



chicago jewish historical society

# CHICAGO JEWISH HISTORY

## *Why History Matters*

### The Three Patriots Monument: Why It Matters

**DR. RACHELLE GOLD, A Co-President's Column**

The City of Chicago is in the process of examining its monuments. An August 12, 2020 press release announced “a racial healing and historical reckoning project to assess the memorials, monuments and other art across Chicago.” The project’s objectives, according to the press release, were the following: “[c]ataloguing monuments and public art on City or sister agency property; [a]ppointing an advisory committee to determine which pieces warrant attention or action; [m]aking recommendations on any new monuments or public art that could be commissioned; and [c]reating a platform for the public to engage in a civic dialogue about Chicago’s history.”



Of the more than 500 pieces of art that were evaluated, 41 were identified for public discussion (for criteria, see [chicagomonuments.org/about](http://chicagomonuments.org/about)). The Chicago Monuments Project Advisory Committee will ultimately make recommendations for each, including the possibility of removal. One of these art works is the Three Patriots Statue depicting Robert Morris, George Washington, and Haym Salomon. This iconic element of Chicago Jewish history is featured in the CJHS logo. (Look at our Society logo and locate the three standing figures near the right side.)

A Chicago Monuments Project’s website was launched on February 17 to invite feedback, public engagement, and discussion. CJHS immediately became involved. Many board members submitted comments and voiced support for the Three Patriots Statue. I submitted a proposal, which was accepted, for CJHS to host an educational program, “The Three Patriots Statue: Why It Matters,” on April 20, as part of the Project’s Community Partner Series ([chicagomonuments.org/participate](http://chicagomonuments.org/participate)). We fervently hope that our efforts are influential.

Many of you are familiar with the Three Patriots Statue. Former editor Bev Chubat wrote about it for *CJH* on the

The 1941 dedication of the Three Patriots Monument. Image from “The Great Triumvirate of Patriots” by Harry Barnard.

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## CO-PRESIDENT'S COLUMN: *Three Patriots*



Dr. Rachelle Gold

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Statue's 60th anniversary (Year-End issue, 2001, pp. 3, 14-15). I expanded on its history and meaning in the following essay I sent to the Chicago Monuments Project Advisory Committee Co-Chairs.

I urge you to learn more about the Project. As its work proceeds, we will keep you informed.

### **The Meaning of the Three Patriots Statue**

We at the Chicago Jewish Historical Society are emphatic in support of the Three Patriots Statue, one of the monuments under review by the Chicago Monuments Project Advisory Committee. The Three Patriots, standing hand-in-hand, are Robert Morris, George Washington, and Haym Salomon. On one side of the statue's base is inscribed an image of Lady Liberty stretching out her arms to embrace all, and on the opposite side a quote from George Washington's 1790 letter to the Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island. It reads, "The government of the United States which gives to bigotry no sanction to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens in giving it in all occasions their effectual support." The Three Patriots Statue, in Heald Square, was landmarked by the City of Chicago on September 15, 1971, the first sculpture to gain this status.

It is imperative that the Committee understand the background and context of this monument, and why it is deeply meaningful and significant to the Chicago Jewish community and the broader Chicago and American communities. The statue was built to counter antisemitism and to promote democracy and American unity. The statue honors three people who deserve honor. They risked their lives and fortunes to create our country, enshrining the freedoms we enjoy today. We are proud of it, and it must endure.

The idea for the statue was initiated in 1936 by attorney Barnet Hodes (1900-1980), a Jewish Chicagoan, who at the time was the Corporation Counsel of the City of Chicago. Hodes was born in Poland and grew up in La Salle, Illinois, the only Jew among his schoolmates. Interested in history, he learned on his own about the Jewish role in the founding of America (there was no mention in his school books), especially that of the Revolutionary War patriot Haym Salomon, whom Hodes dreamt of honoring.

Haym Salomon (1740-1785), born in Poland, came to New York in 1772. He became a successful merchant and financier and a strong advocate of the Revolutionary cause. He helped finance the Revolution by selling government securities, and he gave personal loans to prominent members of the Continental Congress, often charging no interest. He was arrested and imprisoned more than once by the British.

Robert Morris, the third of the Three Patriots, was a major financier of the Revolution. He served in the Pennsylvania legislature, the Second Continental Congress, and the U.S. Senate; was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation and the U.S. Constitution; and was first U.S. Superintendent of Finance.

It is critical that you understand the connection between world events in the 1930s and the idea of the statue. The 1930s was an ominous period and a historical turning point that led to World War II and the Holocaust. Antisemitism was on the rise not just in Germany and other countries, but in the United States and in Chicago. Hodes saw that the concept of patriotism had become perverted by Nazi, fascist, and dictatorial ideologies. He viewed these developments as a threat to democracies everywhere, as well as to the Jewish people. As an antidote to antisemitism and fascism, it was urgent to create an enduring symbol of the Jewish contribution to American history. Such a monument would be an answer to Hitler and fascism. While Hitler was persecuting the Jews, the U.S. would be honoring them as a vital part of American history from its beginning.



