



chicago jewish historical society

CHICAGO JEWISH HISTORY

Homage to Jewish Labor

A Mural Thrives in Chicago:

A Co-President's Column

In its 40th year, a Chicago Jewish artistic and historical monument has gained a new life.

The Jewish labor mural, "Fabric of Our Lives," designed by Chicago artists Miriam Socoloff and Cynthia Weiss, was restored to its original magnificence this past October. The 13-by-15-foot outdoor glass mosaic mural, dedicated in 1980 and rededicated in 1996, prominently occupies the wall near the entrance of the Bernard Horwich Jewish Community Center (BHJCC) in West Rogers Park.

In their long careers, the accomplished artists have produced many works, but the mural, for which they hold a special fondness, has particular meaning for them. Socoloff expressed their feelings. "I love this piece, I love everything about it," she said. "It was our first mosaic. We are more technically proficient in laying tile now, but the piece holds together."

Weiss explained the main artistic idea of the mural. She said, "It was to show that Yiddish culture, theater, music, and poetry grew from the work experience of everyday life on the street, in factories.... That was the stage on which Yiddish culture flourished, from immigrants' everyday experiences and work experience in this country, in Chicago."

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The "Fabric of Our Lives" mosaic mural at the Bernard Horwich Jewish Community Center in West Rogers Park was recently restored to its original splendor. The mural pays homage to our Jewish immigrant forebears, many of whom toiled under less-than-decent working conditions.

Hail to Our Jewish Vendors

There was a time, not too long ago, when many, if not most, of the vendors at local sports venues were nice Jewish guys from the North and South Sides. Read more about them on pages 4-9 of this issue. From left: Robert Kletnick, Arnold Lipski, Glenn Smoler, Dr. Paul Smulson, Dr. David Shanker, Jay Lawrence, Bob Schwartz, Ira Levin, Lloyd Rutzky, Michael Ginsburg, Dr. Eli Lawrence, Mitch Levin, and Joel Levin.



CO-PRESIDENT'S COLUMN: A Mural Thrives



Dr. Rachelle Gold

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The mural is a vivid tableau of scenes and symbols from Chicago Jewish life. It must be viewed in person—ideally, on a sunny, clear day—to be appreciated. Here is a description from the program of the October 13, 1996, rededication. (Marian Cutler wrote about the well-attended first dedication in CJH, December 1980, p. 5.)

“The brick wall in the lower right corner symbolizes the ghettos, pogroms and poverty in Europe. The open gate above the wall symbolizes liberation, justice and a new beginning. The dominant scene shows women at their sewing machines, representing the sweatshops where many immigrants worked under brutal working conditions. The fabric sewn at these machines becomes the Chicago streets the immigrants lived on. The street scene includes the Hebrew Literary Society, the Jewish People’s Institute, a West Side synagogue, a kosher butcher shop and Maxwell Street.”

The upper section of the mural depicts the figures of a boy selling Yiddish papers, a violinist, a dancer, a writer, and a labor unionist. The entire mural is enclosed in a patterned ceramic tile border, inspired by Hebrew manuscript illumination and Jewish paper cut art, that contains traditional Jewish symbols and tools of culture and work. The lower border has a quote in Yiddish from a poem by Morris Rosenfeld (1862–1923), the “Sweatshop Bard.”

The restoration was a necessity. Over the last decade, the mural had become a victim of the elements. As a frequent visitor to BHJCC, I had long admired the mural. It disturbed me to see that it was dingy and damaged and whole sections of tile had fallen to the ground.

When CJH former editor Bev Chubat, unaware of the mural’s state, suggested last summer that I meet the artists, whom she knew, and write an update on the mural, I deferred so as not to report bad news. Fate decreed that my contact with the artists would materialize only after the mural restoration was complete. I fortuitously learned of the happy news from correspondence with CJHS member Rachel Abramson, a longtime friend of Socoloff.

“Fabric of Our Lives” grew out of Socoloff’s and Weiss’s combining their efforts as friends, artists, activists, and educators. The two artists first met in the 1970s as neighbors in their Lakeview six-flat, and soon thereafter discovered their shared interests. They were daughters of artists (Beatrice Socoloff and Harriet Weiss). Weiss was a muralist and promoter of youth art programs throughout the city, and Socoloff was a painter and Chicago Public Schools (CPS) art teacher and supervisor. Both were involved in progressive groups that sought to improve society.

Socoloff, a Chicago native with a degree in art education from Northern Illinois University, was a member of the Chicago Women’s Liberation Union and of Chutzpah, a radical-leftist Jewish group that did community building around issues of social justice in the Jewish community. It was through Chutzpah that Socoloff learned about heroic Jewish labor history and developed the idea to celebrate it through art.

Weiss was the one who proposed a mural. Her art education took place at Colorado College, the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), and the Art Institute of Chicago, as well as in Barcelona. She was part of the Chicago Mural Group, now the Chicago Public Art Group, an artists’ collective engaged in political art and “people’s art,” where she was mentored by John Pitman Weber, a founder of the group, and muralist Caryl Yasko, an inspiring role model. Weiss, bilingual in Spanish (an important influence and asset), first became interested in murals during her childhood in Mexico City, where she was exposed to the work of the great Mexican muralists. Her interest deepened in Chicago through her work at the Jane Addams Center of the Hull House Association and in city neighborhoods, especially Pilsen. The decision to use mosaic as the



Co-muralist Miriam Socoloff



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artistic medium came about because someone donated many boxes of surplus Italian glass tiles.

The ambitious project required funds, supporters, advisors, and many volunteers. The West Rogers Park Jewish Mural Committee was formed, comprised of a spectrum of community leaders. A prime ally was the Jewish Labor Committee (JLC) and its Chicago leader, Stanley Rosen. JLC is a national organization founded in New York in 1934 as "the Jewish voice of the labor movement, and the voice of the labor movement in the Jewish community," according to its website. Rosen, a UIC labor professor, later created the Radical Jewish Elders Video Project, housed at Spertus Institute. A JLC advisory committee consulted on ideas and themes.



Co-muralist Cynthia Weiss

The artwork also needed a home. Remarkably, the artists commenced the project "before we even had a wall for it," said the two artists. Their chosen site was Devon Avenue, which was in transition from its Jewish heyday but still had mostly Jewish-owned stores. However, the Jewish merchants were discouraging, as they noted the neighborhood's changing demographics, and recommended BHJCC as the proper site. A committed volunteer, Martin Fox, stepped up to approach BHJCC. Fox was the president of a nearby synagogue founded by Holocaust survivors, a JLC member, and an influential figure in city politics. BHJCC agreed to host the mural, but the artists had to find another location to do the artwork. That was provided by the Dr. Max Dolnick Community Center, the Labor Zionist Center, on California Avenue south of Devon.

To construct the mosaic mural, Socoloff and Weiss worked with a group of volunteers, mostly non-artists. Weiss depicted the intimacy of this process. She said, "It was like a quilting bee. You spend hours and hours together, absorbed in work growing under your fingers, which became a lovely experience with an odd group of people who helped.... The conversation around the mosaic table is a lovely part of making the work." A calamity that could have doomed the project—a flood that destroyed the artists' drawing—did not deter them. Socoloff and Weiss redid the drawing, and the work resumed.

The completed masterpiece took its place on the BJHCC wall in 1980. The mural received accolades and much attention. A poster of the mural, produced by JLC, was widely distributed and featured in books and exhibitions, including at the Diaspora Museum, now the Museum of the Jewish People, in Tel Aviv.

It was not until last year that Socoloff's friend from Chutzpah, Leo Schlossberg, alerted the artists to the mural's deteriorating condition. Socoloff sprang into action to preserve this "important piece of Chicago Jewish history and the mural itself," she said. With a potent mix of pragmatism and ardor, she persuaded BHJCC to fund the restoration. The approval came in September 2020.

