.

Dave and his wife of nearly sixty years, Ruth (Plotkin) Hoff, have been members of the Texas Jewish Historical Society almost since its inception. A pillar of the Midland and Odessa communities, Dave moved to West Texas in the 1960s, where he and Ruth raised four children – Bruce, Faye, and twins Betsy and Judy.

Dave was born in St. Louis, Missouri. He enjoyed careers in construction, manufacturing, and retail electronics. A founder and past president of Temple Beth El, he served on its Board of Directors since the 1960s. Dave was very active in B'nai B'rith and held almost every position in the organization. He was largely responsible for the success of both the local B'nai B'rith and its B'nai B'rith Youth Organization (B.B.Y.O.) chapter.

A man who took great pride in his family, his career and his religious life, Dave worked tirelessly to give back, and to make the world a better place. His care and concern for humankind will forever remain in the hearts and memories of those who were privileged to know him.

In addition to Ruth, Dave is survived by his children and their spouses, nine grandchildren, numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins, and a host of loving friends.

## Blanche Sheiness Corpus Christi

Blanche Sheiness, long time Historian of the Texas Jewish Historical Society, passed away October 17, 2006, in Houston, Texas.

Blanche was born November 24, 1913 to Ida and Harry Ladabam in San Antonio, Texas and moved to Laredo with her family when she was a young girl.



Blanche received her teaching degree from the University of Texas in Austin. She married Marvin Sheiness and they moved to Alice, Texas, where they raised their three children, Herschel, Mark, and Sally. Blanche worked with Marvin in his various businesses in Alice, including The Men's Store and Alice Hardware.

In Alice, Blanche was involved with the Music Club, Eastern Star, Texas Exes, and was President of the Brush County A&M Mother's Club. She was also a member of the Corpus Christi Chapter of Hadassah. Blanche and Marvin were affiliated with B'nai Israel Synagogue in Corpus Christi. In 1999, Blanche moved to Houston where she worked with foreign students at the University of Houston to teach them English. She also taught computer skills at The Hampton, where she resided.

Blanche is survived by her children, Herschel and Joyce Sheiness of San Antonio, Mark and Paula Sheiness of Houston, and Sally Drayer of Dallas; her grandchildren, Frank Sheines, Carrie Sheiness of Austin, Aaron and Violeta Drayer of Lima, Peru, Rachel Drayer of Lander, Wyoming, Michelle Drayer of Shanghai, China, and sister-in-law Fay Kahn of St. Louis, Missouri.

Graveside services were held on Friday, October 20, 2006 at Seaside Memorial Park in Corpus Christi, Texas.

## *Beth El's Former Building, continued from page 6*

ter Hamon to design this synagogue. Hamon chose the Spanish Colonial Revival style for the synagogue, which today is a rare example of a Jewish congregational structure built in the style. In 1950, architect Morris Levy added classrooms, an auditorium and other facilities. Hamon's design exhibits Spanish and Mediterranean influences, including two domed towers with iron balconies, red tile roofs, courtyard, arched porticos and an arched motif on the main façade, with stone tablets at the center. A Star of David is centered on the wide arched stone entry.

In 1942, Temple Beth El's Orthodox members organized a new congregation called Shomre Emunah, or "Keepers of the Faith." The Reform congregation continued to worship in this building under the leadership of Rabbi Sidney A. Wolf until 1982, when it moved to a new site on Saratoga Boulevard. The two groups maintained close ties through the years.

Various groups, including a local Montessori School, used the building, which remains a Corpus Christi landmark. In 1991, the Metropolitan Community Church of Corpus Christi purchased it and once again used it as a House of Worship.

Recorded Texas Historic Landmark – 2003"

Temple Beth El and B'nai Israel Synagogue, a Conservative congregation, agreed to merge as one congregation in September 2005, under the new name of Congregation Beth Israel, located at the Saratoga site of Temple Beth El.

was gregarious and interested in other people's ideas and business. Besides his great personality, Morris believed in treating all people equally. He was the first in town to put price tag on every piece of merchandise, so everyone knew the price and did not have to haggle.

