

It's Presidential and More!

SJHS to Meet in Little Rock

By Jim Pfeifer



in Little Rock, on November 9-12, 2006. **Please pencil this in on your calendars!**

The magnificent William Jefferson Clinton Presidential Library is located on the river, doors away from where my great-grandfather, Jewish businessman Philip Pfeifer, started his "boat store" just after the Civil War to service plantations up and down the river. He and his neighboring German-Jewish, immigrant businessmen found themselves in the wild west. There was gun slinging, and gubernatorial elections were decided by cannon fire down the main street. There was nothing genteel and Old South about it! Amidst all this, my great-grandfather and ninety other Little Rock Jewish families began the state's first congregation in 1866. We proudly continue our Jewish community, a small but proud and close group, and we are honored to host the 2006 Southern Jewish Historical Society Conference.



Jim Pfeifer, Host Committee Chair

Your residence in Little Rock for the Conference is right in the heart of all this history...the gorgeous Peabody Hotel, where ducks waddle in the lobby pond and rooms look out next door to Arkansas's historic 1836 First State Capitol. You are adjacent to the historic and lively River Market area, full of galleries and cafes, where my grandfather's boat store is now a catfish parlor! At the end of your street, a walk

or a brief trolley ride away, is the new Clinton Presidential Center.

President Clinton and the Jewish people of Arkansas have long and strong ties. He spoke from our bema many times as Attorney General and Governor. Many congregants worked in the trenches early in his Presidential campaign and later followed him to the White House. It is fitting, therefore, that the Presidential Center has been reserved for your private touring during this conference. Members of our congregation who worked in the White House will lead you through this amazing space, sharing personal recollections. The Great Hall of the Presidential Center has been reserved for

your dining pleasure, and we are honored to have as keynote speaker, Presidential advisor Stuart Eizenstat. Mr. Eizenstat was heavily involved in reparations to German Jews and other important Jewish-related issues during the eight years of the Clinton administration.

But all things are not presidential! With the help of Program Chair Dr. Stuart Rockoff of the Institute for Southern Jewish Life in Jackson, MS, a smashing program is developing. Among many important authors and scholars already scheduled is Deborah Dash Moore, author of the recently published *G.I. Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation*. You will visit the Central High National Park Museum and hear local stories about how Jewish women made a difference in the Little Rock Central High crisis of 1957. You will see how the Jews in the 'wild west' lived 135 years ago as you will be invited into an 1870's home which has never left the family...the original prayer books are still in the book case!



Dr. Stuart Rockoff, Program Chair

We're excited, we're ready, don't pass this up! Contact us at jimpfeif6@aol.com for more information.

Society News Parlor Parties

A "first time ever" event for the SJHS took place in Smyrna, GA, on Sunday, January 8, in the lovely home of Jackie Metzel, Membership Chair. The gathering was planned with the assistance of Saul Viener, Founding President of the SJHS, in response to queries about the possibility of members meeting other than at annual conferences. Twenty five members and friends enjoyed the opportunity of socializing and learning more about our history and activities. Jackie welcomed the guests and provided delicious refreshments. Saul described how the Society first came into being and then succeeded on the second attempt in 1976 with A Conference on Writing Southern Jewish History, which convened in Richmond. That event was sponsored by the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, the American Jewish Historical Society, the Richmond Jewish Community Council (now Federation) and the JCC. To learn more about the

— continued on page 5

A Letter from Our President



Sumner I. Levine, President

As your president, I would like to report that the health of the SJHS is extremely robust and continues to be blessed with the devoted support of our past leaders. Our present officers and board are following in the footsteps of many who have contributed so much in the past.

Every group must have the foundation to build upon, and I would like to recognize what may be considered the backbone of our organization. They are the individuals who have contributed their time and efforts on an ongoing basis to keep the SJHS a strong, viable, expanding organization. There are far too many to name everyone, but I would like to mention two people who have been involved in the diversification and camaraderie that we all experience.