The artists were unsure they would have time to complete the extensive work needed before the onset of bad weather, but good fortune prevailed: The weather was dry and unseasonably mild. A building engineer had a large container of original tiles that he had been rescuing from the ground. Local stores carried

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Beer, Hot Dogs, Ice Cream, and Cracker Jacks: The Stories of Chicago's (Jewish) Ballpark Vendors

JOEL LEVIN AND LLOYD RUTZKY

In the Beginning

"When the legend becomes fact, print the legend," so the saying goes.

The stories of baseball park vendors are filled with equal amounts of truth, faulty memories, salty chat, and fabled mishegas. Joel Levin and Lloyd Rutzky are responsible for two successful books about Chicago's amazing vendors: "Wrigley Field's Amazing Vendors" and "White Sox Park's Amazing Vendors," released in 2018 and 2019, respectively, by Arcadia Publishers.

These books began almost 60 years ago. In 1962, Joel and his older brother, Mitch Levin, began working at the fields and parks of professional baseball on Chicago's north and south sides. Lloyd Rutzky joined them in 1965. While finishing his degree at Columbia College, Lloyd took a course in photography. He soon began a crusade to shoot everybody with whom he worked at the ballparks.

Lloyd had in his mind that if he couldn't become a professional athlete with his face on a bubble gum card, he would put every employee he could find working off the field and in the stands in a bubble-gum-card photo—as if they were just as worthy of collecting as those on the field. He also thought this visual record would be a good remembrance of his career as a vendor after that line of work ran its course in perhaps five years. But he stuck around for 50 years, after the first five, and took about 1,000 quality pictures—mostly candid, but a few posed. More than 320 of them have become immortalized in his and Joel's books, which include the ins and outs of the "vending game" and iconic tales of what it's like to live the vending life.

Lloyd's vending career achieved amazing milestones. He worked at 8,000-plus games and very likely sold more beer in the seats at baseball games than anybody who has ever lived. For sure, he holds that record in Chicago, where he was one of the top sellers every year and outlasted dozens of rivals.

Lloyd and Joel became acquainted over the course of Joel's last dozen years at the parks, before Joel left to enter the teaching profession. In the early years of this new century, Joel started to think fondly of his former career as a "hawker" and a "schlepper" and entertained the notion of writing a book about it. He had already written a few books about his professorial days.

But what really got Joel started was finding an old Arcadia book from 2004, "Forgotten Chicago," in a resale shop. In it was a picture of a forlorn-looking older gent working at Comiskey Park selling peanuts. He was Irving Newer, an old friend of Joel's.

Newer served as an inspiration. Joel concluded that a book with more pictures of the rediscovered Newer, along with those of others who worked at the parks, would be of great interest to many baseball fans—in Chicago and beyond. And he remembered that his old friend Lloyd had taken quite a few while Joel was a vendor. He hoped that Lloyd would answer the call for history. Indeed, his call was more than answered.

One book covering both Chicago baseball landmarks was the original concept. But because Lloyd had such an abundance of pictures, and because both the publisher and its authors thought the marketplace would bear two, it was decided to have one focus on the Cubs and the other on the White Sox.



Lloyd Rutzky's Story

Lloyd's story of how he became a vendor is similar to many others'. He "knew somebody." In his case, it was his Uncle Mike, who was "in" as a vendor. So was his next-door neighbor, Myles Pomeroy. Plus, Lloyd loved baseball. And since he was a South Sider, he loved the White Sox.

Lloyd was also fascinated by the guys who yelled, "Hotdogs!" He and his older brother, Ron, used to scream "Hotdogs!" out of car windows when driving through viaducts with their father, Jules, also an avid White Sox fan. Jules' father once had a grocery store across from the White Sox's "Baseball Palace of the World," Comiskey Park. And because Jules was in a business that delivered bags to the park in which cotton candy was wrapped, he and Lloyd saw many a Sox game for free.



Lloyd Rutzky

So, for Lloyd, becoming a vendor was pretty much in the cards—baseball cards, that is.

Naturally, though, it was older brother Ron who became a vendor first in 1964 at the age of 19. His mom's younger brother, Mike Rubin, ran concession stands in the upper deck at Comiskey Park, along with partners Eddie Albaum, Danny Rubinstein, Jack and Solly Gold. For sure, most of those involved in vending were Jewish. Keep Rubinstein in mind. His name will come up again.

After Ron was enticed by Uncle Mike to work for him at the stands at Comiskey, Lloyd jumped at the chance to accompany his older brother to the park and get in more "free games." Lloyd actually had tried to sign up as a vendor earlier that year at the union office in downtown Chicago. He was inspired by his slightly older neighbor, good friend, and fellow baseball fanatic Myles Pomeroy, who had gotten "in" because Myles' Dad knew somebody "in"—that somebody being Danny Rubinstein.

Lloyd's application was put on a waiting list, but Lloyd did accompany his brother to Soldier Field that summer of 1964 because Ron had been "ordered" by Uncle Mike and Danny to work at the college football all-star game to which "anybody could come." The naive, 16-year-old Lloyd was denied work there because he didn't know he needed a Social Security card for employment. He went to obtain one the next week, but it was too late to get one for that season.

Meanwhile, Ron worked for his Uncle Mike and the partners, but when he compared his pay with the other vendors, who were employed by Sportservice, he discovered that being on "the family payroll" meant that he would receive what Uncle Mike and his cohorts considered "good enough."

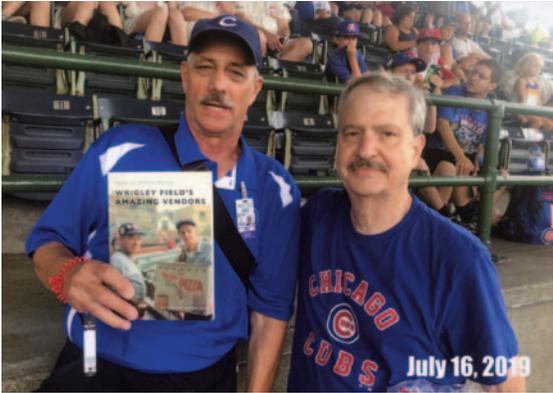
So, a year later, Ron decided that since he was now "in," he would work for the better-paying Sportservice and cut "family ties." And Lloyd again tried to get the vending job at the union office that spring—and again was put on the waiting list.

As it turned out, Ron had decided the vending life wasn't for him. He wasn't much of a sports fan, anyway. So, in July 1965, Lloyd, impersonating Ron, began as an employee for Sportservice. Lloyd loved it, and his bosses loved him.

When Lloyd went to apply at the union in the spring of 1966, union President Nick LaPapa saw the many events at which Lloyd had posed as Ron. Deciding that Lloyd would be just as good as his older brother, the union hired him, taking him off the dreaded waiting list.

Things were a bit awkward for the new Rutzky at first when he came to opening day. Bosses were amazed how much he resembled Ron, but eventually chalked that up to "family resemblance." Thus, an amazing career was officially born. Over the years, Lloyd went on to sell more than a dozen items: soda pop, lemonade, peanuts, Cracker Jacks, hotdogs, ice cream, taffy apples, beef sandwiches, pizza, beer, water, programs, binoculars, and baseball caps.

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Ira Levin (left) with namesake Joel Levin. The two are only related by their love of baseball.

he liked being there, but because he knew he was great at it and the world was going to watch him soar in the vending ranks, becoming one of the best of the best. He first dominated sales on peanuts, later on beer. He has a 57-year career still pending ... when fans can return to the ballparks and stadiums when COVID-19 is no more.

Arnold Lipski's Story

Arnold was a close neighbor of Ira Levin's. Though three years separated them—Arnold was Ira's junior—they both hung around Jensen Park, on Lawndale Avenue between Leland and Eastwood avenues, playing ball. Ira lived on Leland; Arnold, on Eastwood. Ira would talk of vending, and Arnold was hooked enough to sign up in 1968, sponsored by Ira.

Later that summer at Wrigley Field, during a very hot afternoon doubleheader, rookie Arnold was suffering for sales on popcorn while three-year veteran Lloyd was being forced to sell peanuts in the near 100-degree heat. The two collapsed of heat exhaustion in the same spot and developed a friendship that has lasted over 50 years.

