

L'Dor V'Dor

from generation to generation • the newsletter of the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society

NJHS CELEBRATES 25TH ANNIVERSARY

A very successful 25th Anniversary celebration was held on Sunday, August 5th in the JCC auditorium. Master of ceremonies, Joanie Bernstein opened the event with a special documentary coordinated and created by Ozzie Nogg featuring interviews of founders, Mary Fellman and Oliver Pollak. Mark Fellman presented the Mary Fellman Award to the Riekes Family for their many contributions to the Historical Society throughout the years. Receiving the Shirley Berman Volunteer Award was Joanie Bernstein for her years of service. Also on the agenda were remarks by Michael Staenberg of St. Louis, sponsor of the exhibit "There WAS Film in the Camera", a photographic exhibit by the late Gary Gerelick. Michael, Gary's cousin shared special family moments about Gary and his camera. A dessert reception followed the program.

We are very grateful to the generosity of our sponsors for making our 25th Anniversary celebration so successful. The annual meeting was sponsored by the following funds: Ruth Frisch & Oscar S. Belzer Endowment Fund, Samuel & Bess Rothenberg Memorial Endowment Fund, Mickey & George Shafer Endowment for NJHS and the Ann Woskoff Schulman Memorial Fund. We also extend a special thanks to the Jewish Senior Services/Rose Blumkin Jewish Home.

Making it possible for us to display Gary's photographs in the JCC gallery were: The Staenberg Family Foundation, Hally Decarion, the Henry Monsky Lodge #3306 of B'nai B'rith, Keith & Judith Josephson and Joe Kirshenbaum. A very large thank you goes to Bob Belgrade for his long hours enhancing Gary's photos.



Caryl Greenberg, NJHS Board member, looking at Gary's photos.



Left: left to right, Ari Riekes and Mark Fellman



Left to right: Renee Corcoran, Mrs. B. Doll and Joanie Bernstein

Photos provided by the Jewish Press.

Membership Renew

Enclosed is your membership envelope for 2008. We depend solely on memberships and donations to continue our programs.

Thank you for your continued support ---with your help we have a great past ahead of us.

Letter From Kevee Kirshenbaum, Membership Chair

Enclosed in this newsletter you will find an envelope for your 2008 membership. Please complete the information requested and return the envelope at your earliest convenience. The NJHS membership year is from January 1 to December 31st. Your membership is very important to us!!! As you know, the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society receives no funding from the Jewish Federation of Omaha and we depend entirely on memberships and donations to continue our important work.

If you know anyone in our area or any former Nebraskans who would like to become members please let us know or contact them directly and tell them how important it is to preserve our history for future generations by becoming a member of the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society.

Thank you for your continued support. We need you to remain a vital part in our Jewish community.

Benefactor membership	\$1000.00
Life membership	500.00
Patron membership	100.00
Sponsor membership	50.00
Basic membership	25.00

NJHS & Jewish Press Share Community Service Award

On Tuesday, September 25th, the NJHS and the Jewish Press received the Jewish Federation of Omaha Community Service Award for "Front Page: 85 Years of Jewish Press History". The exhibit displayed in the JCC gallery in April of 2006 featured 120 Jewish Press front pages, highlighting local, national and international events. All 72 of the special Passover and Rosh Hashanah covers were also displayed on separate panels. A group of approximately

30 volunteers organized by the NJHS researched 85 years of our history to determine which front pages should be displayed in the exhibit. NJHS volunteers also organized and were responsible for the opening reception.



Photo of Howard Marcus, Carol Katzman and Renee Corcoran.

Message from the President, Midge Bowers, December 2007

The highlight of this year was the 25th Anniversary Annual meeting. The support and commitment of many founders and board members for twenty five years made the event very special. Ozzie Nogg prepared a video picturing various photos of Mary Fellman with all of the original founders describing their dreams for the future of the NJHS. The Riekes family was awarded the Mary Fellman Award for their generous endowment to the NJHS for the Riekes Museum. Mark Fellman, Mary's son, came from Minneapolis to speak on his mother's behalf. Ari Riekes received the award for the family.