Saul Viener is certainly the first person one thinks of when you recall our group's formation and his repeated efforts to strengthen and preserve our historic southern Jewish heritage. Suffice it to say that when Saul's remarks were read at the Baltimore conference, the delegates felt strong emotions and a feeling of disappointment that Saul and Jackie were not there. Our patriarch has always been there for us. Every group must have a "go-to," knowledgeable, practical, experienced individual. The SJHS has been blessed with our long-time treasurer, Bernie Wax. Bernie is the person that every president, program chair or anyone else in SJHS goes to when he or she needs a problem solved or to find the correct path that SJHS should take. Because of his days with the American Jewish Historical Society, there is little that Bernie has not experienced in the world of historical societies.

We are also blessed with a group of dedicated past presidents and other past officers and board members, as well as present board members, program chairpersons and other committee chairpersons, including those producing our newsletter and journal, who have contributed to our continuity and success.

Another joy of this office is the opportunity of meeting individuals who have filled the role of host chairmen and have produced most successful annual conferences. Baltimore, through the efforts of Peter Hoffberger, and now Little Rock, through the tireless devotion of Jim Pfeifer, have and will provide our delegates memorable conferences. This year's cast of speakers will be one of the best that we have ever had. We are also looking forward to the Washington conference, which has a strong host committee in place headed by our past president Janice Blumberg and Laura Apfelbaum.

I want to thank all of these people for their efforts to make the organization as strong and viable as it is. I also want to urge all of you to reserve the weekend of November 10th through the 12th when we will be meeting in Little Rock. You are in for a special treat at the conference, and you also will view the Clinton Library in ways that most people do not have the opportunity to experience. I promise you, you will not be disappointed.

Best regards,

May Is Jewish American Heritage Month

President Bush Issues Proclamation

By proclamation of the President, May has been declared Jewish American Heritage Month. The effort to create the national observance was spearheaded by South Florida Jewish leaders, most notably SJHS member Marcia Zerivitz, director of the Jewish Museum of Florida in Miami Beach. The Museum was instrumental in having the state legislature designate January as Florida Jewish History Month.

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Florida's 20th Congressional District, the first Jewish woman from the state elected to Congress, enlisted 250 House sponsors in a bill that passed unanimously. Sen.

Arlen Specter led unanimous passage in the Senate.

At the White House signing, Rep. Wasserman Schultz noted, "This is an historic occasion. Generations to come will have the chance to live without anti-Semitism through greater understanding and awareness of the significant role that American Jews have played in U.S. history." The Proclamation, dated "in the year of our Lord two thousand six," states, "The Jewish people have enriched our culture and contributed to a more compassionate and hopeful America."

Officers and Board 2006



PRESIDENT
Sumner I. Levine
33 E. Yates Road S.
Memphis, TN 38120-2071
901.682.5935
physum@midssouth.rr.com

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
Minette Cooper
Norfolk, VA

PRESIDENT ELECT
Scott M. Langston
Weatherford, TX

SECRETARY
Marcie Cohen Ferris
Chapel Hill, NC

TREASURER
Bernard Wax
21 Blake Rd.
Brookline, MA 02445
Phone: 617.734.3968
Fax: 617.232.6403
Dollybern2@cs.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Wendy Lowe Besmann
Oak Ridge, TN
Eric L. Goldstein
Atlanta, GA

Jacqueline G. Metzler
Smyrna, GA
Stuart Rockoff
Jackson, MS

Dale Rosengarten
Charleston, SC
Jacob Rosensweig
Del Ray Beach, FL

Jim Schuyler
Richmond, VA

Phil N. Steel, Jr.
Philadelphia, PA

Stephen J. Whitfield
Lexington, MA

Ex officio
Jay Tanenbaum
President, Institute of Southern
Jewish Life

Rachel Heimovics Braun
Managing Editor
Mark Bauman, Editor
Southern Jewish History
2517 Hartford Dr.
Ellenwood, GA 30294
Phone: 404.366.3306
Fax: 404.756.4944
markkbauman@aol.com