The next year, Lloyd would move north to Glenview. When Arnold moved north to Des Plaines, they would often carpool to the parks. In 1982, they even had a stand together in the bleachers at Wrigley Field. Working at a stand is something Lloyd had avoided with a passion—because it usually meant you couldn't see the game—and that was the main reason he loved this job. Making money was secondary. If he couldn't see the game, Lloyd felt like he might as well have an office or factory job. But this stand with Arnold worked, since it was out on the bleachers' main walkway and in full view of the game if you cared. And Lloyd cared.

Glenn Smoler's Story

Glenn also has Danny Rubinstein to thank for his enduring vending career that began in 1973 and is still pending, awaiting the ending of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Glenn's dad owned GI Furniture and Appliances at 6131 W. Dempster in Morton Grove from 1965 to 1983. In the winter of 1972 and 1973, Danny bought a big couch at the store, where he also recruited 18-year-old Glenn to be one of his "boys," working for him at his right field upper deck stand at Comiskey Park.

In 1975, Glenn terminated his service to Danny's cause and joined the rank-and-file schlepping crew of vendors. For the next 43 years, along with Ira Levin, he dominated the upper decks of Comiskey Park and Wrigley Field. Finally, in 2018, he "came down" at Wrigley to challenge the hard corps of the much more lucrative—and much more exhausting—lower level, where there are more people, more avenues to roam, and more competition. Glenn has been up to the task, quickly carving a reputation as one of the masters on beer. But whether he has been a "Danny Boy" or a free, regular vendor, Glenn has loved his job at the ballparks—and the chance to see all these games for free has been a dream come true.

Glenn has been a lifelong friend of another vendor in our stories, Jay Lawrence, whom he has known from their days at Boone Elementary School and Mather High.

Ira Levin's Story

Ira Levin had an equally fabled vending beginning. In 1963, the 16-year-old North Sider and a couple of his friends saw a newspaper ad that jobs were available at Northwestern University's Dyche Stadium for a spring football game, so they went to see what it was all about. And there they met Danny Rubinstein.

Little became of Ira's friends from that day in the annals of vending history, but Ira took off running, outdoing everybody in sales as if he had invented the vending game.

Danny immediately had him sign up for the baseball parks. Ira's excitement over this new job made it hard for him to sleep at night, so anxious was he to get to the parks. Not just because



Smulson with famed sports announcer Harry Caray

In His Own Words: Dr. Paul Smulson

I was a vendor at Wrigley Field, Comiskey Park, Soldier Field, and the Chicago Stadium from 1970 to 1979. I grew up in Skokie. Vending was a great job, working outside in all types of weather. I worked as a vendor through high school, college, and dental school. Being a vendor helped pay for my education. I retired after practicing oral and maxillo-facial surgery for 32 years.

On page 36 of "Wrigley Field's Amazing Vendors," you can see me in action as I demonstrate a perfect two-bottle pour of Schlitz, "The beer that made Milwaukee famous." That photo was taken by my father, Dr. Marshall H. Smulson, during a Cubs game in 1976.

I frequently carried two cases of beer at a time when there were large crowds. "White Sox Park's Amazing Vendors" has an iconic photo of me on page 88 with legendary sports announcer Harry Caray. I'm in my beer uniform socializing with Harry, who is wearing a bright red plaid sports coat. Beer at that time—1977—cost 80 cents.

While practicing dental surgery during the day, I was a sports photojournalist for the Chicago Daily Defender (Chicago's African-American-based newspaper) at night and on the weekends. I photographed Michael Jordan and the Bulls teams during their championship years. I also photographed Cubs, White Sox, and Bears games.

Vending at the ballparks was a family affair. My brothers Dan and Jim were vendors who also became dentists.

In His Own Words: Bob Kletnick

I'm an avid White Sox fan. When my brother, Ted, asked me to join him as a vendor in 1964, I eagerly accepted the job. Coca-Cola, popcorn, ice cream, and beer were the main items I sold during my 10 years at the ballparks (spread out over two decades).

Friends jokingly declared me an "official vendor" on June 25, 1967, when I sold more popcorn than Al "Moose" Morgan, a longtime vendor, at the annual Cubs-Sox charity game. On August 2 of that year, I had my best day to date at a Cubs-Cardinals doubleheader, selling Coke before 37,164 fans. I used the money to help pay for a car I purchased that same evening. I enjoyed working the White Sox-Detroit Tigers doubleheader on September 10, 1967. Joel Horlen pitched a no-hitter, as the Sox shut out the Tigers twice and moved closer to first place.

Being a vendor enabled me to attend concerts I might otherwise have missed. I was there for the Beatles concert at Comiskey Park in 1965, a Rascals concert at the long-gone Chicago Coliseum in 1968, and the Michael Jackson concert at Comiskey Park in 1984. I even worked the Polish Millennium celebration at Soldier Field in 1966, selling souvenirs.

I retired in 2014 after a 28-year career with the United States Post Office. I'm photographed on page 58 of "White Sox Park's Amazing Vendors" getting a new load of ice cream from commissary worker Karen Green.

In His Own Words: Michael Ginsburg

Outside jobs that combined physical labor with my entrepreneurial spirit always appealed to me. As a youngster, I "hustled up" snow shoveling jobs and ran a Kool-Aid stand. I always liked selling and meeting people so becoming a vendor seemed a natural fit. My first real job was working at Wolfy's, earning \$1.10 an hour.

I found out about Chicago's ballpark vendors through a family friend, Elliot Cohen. Getting a job as a vendor, for which you are paid totally on commission, suited my drive to succeed. I started working as a vendor in the

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middle of the never-to-be-forgotten 1969 Cubs season. I was selling 15-cent and quarter Fresca on a rotating basis. Over the years, I worked my way up to selling beer.

I had access to both the Cubs and White Sox clubhouses because I sold *The Sporting News* paper to all the players before the game. I remember selling a souvenir to Mayor Richard J. Daley at Wrigley Field in the early 1970s. When I got home that evening, my father, Joseph, remarked that he had seen me on television with Mayor Daley. I even remember my vendor call: "Once the day is over, you can never live it again. BUY A SOUVENIR!"

Kerry Wood's 20 strikeouts game in 1998 and Mark Buehrle's perfect game in 2009 are among my vending highlights, but Ernie Banks is in a class of his own. I witnessed his 500th home run at Wrigley Field on May 12, 1970. Still, it was a simple phone call that showed Ernie's true Hall of Fame character. Several years after he retired, I ran into Ernie on the main concourse of Wrigley Field. I asked him if he would make a personal phone call to an elderly friend of mine who idolized Ernie. Without hesitation, Ernie escorted me into his private office and spoke for several minutes to my flabbergasted friend. Mr. Cub was a Hall of Famer on and off the field.



Michael Ginsburg

In His Own Words: Jay Lawrence

In February 1971, my friend Marshal Fagan told me he was going to a union office for Chicago baseball vendors to sign up for the season. I said I would go with him and also sign up for the job. I had noticed that there were many Jewish guys from my high school who were vendors at Wrigley Field, Comiskey Park, and Soldier Field.

When Marshal and I got to the union office in downtown Chicago, we were greeted by Morry Baron, who was the Secretary/Treasurer of Local 236, the vendors' union. He gave us forms to complete. After filling them out, Morry said, "I see you two live in Rogers Park and attend Mather High School." He gave us permit cards, which allowed us to work as vendors at both Wrigley Field and Comiskey Park.

I began working as a vendor in the spring of 1971. I observed that more than 80 percent of the vendors were Jewish. Later that year, I thanked Morry for selecting me for the vending job. I asked him how many people applied, and he said that he received hundreds of applications but could only employ about 40 new guys each year. Morry said he chose me because I was Jewish and lived in Rogers Park. He went on to say he had great results by putting Jewish guys to work. I was grateful to Morry, grateful for being a Jewish guy from Rogers Park, and grateful for working with a lot of wonderful Jewish guys.