Our store was the first to hire an Hispanic. She was our cashier and bookkeeper. Morris opened accounts for credit to a number of blacks and Hispanics; and many farmers had accounts with us. I remember one particularly bad year that he called all the farmers with accounts with us and told them to come in and add whatever they needed to get their kids ready for school. Morris learned enough Spanish to talk to Mexican customers and many years before the US 59 became a freeway and bypassed the town, many travelers from Mexico stopped to purchase gifts for home at the store.

We had our usual group of farm animals in the yard in Edna. One day, Morris came home and said he was buying seven heifers. He told my mother that he could not talk to men on the street unless he owned cows like they did.

That was our start in the cow and calf business. He eventually bought a small ranch and leased other pastures for his several hundred head. Owning land was always important to my father. He bought a farm, too. He took a delight in riding around and working the cattle with his helper. He took an active part in planning the crops to be planted by our farm tenant.

Both my parents were active in the community. My mother was treasurer of the Band Parents and raised

money selling peanuts and sandwiches at games and on the special trains. She belonged to Bridge Clubs and Garden Clubs and Study Clubs. My father was on the City Council and was an adjunct Sunday School teacher at two churches. They were generous to the community; donating to local causes, such as clubs, churches, and schools. My parents were proud of their Jewish heritage and everyone in town knew they were Jewish. When my father became a member of Rotary International, he told them only once that he did not eat pork, and he was served a substitute at all subsequent pork meals.

Morris was always concerned that we observed Jewish customs and holidays. We belonged to the Shearith Israel Synagogue in Wharton when we lived in El Campo. When we moved to Edna, we went back there for services. It was, at that time, an Orthodox congregation. The kids were all playing outside and this did not suit my father. We changed to B'nai Israel Temple in Victoria. This was an active Reform congregation with a Rabbi. My sister and I attended Sunday School regularly and always went to services. My father prevailed upon the Rabbi for me to become a Bar Mitzvah, which was very uncommon in Reform Temples in 1939.

After World War II, my father learned through his cousin in Philadelphia that a niece was the only survivor of his immediate family. All had perished in the Holocaust or in the fighting, which was concentrated in their area. For many years, he arranged to send merchandise to her that she

could trade on the black market in Russia for money.

In the sixties, Morris's cousin Maurice Rifkin, a travel agent, arranged for Louise and Morris to accompany Maury and his wife Lillian on a visit to Russia. They went to Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Tashkent where members of Maury's family lived. When they returned, I never saw my father so depressed. He was appalled at the conditions and conduct in that country. He said in the time that he was there, he never saw anybody smile.

Morris and Louise had long and happy lives, and celebrated fifty-nine years together. Morris is buried in the family plot of the Hallettsville Jewish Cemetery. At his death, he was mourned by his wife Louise; his two children David and wife Helene (Dolly), and Celine and husband Charles Kaplan; and grandchildren Paula, Marian (Sandy), and Daniel Seligman, and Lee, David, Jay, and Nannette Kaplan.

*28th Annual Gathering,  
continued from page 7*

Gittelsohn of Boston, who made the historical speech at the conclusion of the Battle for Iwo Jima during World War II. In addition, as a result of the Society honoring Odessa by having its gathering there, several Permian Basin families have joined our organization.

Please mark your calendar now and look forward to a couple of days where there is much to do and your presence is most appreciated. couple of days where there is much to do and your presence is most appreciated.

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# Book Review: *All the Way From Yoakum: The Personal Journey of a Political Insider*

by Stuart Rockoff, Southern Jewish Historical Society Magazine

Texas Republican Party organizer Marjorie Meyer Arsht, a member of the prominent Houston family that owned Foley Brothers Department Store and gave Cohen House to Rice University, has written an autobiography that captures both small-town life and the oil-rich atmosphere of Houston. In *All the Way from Yoakum: The Personal Journey of a Political Insider*, published this year by Texas A&M University Press, Arsht combines a clear writing style with a colorful life that began with her birth in South Texas in 1914. Her well-illustrated volume also provides an insider's analysis of the infancy and adolescence of today's powerful state Republican Party.