Following the award presentations there was an exhibit of Gary Gerelick's photographs that spanned forty years of his life and involvement with his family and the Jewish community. The exhibit chairmen, Stu Giller and Bob Belgrade, worked with their committee, Beth Staenberg and Mike Abramson, to select a representation from the hundreds of pictures that were donated to the NJHS by his friends and family. The pictures brought many nostalgic memories to the people who visited the gallery in August. Mike Staenberg, Gary's cousin, thanked the NJHS for the exhibit and spoke of the importance in the future that we continue our efforts to keep memories alive.

Another highlight of the year was the Community Service Award given to the NJHS and the Jewish Press for the exhibit in 2006 "Front Page: 85 Years of Jewish Press History"

In order to accomplish these exhibits and oral histories for the community, NJHS needs your membership and donations. These funds maintain the office and the staff as well. Please consider increasing your membership and I urge you to keep NJHS in mind for special occasion and memory card donations.

Best wishes for a happy and healthy 2008.

Moving? Please notify us of your address change!

Short Notes from the NJHS

- Calling central high alumna!!! Do you have an annual/yearbook that you would like to donate to the NJHS archives? Please call us at 334-6441/42. To let us know which year(s) you are offering because we only have space for 1 copy of each year!

These are the issues that we are looking for: 1918, 1921, 1922, 1923, 1925, 1928, 1931, 1935, 1946, 1950, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1956, 1957, 1961, 1965, 1969, 1970, 1972, and all issues after that through 2007.

We appreciate your assistance in adding to this piece of Nebraska Jewish history in our collection.

- The Nebraska Jewish Historical Society would like to commend Tom Friedman and Judy Josephson for their efforts to rejuvenate B'nai Jacob and B'nai Sholom Cemeteries that adjoin the Temple Israel Cemetery. The historical information in these cemeteries must be preserved for the future generations of our Jewish community. A list of those buried at these cemeteries was printed in the November 23rd issue of the Jewish Press. For further information you can contact Dennis DePorte, Executive Director at Temple Israel.

NJHS WISH LIST

- Addition to the 50th Anniversary Wall - \$1500.00
This would allow us the opportunity to add additional photographs to this permanent exhibit located in the main hallway at the JCC. We will have to turn people away from adding to the exhibit without this addition to the wall.
- Special thanks to Rosalie & Milt Saylan for their generous donation, making it possible to purchase new colored printers for the NJHS office. Their donation was made in honor of Louise Abrahamson and her many years of preserving our history.

Where Are You Now?

All former Nebraskans: Let the NJHS know what you and your families are doing. Where are you living? What are you doing? Please write a brief description and send to us at 333 South 132nd Street, Omaha, NE 68154 or email njhs@jewishomaha.org We look forward to hearing from you!

New Members

Membership is the key to the strength of the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society. We gratefully acknowledge and welcome our new benefactors, life member and members. Thank you for your support.

Benefactor

David L. Davis
Henry A. Davis
Elaine & Ben Nachman

New Members

Doris & Harry Alloy
Esther & Bernard Bogdanoff
Mr. & Mrs. H. W. Slosburg

Life Members

Barbara & Marshall Kushner

2007-08 NJHS Officers

President: Midge Bowers
Vice President: Debbi Josephson
Secretary: Rocky Stern
Treasurer: Ira Nathan
Past President: Helen Epstein

Founders: Mary Fellman & Oliver Pollak

Board Members

Ron Brodkey
Stu Giller
Caryl Greenberg
Gary Javitch
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Lois Friedman
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Kevee Kirshenbaum

Board Advisory on Oral Histories

Ben Nachman

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Executive Director:

Renee Ratner Corcoran

Staff:

Dottie Rosenblum
Kathy Weiner

B'nai B'rith: Looking To Recruit The Next Generation

by Gary Javitch, Nebraska Jewish Historical Society
Board Member and
Henry Monsky Lodge #3306 President

It all began when “12 German-Jewish immigrants met at Sinsheimer’s Café on New York’s Lower East Side in 1843 to help others like themselves,” according to the B’nai B’rith International (BBI) website

“The fledgling group sought to provide social services for fellow Jews, especially widows and orphans.” At that meeting they discussed “their ideas and their funds and founded what would become the most enduring service organization in the United States. Its name, B’nai B’rith or ‘Children of the Covenant’ mirrored its idealistic mission: uniting Jews in service to their community.” In 2008, BBI will celebrate its 165th birthday. From its humble beginnings, B’nai B’rith membership now spans four continents and nearly fifty countries.