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Hodes gathered a group of diverse, prominent Chicago citizens to establish the Patriotic Foundation of Chicago to “strengthen the traditional spirit of American unity.” The Foundation’s honorary chairman was Chicago Mayor Edward J. Kelly. Hodes and the Foundation proposed the creation in Chicago of a monument depicting three Revolutionary-era American figures of different backgrounds that would “convey American values of diversity and unity as exemplified by Jewish participation.” The monument was to symbolize the cooperation that George Washington received from Haym Salomon and Robert Morris. The monument would serve as a “contribution to patriotism, historical knowledge, and understanding of the part played by people of various nationalities in the building of America.”

To design the monument, Hodes engaged Chicago’s most internationally renowned sculptor, Lorado Taft (1860–1936), a descendant of American revolutionaries and the creator of many famous Chicago sculptures. In Taft’s words, the statue was to be “a powerful sermon in bronze and granite” of unity amongst different peoples and “in crucial times, of civilian as well as military sacrifice and preparedness.” Unfortunately, Taft lived only long enough to produce the model for the monument. He was so fervent about the project that his deathbed request to his son-in-law Paul Douglas (then a University of Chicago economics professor, later the U.S. Senator) was to bring the project to fruition, a commitment Douglas accepted.

Taft’s protégé, Leonard Crunelle, took charge of the completion of the work. Hodes, then co-chair of the Patriotic Foundation of Chicago, accelerated efforts to raise funds and win broad-based community and government support to finish and install the statue. In 1938–1939, he conducted a nationwide letter writing campaign to governors, senators, newspapers, university history departments, and public leaders. A separate fundraising campaign was designed to make this project a community effort by supplementing large donations with small “subscription” donations from the public.

The dedication of the statue took place, by intention, on the 150th anniversary of the Bill of Rights, December 15, 1941, a day of national celebration by proclamation of President Franklin Roosevelt, a supporter of the statue. The date was meaningful for other reasons. It was the week after the attack on Pearl Harbor and the entry of the U.S. in World War II. It also happened to be the first day of Hanukkah, a festival of rededication.

The event, attended by 5,000 onlookers, featured prominent speakers representing different sectors of society and religious communities. Thousands more on nearby streets listened to a broadcast of the event.

In the eight decades since 1941, the Three Patriots Statue has grown beyond its status as a Chicago landmark. It attracts interest and a wide range of visitors from other cities and countries who have admired and written about it.

What remains most important for the Chicago Jewish community is that the statue is above all an inseparable and cherished part of our history.

## The Chicago Origins of a Jewish Civil Rights Attorney: Aviva Futorian

ESTHER MOSAK

Civil rights attorney Aviva Futorian was part of a movement of college students and young graduates in the 1960s, many of them Jewish, who worked vigorously, often at great risk of physical harm, to help Black people throughout the South gain basic rights and freedoms, including the right to vote. She participated in the Mississippi Freedom Summer and then stayed on in Mississippi for two years as an organizer for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

In 1965, she returned to her hometown of Chicago to work at the ADL, the Anti-Defamation League, founded by B'nai B'rith. She subsequently became a legislative assistant to a young Jewish congresswoman from Brooklyn, United States Representative Elizabeth Holtzman, and then served as director of the Women's Law Project of the Legal Assistance Foundation of Chicago.

In recent years, Futorian has made a name for herself representing death-sentenced defendants in their final appeals. In 2011, she and other anti-capital punishment advocates successfully pressed for an end to the death penalty in the State of Illinois.

The co-author of "Voices from the Mississippi Hill Country" (University Press of Mississippi), Futorian traces her development as an activist to her Jewish family roots. Her father, Morris Futorian, was an immigrant entrepreneur in Chicago who founded Futorian-Stratford Furniture, best known for its retro, mid-century styles, including the upholstered lounge chair and the Stratolounger recliner. He was eventually inducted into the Home Furnishings Hall of Fame. Futorian's mother, Naomi Futorian, was one of the first women to teach at the Orthodox Hebrew Theological Seminary on Chicago's West Side. She taught Hebrew for the next 70-plus years and became a pioneer among women reading Torah in Chicago.

CJHS database administrator Esther Mosak recently interviewed Futorian, a longtime friend, about her work. An edited version of the interview follows.

### **Q: Tell us more about your father's family.**

A: My paternal grandmother was the daughter of the chief rabbi of Uman, Ukraine. My grandfather never seemed to have much of a job. My father, at age 12, was beaten up by some Gentile boys, and he swore revenge. He became a Communist and arranged a meeting for his Communist group with Trotsky in Uman. The family later was smuggled into Kishinev, Romania, where they lived in a refugee camp run by HIAS [the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.] Every day, when volunteers distributed meals, my grandfather would ask them where they were from, saying he had a niece, Anna Sokoloff, who was a doctor in Chicago. One day, a volunteer said, "I'm a pharmacist, and this doctor's office is above my office." They wrote to Anna, she sent the required paperwork, and the family got on a boat to America. That was around 1923.