In His Own Words: Eli Lawrence, "Kings for the Day"

Vending for me was the perfect combination of being with a fraternity of brothers, largely made up of kids from Mather and Sullivan high schools, and a great way to make money to pay for college. Few days exemplified this better than July 10, 1977, a 95-degree scorcher, in which the Cubs played the Cardinals in a daytime doubleheader. We all sold beer, which was iced down in buckets, and the cold ice water dripped on us throughout the game, keeping us cool.

It was the perfect beer-buying crowd. Cardinals fans were avid beer guzzlers and would drink any type of beer, even the undrinkable Schlitz. The crowd, eventually 40,038 fans, came in early, and selling beer was as easy as could be. All of my friends—from the best to the worst vendors—made a lot of money that day (as we were paid on commission). I sold more than 50 loads of beer!

After the game, we went in four cars, 15 guys total, to celebrate our good fortune. I suggested going to Grassfield's, a very fancy restaurant on Ridge Avenue at Pratt Boulevard. However, they had a dress code. I went inside and talked to the maître d' and told him there were 14 others dressed no better than I (still in work clothes and smelling like stale beer). I pulled out a wad of cash and said, "And we all have this." A couple of minutes later, he led all 15 of us to a private room and we were kings for the day.

In His Own Words: Mitch Levin

The most memorable year I ever worked as a vendor was in 1962, my very first year at the ballparks. It wasn't even a baseball game. It was a boxing match between Floyd Patterson and Sonny Liston for the heavyweight championship of the world on September 25 at old Comiskey Park. (Liston won.) A very young Cassius Clay, soon to be Muhammad Ali, was also in attendance, but not selling Coca-Cola like me.

That fight, when I was 18, sparked my lifelong interest in the sport of boxing that culminated in my collecting thousands of historic 16-millimeter boxing films and an appointment to the Illinois Boxing Commission in 2005. You can see a photo of me getting Muhammad Ali's autograph on Page 82 of "White Sox Park's Amazing Vendors."

My vending career lasted for 30 years—from 1962 to 1992. I sold every product imaginable at both Wrigley Field and Comiskey Park: Coke, peanuts, popcorn, hotdogs, and ice cream. As I matured, I became the proverbial "beer man," photographed on Page 41 of "Wrigley Field's Amazing Vendors," along with my brother, Joel, another beer man. I helped several friends get jobs at the ballparks, just as a fellow Roosevelt High School student helped us get our jobs.

Between my love of boxing and a three decades-long vending career, I managed to "squeeze in" a 50-year career for the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, retiring in 2020. Pretty good for a neighborhood teenager from Albany Park.

In His Own Words: Joel Levin

My career as a Chicago baseball vendor began at Wrigley Field in 1962 selling 15-cent Coca-Cola. By the end of that season, I was promoted to 25-cent Coca-Cola and, eventually, graduated to Borden's Frosty Malts.

Aside from the excitement of having my very first job at 16, the highlight of that year was the All-Star Baseball Game at Wrigley Field played on July 30. The best players of both the American and National leagues were only a few feet away from me, standing on the playing field waiting to be introduced. Willie Mays, Hank Aaron, Mickey Mantle, Roger Maris, Sandy Koufax, and Ernie Banks were some of the legendary players right before my eyes. Those were heady times for a teenager.

My second year as a vendor proved to be just as exciting as my first—if not more so. The Bears were hosting the dreaded New York Giants for the NFL Championship at Wrigley Field on December 29, only one month after President Kennedy had been assassinated. The temperature was near zero. It was like working in a freezer. I was selling peanuts, but the fans didn't want to take their gloves off to crack open the shells. (Only beer and hot chocolate sold that day.) I ended up running into the vendors' room several times to keep my hands and feet warm with Sterno cans that were used to keep the hotdogs warm. I then ran back out into the stands to root the Bears on to victory. Despite the deep freeze, the Bears and the vendors persevered to bring home the NFL Championship to Chicago 14-10.

The most vivid memory of my vending career, which lasted through 1976, was the heartbreaking 1969 Cubs season. Wrigley management opened the gates at 10 a.m. to accommodate the enormous crowds waiting outside on Clark and Addison streets. I competed with other vendors to see who could sell the most Frosty Malts.

We all carried triple loads of Frosty Malts (10 packages, 120 chocolate malt cups) to the upper deck, since there were no permanent refreshment stands at that time. The trip to the upper deck from the main concourse took longer than the selling out of the malts. In vendor terms, it was a "pass-out," meaning that a vendor did not have to shout the name of the product. Fans would besiege you, and you would just "pass out" the item. Large crowds, pass-outs, and raucous Bleacher Bums, however, could not help the Cubs avoid their September collapse to the Miracle New York Mets.

On July 16, 2019, I returned to Wrigley Field to hand out a few copies of "Wrigley Field's Amazing Vendors," a book I co-authored with Lloyd Rutzky, to a few of the vendors I competed with in 1969. It was the official 50th anniversary of the 1969 Cubs team. I had now come full circle, from being a vendor at Wrigley Field to a published author who had written about the vendors.

Flags of the Forefathers and Foremothers

DR. EDWARD MAZUR

The American flag has become an omnipresent part of American society. We view the flag from flagpoles. We see it carried by partisans, who emblazon it on shirts, hats, and body parts. Imagine what Betsy Ross would think about the evolution of her handiwork.

Most of the time, we pay passing respect to flags—the United States', along with Israel's. Occasionally, however, flags take center stage in our lives, minds, and actions. In the recent past, we have witnessed demonstrations both here at home and abroad over flags. During the past year, Mississippi legislators and the people who elected them voted to adopt a new design for their flag, removing the stars and bars that symbolized the powerful hold of the Confederacy among many Southerners.



As a student in the 1950s at Sullivan High School in East Rogers Park, I recall the cover of our history textbook. It featured American soldiers erecting the flag on the island of battle-scarred Iwo Jima. Over the years, I also observed in my newspapers and from TV the images of Israeli military personnel displaying the Israeli flag in scenes of battle, jubilation, and peace. And in the synagogues and other Jewish venues at which I have davened—Hillel, at the University of Illinois; Rodfei Zedek, in Hyde Park, near the University of Chicago, where I was a graduate student; New Israel, on Touhy Avenue, in West Rogers Park; and, currently, at the Lake Shore Drive Synagogue, on Elm Street, in Chicago's Gold Coast—I have witnessed the proud display of both the American and Israeli flags.

These observations have led me to consider those moments within modern American Jewish history when the presence of a flag has prompted powerful emotional responses—be they acts of patriotism or defiance. And as I have prayed at various synagogues, I also have had this thought: Did anyone raise eyebrows or discuss or protest at synagogue board meetings when the American flag or the Israeli flag was first hoisted in the sanctuary? And, I have also thought about the flags' origins.

As regards the Israeli flag, some historians date its development of its blue and white colors and the Star of David to the Spanish-American War in 1898. Others trace it back to World War I. Jenna Weissman Joselit, the Charles E. Smith Professor of Judaic Studies at The George Washington University, has discovered a reference to the sighting of a blue-and-white striped "Flag of Judah" at a Columbus Day Parade in Boston as early as 1892, several years before the "blue and white's" debut at the First Zionist Congress.

In an August 8, 2015, article in *The Forward*, Weissman Joselit wrote that the flag was "[h]eld aloft by the members of the B'nai Zion Educational Society [and] was accompanied by an American flag as it made its way down the city's streets and avenues."

In the years that followed, both the Stars and Stripes and the Magen David became familiar sights not only in Boston, but also in Chicago's near Westside Maxwell Street neighborhood, New York, Detroit, and other communities with Jewish populations. Brandeis University historian Jonathan Sarna referenced this phenomenon in his 1998 article "The Cult of Synthesis in American Jewish Culture," which appeared in *Jewish Social Studies*. Gradually, the two flags adorned synagogue sanctuaries across the United States, where they stood tall on opposite ends of the pulpit. In Chicago, as Jews moved into the Lawndale, Humboldt Park, Logan Square, Albany Park, East and West Rogers Park, Hyde Park, South Shore, and Jeffery Manor neighborhoods, the two flags appeared frequently flanking the ark and the Torahs held within.