Their ideas spread around the country, taking root in Omaha in 1884, when another group, this time consisting of 35 Jewish men, launched the first B’nai B’rith Lodge in the river city. By 1950, Omaha was home to three lodges: Henry Monsky, Cornhusker, and South Omaha with about 1200 total members. In addition, the Irving Cohen Lodge in Council Bluffs numbered about 100 members. Lodges had monthly meetings and programs that attracted large turnouts, according to current Monsky Lodge Trustee and Treasurer Al Abramson.

However, in the early 1960’s, as the Jewish community of South Omaha and Council Bluffs moved from those areas, those lodges became inactive. At the same time, Cornhusker Lodge, started by returning WW II veterans, began to age and subsequently they merged to create Henry Monsky Lodge #3306.

Still, the process of time had taken a toll. With the gradual acceptance of Jews into American society and a host of acculturating factors, membership in many Jewish organizations has dropped. That is also true for B’nai B’rith across America and in Omaha as well.

In 2000, to counteract the ravages of time, age, and, yes, lethargy, the surviving Monsky Lodge embarked upon a crash course to renew and revitalize itself.

To begin the renewal process, the lodge tapped third-generation member Aaron Weiner, whose father Ken Weiner, and grandfather Ed Rosen had played a very active B’nai B’rith role. Aaron organized a dinner and recruited a number of new members who went on to play an ever more active role.

Programming

The Lodge also needed to revitalize the programming to retain the new recruits. That task was undertaken and today the Lodge runs a great number of activities. These include Sukkah Building for the Child Development Center, the Friedel Jewish Academy, and the Rose Blumkin Jewish Home, taking full advantage of the powerful arm of former Lodge and regional president, Adam Jacobs, whose ability to toss pine boughs up and onto the support structures is now legendary. The BBYO kids– the B’nai B’rith Youth Organization – join in and the Lodge buys pizza afterward for all the participants.

Also in the Fall months, the Lodge helps to underwrite the Klutznick Symposium, sponsored by Creighton University and attended by scholars from all over the world.

At Chanukah time, the Lodge holds the increasingly popular Ed Zorinsky Bible Quiz for Jewish high school students to encourage their learning about their religion and their heritage. Founder Steve Riekes leads the committee that prepares the questions and organizes the event. The Lodge awards almost \$1500 in scholarships and prize money to the winners of the event, which is now in its 22nd year.

Another Chanukah activity the Lodge undertakes is to remember the Jewish youngsters who live in economically disadvantaged families. Accordingly, the Lodge donates money to Jewish Family Service so they can give gift cards to those in need during the holiday period.

The Chanukah walk/run also takes place during the holiday period. This year’s theme is “Fighting for Freedom From Oil Addiction.”

In conjunction with Israel Independence day, the Lodge holds the Jewish Trivia Quiz in the spring. Added to all those programs, the Lodge also offers an occasional Cultural Arts and Movie program, featuring Jewish-themed films. Steve Riekes organizes those cultural activities, (the Trivia Quiz, and the Sukkah building).

In the charitable and community service arenas, the Lodge subsidizes the AZA (boys) and BBG (girls) youth groups, which fall under the BBYO umbrella. That we can provide scholarships and loans to these young people to enhance their Jewish experiences brings a great deal of satisfaction to the Lodge. That effort is the main Lodge focus.