### **Q: What was their life like in Chicago?**

A: My grandfather got a job at the Glabman Brothers furniture store on Halsted, sweeping floors, cleaning up, and he was joined by my father. My father's schooling hadn't worked out. He was kicked out of a yeshiva for disrespecting a rabbi and had, at age 15, been placed in a public school's kindergarten class to learn English. He ended up studying at Hoffman Preparatory night school. At the time, they were living around Kedzie and Irving Park. My father saved money and went into furniture upholstery and then manufacturing on his own. He visited the Ford Plant in Detroit and was very impressed with the idea of assembly line work. He was the first person in the furniture upholstery industry to have assembly lines. His became one of the largest furniture



Aviva Futorian

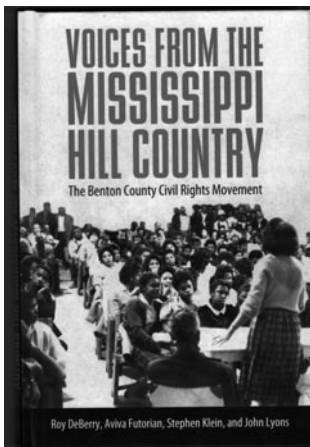
manufacturing companies in the U.S. [The Futorian–Stratford Furniture Company was named for the street—Stratford, in Chicago’s Lakeview neighborhood—on which Morris Futorian had lived in the 1930s. Production eventually moved to Mississippi, ironically enough, where Aviva moved for very different reasons.]

**Q: After his business success, was your father still a socialist?**

That’s the question. I believe he voted for Nixon in 1960, but he denied it afterward. He did become a Reagan Republican. He developed a theory: He said that American capitalists had all read Marx and thus did not make the mistakes that Marx had predicted they’d make.

**A: What about your mother?**

She was a Labor Zionist for Israel and a solid Democrat. She was one of four daughters from a town called Lechovitch, which was destroyed in World War II. It was in Belarus, near Minsk. My maternal grandfather had joined cousins in Chicago in 1913, planning to make money to bring his wife and children over. He was delivering groceries by horse and buggy. Then the war started. My grandmother moved to a nearby town to live with relatives and had a room to rent. A Hebrew teacher wanted the room, and my grandmother said she’d rent to him if he’d teach her daughter Naomi Hebrew. He said absolutely not. We don’t teach girls Hebrew. But he ultimately agreed. When my grandmother and the girls arrived in Chicago in 1920, they first lived near Maxwell Street, then Division Street. My mother went to Marshall High School. She interviewed for jobs teaching Hebrew, was told they didn’t have female Hebrew teachers, but was ultimately hired, teaching at B’Nai Jacob in Austin, Anshe Emet in Lakeview, and Beth El in Highland Park. She was the first woman to read from Torah at a Conservative synagogue in Chicago. That was in 1950 at Anshe Emet, with Rabbi Goldman. I was one of a group bat mitzvah—the first girls in a Conservative synagogue here to be bat mitzvah. Hebrew was my mother’s life.



**Futorian co-authored a book about the Civil Rights movement in Mississippi during the 1960s.**

**Q: Would you say this background contributed to your later political activism?**

A: Well, I was always rebellious. When my mother would give me a quarter to get milk at LeMoyné School for the week, I would instead go to Nikki’s hot dog stand in the schoolyard, where you could buy a hot dog with everything on it for 15 cents. The next day, I’d get “everything on it but the hot dog” for eight cents. The other two cents went for those candy dots on a strip of paper at the school store.

**Q: What took you to Mississippi?**

A: When I was in college at Brandeis, I worshiped Herbert Marcuse [the radical German–Jewish philosopher, political theorist, and sociologist]. I became a radical socialist. At that time, Marcuse did not believe in protests and marching, so I didn’t. I thought I was going to be a scholar and began a history Ph.D program at the University of Chicago. But I realized that I wasn’t a scholar at all. I became a high school history teacher. I did my student teaching at Mather High School in Chicago and taught in Park Forest for three years.

During those years, I was getting letters from my Brandeis friend Mendy Samstein, who was working with SNCC in Mississippi. I ended up going down for their Summer Project in 1964 as a Freedom School teacher. Then I was asked to stay on as an organizer of a county. Another Brandeis student who had been a member of SNCC, Miriam Glickman, said I was the first white girl invited to run a project. The county actually had organized itself, and I was mainly a “gofer.” It was totally rural. Some of the Black families were sharecroppers on large plantations but those who organized into a movement owned their own small farms. I don’t think the people I worked with knew that I was Jewish, or what Jewish was. I stayed on for two years.

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## Aviva Futorian

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**Q: Tell me about some of the things you worked on.**

A: When we had the Freedom Schools, I suggested kids write about how they felt about the three civil rights workers who went missing. [James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman were murdered by the Ku Klux Klan; Chaney was Black, and Schwerner and Goodman were Jewish.] That started the Benton County Freedom Train newspaper. SNCC gave us a mimeograph machine. That became THE big thing in the movement in our county. Nine of the leaders and I were sued for libel, but the case against us was overturned by the Mississippi Supreme Court.

Also, at our mass meetings, people who had felt ashamed when they “failed” poll tests came to feel it was a badge of honor to take the exam and fail it because we were creating a record. As a result, we became the first and certainly the smallest county to get a federal registrar in after the Voting Rights Act was passed. We got tons of people registered, and they voted out the local judge who had found in favor of the libel suit.