The Rambler welcomes
submissions on news
relevant to Southern Jewry.
Deadline for the fall issue is
August 15

Editorial inquiries to
Leonard Rogoff, Editor
The Rambler
329 Burlage Circle
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
Phone: 919.929.6054
lrogoff@nc.rr.com

Send address changes to
Barbara Tahsler
SJHS
PO Box 5024
Atlanta GA 30302-5024
wydd@ix.netcom.com

Membership
Jacqueline G. Metzler
P.O. Box 725133
Atlanta, GA 31139
Phone/Fax:
770.805.0883

Big Names at Little Rock

SJHS Program Plans

The program of the 31st Annual Meeting of the Southern Jewish Historical Society gathers together major figures in Southern and American Jewish studies. The Program Committee, under chair Stuart Rockoff, has enlisted former ambassador and presidential advisor Stuart Eizenstat, food maven Marcie Cohen Ferris, Vassar historian Deborah Dash Moore, institution builder Macy Hart, and Eli Evans, perhaps the region's most distinctive Jewish voice. Putting it all in Southern context will be sociologist John Shelton Reed, one of the wisest and the wittiest observers of the Southern scene.

For cultural tourists, the program features optional bus tours of Hot Springs and Little Rock. For students and scholars, the panels will address a variety of relevant subjects: women in civil rights, Southern-Jewish literature, summer camping, and rabbinic pioneers. The moderators include SJHS stalwarts Mark Bauman, Hollace Weiner, and Karla Goldman and Jayne Guberman of the Jewish Women's Archive. One very important panel will bring historical perspective to Hurricane Katrina with first-person testimonies from Cathy Kahn, Irwin Lachoff, and Barry Stiefel. The always popular "Meet the Authors" discussion will feature new books by Deborah Weiner, Eric Goldstein, Cheryl Greenberg, and C. S. Monaco.

Here's a tentative schedule:

Thursday, November 9 (Optional)

9:00-3:30 Bus tour from the Peabody Hotel of Jewish Hot Springs, led by Jewish leaders, with lunch provided by the congregation.

4:00 Marcie Cohen Ferris, Matzoh Ball Gumbo Food Experience, a multimedia presentation and foodfest jointly promoted and sponsored by the Central Arkansas Library System.

Friday, November 10

8:30-1:00 Tour of Little Rock includes Central High National Park Museum and School, tour of 1870's restored Jewish home, and Arkansas History Museum for lunch

1:00-2:00 "The Winter Family of Alabama and Arkansas: A Case Study in Researching Jewish Family History" - Karen Franklin, Director Family Research Program, Leo Baeck Institute.

2:15-3:30 "Voices of Moderation: Jewish Women and the Civil Rights Movement, Karla Goldman, chair
"The Women's Emergency Committee in Little Rock" - Laura Miller, Central High School National Park Museum
"Wednesdays in Mississippi: Civil Rights as Women's Work" - Holly Cowan Shulman-University of Virginia

Temple B'nai Israel

8:30 - 9:30 - "GI Jews" - Deborah Dash Moore, University of Michigan

Saturday, November 11

Peabody Hotel Conference Center

8:00-8:30 Shabbat Services

9:00-10:15 Writing the Story of Southern Jews, Leonard Rogoff, chair
"A Struggle which Has Ended So Beneficently: A Century of Jewish Historical Writing about the Civil War" - Adam Mendelson, Brandeis University
"Cowboys and Indigents: A History of Texas-Jewish Fiction" - Bryan Stone, Del Mar College

10:30-12:00 Jewish Camping in the South, Hollace Weiner, chair
"Camp Blue Star" - Marcie Cohen Ferris, UNC Chapel Hill
"The History of Henry S. Jacobs Camp" - Stuart Rockoff, ISJL
"Jewish Camping and Its Relationship to the Organized Camping Movement in America" - Gary Zola, Hebrew Union College/American Jewish Archives