Briefly, in the public arena the Lodge also is proud to participate in the annual city wide Omaha Safety Council Awards Lunch by giving a civic award to an outstanding individual. And on a biennial basis, we give a Jewish community thanks to retiring police, fire fighters and sheriff’s deputies. Another charitable activity deserving mention is

the Lodge's sponsorship of a soldier's education by supporting the Friends of the Israel Defense Force (FIDF) organization.

Revitalization is ongoing. The programs mentioned are important parts of the Monsky Lodge's reason for existence. That's why we are open to new ideas all the time. That's why we encourage community participation in our projects and provide opportunities for people to participate.

Two Special Programs

What fuels all this; what makes it possible to fund the programs; what gives the Lodge the recognition to be a force in the city are two very special programs. They are the jewels in the Henry Monsky Lodge crown: our B'nai B'rith Breadbreakers Lunch program and the annual banquet.

Breadbreakers began circa 1950, when Earl Siegel, Marvin Treller, Isadore Bogdanoff and Eddie Rosen sat around a table at The Leavenworth Grill at 39th Street to create a program that still continues each Wednesday – now at its current home at the Regency Lodge on Pacific at 107th Streets. Governors, senators, congressmen, attorneys general, mayors and other public officials have stood to address the group and take questions in a mini-press conference format over a buffet meal.

In seeking the prominent and the preeminent, the interesting and the influential, the Lodge has also heard from university presidents and chancellors, world-renowned scientists and scholars, star sports columnists and college sports stars. And that list doesn't even touch the depth and diversity of our local and statewide lunch presenters.

Adding to the Breadbreakers breadth, on a number of occasions, by joining with AIPAC or other organizations, the Lodge has brought in national speakers, as well. Marty Ricks and Gary Javitch co-chair this program.

If Breadbreakers gave us local renown, it has been the banquet that has brought us national attention. Bert Rander arranged our First Annual Past President's Stag in 1953. At that time only men could attend and the Lodge honored the male high school sports star of the year.

Giving way to the changing times, in the early nineties, the Lodge admitted women to the event for the first time at the urging of Steve Simon and developed an award for the young ladies, too.

Today, the criteria for the student awards are different. To qualify as our honoree, the student-athlete must do well academically also. The Lodge holds an election among the metro Omaha area athletic directors, sportswriters and coaches to select the most outstanding graduating high school scholar-athlete, male and female to honor with

the Bert Rander Award (boys) and the Earl Siegel Award (girls). For nearly 22 years, Lois Epstein has managed all the details of the election process (and everything else around the office including getting out the advertising for all the events). Validating the entire process, the Lodge notes that two of the athletes we recognized, Johnny Rodgers and Eric Crouch, went on to earn Heisman Trophies.

Now, the governor, the mayor, the athletic directors of the major universities and some of the top coaches in the state regularly join us on our banquet dais. We add additional luster to the program by bringing in a nationally known sports figure as a keynote speaker. Men such as Howard Cosell, Paul "Bear" Bryant, Keith Jackson, Tom Osborne and Steve Spurrier, are just a few of the headliners who have helped us highlight the achievements of the young students.

The 54th edition of the charity sports banquet will take place on May 7, 2008, headed by our outstanding veteran chair Gil Cohen, who along with the superb assistance of Rich Juro, Aaron Weiner, Don Dandy, Howard Shandell, Larry Goldstrom, Howard Borden, Mike Abramson, Linda Saltzman, Adam Jacobs, Larry Kelberg and Marty Cohen, puts together a fantastic fundraiser event. Last year, the members of **The Top Five Sales** club were Rich Juro (The # 1 salesman), Aaron Weiner, Nate Schwalb, Don Dandy, Mike and Jeff Platt. The money earned from this program pays for all of our activities during the year. (Our oldest Lodge Member, George Shafer, soon-to-be 90, has attended all the banquets except one. He had to miss that only because he was out of town and his plane was delayed!)

The event has taken place in many facilities over the years: Peony Park, Ak-Sar-Ben, the Holiday Inn Convention Center. In the Spring, the new home will be The Qwest Center.