**Q: How about your interactions with local law enforcement?**

I never had anything to do with white people there, except for being arrested, which did more for the movement than almost anything else. I conducted a college prep class for seven students. They all went on to college. I believe most of their parents had not even gone to or graduated high school. The students had invited me to a basketball game at their county high school. I went up in the bleachers and sat with the kids. There were white people on the other side—the nuns who were with their students, as it was a Catholic school. The principal came over and said that the superintendent wanted me to leave. My students said, “She’s not leaving.” Then the district attorney came over. By now, the game had stopped because everyone was watching the “authorities” coming over to the bleachers. Then the sheriff, a guy with a big cowboy hat, right out of central casting, came and said I was under arrest. I made him come and get me, and the place erupted. They took me to jail. Every kid who got off the school bus that day told their parents, “Aviva, the civil rights worker, was arrested.” “What did she do?” “She was just sitting there.” More people than ever showed up at the next mass meeting. Three people who owned land bailed me out.

**Q: How did you come to be involved with death penalty and prison reform issues?**

A: In 1992, a friend asked me to be a contract attorney doing death penalty cases. The Illinois death penalties appeals staff wasn’t large enough to handle all the cases. Next to Mississippi, it was the most interesting work I ever did.

These were post-conviction cases—the very last appeal—to the Illinois Supreme Court. It was an opportunity to present any last-minute unconstitutional issues that hadn’t been argued. Whether it’s a single mother working for 59 cents on the dollar of what a man earns, or a black sharecropper, some [activists] have to feel for the people they’re advocating for. It’s hard to feel for criminals, unless you know them. I never felt for them until I met them. I started working with the Illinois Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, and after working constantly with the legislature for years, we got the Illinois legislature to abolish the death penalty. Then I followed my clients in prison, the long-termers. All of our people were commuted to life without parole. They’re mostly warehoused—the justification being that there’s not enough money, there’s not enough room in whatever courses are offered. The main thing I’m working on now is a law to bring back parole. We haven’t had parole since 1978. I work with these poor guys who still come up for parole every year, because they were convicted of crimes they committed before 1978. A parole bill was passed a couple of years ago, but it’s not retroactive.

**Q: What keeps you motivated?**

A: That’s easy. The people I work with and for are interesting. What would I be doing if I weren’t doing this? Going shopping?

***“I ended up going down there for their Summer Project in 1964 as a Freedom School teacher.... I don’t think the people I worked with knew that I was Jewish, or what Jewish was.”***

# The Kulle Affair: A Nazi Hiding in Plain Sight in Suburban Chicago

MICHAEL SOFFER

## Part I

On the second Friday of the month, Reinhold Kulle delivered packets for the upcoming school board meeting to the homes of each board member. He could hear muffled intonations as he walked up the gently sloping stairs to ring the bell, candles flickering through the white windowpanes at the front of the red brick colonial home. Leah Marcus, recently elected Secretary of the District 200 School Board, was lighting Shabbat candles with her three children.

“Reinhold,” she started, staring at the 63-year-old who had been coming to her house each month for the last three years, “is it true?”

“Yes, Mrs. Marcus. But I did no wrong. I killed nobody.”<sup>1</sup>

In early December 1982, the *Wednesday Journal* broke the story that Reinhold Kulle, the head custodian at Oak Park & River Forest (OPRF) High School, stood accused of lying on his 1957 visa application, omitting his years in the Waffen SS during the war.<sup>2</sup> For the next 13 months, the Kulle Affair forced Oak Park to grapple with the past, to think about the legacy of the Holocaust, and to consider whether it was possible for a man to overcome his historical context.

Neighbors stood on opposite sides at school board meetings, as they weighed questions of forgiveness and justice. Some Oak Parkers felt that an invaluable asset to the school was unfairly deemed guilty before a trial, punished for things that happened around him a lifetime ago. Others couldn't bear the thought of a Nazi being near their child. Everyone, though, had to grapple with what to do now that they knew that the high school's custodian had been one of Hitler's men.

Reinhold Kulle was born in 1921 in the Breslau district in Silesia. His father died two years later. At 15, he joined the Hitler Youth. At 19, Kulle voluntarily joined the Waffen SS, after the cavalry rejected him because he was too heavy.<sup>3</sup> In his deportation hearings in the 1980s, Kulle, his attorneys, and his defenders proffered a myriad of reasons why he had joined the Waffen SS. He had received a government promise that he would obtain a civil service job or a farm after the war; he had heard positive accounts from friends; he wanted to escape a problematic relationship with his overbearing and “hard-hearted” step-father.<sup>4</sup>

After serving on motorcycle duty on a reconnaissance squad, Kulle was transferred to the front in June 1941. After being wounded for the third and final time, Kulle was eventually assigned to the SS Death's Head Battalion at Gross-Rosen concentration camp, which historians believe might have operated, along with Mauthausen, as the only Category III camp—the harshest possible designation.<sup>5</sup> Kulle served as an armed perimeter guard there. The 120,000 or so men and women imprisoned at Gross-Rosen throughout the war, a third of whom perished, subsisted each day on a small piece of bread, some margarine, and scraps of horse sausage.<sup>6</sup>