Not every Jewish house of worship in Chicago and elsewhere in the United States welcomed the Zionist flag. As late as the mid-1950s, the official policy of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) held that, in its capacity as the symbol of a foreign, sovereign state, the blue and white would be "quite out of place in an

American synagogue.” If an Israeli dignitary were to visit the synagogue or temple, that would be another matter entirely. Flying the Israeli flag would be a mark of respect as well as an exercise in diplomacy. Otherwise, especially within Reform Jewish circles in Chicago’s temples, its presence was off-limits. This practice was overturned in the 1970s, when the CCAR, expanding on the meaning of the Israel national flag, ruled that it could be—but by no means had to be—displayed in the synagogue sanctuary as a “symbol of Jews and Judaism throughout the world.” And there the matter rested for the future. I am not aware of any Chicago area synagogue or temple that does not currently display both American and Israeli flags.

My research led me to another curiosity over the Jewish flag: Who first came up with the idea of a blue-and-white striped symbol? And when? There is a fascinating public exchange within the pages of Jewish Social Studies of the 1940s between Alex Bein, who would go on to write what had long been the definitive biography of Theodor Herzl, and Dora Askowith, a member of an accomplished and active Zionist Boston Jewish family, on the “first Zionist flag.” Askowith, who taught history at New York’s Hunter College for 45 years, believed that a knowledge of Jewish women’s history would serve as a catalyst for female activism and organization that would advance the status and positions of American Jewish women. Interestingly, her most prominent and well-known publication came in 1915, when Columbia University Press published “The Toleration and Persecution of the Jews in the Roman Empire.”

Askowith claimed that the earliest prototype of what today is the flag of Israel was the handiwork of her father, Jacob Baruch Askowith, who designed it in 1891. His flag hung in Boston’s Zion Hall and was often “unfurled” at its annual Hanukkah celebrations. In 1892, a smaller version of the flag was made by Dora Askowith’s sisters who, along with the other all female members of the B’nai Zion Society, waved it publicly while on a parade organized by their brother, Elias Askowith. Subsequently, this flag also hung in Zion Hall.

Alex Bein, a German-Jewish historian and Zionist, in 1934 published a biography of Theodor Herzl. For the next five decades, the book went through 64 editions and was published in multiple languages. Bein, who in 1955 was appointed by Prime Minister David Ben Gurion as the Keeper of the Israel National Archives, had a different flag creation story. Determined to set the record straight, he claimed that David Wolffsohn, Herzl’s successor as president of the Zionist Congress, had been the first to come up with the idea of a blue-and-white flag. “One of the many problems with which I had to deal,” Wolffsohn wrote in his reminiscences, from which Bein would quote at length and from which Weissman Joselit recounted in her Forward article, “was that of deciding with which flag we should drape the hall. The question troubled me considerably. We would obviously have to create a flag, since we had none ... Suddenly, I got a brainwave: We already had a flag—the blue and white of the tallith ... We had but to unfurl it before the eyes of the Jewish people and the world at large!”

Based on this text, Bein concluded, “Thus, it would appear that Wolffsohn arrived independently at the same idea as had inspired Dora Askowith’s father years previously.”

It probably does not really matter to many of us who initially designed the current Israeli flag. But it makes for productive speculation about the relationships between flag waving and civic well-being. During the current COVID-19 pandemic, it has become difficult for researchers to access certain information about both flags and their treatment and reception by our religious institutions. If CJHS members and supporters have personal recollections or printed documents that discuss how the question of flags in the sanctuaries was addressed, please email your information to me at emazur531@aol.com. And the next time you and your family are in your shul and you need a brief respite from davening, look at the Israeli and American flags and consider their history and meanings.

CJHS Board member Dr. Edward Mazur, a former Society President, is a frequent contributor to this publication.

Question: Who developed the original design of what has become the Israeli flag?

Answer: Great Jewish minds (unsurprisingly) disagree.

Growing up in North Lawndale

DR. IRVING CUTLER

About a century ago, North Lawndale started rapidly becoming Chicago's Jerusalem. Most of the area's population had been of German, Irish, and Bohemian ancestries, and they initially resisted the influx of Jews to the neighborhood. But Jewish immigrants and their children soon became the overwhelming majority of residents. They came mostly from the crowded Maxwell Street area, with its wooden firetraps, sweatshops, and pushcarts. They were drawn to North Lawndale's brick and stone houses with light and airy rooms, along with back and front porches. The attractive community had three nearby parks and good transportation.

By 1940, North Lawndale was the largest Jewish community Chicago ever had. It contained about 110,000 Jews—or some 40 percent of the entire Chicago-area Jewish population. About 45 percent of the population was foreign born, the highest percentage in the city. The area contained some 70 synagogues, virtually all Orthodox. Among its other major institutions were the Hebrew Theological College; the Jewish People's Institute (J.P.I.); the Jewish Daily Forward offices; the Douglas Park Auditorium (Labor Lyceum), which housed the Yiddish Theater and the Workmen's Circle administrative office; Mount Sinai Hospital; a variety of Zionist organizations; and both a Jewish orphanage and old people's home.

The main shopping area was the mile-long stretch of Roosevelt Road from Kedzie to Crawford (now Pulaski) avenues. Among its numerous facilities were six movie theaters that occasionally featured Yiddish films. Wherever you turned in the neighborhood, you would see Jewish butcher shops, groceries, bakeries, and delicatessens. Coming down the alleys was a constant stream of peddlers hawking their produce. Yiddish was spoken everywhere—on the streets, in the stores, at home. North Lawndale was a very vibrant community.

In 1926, three years after my birth in Maxwell Street, my family left the area and purchased a two-story home with a big mortgage at 1539 South Spaulding Avenue. At that age, I spoke mainly Yiddish. I was taught Yiddish songs by my four older sisters, the youngest of whom was 13 years my senior. In a sense, I was raised by five dotting mamas who themselves were raised in Eastern Europe. As for the songs, my Jewish neighbors sitting on their front porches in the summer would call me over to sing for them.



The author's childhood home at 1539 South Spaulding Avenue

Before air conditioning, in the warm months in the evenings, people would sit on their front porch chatting with their neighbors, most of whom they knew quite well, often eating ice cream or other snacks bought from the numerous passing vendors. When a huge chauffeur-driven luxury car, a Duesenberg, would park on the street and one of the Goldblatt brothers of the department store chain would exit to visit his mother, curious kids would gather to chat with the driver. This was not an uncommon occurrence. It was a very lively street.

I really started speaking English when I entered kindergarten at the Howland Elementary School, which was conveniently just a half a block from my home, close enough so I was able to go home for lunch and still have time to play in the schoolyard. I stayed at Howland from kindergarten through eighth grade. In those days they would misguidedly seat us according to our scholastic rankings, and I was always in the first row—the honor row—with my friend Donald Asire, the only gentile boy in the class and on my block.

Donald lived in the house next to my family's. His Bohemian grandparents bought it in the early 1900s, and they remained as the whole block turned Jewish. He became one of my best friends, and we would often play together. His parents would invite me to their house for Christmas treats and to play with his electric train set, which made me envious.

The two of us got along well through the years, but I do remember one fight: I told him there was no Santa Claus, and he called me a kike, a term with which I was unfamiliar. We parted when he went to Farragut High School and I chose Manley, which had mainly Jewish students. Years later, I learned that Donald had become an Air Force pilot and had been killed in Vietnam. I remember my mother, with her broken English, occasionally having conversations with Donald's mother across the backyard fence. She sometimes referred unknowingly to Donald's gentile family as "the genitals."

I would usually walk to school with Donald and another friend who lived on the same block, Herbert Jacobson. Herb was chubby and uninterested in athletics. He preferred working on his bike to playing ball, an activity most of us engaged in after school and during most of the summer. Herb and I were together from kindergarten through the University of Chicago. He became a very prominent cancer research scientist at Albany Medical College. We still keep in touch. Two years ago, I visited him in Albany, New York, when we were both in our mid 90s.