In 1963, when the Texas GOP was of minor influence, Arsht helped launch George H. W. Bush's political career. During a gathering in her Houston home, the elder Bush agreed to run for county Republican chairman. The rest is history. During the Reagan era, Arsht herself became a Republican speechwriter and high-level assistant in the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Arsht had traveled a long way from her native Yoakum, located 35 miles south of Interstate 10 between Houston and San Antonio. Among Yoakum's 4,000 residents were, perhaps, three Jewish families. Arsht's father, who had learned Judaism from Galveston's Rabbi Henry Cohen, shuttled his daughter to Houston and San Antonio for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Arsht's mother, who had grown up in Lafayette, Louisiana, was part of the fashion-famous Bendel family. Her brother was Henri

Bendel, the New York couturier whom many people assume was French rather than an American Jew.

A child prodigy, Arsht graduated high school at age 14 and enrolled in Houston's Rice Institute, now Rice University. While in college, she also attended Sunday School with the Confirmation class at Houston's Congregation Beth Israel. When she realized that one of her final exams fell on Shavuot, the same date as the Confirmation ceremony, she protested all the way to the president of Rice, and arranged to take the final exam later the same date at the campus library.

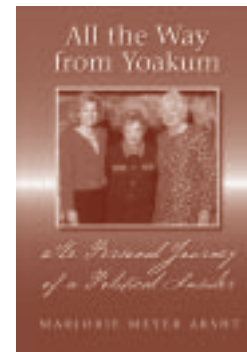
Arsht's grandmother insisted that "well-bred young ladies must speak French," so after graduating Rice, she enrolled in the Sorbonne in Paris. That educational sojourn acquainted her with relatives throughout France and with deep concern for the gathering winds of war. Still young and single, Arsht studied at Columbia University in New York, and then returned to Houston as a 21-year-old school teacher with a job at Hogg Junior High. While working, she lived with her aunt and uncle, Esther and George Cohen, owners of Foley Brothers. A relative who played matchmaker fixed her up with Raymond Arsht, 25, a Houston lawyer from Illinois. Two weeks later, the couple was engaged.

Raymond Arsht later proved to be a "natural" in the developing oil business. Accustomed to blazing her own path, Marjorie Arsht was drawn to Republican politics. During her 1960 vice-presidency of the Beth Israel Sisterhood, the group hosted a political forum featuring two candidates for the Legislature. "At that time, the Repub-

lican party in Texas was so small that a state convention could have been held in almost anyone's living room," she writes. "I listened to an educated, articulate . . . Republican . . .

debate a stumbling, unpleasant Democrat. . . I was committed. I made my first political contribution, five dollars. That one check put me on what few lists existed at that time."

Within two years, the party faithful had convinced Arsht to run for the Legislature. Because Jews were so well represented in civic and business affairs, Arsht's campaign aides assumed the city was home to half a million Jews. The number was closer to 25,000, a figure that translated into fewer than 10,000 voters, few who would vote a Republican ticket. "By running as a Republican, I had broken ranks. Jews were supposed to be Democrats—and liberal at that," Arsht recalls in her memoir. "The Jewish community, which might have been expected to rally to my candidacy, held back . . . There was not one coffee or gathering among my many Jewish friends. They figuratively walked on the other side of the street . . . I understood completely. Where as political appointments were sources of pride, at that time Jews simply didn't run for public office for several reasons. Candidates . . . are targets for all kinds of attacks—some true, some false. Also, among Jews there was a



*continued on page 16*

# Texas Jewish Historical Society Records are Now Online

by Ima Joy Gandler, TJHS Archivist

The Center for American History at the University of Texas is the depository for memorabilia for the Texas Jewish Historical Society. Records at the Center for American History at the University of Texas in Austin are now online. You may add your memorabilia to the Texas Jewish Historical Society Records. To access the Records online, log on to [www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/utcah/00255/cah-00255.html](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/utcah/00255/cah-00255.html).