Today and Beyond

The Henry Monsky Lodge is an affiliate of BBI, which is an important global voice for human rights, senior citizens, the support of BBYO, and stem cell research. The organization maintains offices in Israel, Europe, South America and at the UN. BBI reaches out to the hungry, the homeless, the handicapped war veteran, and the elderly and to the victims of natural disasters.

The Henry Monsky Lodge #3306, now 250 strong, sponsors programs and provides scholarships that help instill moral and ethical values and a sense of Jewish identity. The Lodge is a proud benefactor of BBYO and Jewish community interests.

A strong, supportive, hands-on Board, which includes Marty Ricks, Rich Juro, Gerald Meyer, Adam Jacobs, Steve Riekes, Aaron Weiner, Alvin Abramson, Lois Epstein, and Gary Javitch, makes all that happen

Donations to the NJHS:

Anniversaries: **Helen & Tuffy Epstein (50)** from Debbi & Larry Josephson; **Fran & Barry Snyder** from Helen & Harold Abrahamson; **Gwen & Ray Pred (50)** from Velma Sacks; **Shirley & Buddy Goldstein (65)** from Doris & Al Abramson, Miriam Simon, Karen & Oliver Pollak, George Shafer, Helen & Dave Chorney, Myrna & Kevee Kirshenbaum, Bob Belgrade, Joe Kirshenbaum, Louise Abrahamson.

Birthdays: **Gwen Pred** from Velma Sacks; **Jerry Kohll** from Toni Rosen & Tony Roth; **Sheldon Masnek** from Helen & Dave Chorney; **Harold Abramson (CA)** from Doris & Al Abramson; **Speedy Zweiback** from Midge & Bill Bowers; **Don Greenberg** from Bob Belgrade; **Sarah Lohrman** from Louise Abrahamson; **Sally Venger (100)** from Midge & Bill Bowers.

Recovery: **Doris Cohen** from Helen & Dave Chorney; **John Zipay** from Rosalie & Milt Saylan, Etta & Harold Epstein; **Louise Abrahamson** from Rosalie & Milt Saylan, George Shafer, Etta & Harold Epstein, Phyllis & Normand Roffman; **Ronnie Jacobson** from Renee Corcoran; **Diane Zipay & Bus Rubin** from Louise Abrahamson.

In Memory of: Lucille Frohm by George Shafer; **Lorraine Silverman** from Louise Abrahamson; **Pearl Jabenis** from Debbi & Larry Josephson; **Jerry Zeffren** from Helen & Dave Chorney; **Phil Ratner** from Doris & Al Abramson, Louise Abrahamson, George Shafer, Suzanne Singer, Tibe Stoler, Helen & Tuffy Epstein, Reva Oruch, Susan Rothholz. Lois & Mel Epstein, Shirley & Buddy Goldstein, Betty & Bus Rubin, Rocky Stern, Nan Katz, Joann & Jerry Freeman, Karen & Oliver Pollak, Myrna & Kevee Kirshenbaum, Carly & Barton Greenberg, Debbi & Larry Josephson, Phyllis & Normand Roffman, Betty Dineen Shrier & Bill Ramsey, Dorothy Riekes, Lois & Lloyd Friedman, Velma Sacks, Ann Shackman; **Jean Gendler** from Helen & Dave Chorney; **Lucy Muskin** from Myrna & Kevee Kirshenbaum, Joe Kirshenbaum; **Fran Milder** from Karen & Oliver Pollak, George Shafer, Jocelyn C. Maller, Phyllis & Jon Weinberg.

Other Occasions: **Granddaughter of Vicki Perlmeter** from Debbi & Larry Josephson; **First grandchild of Jeff & Susan Aizenberg, Grandchild of Hannah & Nate Schwalb, Grandson of Dick & Bev Fellman, Marriage of Iris & Marty Ricks' son, Shelly Fox earning her MSW certification** from George Shafer; **Engagement of Kari Epstein & Brandon Tauber** from George Shafer; Louise Abrahamson; **Barton (Bucky) Greenberg's 'Bar Mitzvah'** from Myrna & Kevee Kirshenbaum; **In honor of Ben & Elaine Nachman** from Shirley & Al Sorkin; **Thank you to Ben Nachman** from Ann Kaiman; **Appreciation to Bob Belgrade** from Steve Riekes & Family; **Spirit of Federation Award to Margo Riekes** from Karen & Oliver Pollak; **Spirit of Federation Award to Bob Belgrade** from Karen & Oliver Pollak, Midge & Bill Bowers, Janey & Jerry Dann, Nancy Noddle, Doris & Harry Alloy **Marriage of Etta & Bae Epstein's Granddaughter, Haley to Gabe Maislos** from Louise Abrahamson.