In those days, getting around the city usually meant taking public transportation. I never had a bicycle, but I used to rent one—for a quarter, if memory serves—from nearby Minkys. However, one day when I was working at my father's newsstand on Skid Row (West Madison Street), a kid stopped by and asked whether I wanted to buy a bike. I suspected that it had been stolen, but I bargained him down to three dollars and bought it. Thereafter, I was afraid to ride it home, thinking the police might catch me, so I rode home on quiet side streets on which police weren't likely to patrol.

In school, my teachers seemed to like me. For years, I was the one to lead the class in from outdoors. They would also often send me on errands. On one occasion, my sixth-grade teacher, who was Jewish, gave me car-fare money and directions on a Friday to go to her sister's house in the neighborhood and bring back a fur coat. My feeling was that the teacher must have had an important date that weekend.

Like most boys, I also went in the later afternoon to cheder, or Hebrew school, which I didn't especially like. At the urging of my parents, I also went to the Hebrew Theological College for two years.

In eighth grade, our class had a baseball team and also organized a club that met at the J.P.I. For recreation, we also played football, marbles, spin the top, hide and seek, buck buck how many fingers up, and kick the can. On Friday nights, in particular, we would build a little fire and roast potatoes. Sometimes the pony man came to the street with his ponies. You could ride on them if you could afford the fee. A free attraction was the organ grinder with his trained monkey.

Most of the kids were left to their own devices, but there were Jewish youth organizations, such as the American Boys Commonwealth (ABC) and the Boys' Brotherhood Republic (BBR), plus plenty of activities at the J.P.I. The girls often played hopscotch, jacks, or jump rope. We used Douglas Park for ice skating, boat rowing, and sleeping on hot nights in the pre-air conditioning years. My parents or sisters would sometimes take me to Navy Pier, Riverview, or the beach.

Almost every week, I would go to the movies, which cost only a dime. I usually went to the nearby White Palace Theater and occasionally to a theater on Roosevelt Road. I liked Charlie Chaplin, westerns, and films about World War I, especially "All Quiet on the Western Front." I remember some of the silent movies and the woman who played the piano up front. Her music added excitement to the film.

I also remember, when I was still very young, going downtown with one of my sisters to see an Armistice Day Parade in the late 1920s. Some of the marchers included Civil War veterans, some of whom must have been in their 90s.



The Hebrew Theological College (right) and the Jewish People's Institute were located opposite each other on the corner of Douglas Boulevard and South Saint Louis Avenue.

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Growing up in North Lawndale

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On Saturdays, my cousin Jackie, who was a year older than me, would come over and we would play ball or go on some adventure, such as riding around on the elevated line or watching a uniformed ballgame in one of the parks. Probably my biggest thrill was being given permission to board a U.S. Navy ship that had docked in the Chicago River. Little did I know then that years later, I would serve as an officer on the destroyer escort USS Stewart, which ferried convoys of men and materials through the submarine-laden Atlantic Ocean to European war zones.

The High Holidays were a special time in the neighborhood. Virtually all traffic would stop, and people dressed in their finest. As kids, we would hop from one shul to another on Douglas Boulevard, visiting our grandparents, parents, and friends. On the holiday of Sukkot, you would see hundreds of men in the morning rushing to shul carrying a lulav (a palm branch) and an etrog (citron fruit). For Passover, the grocery windows were full of boxes of matzah.

At Manley High School (most went to Marshall), I especially enjoyed the social science classes. After graduating, like most of my friends, I went to the neighborhood Herzl Junior College for two years. Because it was a city junior college, the cost was minimal. Its large survey classes were very good. While at Herzl, I worked as the night manager at my brother-in-law's small supermarket in Old Town. I would take public transportation there and work from 4 to 9 p.m. I would then go home and do my homework. I saved enough money to apply to the University of Chicago, which accepted me and where I rented a room on campus.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Jews of North Lawndale, like people everywhere, were hard hit economically. It was fairly common to see families being evicted from their residences with all their belongings laid outside on the sidewalk. Due mainly to financial distress, the suicide rate in the community shot up considerably. We also lost our house during this period and moved into an apartment at 1630 South Central Park Avenue. My parents continued to live there until the early 1950s.

At the urging of my parents, I managed to do a few good deeds during this trying period. I would go light the Chanukah candles for an elderly widow nearby. On some Fridays, I would deliver my mother's Shabbat meals to a poor friend whose husband had died. The man upstairs was a carpenter, but he couldn't write

English, so I would write out receipts for him. My mother asked me to help some of her elderly lady friends become citizens: I would teach them about the three branches of government and George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

Just a year ago, North Lawndale was holding its sesquicentennial, with help from the Chicago History Museum. Monthly lectures were held, which were well organized and attended. They were all part of an effort to turn around an image of North Lawndale as a haven of gangs and drugs, a reputation it had acquired in more recent decades.

Looking back over the decades, I must have led about 100 tours through North Lawndale. I had also written several books that include sections on the area. I was therefore asked to give a talk about life in that community in the earlier part of the 20th century, when it was wholly Jewish for almost 50 years. I spoke of all the institutions that were left behind for the Black community, including Mount Sinai Hospital, which is still partially supported by the Jewish community.

The audience for the talk, which took place in North Lawndale, consisted mostly of community leaders, artists, musicians, and craftsmen. During the program, I heard the repeated wail of police sirens. While in the neighborhood, I walked over to the site of my family's former home on South Spaulding. I found only a vacant lot—one of a couple of thousand throughout the neighborhood.

A month after the talk, I was interviewed in my home by a couple of the event's organizers. The interview, which was videotaped, will be part of a time capsule, along with all of the other lectures.

Generations from now, information about Jewish North Lawndale, the neighborhood that means so much to me, will be available for those interested in learning about Chicago's Jerusalem.

CJHS Board member Dr. Irving Cutler is a prolific author. He taught for many years at Chicago State University.

Wherever you turned in the neighborhood, you would see Jewish butcher shops, groceries, bakeries, and delicatessens. Coming down the alleys was a constant stream of peddlers hawking their produce.

CJHS Embarks on Chicago Jewish History Curriculum Initiative

Oak Park and River Forest High School social studies teacher Michael B. Soffer has been awarded \$3,000 by the Chicago Jewish Historical Society's (CJHS) Board of Trustees to create a Chicago Jewish history curriculum that can be used in both Jewish day schools and public schools to teach students about the significant contributions of Jewish Chicagoans and to whet their appetites for further inquiry.

The CJHS-based curriculum, said Soffer, will be geared for students in the eighth grade and above. It will include a "deep dive" into Chicago Jewish history, touching on migration patterns, the establishment of Jewish institutions, and events—such as the Nazi march in Skokie—that had a deep and enduring effect on local Jews. It will also afford students an opportunity to embark on research subjects of particular interest to them, whether they be the demography of Chicago's Jewish neighborhoods, the achievements of local Jewish writers, or the representation of Jews in city, state, and federal government.

Soffer is no stranger to innovative curriculum development. Following a spate of antisemitic and racist incidents at Oak Park and River Forest several years ago, he was inspired to develop a Holocaust studies class that has been lauded by students, parents, and administrators and has received considerable coverage in the press. He taught two units of the class in the fall, and he is teaching three additional units this semester. As with all of his classes, which have included Advanced Placement (AP) history, sociology, and psychology, he said that he wants students to ask this question of themselves: "What does it take for us to care about someone else?"

A magna cum laude graduate of Brandeis University, Soffer himself grew up in Oak Park and attended the high school at which he has taught since 2007. He received a master's degree in English and American literature from DePaul University, and he has gone on to earn a number of prizes for excellence in teaching. He has also served as a consultant for the College Board's AP American history program.

Soffer lives in Skokie, where his wife is a special education instructional coach in the local school system. They have two young children, both of whom attend Solomon Schechter Day School. He said that he was inspired to enter the field of education by examples set by a number of "great teachers," as well as by his parents, both educators who now teach at the university level. He said that his own family's Chicago Jewish history followed migration patterns similar to those of many other Jews in the metropolitan area: arrival in the city in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, settlement in Chicago's Lawndale neighborhood, and postwar migration to the city's northern suburbs.