12:15-1:45 Lunch
John Shelton Reed, UNC Chapel Hill, Keynote speaker

2:00-3:30 Panel Discussion: Historical Perspectives of Southern Jewish Life Today - John Shelton Reed, moderator; Eli Evans, Dana Greene, Dale Rosengarten,

3:45-5:00 Rabbinic Pioneers, Mark Bauman, chair
"Like a Mighty Stream: Rabbi Ira Sanders and the Struggle for Racial Justice in Arkansas" - James Moses, Arkansas Tech University
"Paula Ackerman: First 'Lady Rabbi' of the American South" - Ellen Umansky, Fairfield University

Evening Program - Clinton Presidential Library
Stuart Eizenstat, keynote speaker

Sunday, November 12

9:00-10:15 Panel Discussion: Hurricane Katrina as History
Cathy Kahn, Touro Infirmary Archives
Irwin Lachoff, archivist, Xavier University
Jayne Guberman, Jewish Women's Archive
Barry Stiefel - Tulane University

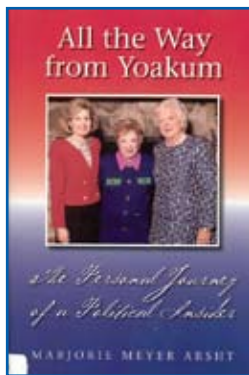
10:30-11:45 Meet the Authors
Deborah Weiner, *Coalfield Jews: An Appalachian History*
Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity*
Cheryl Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century*
C. S. Monaco, *Moses Levy of Florida: Jewish Utopian and Antebellum Reformer*



Society News continued from page 1

Conference, see the profile of Prof. Steve Whitfield of Brandeis University in Volume 7 of *Southern Jewish History*.

The Sunday gathering featured Dr. Bruce Beeber, a former President of the SJHS and eminent scholar of the Jewish Georgia experience, who held the group enthralled with several fascinating threads in the fabric of Jewish life in the Peach State. Several of those present inquired if there will be a repeat of such a gathering. The matter is under review. Other areas might want to consider offering a similar opportunity to explore Jewish history and further support our Southern Jewish Historical Society. Jackie Metzel and Saul Viener will be happy to respond to any inquiries. Email Saul at sjvce@webtv.net or phone Jackie at 770.805.0883.

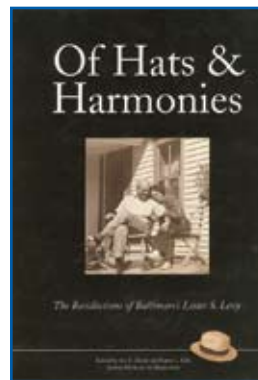


All the Way to Yoakum: The Personal Journey of a Political Insider

by Marjorie Meyer Arsht

One look at the cover photo of *All the Way to Yoakum* reveals that this is not the typical Jewish memoir. Posed between Texas Republican Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison and former first lady Barbara Bush, Marjorie Meyer Arsht was an oddity: a Jewish Republican woman at a time when Texas, like the rest of the South, and most Jews were solidly Democratic. In her memoir, Arsht looks back at over nine decades of her life, from her childhood in the small Texas town of Yoakum, her time at Rice University and the Sorbonne in Paris, to the ups and downs of her often tumultuous family life. In the late 1950s, Arsht got involved in the then small world of Texas Republican politics, befriending an ambitious newcomer named George Bush, a friendship that would serve her well later in life. Like many in her classical reform Houston congregation, Beth Israel, Arsht opposed political Zionism and became a leader of the American Council for Judaism. In 1962, she resigned as president of the Beth Israel sisterhood to run for the state legislature as a Republican, a fool's errand that was almost successful. If Arsht was a Republican voice in the wilderness in Texas in 1962, by the 21st century, Republicans controlled every statewide office in the Lone Star State. While most Texas Jews opposed this political transition, Arsht was present at the creation.