Kulle was promoted multiple times at Gross-Rosen, eventually serving as a recruit trainer.<sup>7</sup> In January 1945, Kulle's wife, Trudel, gave birth to a daughter. Any celebration, though, would have been short-lived. Just four days before the Red Army reached the camp, the new father participated in the forced evacuation of Gross-Rosen, transporting prisoners to Mauthausen on open freight cars in the harsh winter. Packed so tightly that they could barely move, many prisoners died en route.<sup>8</sup> Though the Nazi defeat was all but guaranteed, Kulle walked another eight kilometers to his next station, serving until the end of the war.<sup>9</sup>



Chicago area scholar Dr. Rima Lunin Schultz worked with other concerned members of the Oak Park and River Forest communities to persuade local school administrators to dismiss a longtime custodian who had hidden his Nazi past.

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## The Kulle Affair

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The Kulle came to the United States in 1957. Like many other SS members, Reinhold did not disclose his membership in the *Waffen SS* on his visa application. In an initial deposition decades later, he at first apologized for the omission. Later, after hiring attorneys with experience representing accused Nazis, he explained that his English was poor, that he hadn't understood his deposer's questions, and that the U.S. Consulate had never asked him if he had been in the SS.<sup>10</sup>

On August 24, 1977, five years before news of his Nazi past would emerge, the *Oak Leaves* newspaper featured Kulle in its "v.i.p.: very interesting people" section. Kulle had joined the OPRF staff in 1959. The paper called him a "refugee from East Germany" in a passing reference and gave no further thought to what he might have sought refuge from, or how this European man might have spent his early twenties, as World War II raged. The article, buried on page 75 of that week's paper, reported that Kulle had a firm leadership style: "[t]here's something in Reinhold Kulle's voice that tells you he means it." He made sure the building was ready for when kids would return the following morning. Kulle oversaw the work of 30 custodians. "[W]ithout supervision," the former SS recruit trainer told the paper, "the job would never be done." In another eerie passage, the paper explained that when there are school events in the evenings, "Kulle is usually there standing guard."<sup>11</sup>

By all accounts, Kulle was an efficient worker. At his deportation hearings, custodians, teachers, and the district's superintendent testified on his behalf. One teacher indignantly told the court that "[t]here are no circumstances in which Mr. Kulle would be involved in wanton violence." Even years later, his former colleagues still praise his work. The building was never cleaner, one explained. Others remembered Kulle taking their children out for ice cream as they graded papers.

For the next 13 months, parallel proceedings unfolded. At the Dirksen Federal Building downtown, Bruce Einhorn of the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office of Special Investigations (OSI) sought to deport Kulle for lying on his visa application. Having served in the SS, Kulle had been ineligible for a visa. In the wood-paneled boardroom at OPRF, local activists sought to have Kulle removed from the high school. "I didn't want to hurt him," Raelynne Toperoff, one of the leading activists explained. "I just didn't want him around our children because of what he symbolized."<sup>12</sup>

The Kulle Affair was not Oak Park's first experience with Nazis. In 1977, a few months before their attempted demonstration in Skokie, Frank Collin and the Marquette Park Nazis protested Holocaust survivor and Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal's appearance at nearby Triton College. Their signs read "Communism is Jewish," "Hitler was Right," and "Is Simon Wiesenthal a Communist Agent?"<sup>13</sup> A brawl ensued, as Tadeusz Lampert, a resistance fighter during the war, "rushed toward the Nazis."<sup>14</sup> Eventually, Wiesenthal warned his audience that there were likely former Nazis among them; some, he told them, were probably working in prominent positions in their local community.<sup>15</sup>

In 1980, Michael Allen, who came north from St. Louis to replace Collin as the National Socialist Party of America's leader, applied for a permit to hold a rally in Oak Park.<sup>16</sup> While members of the progressive suburban community debated whether to allow the rally, there was little debate about the Nazis themselves. Oak Park, where Bobbie Ramond had pioneered her "open housing" plan for racial integration, centered its debate on whether to ignore the Nazis, as the village trustees recommended, or to counter-protest and denounce them.



**Bruce Einhorn, an attorney with the Department of Justice's Office of Special Investigation, moved to deport Reinhold Kulle for lying on his visa application. Einhorn subsequently became a judge. He is now the executive director and CEO of the non-profit Asylum Project.**



In what typified the local discourse that fall, the *Oak Leaves* ran competing letters from local citizens on September 17. "Villagers should avoid Nazi rally," read one. "Why roll over and play dead for Nazis," read another.<sup>17</sup>

In a telling letter that presaged the debate the village would have three years later, one local woman suggested that "it requires far more energy to fight hatred than to live in complacency." She wondered whether it was the Nazis' crassness—not their beliefs—that animated Oak Park's disgust.<sup>18</sup>

Unlike the march, the Kulle matter did not initially elicit much response in Oak Park. Throughout the spring and summer of 1983, Kulle's hearings were repeatedly delayed at the request of his attorney, who was working on several other prominent cases. The two local papers featured short reports about the hearings, and they received few letters about the Kulle Affair until later that fall. In each article, *The Wednesday Journal* reminded its readers of Kulle's strong reputation at the high school; the *Oak Leaves* ended its pieces with reminders about the horrors of the Holocaust. The disparate approaches reflected the ways in which Oak Parkers understood the Kulle Affair, though the majority followed the *Wednesday Journal's* reasoning. The Kulle they knew was nothing like the young man the DOJ described.