FROM NJHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF:

Anniversaries: **50th** - Helen & Tuffy Epstein; **65th** - Shirley & Buddy Goldstein.

Birthdays: Kevee Kirshenbaum, Sally Venger

In Memory: Lorraine Silverman, Jerry Zeffren, Jose Levin, Ronnie Watkins, Phil Ratner, Leo Biga's mother, Jean Gendler, Frances Milder.

Recovery: Louise Abrahamson, Debbi Josephson

Other Occasions: Federation Humanitarian Award to Rabbi Myer Kripke; Spirit of Federation award to Bob Belgrade and Margo Riekes; **Birth of First grandson** to Carol & Ira Nathan & Jeff & Susan Aizenberg, Daughter to Gary Katz family, Twin boys to Elinor & Guy Matalon, Twin daughters to Lori & Wayne Schwarz, Granddaughter to Vicki Perlmeter; Son to Esther & Phillip Katz.

An Oral History Update

Ben Nachman, our remarkable volunteer, has interviewed the following individuals and their oral histories have been added to our collection: Lillian Johnson Ban, Rhoda Blatt, Esther Bogdanoff, Barbara Roffman Cohen, Rose Davis, Dave Dvorkin, Lucille & Jack Epstein, Marlen Willis Frost, Bernard Bogdanoff Gary Javitch, Karen Sokolof Javitch, Ann Kaiman, Sylvia & Jerry Kaiman, Marilyn Nearenberg Katz, Joseph Kirshenbaum, Pauline Landman, Maxine & Jack Noodell, Ilene Pachman, Dick Rochman, Irv Rushall, Julius & Sarah Schreiber, Harriett Kubby Sperling, Barbara & Marvin Taxman, Molly Yousem Schroeder & Mike Yousem. If you have not been interviewed please consider doing it for your children and grandchildren. It is a very important way to preserve not only our Jewish community but to your own family history. Call 334-6441/42 for more information on how you can become a part of the NJHS Oral History Program,

The 25th Anniversary video shown at the annual meeting is available for sale at the NJHS office. If you were unable to attend this special anniversary celebration last August, the video, created by the very talented Ozzie Nogg, contains interviews with Mary and Oliver and the founding of the organization.

Mission Statement

The Mission of the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society is to preserve the histories of the Jewish families who settled in Nebraska and Council Bluffs, Iowa. The NJHS will promote the acquisition, cataloging and use of the collected materials which depict this history by: participating in conferences; issuing publications to members and professionals; fostering research; and promoting museum projects and related educational and cultural activities.

Can you identify these photos?





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333 S 132 St
Omaha, NE 68154

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NJHS Offices: E-mail: njhs@jewishomaha.org • Phone: (402) 334-6441/6442 • Fax: (402) 334-6507



Nebraska Jewish Historical Society Donations

We have available for all occasions, cards for donations of \$5.00, \$10.00 and \$25.00 and up. Also available are packets of six (\$5.00 cards) for \$25.00. Please use the form below and we will send the appropriate card. Please make your checks payable to the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society, 333 South 132nd Street, Omaha, NE 68154.

TO: Name _____
Address _____

FROM: Name _____
Address _____

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IN HONOR OF _____

IN MEMORY OF _____

OTHER _____

OR call the NJHS office at 334-6441 between 10:00 AM & 4:00 PM Monday through Thursday. Contributions can be made to the NJHS Fund or the Mary Fellman Permanent Enrichment Fund.