



The Newsletter

of the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society

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NJHS Celebrates Chai - 18 years of Historical Work for the NJHS

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The Nebraska Jewish Historical Society will host it's 18th Annual Meeting and celebration on Wednesday, July 25, 7 pm., at the Jewish Community Center! We will honor our departing archivist, Barbara Morrison-Bresler who is moving with her family in August to the Boston area, where her husband Scott has a new position.

"The Bresler family has been a tremendous asset to our Historical Society, as well as to our community and we wish them all the best in their new home," said Bob Belgrade, outgoing president of the NJHS, who will remain active in fundraising and special projects for the Society.

Also being honored are outgoing board members and officers. Karen Pollak, outgoing treasurer, leaves the board, but will continue to assist the Historical Society by working on writing grant requests.

A new group of board members will be installed along with longtime board member Louise Abrahamson assuming the office of President.

The Nebraska Jewish Historical Society, founded in October 1982, is 18 years old and has moved into new quarters at the JCC, which includes the beautiful, newly-dedicated Belzer Family Gallery and new storage and office space. The NJHS continues to preserve the history of Jews in Nebraska and Council Bluffs, Iowa, at the Carl Frohm Archives and with the exhibits on display in the halls of the JCC and in the Riekes Museum. Future projects include online genealogy, a history of Rabbis in Omaha, and a documentation project of the area's Jewish cemeteries.

"It is an exciting time for the Society with lots of new things happening," Belgrade added. "Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend this special evening's honors." Call the Society at 334-6441 with questions about this event or any projects of the NJHS.



Lois Friedman, Oliver Pollak, and Mary Fellman at NJHS 5th Anniversary, 1987

One day, you're going to be somebody's Jewish ancestor!

So, be a Good one!

Make it a proud Jewish history with your life stories, photographs, documents, keepsakes, journals, memoirs and financial support.

For the sake of the next generation —

Join the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society and

PASS IT ON!



Oscar Belzer



Ruth Belzer



Jerome J. Belzer

Belzer Family Gallery opens to large crowd

Sunday June 17 marked the opening of the Belzer Family Gallery at the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society. A wonderful crowd was in attendance to meet and greet Ruth Belzer who flew in from Los Angeles. The gallery space was envisioned and created by Patty O'Connor-Seger, a former Omahan and close family friend of Eunice Denenberg, niece of Ruth and Oscar Belzer.

What a space! An ingenious plexiglass totem-like sculpture with Hebrew lettering of the Yiddish spelling for the name Belzer. Portraits of Ruth, Oscar and their son Jerry Belzer. Cases of family artifacts, photographs, memorabilia, and honors! A family history that will forever be displayed in the new entry to the Historical Society! The NJHS thanks Patty for her creative vision.

Friends and family gathered along with members of the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society to officially open this new space and to hear special words from President Bob Belgrade, from Eunice Denenberg, and from Rabbi Myer Kripke, a good friend of the Belzer family.

Another part of the day's festivities was the celebration of Ruth's 90th Birthday. Happy Birthday Ruth! The reception planned by Linda Mann and Nancy Noddle completed the festive afternoon with birthday cake, fruit, socializing, and viewing the new gallery.

The NJHS thanks Ruth Frisch Belzer and the Oscar Belzer Estate for their extremely generous donation which made possible the gallery, the new offices of the NJHS and our new furnishings. We thank Michael Korney and the Jerome Belzer Living Trust which made possible the purchase of new computer equipment and archiving software.

We thank Eunice and Norman Denenberg for giving their time, energy and love to this endeavor!

Jewish Dentists and Physicians in Nebraska



Dr. Morris Margolin

Along with the dedication of the Belzer Family Gallery on June 17th was the opening of the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society's new headquarters and a new exhibit about Jewish Dentists and Physicians. Although the history of this community encompasses over 100 possible men and women in this category, the criteria for inclusion in the exhibit were the existence of photographs in our collection and retirement from practice. Helping make choices for the display were Don Nogg and Eddie Malashock. The creative arrangement of 39 dentists and physicians was coordinated by Ducky Milder and the NJHS office staff. A new display unit was also built for the exhibit by exhibit researcher and designer Doug Hartman, who has worked with the Historical Society on other projects. Thanks to all and come see it!



Dr. Philip Sher

From Co-Founder Mary Fellman...