Stuart Rockoff
Historian, Goldring/Woldenberg Institute for Southern Jewish Life



Of Hats & Harmonies: The Recollections of Baltimore's Lester S. Levy

Edited by Avi Y. Decter and
Karen L. Falk. Baltimore: Jewish
Museum of Maryland, 2006

This illustrated, handsomely printed memoir is a social history of a man and a family who lived not only richly but well. Lester Levy (1896-1989) was a man of many parts: raconteur, hat manufacturer, communal and congregational activist, scholar and collector of popular music. Lester and his wife Eleanor Kohn Levy, herself a social worker and gifted ceramicist, in their 60 years of married life threw themselves into a welter of causes including Chizuk Amuno congregation, Potter's Guild, Maryland Conference on Social Welfare, and Johns Hopkins University. The Levy family provided leadership in creating Baltimore's Associated Jewish Charities, which united uptown German and downtown East European philanthropies. Not merely did they petition and contribute financially in support of European Jewry in the dark years of Nazism, they took into their home a German-Jewish foster child as their fourth daughter. One daughter wrote of the family's "open heart policy," and the book fittingly includes biographies that trace Lester and Eleanor's past and succeeding generations. Levy's vocation was straw hats, but his avocation was popular sheet music for which he was a scholar, author, collector, and benefactor. Drawing on letters, documents, and photographs in the Jewish Museum of Maryland collection, principally Levy's own memoir, editors Avi Decter and Karen Falk draw a portrait of a time and a society. Most of all, readers will find endearing the modest and engaging voice of a man who wanted his closing words to be, "I am a Jew," which, for him, implied a legacy of honor, obligation, and family love.

Leonard Rogoff
Editor, *The Rambler*

SJHS Grants Financial Aid for Research

The Southern Jewish Historical Society encourages applications to its 2006 Grants programs.

1. The Kawaler Research/Travel Grant assists individuals with travel and other expenses related to conducting research in Southern Jewish history. A total of \$2000 will be divided among funded applications. Applicants must present a plan of research, indicating the libraries and/or archives where they intend to work, and their goal, as well as a budget of expenses and other sources of funding.

2. The Lowenstein Archival Grant encourages the preservation of archival materials related to Southern Jewish history. A total of \$1000 will be divided among funded applications. Applicants must include a description of the project and a budget.

3. The SJHS Projects Completion Grant is designed to facilitate the completion of projects relevant to Jewish history in the Southern United States. Funds cannot be used for research or travel costs. A total of \$6000 will be dispersed among funded applications. Guidelines for applications can be found under the "Grants" section of the society's website at www.jewishsouth.org.

The deadline for submission of applications is August 1, 2006. Applications and questions may be addressed to Scott Langston, 206 Mitchell, Weatherford TX 76087 or sent by email to Sclangston@charter.net.

Notes & Queries

- Mark K. Bauman's article, "Variations on the Mortara Case in Midnineteenth-Century New Orleans," appears in volume 55/2 of *The American Jewish Archives Journal*. Bauman examines the case of Alice Levy, a Jewish orphan of French parentage. Although her mother had explicitly wanted her daughter raised a Jew, a Catholic nurse had her baptized. This case occurred in 1858, the very year when world Jewry was outraged by the complicity of the Roman Catholic church in the kidnapping and baptizing of the Jewish Mortara child in Italy. In the Levy case local Jews, with the support of the French government and some local Catholics, intervened to have the child returned to the Jewish community where she was placed in the Jewish Widows and Orphans Home.
- Fred Kahn, the late husband of former SJHS president Catherine Kahn, was a genial, loyal friend, who always brought grace and good humor to any Society gathering. Mary Kahn Tutwiler recalls her father's last days and her family's ordeal in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in "The Long Goodbye: After the evacuation, a husband and wife try to go home," a cover story in the Dec, 12, 2005, *The Independent*, a weekly published in Lafayette, LA. This moving memoir can be accessed online at www.theind.com/cover3.asp?CID=1044219736
- Cantor Neil Blumofe of Austin's Congregation Agudas Achim has released his second album, *Piety and Desire*. Recorded in New Orleans before Katrina, the CD features the cantor's own compositions which explore Jewish wedding themes in a jazz idiom. The title takes its names from two New Orleans streets. One composition is titled "Seven Blessings in The Garden District." The band includes New Orleans jazz stars Roland Guerin and Jason Marsalis as well as Austin musicians. *Piety and Desire* "looks at the Jewish ceremony through the prism of jazz," Michael Hurewitz writes in *The Forward*. In an interview, the cantor noted that "chazanut is very much an improvisational art," adding, "just like in jazz we have charts, but it is up to the cantor to express the prayer and bring it to life." This album is Cantor Blumofe's second, following the 2003 release of his *Moses Muses*. Contact www.horebrecords.com