Items not included are the selected archives and manuscripts collection in the Texas Jewish Collection. To obtain lists in this category, log on to [www.cah.utexas.edu/services/subject\\_guides/subject\\_guide\\_jewish.php](http://www.cah.utexas.edu/services/subject_guides/subject_guide_jewish.php).

The types of materials, originals or copies, that you may add to the Texas Jewish Historical Society Records are as follows:

**PERSONAL PAPERS**—family trees, histories, letters, diaries or journals, passports, naturalization papers, birth certificates, death certificates, records and certificates of marriage, circumcisions, consecrations, Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, confirmations, war records, scrapbook materials such as report cards, graduation certificates, programs, and invitations, other documentary mementos, obituaries, newspaper clippings, recorded or written oral history interviews or memories, legal records such as wills, estate materials, deeds, court records, and contracts, photographs, and photo albums, identified or unidentified.

**BUSINESS PAPERS**—(no active records that are needed to operate)—correspondence, ledgers or record books, classified files, financial records such as receipts, invoices, and inventories, legal records such as contracts, deeds, and court records, flyers, calendars, schedules, posters, memos, business cards, and photographs or photo albums, identified or unidentified.

**PRINTED MATERIALS**—newspapers, books, pamphlets, posters, broadsides, maps, and printed documents.

**LITERARY PRODUCTIONS/WRITINGS**—essays, poetry, fiction, reminiscences, memoirs, oral history, interviews on cassette tapes or narratives, and speeches.

**ORGANIZATIONAL RECORDS**—charters, membership lists, minutes, yearbooks, programs, press releases, correspondence, newsletters, newspapers, and brochures.

**RELIGIOUS MATERIALS**—synagogue records, minutes, programs, brochures, bulletins, record books, membership lists, prayer books, hymn books, photographs or photo albums, identified or unidentified, and cemetery records.

**SOUND MATERIALS**—music or disc, cassette tape or as sheet music, and oral history interviews.

**ARTISTIC MATERIALS**—posters, drawings, and photographs.

*continued on page 19*

## Donations to the Endowment Fund

Extend the life and future of the Texas Jewish Historical Society. When you honor or memorialize a friend or loved one with a contribution to the Society's Endowment Fund, you are extending the life and future of TJHS. Your donations help support important programs.

To honor a friend or loved one, send the honoree's full name, honor (congratulations and occasion, memorial, etc.), and your name (donor name), along with a check in any amount to the Texas Jewish Historical Society, P.O. Box 10193, Austin, TX 78766-0193. Upon receipt of your gift, you will receive an acknowledgement. Thank you for supporting the TJHS.

### TEXAS JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Gratefully acknowledges your gift to its  
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In honor of/memory of \_\_\_\_\_

An acknowledgement will be sent to the party you specify.  
Your gift will further the efforts to record, preserve, and disseminate  
historic information about Texas Jewish culture.

# TJHS Members Meeting in Abilene, October, 2006



*These three pictures were taken by Rusty Milstein during our tour of Fiesta Texas, a museum of the West Texas experience. In the picture to the left is L. David Vogel (TJHS board member). In the picture below is Vickie Vogel, L. David Vogel, and Mitzi Milstein, TJHS Vice President.*



*In the picture above is Vickie Vogel and Hollace Weiner, editor of Lone Stars of David (our new book). Hollace is wearing the boots that will appear on the cover of the book.*



*The two pictures below were taken by Vickie Vogel while TJHS members were lunching at the Cypress Restaurant.*



*Left side of table: Sheila Rosenfield, Herman Morris  
Right side of table (l to r): Mitzi Milstein, Neil Gurwitz,  
Betty Gurwitz, Annette Lackman, Howard Lackman*



*Left to right: Max Stool, Milton Harelik,  
Dorothy Harelik, Seymour Beitscher*

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# The Texas Jewish Historical Society's