Since it's founding more than 18 years ago, the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society has added a colorful glow and an historical point of view to the almost one hundred years since the creation of the Jewish Federation of Omaha. Exhibits, publications, archives and other forms of "recording the past" have enriched the community and visitors from all over and of all ages. With the dramatic move into new headquarters, with the addition of new eager board members, and with new goals and concerns, the NJHS will continue to add excitement to the remembering of Nebraska's Jewish past and planning for the future. May the coming years be years of in-gathering, of collecting and teaching about those who created this outstanding community and those who continue to build it!

Some Farewell notes from our Archivist Barbara Bresler

I think my first assignment was to finish the documentation and choose artifacts for the Wall of Synagogue History in the Riekes Museum, trying to integrate the whole religious story of Nebraska and Council Bluffs, rabbis, buildings, the beginnings of congregations, their splits, their dissolutions, their officers, name, dates, locations, artifacts. Along with this exercise was a 2 1/2 hour tour of Jewish Omaha with co-founder Mary Fellman. I took 13 pages of notes! And then she told me that we hadn't even touched on the colorful history of South Omaha! The design and research of The Kirshenbaum's tribute to every working man and woman, "The person who works is truly blessed," came shortly after. WOW! Over a thousand names. What an editing job. Somebody's mom, brother, uncle, grandpa. All these people who started their own businesses. Some businesses that are still going over a hundred years old, and some but for our exhibit and research, are all but forgotten. That's history! During that time, I also learned that everybody who walked in my door at the Historical Society or any one who called was related to someone else or to lots of somebody elses and that all of Jewish Omaha is related. There have been regular visitors, special donors, special exhibits planned with the generous donations of particular families. There have been a regular few, who I knew I could call on at any given moment to answer a question about Jewish Omaha. And I did call and you know who you are. Thank you. There are Mary's good

friends that have embraced me, there was always Dottie backing me up, and there has been a small but very nice group of people serving on the Board of the Historical Society who helped make the important decisions. A lot of people have put their faith in me and let me make some choices about what I thought was the "story to tell" about your Jewish Omaha and Jewish Nebraska and I thank all of you for your trust.

This Jewish community is unique. It is a close group, committed to preserving it's very colorful and important Jewish past. Let that past continue to inspire learning and pride in your community. Let that past inspire your future. I hope everyone will continue to place their historical items with the Society, that members will continue to give generously to the only entity that will help carry on this legacy. All of you must pass it on, so that people like myself can use these materials to learn and to teach. The society needs your help. Keep visiting, keep giving, get involved. We have done a lot in four years. But there are many more exciting projects that can be pursued. Volunteer or donate your artifacts and papers, help with an exhibit or an event, join at a higher level of membership, get on the board, give money. The Historical Society wants and needs your help. Thank you for helping me do my job so well. I will miss you all.

Your Support is Appreciated!

Thanks for renewing memberships at all levels, and special thanks to all who gave extra this year.

If we haven't received your 2001 dues, its not too late!! Please mail today!!

Use the coupon below.

It's time to Join the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society and PASS IT ON!

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The Nebraska Jewish Historical Society, 333 South 132nd St.,
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This is a New membership Renewal



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**18TH ANNUAL MEETING!
YOU'RE INVITED!
JULY 25TH! 7 PM
BE THERE!**

Honoring our New Volunteers

Al Abramson, a CPA for 43 years and Director of the Department of Motor Vehicles for 5 1/2 years joins the Society to sort and prepare the B'nai Brith collection for the new computer catalog. He also has been assisting board members to assess our Financial status. For many years Al has been very active in B'nai Brith holding all local and district offices and several national leadership roles. He served as VP of the Jewish Federation and as Chairman of the Dr. Sher Home. Al believes that "The history of the community, of Jewish involvement, commitment, and leadership is a stepping stone for future generations and that the NJHS is a reservoir of that rich heritage."

Helen Rifkin has been working this spring at the Society but is not a newcomer to the active Jewish scene in Omaha. Her leadership of the JCC Cultural Arts department was one of warmth and strength, and one of sensitivity and great care for all the varied ideas and projects. The NJHS is fortunate to have her knowledge and eagerness in all that she does and plans to do. As a volunteer she has worked on organizing ORT and JCAC files, helped create exhibits, and offered many suggestions for office organization and projects.

Helen Epstein came to Omaha from another midwest town, Denver. She has joined with her husband Tuffy in enriching the lives of those she spends time with. As a teacher in Early Childhood Education and ESL, she has diverse interests. She is also great fun, forever youthful, creative and a concerned friend to people of all ages and interests. Helen is helping the Historical Society with exhibits, editing, and mailings. Helen added "I am a nut for genealogy and family history. Our children and our grandchildren will benefit from the programs and resources provided by the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society."