The CJHS Jewish history curriculum will be completed by March 2021. Soffer and CJHS Board members, including Rabbi Moshe Simkovich, who was instrumental in spearheading the project, are identifying Jewish days schools at which to pilot the curriculum before launching it more widely.

Rabbi Simkovich said that he is thrilled that this CJHS Chicago Jewish history curriculum has come to fruition. "Jews in Chicago have a unique history and are a dynamic part of the city's story," he said. "The CJHS decided to create an innovative curriculum that will involve students in this history, providing them with a place in the picture of a community contributing to the exuberance of Chicago."



Award-winning Oak Park and River Forest High School history teacher Michael B. Soffer is working with the CJHS to develop an innovative Chicago Jewish history curriculum.

Zoom Roundup: Memories of Jewish Summer Camp

Arts and crafts, swimming, tennis, Friday night dinners, Israeli dancing, hiking, canoeing, and more—all under the auspices of Jewish-run organizations that inculcate in young people Jewish values and identity. That’s what Jewish summer camps in the United States have been offering children and their families for more than 100 years, said Jerry Kaye, a maven of the North American Jewish summer camps, who gave CJHS members and friends a nostalgic trip down memory lane when he presented the Zoom presentation “Come Away to Camp” this past January.

Kaye, who retired after 47 years as director of the Olin–Sang–Ruby Union Institute in Wisconsin in 2017, offered a historical perspective of Jewish summer camps. Many of the early Jewish camps had roots in Labor Zionist and Socialist movements; others were created out of the desire to instill in young people an appreciation for Yiddish culture. A number were connected to specific synagogues.



Jewish camp maven Jerry Kaye, who ran Olin–Sang–Ruby, in Wisconsin, for almost five decades, at a camp Shabbat service in 2016. Kaye recently presented a CJHS-sponsored Zoom program on Jewish summer camps.

The Jewish summer camp experience has been available to children and their families in North America for more than a century. In the Midwest, there are 11 Jewish-identified camps.

Today, in the Midwest, said Kaye, there are 11 camps that identify as Jewish, including two Orthodox, one Conservative, and one Reform (Kaye’s Olin–Sang–Ruby). Most operate as nonprofit organizations. As such, they can raise funds from Jewish federations, foundations, and other donors, allowing them to offer scholarships to campers whose families could not otherwise afford the steep price tags of Jewish summer camp, which can cost thousands of dollars each summer.

Running a camp is an expensive endeavor, said Kaye, who calculated that it would take \$30 million to establish and create a new camp nowadays. But that doesn’t mean that the financial burden should fall to families of modest means.

“Our motto has always been, ‘Money should not keep your kid out of camp,’” he said.

Kaye praised Jewish camps for adapting to the times. Today, he said, one finds children of interfaith families in many Jewish camps. But they are not distinguished in any way from other campers. “When you walk through the gate of camp, you’re Jewish,” he said.

In addition, he said, many camps, including Olin–Sang–Ruby, have also readily accepted campers who identify as transgender and made accommodations for them.

Kaye noted early on in his presentation that Jewish camps afford youngsters an opportunity to establish friendships that last a lifetime. His observation was borne out by many in his Zoom audience, who chimed in during the program to reflect on camp friendships that have endured for 60 and 70 years.

Zoom Roundup: Abraham Kohn and the Lost Flag

CJHS member Matt Nickerson, a journalist and historian, presented to Society members and friends this past November a program on Chicago Jewish pioneer Abraham Kohn (1819–1871), who immigrated to the United States from Bavaria in 1842, became a successful haberdasher and respected pillar in both the Jewish and greater communities, and went on to years of public service as Chicago’s City Clerk—the first Jew to hold a citywide office.

Kohn, who helped found Chicago’s first synagogue, Kehilath Anshe Mayriv, in 1847, was perhaps best known for his creation of an American flag with an inscription from the Book of Joshua. He sent it as an inaugural gift in early 1861 to just-elected President Abraham Lincoln, a fellow Republican whom he admired for his abolitionist stance, and it was hung in the White House. Today, Nickerson reported, “No one knows what happened to the flag. Many people have hunted for it. [It] has proven as elusive as the Holy Grail.”

Nickerson described Kohn as a man who had a dramatic change of heart about his adopted homeland. In his diaries, Kohn had initially found Americans “selfish, naïve, and shallow,” said Nickerson. “He was utterly disenchanting with America, and he looked down on Americans.”

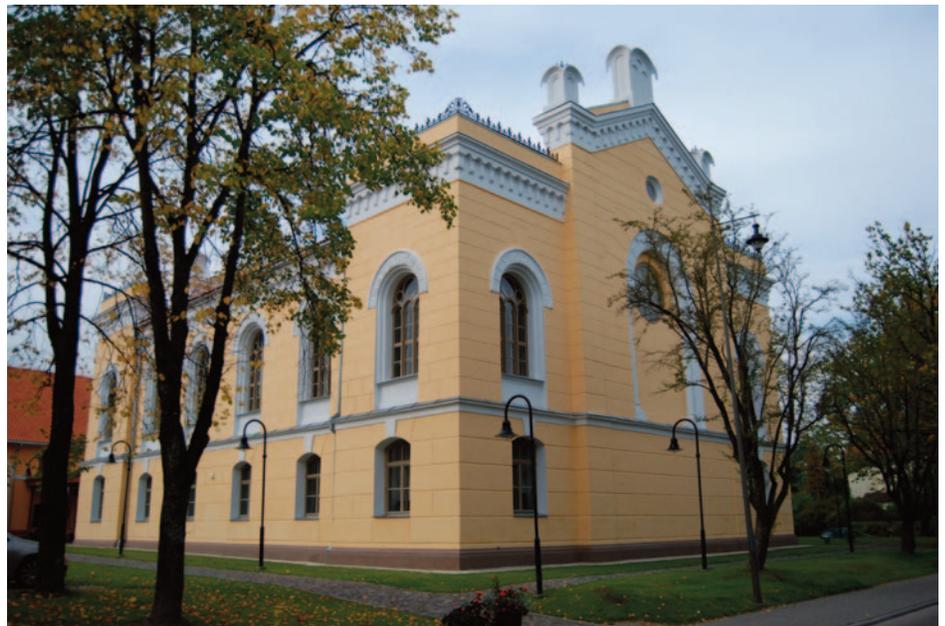
But, Nickerson added, Kohn decided to stick it out in the United States and help “solve its problems...and build a Promised Land.” As a part of his efforts, Kohn was part of the Chicago Jewish community that raised funds for Company C, an all-Jewish regiment of the 82nd Illinois Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War.

CJHS members ... YASHER KOACH!

*The Hebrew phrase means
“More Power to You.”*

CJHS member **Julia Bachrach**, an author, preservationist, and historian who presented the Society-sponsored program “Chicago’s Jewish Architects: A Legacy of Modernism” in 2018, curated the exhibit “From Swamps to Parks: Building Chicago’s Public Spaces,” which was featured at the Harold Washington Library Center this past fall.

CJHS Board member **Eric Benjaminson** has been working closely with the Jewish community in Latvia to make more readily accessible archival material that relates to Jewish life in that country before and during World War II, as well as to raise funds for the Riga Ghetto Museum and for the restoration of a synagogue in Kuldiga, Latvia, the hometown of one of his grandfathers. The synagogue restoration is now



The restored synagogue, above, in Kuldiga, Latvia. CJHS Board member Eric Benjaminson, whose grandfather hailed from Kuldiga, worked with others to raise funds for the building’s successful restoration.

complete. The building serves as the site of the town’s library, which includes a permanent exhibit on the Shoah and on prewar Jewish life in the region.

Benjaminson, a former diplomat, also participated this February

as a panelist in the Zoom discussion “Reflections on the Diplomatic Career of a Jewish-American Diplomat, and Current Trends in U.S. Foreign Policy,” which was sponsored by

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CJHS members ... YASHER KOACH!

continued from previous page

Congregation Yehuda Moshe as part of the synagogue's annual "Night of Knowledge" program, organized by CJHS Board member **Elise Ginsparg**.