Early that fall, a short piece buried deep inside the *Chicago Tribune* caught Toperoff's eye.<sup>19</sup> There was to be a hearing to adjudicate the deportability of an OPRF custodian. The veteran educator soon found herself at the nearby home of her friend Rima Lunin Schultz, who was finishing her dissertation and would soon become a preeminent scholar of women's history. In Lunin Schultz's kitchen, the pair tried desperately to find out in which room at the Dirksen building the hearing was to be held. After striking out on their first batch of calls, they called the DOJ and spoke to Einhorn, the case's prosecutor, directly.<sup>20</sup> They ran the few blocks to the Ridgeland L station and headed downtown. They and other members of the Oak Park Jewish community joined Holocaust survivors as regular Kulle hearing attendees. The Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois, the precursor to the Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Skokie, had been organizing its members, encouraging them to call Einhorn and attend the trial. At their first appearance, one survivor turned to Lunin Schultz and Toperoff, thanking them for their presence. "We didn't know if anyone would come."<sup>21</sup>

Back home in Oak Park, they sprang into action, organizing an ad hoc committee. They wrote to the local papers, spoke at local churches, circulated letters to community members, and attended school board meetings. Members of both local synagogues, along with unaffiliated Jews, members of St. Giles Catholic Parish, and members of the Third Unitarian Universalist Congregation, joined together to form a diverse coalition.

The Oak Park Community Relations Commission, established to promote equality and to improve intergroup relations, took an active role as well. Its leader, John Lukehart, wrote to the school board that "[c]rimes against humanity" are "implicit in the charges against Mr. Kulle," and that, because of "the discomfort, the pain, the anguish" caused by his continued employment at the high school, "it is the commission's judgment that the Board of Education should put Mr. Kulle on a leave of absence immediately."<sup>22</sup> But whenever the activists tried to get the Board to discuss Kulle, the Board demurred. Personnel issues could only be discussed in closed session.<sup>23</sup>

Lunin Schultz and Toperoff were also desperately concerned about the lack of historical context OPRF students seemed to have, which was at the root of the town's inability to understand the Holocaust. Staff at the school's newspaper began coming to Lunin Schultz's home, borrowing books, asking questions, and learning from her. The women reached out to the faculty and local parent organizations, hoping to help improve the Holocaust curriculum. One parent responded that she wasn't sure she wanted her children exposed to such an upsetting topic.<sup>24</sup>

Toperoff was confused by the controversy. Why, if it was already determined that Kulle was a Nazi, was he still employed at the high school? As the 1983–1984 school year began, Kulle, along with much of the rest of the non-certified staff, received an eight percent raise.<sup>25</sup> While the school waited for the deportation hearings to conclude, Toperoff, Lunin Schultz, Lampert, Lukehart, Chicago activist Norman Roth, and their allies thought the deportation hearings irrelevant to the school's decision. The issue for them was not the legal question of

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## The Kulle Affair

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whether Kulle had lied on his visa, but the moral question of whether a school, or a publicly funded institution of any kind, should employ a Nazi.

But the majority of the faculty and the community, which had resoundingly denounced neo-Nazis just three years earlier, did not see Kulle's past membership in the Waffen SS as the issue. The activists tried to center the conversation on the Holocaust, but they were often stymied by Kulle's defenders. There was no direct evidence that Kulle himself had committed any atrocities. His attorneys and neighbors told the local papers that he was "a good man" who was just a small "part of the system" and had only joined the SS out of necessity.<sup>26</sup> He was being railroaded by the DOJ, they said, blamed for the crimes of an entire regime. His supporters compared the OSI prosecutors to Senator Joe McCarthy.<sup>27</sup> In what was a typical defense in deportation trials, they argued that because so much time had passed, it was inappropriate to punish an old man for the sins of his youth. For the next few months, the debate raged on in the community, and played out in the opinion pages of both the *Wednesday Journal* and the *Oak Leaves*.

**Editor's Note:** This concludes Part I of "The Kulle Affair: A Nazi Hiding in Plain Sight in Chicago." The second and final portion of this article will appear in the Summer 2021 issue of this publication. Author Michael Soffer, a social studies teacher at OPRF High School, is the recent recipient of a CJHS grant to develop a Chicago Jewish history curriculum for local schools.

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<sup>4</sup> *Matter of Kulle*.

<sup>5</sup> Braiter, Leslaw. "Gross-Rosen Main Camp." Translated by Gerard Majka. Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945: Volume I. Edited by Geoffrey P. Megargee. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. p. 696.

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<sup>9</sup> *Matter of Kulle*.

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<sup>13</sup> Vukelich, Dan and Dimaso, Rochelle. "Three Charged in Nazi Fracas." *Oak Park World*. p. 5.

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<sup>18</sup> Halliburton, Vivian. Letter to the editor. "Are Nazis hated for wrong reason?" *Oak Leaves*. October 8, 1980. p. 22.