*Charles and Jan Hart and Mabel Massin*



*Carol Brin and Hershel Rich*



*Joyce Gerrick and Shirley Rich*



*David Bach*



*TJHS members visit the boxcar exhibit at the Holocaust Museum.*



*Hollace Weiner*



*Shirley Rich*

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# 27th Annual Gathering in Houston



*TJHS Members listen to the speakers.*



*Don and Gertrude Teter and Doris and Ed Katten*



*Royal, Carol, and Janis Brin*



*Sally  
Drayer,  
Blanche  
Sheiness,  
and  
Susan  
Furman*



*Lynn Greenberg and Selma Mantel*



*The four members facing the camera are Jack Gerrick,  
Jan Hart, Sherry Zander, and Charles Hart*

**Book Review, continued from page 11**

fear that if a Jew in elective office did something wrong, all would be held accountable.”

Arsht’s unsuccessful race for the Legislature convinced her that grassroots organization was necessary to build the party. She got to work, and was part of the growth and success of today’s GOP. *All the Way from Yoakum* illustrates, with pictures, today’s powerful Republicans, and how insightful Marjorie Arsht has been. On the book jacket, she stands with former First Lady Barbara Bush and Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison. Inside are professional photos of Arsht with the late Senator John Tower, former President George Bush, and current president George Bush when he was celebrating his father’s nomination to the presidency. In words and pictures, Marjorie Meyer Arsht relates both the remarkable success story of a small-town Jewish family and an inside perspective of the Texas GOP.

## Do You Recognize This?

This postcard was sent to Charles B. Hart, along with a question asking if anyone recognizes the people in it. The back of the picture is inscribed “Greetings from the honeymooners, Manette (or possibly Nanette?) & Leon. Apr 9/19 – Hot Springs, Ark.”

A question asked was “Is it Mannette Bonart?”

If you can help, please contact Charles B. Hart in Temple, TX.





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# Texas Jewish Historical Society 2006-2007

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Mitzi Milstein (Longview) .....	<i>1st Vice-President</i>
Beverly Beck Trachtenberg (Houston) .....	<i>2nd Vice-President</i>
Bob Gindler (Sugar Land) .....	<i>3rd Vice-President</i>
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Open .....	<i>Recording Secretary</i>
Jan Siegel Hart (Temple) .....	<i>Corresponding Secretary</i>
Barry Green (Tyler) .....	<i>Parliamentarian</i>
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# TJHS 28th Annual Gathering

Registration Form

April 20-22, 2007

at the MCM Eleganté Hotel in *Odessa, Texas*

5200 East University - for Reservations, call 1-866-368-5885

Fax 432-362-8958

*The cost is \$84 per night.*

**Reservation Deadline is April 1, 2007**

*This will be an exciting weekend in a beautiful West Texas setting. The MCM Eleganté is a five-star hotel in the middle of West Texas. Nearby, **there's** the Gateway Spa 7 Salon and the Oasis Bar and Grill. You'll be overwhelmed with history. There is the history of the West Texas oil fields, the history of the Odessa/Midland Jewish community, the history of its cemetery, and the history of its association with United States **presidents**. Co-chairmen of this event, Mr. Roy Elsner and Dr. Frank Kasman will show you immense hospitality and you will love your visit to the Texas Jewish Historical Society's 28th Annual Gathering.*

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*Please note: The Registration price will be announced in the near future.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Number attending: \_\_\_\_\_