CJHS member **Ethan Bensinger** is talking on February 24 about his family's experiences during the Shoah as a part of the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Educational Center's Coffee with a Survivor conversations, which are held live stream on Facebook. Bensinger, a documentary filmmaker, completed a Holocaust-era documentary that has been aired widely on public television.

CJHS Board member and Past President **Rachel Heimovics** wrote to The Forward this past November to correct an error in an article about Chicago's Standard Club. As a result of her correspondence, the publication emended the article, providing credit to noted Chicago Jewish architect Dankmar Adler for his work on the Standard Club.

"The Kosher Capones: A History of Chicago's Jewish Gangsters" by CJHS member and former CJH Editor **Dr. Joe Kraus**, now an English professor at the University of Scranton, has been nominated by the Union League Club's 2021 Outstanding Book on the History of Chicago Award.

CJHS Board member **Alissa Tanzar Zeffren**, an Ida Crown Jewish Academy faculty member, was a focus of the article "Persevering During COVID, Teachers Receive an A+," which appeared in the January/February 2021 issue of Chicago's JUF News. The article was written by CJH Editor and CJHS member **Robert Nagler Miller**.

Please send items for the Yasher Koach column to CJH Editor Robert Nagler Miller at Robertnaglermiller@gmail.com.

Welcome New Members of the Society

Robert Bennett
Arlington Heights, IL

Julia Berkowitz
Chicago, IL

Susie Cutler
Deerfield, IL

Ellen Doppelt
Highland Park, IL

Rabbi Yitzchak Falk
Chicago, IL

Suzanne Gallai
Marseilles, IL

Arlene Goldberg
Highland Park, IL

Barbara Gressel
Chicago, IL

Jane Heron
Chicago, IL

Frank Joseph
Chevy Chase, MD

Jerry and Paula Kaye
Wilmette, IL

Alison and Benjamin Newman
Oak Park, IL

Mark Platt
Oro Valley, AZ

Lara Rosenbush
Chicago, IL

Susan Shapiro
Honeoye, NY

Joab Silverglade
Deerfield, IL

Stephanie Stone and Daniel
Pekarsky
New York, NY

Jackie Vossler
Chicago, IL

Jerome Witkovsky
Canoga Park, CA

A Note to CJHS Members

If you are not receiving emails about CJHS events, it probably means that we do not have your email address. Send it to us at info@ChicagoJewishHistory.org. We promise to send you only a modest number of emails, and we will not share your contact information with others.

CO-PRESIDENT'S COLUMN:

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an ample supply of colored glass tiles from Italy and Mexico close in color to the missing originals. The detailed sections of the mural, such as lettering and faces, which would have taken more work to restore, were intact. The mural poster was available as a guide for reconstruction. The skilled new tile setter they hired, Brian McGlade, had been trained by the original tile setter.

Amazingly, the three-person restoration crew—the two artists and McGlade—completed their work by the end of October. “Fabric of Our Lives” was whole and beautiful again. “It was deeply satisfying, a tikkun olam, to physically, literally repair something in these broken times,” said Weiss.

The artists remain close, artistically active, and as socially conscious as ever, though “our hopes have changed,” said Weiss. “In the 70s, we thought everything was possible.” Their families shared a vacation cottage in Michigan, where the landscape provides artistic opportunity. For years, they also did plein air painting at Oxbow, the summer retreat of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Socoloff creates figurative art, in addition to landscapes and murals. She loves teaching art to CPS teens at After School Matters at Gallery 37 Center for the Arts, a program co-founded in 1991 by Maggie Daley and Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Lois Weisberg. Socoloff continues her passion for social justice and progressive politics as an active member of the Chicago Teachers Union—she was a long-time delegate until her retirement from CPS—as well as Chutzpah and Indivisible, the political advocacy organization.

Weiss does her individual work at her Ravenswood studio and works on large-scale projects with the Chicago Public Art Group. She retired in 2018 from her full-time job as Director of Education at Marwen, an organization that provides free visual arts and college and career programming for Chicago’s middle school and high school students from under-resourced communities and schools. She volunteers in political campaigns, promotes immigration rights, and is a member of a group, through Indivisible, that combats racism.

Readers, I hope you will go see the mural and visit the artists’ websites—www.miriamocoloff.art and www.cynthiaweiss.com—to see the work of those who gave this gift to our community.

Big Machers: Chicago’s Jews Are No Strangers at the White House

Federal judge Merrick Garland, recently named by President Joe Biden to serve as this country’s next Attorney General, is among more than a handful of Jewish-identified men and women to have been nominated for Cabinet and Cabinet-level positions in the current White House. In fact, as the Forward recently pointed out, in a January 18 article by Jacob Kornbluh, a joke floating around Jewish Twitter posits there are enough executive-level Jews in this administration to form a minyan.

Garland, at this time, is the only landsman with Chicago roots. But he will not be the first Jewish Chicagoan to play a critical role in the West Wing and environs. At least seven Jewish Chicagoans have been key figures in administrations dating back to John F. Kennedy:

Penny Pritzker, United States Secretary of Commerce, 2013–2017, served under President Barack Obama. (She is the sister of Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker.)

David Axelrod, Senior Advisor to the President, 2009–2011, served under Obama. (Though born and raised in New York, he has been in Chicago since 1972, when he matriculated as an undergraduate at the University of Chicago.)

Rahm Emanuel, White House Chief of Staff, 2009–2010, served under Obama. (He was Chicago’s first Jewish mayor.)

Charlene Barshefsky, U.S. Trade Representative, 1997–2001, served under President Bill Clinton. (Barshefsky graduated from Von Steuben High School on Chicago’s North Side in 1968.)

Philip Klutznick, United States Secretary of Commerce, 1980–1981, served under President Jimmy Carter. (Though he was born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri, and spent his early professional years in Omaha, he lived the better part of his life in Chicago and environs. He helped develop Park Forest, Illinois.)

Edward H. Levi, Attorney General, 1975–1977, served under President Gerald Ford. (His father, Rabbi Gerson Levi, served KAM Isaiah Israel in Hyde Park.)

Arthur Goldberg, United States Secretary of Labor, 1961–1962, served under Kennedy. (He then became an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court and Ambassador to the United Nations.)

Look to the rock from which you were hewn

הביטו אל-צור חצבתכם



chicago jewish historical society

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Our History and Mission

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society was founded in 1977, and is in part an outgrowth of local Jewish participation in the United States Bicentennial Celebration of 1976 at an exhibition mounted at the Museum of Science and Industry by the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago and the American Jewish Congress. Forty-three years after its founding, the Society's unique mission

Tribute Cards for Celebrations or Memorials The card design features the Society's handsome logo. Inside, our mission statement and space for your personal message. Pack of five cards & envelopes \$18.00. Individual cards can be mailed for you from our office at \$5.00 per card, postage included. Mail your order and check to the CJHS P.O. Box 597004, Chicago IL 60659-7004. You may also order online at our website.

Visit our website www.chicagojewishhistory.org

Pay your membership dues online via PayPal or credit card, or use the printable membership application.

Inquiries: info@chicagojewishhistory.org

All issues of our Society periodical from 1977 to the present are digitized and posted on our website in pdf format. Click on the Publications tab and scroll down through the years. There is also an Index to the issues from 1977 to 2012.

ABOUT THE SOCIETY

continues to be the discovery, collection, and dissemination of information about the Jewish experience in the Chicago area through publications, open meetings, tours, and outreach to youth. The Society does not maintain its own archives, but seeks out written, spoken, and photographic records and artifacts and responsibly arranges for their donation to Jewish archives.

Membership in the Society is open to all interested persons and organizations, and includes:

- A subscription to the Society's award-winning quarterly journal, *Chicago Jewish History*.
- Free admission to Society public programs. General admission is \$10 per person.
- Discounts on Society tours.
- Membership runs on a calendar year, from January through December. New members joining after July 1st are given an initial membership through December of the following year.

Life Membership	\$1,000
Annual Dues	
Historian	500
Scholar	250
Sponsor	100
Patron	65
Member	40
Student (with I.D.)	10



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