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<sup>20</sup> Lunin Schultz, Rima. Interview by Michael Soffer. Personal Interview. December 19, 2020.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Lukehart, John. "Community Relations Commission Letter to OPRF School Board." Letter. October 20, 1983.

<sup>23</sup> OPRF School Board Minutes. October 20, 1983.

<sup>24</sup> Lunin Schultz, Rima, interview.

<sup>25</sup> OPRF School Board Minutes. June 16, 1983.

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## Quincy's Jewish Families Helped Shape the City

CYNTHIA F. GENSHEIMER

From the arrival of Abraham Jonas and his family in 1838 through the end of the 19th century, Jews—despite their tiny numbers—were essential in laying the foundations of the city of Quincy. They established businesses that made the city prosper and played a large role in civic and charitable affairs.

Jonas, a close friend of Abraham Lincoln, helped bring a Lincoln–Douglas debate to Quincy. Jonas was a lawyer and state legislator and held the highest Masonic position in Illinois. His wife, Louisa, replaced him as postmaster after his death. While Jonas' sons fought in the Civil War, daughter Annie worked on the Great Western Illinois Sanitary Fair in 1864 as a member of the Needle Pickets, a women's soldier aid society.

The Jonas family was British and highly literate, and Abraham's brother Samuel was instrumental in the Quincy Public Library's first years, lecturing there and serving as president. Abraham's nephew Lewin Cohen, also a library trustee, was a prominent physician on the faculty of Quincy Medical College and an early officer of the County Health Department.



Historian and writer Dr. Cynthia F. Gensheimer specializes in the history of American Jews in the 19th-century Midwest.

Other Jews who settled in Quincy in the mid-19th century were from present-day Germany and western Poland and encountered some discrimination. Some in Quincy shared the common belief that Judaism should be respected for its foundational beliefs but had become an archaic, outmoded religion superseded by Christianity. Over time, Jews earned respect, and some became leading citizens.

Most Jewish newcomers began in a small way as peddlers or clerks, and then became shopkeepers. Some became successful wholesalers, retailers and manufacturers—big employers that helped Quincy thrive. Jewish merchants led efforts to pave sidewalks; improve access to the city by water, rail, and road; electrify the city; and host citywide fairs and parades.

Isaac Lesem gave the city a boost in 1890 when he hired 400 people, mostly women, to sew Noxall overalls and work shirts. His modern factory featured fire escapes, good lighting and proper ventilation. Public-minded, Lesem was one of the city's top promoters. In 1890, he lobbied in Washington to improve Quincy's wharf. He served on statewide boards, including the Board of Education.

Gustav Levi personally made good on all deposits after his bank failed. Morris Goodman, cigar manufacturer, instituted the eight-hour workday in Quincy. In 1890, J. Stern & Sons, a successful men's clothing store, attracted fanfare by throwing 50 overcoats off its roof to a crowd of 1,000 below.

In the early 1870s, Quincy's Jewish population topped out at about 500, making Jews just 2% of the population, but they had a far larger share of children in the public schools. In 1879, for instance, one-third of those who graduated from Quincy High School were Jewish. Tobacconist Samson Kingsbaker was on the Quincy school board. The first from Quincy to attend normal school, Rebecca Lesem, taught in Quincy.

Not only did Jews look after their own through their benevolent and fraternal organizations, they also spearheaded local efforts to fund civic improvements and charities. They were motivated by religious imperative and enthusiasm for their new hometown and its opportunities.

In 1875, the Woodland Home admitted its first Jew to the orphanage's board of directors. From 1853, the orphanage was to be governed by women from each church, "that they contribute to its funds."

Isaac Lesem's wife, Kate, was selected from "the Hebrew Society," to broaden the orphanage's financial base. In Kate's memory, Isaac Lesem contributed generously to the Cleveland Jewish Orphanage.

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## Quincy's Jewish Families

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Jews were major backers of Blessing Hospital from the start, particularly Gustav Levi, who was one of its incorporators. Wealthy Jewish women, including Kate Lesem, Fannie Joseph, Jennie Nelke, Julia Vasen and Harriet Lesem, served both on its Board of Lady Managers and as leaders of the Hebrew Ladies' Benevolent Society, which supported it. As a young doctor, Sarah Vasen headed the obstetrics department.

Quincy's rabbi, like the city's Protestant ministers, urged congregants to support citywide charities. Through the city's Minister's Council, Quincy's rabbi was involved in helping the indigent, and his female congregants helped him. Directed to "help the poor to help themselves," the Associated Charities was a nonsectarian citywide voluntary effort established in 1885. Quincy's rabbis and Isaac Lesem, Wolf Joseph, J.D. Levy and Ben Vasen were among the group's top leaders and contributors. Fannie Wolf visited needy families to offer counsel.

Working closely with the Associated Charities, Alderman Harry Swimmer formulated a plan to canvass neighborhoods for funds. Swimmer ceaselessly promoted the city and ran unsuccessfully for mayor. His wife, Lena, led the successful drive for women to serve on the school board. Jewish women joined Christians in 1893 to create the Woman's Council through which Lena Swimmer promoted public parks, street signs and drinking fountains. Jewish women led the council's philanthropic work, with Julia Vasen raising funds to purchase 275 pairs of shoes for school children. Julia's husband, Ben, established the city's savings and loan industry.