*Mail to: TJHS, P.O. Box 12061, Odessa, TX 79768*

# Welcome New Members!

*July 1, 2006 - November 30, 2006*

## **AIPAC**

11 Greenway Plaza, Ste. 1520  
Houston, TX 77046

## **Cohen, Bette Jean**

41 Augusta  
Abilene, TX 79606  
bettejcohen@aol.com

## **Cohen, Joan and Daniel**

3760 Rice Blvd.  
Houston, TX 77005  
713-668-4859

## **Eneman, Evelyn**

215 Sidney St.  
Longview, TX 75602  
903-757-9817

## **Farber, Susan and Randal**

5203 S. Braeswood Blvd.  
Houston, TX 77096

## **Fisher, Dr. and Mrs. Sam**

1714 W. Crescent Dr.  
Odessa, TX 79761  
432-366-8162

## **Goodmark, Michelle and Robert**

7723 Braes Meadow Dr.  
Houston, TX 77071  
713-722-4986  
rlgoodmark@earthlink.net

## **Goren, Esther**

5555 Del Monte, Apt. 506  
Houston, TX 77056  
713-871-0255

## **Gould, Dr. Norman and Evelyn**

2814 Fannin  
Midland, TX 79705  
432-694-1880

## **Kusnetz, Howard and Florence (Moglinksy)**

5718 Braesheather  
Houston, TX 77096  
713-723-2711  
fmkay@earthlink.net

## **Mahoney, Katie**

5204 Roosevelt Ave. #B  
Austin, TX 78766  
512-323-3405  
kmahoney@wesleyan.edu

## **Mendlinger, Sheryl**

71 Parker Ave.  
Newton, MA 02459  
sherylm@bgu.ac.il

## **Michelson, Abigail**

508 Drake's Cove  
Lockhart, TX 78644  
512-376-2155

## **Nathan, Jayne**

5555 N. Braeswood, Unit 58  
Houston, TX 77096  
713-283-1760

## **Roosth, Dr. Thomas and Priscella**

2628 Glen Haven  
Houston, TX 77025  
713-667-0544  
prissy.roosth@juno.com

## **Silverberg, Adele and Harold**

4101 Spicewood Springs Rd.  
Austin, TX 78759  
512-345-1190

## **Stahl, Rabbi Samuel and Lynn**

4218 Bluemol  
San Antonio, TX 78240  
210-696-2825

## **Unitarian Universalist Church**

1726 Morgans Point Rd.  
Morgans Point, TX 76513

## Has Your Address Changed?

Has your address changed? What about your Area Code or phone number? Has your name changed? Do you want your name to appear differently on the TJHS mailing label? Please let us know. We'd really appreciate your help. Please send new information to:

**Leon Brachman**  
3720 Autumn Drive  
Fort Worth, TX 76109  
phone: 817-924-9207  
e-mail: leonhb@flash.net

## *TJHS Records, continued from page 12*

If you require additional information concerning placement of items in the Texas Jewish Historical Society Records, please contact the Center for American History Registrar, Evan Hocker, at 512-495-4535 or email him at e.hocker@mail.utexas.edu. Prior to donating items, please contact Ima Joy Gandler, 3001 Wooded Acres, Waco, Texas 76710 (phone 254-772-5717).

Items may be shipped to Ima Joy Gandler or to the Center for American History, care of: Evan Hocker, Reg-

istrar, 1 University Station D1100, Austin, Texas 78712.

Be sure to include a letter stating that these items are to be included in the Texas Jewish Historical Society Records.

If you wish to visit the Center for American History Research and Collection Division, it is located in Sid Richardson Hall, 2.101, by the LBJ Library.

Please keep this article for future reference.

# Texas Jewish Historical Society

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## Texas Jewish Historical Society

### New Membership and Information Update Form for Directory

Join the Texas Jewish Historical Society today! Or use this form to update your contact information for the Member Directory (being updated for 2006-2008). Complete each section below. Clip out and mail this form with your check made payable to the Texas Jewish Historical Society, P.O. Box 10193, Austin, TX 78766-0193. **Please PRINT.**

**YES!** Count me in! My dues are enclosed  Please **update** my information in the New Member Directory

#### Check the Appropriate Box(es)

New Member  Gift Membership/Recipient's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
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 **Updated Information Only** Donor's Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Occasion: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Membership Category

\$36 Annual Member  \$100 Sponsor  \$500 Benefactor  
 \$50 Supporting Member  \$250 Sustaining Member  \$1,000 Patron

New Member's Name (note if gift membership): \_\_\_\_\_  Check if gift recipient

Name of Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_ Maiden Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home telephone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address(es): \_\_\_\_\_ Website: \_\_\_\_\_

*Contributions to the Texas Jewish Historical Society are tax deductible within the limits of the law.*