Calendar

Date Event

Nov. 9-12	SJHS 31st Annual Conference, Little Rock, AR
current	"Treasures of the Collection" "Commonwealth and Community: The Jewish Experience in Virginia" "Congregation Beth Ahabah: One Hundred Years on West Franklin Street" Beth Ahabah Museum and Archives, 1109 W. Franklin St., Richmond, VA 23220 (804.353.2668/ www.bethahabah.org)
current	"Of Passover and Pilgrimage: The Natchez Jewish Experience" Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience Exhibit, Temple B'nai Israel, Natchez, MS (601.445.5407)
current	"Alsace to America: Discovering a Southern Jewish Heritage" Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience, Utica, MS (601.362.6357/ www.msje.org)
permanent	Creating Community: The Jews of Atlanta from 1845 to the Present" "The Legacy Project: Coming to America" William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum, 1440 Spring St. NW, Atlanta, GA 30309 (404.870.7684/ www.atlantajewishmuseum.org)
permanent opens Sept. 12	"MOSAIC: Jewish Life in Florida" "Bonim: Jewish Developers Building Florida - Building Community" Jewish Museum of Florida, 301 Washington Ave., Miami Beach, FL 33139-6965 (305.672.5044/ www.jewishmuseum.com)
permanent	"The Blum House Project" Old City Park, 1717 Gano St., Dallas, TX (214.421.5141/ oldcitypark.org)
ongoing opens July 16	"Cabin Fever: Jewish Camping and Jewish Commitment" "The Other Promised Land: Vacations, Identity, and the Jewish American Dream" The Jewish Museum of Maryland, 15 Lloyd St., Baltimore MD 21202 (410.732.6400/ www.jewishmuseummd.org)
thru July 4	"Jews in Washington: Scrapbook of an American Community" Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington William & Albert Small Jewish Museum, 701 Third St. NW, Washington DC 20001 (202.789.0900/ infor@jhsgw.org)
permanent	Shalom Y'all: A Road Trip through Jewish Alabama (Bill Aron photographs) Levite Jewish Community Center, 3960 Montclair Road, Birmingham, AL (205-879-0411)

Non-Profit.Org
 U. S. Postage
 PAID
 Chapel Hill, NC
 Permit No. 295

Join the Southern Jewish Historical Society!

Your membership will help support the SJHS in its efforts to study, preserve, and present the Jewish experience in the American South. The SJHS awards prizes and research grants, publishes scholarships, supports exhibitions, and holds an annual conference. Members receive *The Rambler* newsletter, *Southern Jewish History* journal, and special conference rates



General Member	\$35
Business or Corporate Member	\$35
Patron	\$50
Century Club	\$100
Life Member (\$200 X 5 years)	\$1000
Student	\$15

To support the research, scholarship, and exhibition of the Southern Jewish History, I wish to make a donation to the SJHS Endowment of \$_____ in honor/memory of_____.

Name _____
 Title _____ Company _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____ Email _____

Please make checks to the Southern Jewish Historical Society and mail to
Southern Jewish Historical Society
PO Box 5024
Atlanta, GA 30302-5024
 Please mark "Membership" or "Endowment" in the memo line of your check.
 Please check here if you would like your email and phone listed in the SJHS directory_____.