Most 19th-century Jews left Quincy for large cities. Julius Jonas, like many others, moved to Chicago, where he secured the vote to locate the Soldiers' Home in Quincy. When I.H. Lesem was criticized for having box seats at Quincy's Empire Theater in 1893, he responded by saying that he had just donated 1,000 loaves of bread to the poor.

Many Quincy Jews, like Julius Jonas' sister Rosalie and her husband, Herman Hirsch, performed charitable deeds unobtrusively. On Herman Hirsch's 1915 death, a newspaper editorialized, "[I]t may be doubted if according to his means there has ever lived in Quincy a man who gave more of time and money for the relief of the poor...."

Such is the legacy of the Jews who helped establish the city of Quincy and those who followed.

**Editor's Note:** This article first appeared in the May 19, 2019, publication of the Historical Society of Quincy & Adams County and is reprinted with the permission of the author and the historical society's executive director.

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## Meet Dr. Cynthia F. Gensheimer

Independent historian, researcher, and writer Dr. Cynthia Gensheimer has carved out a niche for herself: the study of 19th-century Jewish communities in small Midwestern cities along the Mississippi River. Among her scholarly papers, which have gained increasing attention by Jewish studies scholars, is the 2020 article "Inching Toward Women's Equality: Tentative Steps in Three Small Jewish Communities," which she co-wrote with Dr. David A. Frolick, professor emeritus of political science at Naperville's North Central College. The article, published in *The American Jewish Archives Journal*, investigates the foothold Jewish women gained in congregational life in Keokuk, Iowa; Louisiana Missouri; and Quincy, Illinois. Another, "'No Better Education': Helen Solomon at Wellesley College, 1901-1902," which she co-authored last year with the University of Pennsylvania's Dr. Kathryn Hellerstein for *American Jewish History*, is a look at the educational experiences of the daughter of Chicagoan Hannah Greenebaum Solomon, the founder of the National Council of Jewish Women.

Denver-based, Dr. Gensheimer traveled a circuitous path to Jewish studies. A native of Schenectady, New York, she studied math and economics at the University of Rochester, where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa, before earning a Ph.D. in economics at UCLA.

CJH Editor Robert Nagler Miller recently enjoyed an extended conversation with Dr. Gensheimer. An edited version of their talk follows.

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**RNM:** You describe your path from economics to American Jewish history as a "rough segue." You began your career analyzing tax policy at the Congressional Budget Office, and for a while, you taught part-time in the economics department at Vassar College. What was the catalyst for your interest in the Jews of the Midwest?

**CG:** Over the years, my husband and I moved around the country quite a bit. When we lived in Kansas City, I was vice president of the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Kansas City. As chair of a strategic planning committee, I thought I'd begin each meeting by putting our work in historical perspective. In the local Kansas City Jewish archives, I discovered that a rabbi's diary from the early 1880s described the Kansas City community's benevolent work in great detail. That same rabbi, Elias Eppstein, served as Quincy's only rabbi from 1890 to 1906, and the portions of his diary from that period drew me to study Quincy's Jewish community in depth. My background as an economist prompted me to create a census of the 19th-century Jews who lived in Quincy and surrounding towns.

**RNM:** What were the origins of the 19th-century Jews of Quincy, Keokuk, Louisiana, Missouri, and other Mississippi River towns?

**CG:** Most of them were immigrants from present-day Germany, Austria, France, and western Poland—the Younker family of Iowa's Younkers department stores was from western Poland, for instance—and they came to this country through East Coast and southern ports in the middle of the 1800s, cities such as Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, New Orleans, and Galveston. When a decline in the economy occurred after 1870, some of them, interestingly, returned to the port cities at which they had initially landed.

**RNM:** How about the Jews of Quincy?

**CG:** A very large proportion of them eventually moved to Chicago, many becoming prominent there. I've created a whole spreadsheet that includes details about the trajectories of Quincy's Jews.

**RNM:** Before that economic decline, you have described some of the Jews of these small river cities as highly successful. To what do you attribute their successes?

**CG:** Most arrived with some education and an intense desire for more education and an appreciation of the opportunities that were available to them in the United States. They were hard-working merchants who came when these river cities were booming. Jewish families in these towns were also very tightknit. When there was a loss of a breadwinner, someone in the

## Pesach in the Early 1940s: Independence Boulevard and Douglas Boulevard

JEAN CHUBAT ROSENBAUM (1928-2014)

As soon as the boxes of matzos and bottles of red *chraim* (horseradish) appeared on the grocery shelves, the Jewish housewives of Chicago's Great West Side began to shop for Pesach.

Pesach for our family began the week before the holiday, when Mom went to Harris's grocery under the Garfield Park L station and bought two boxes of Streit's plain and one box of egg matzos, a box of matzo farfel, a box of matzo meal, and a bottle of Planter's Hi-Hat Peanut Oil.

Mom was a short (five-foot) woman, but back then she was sturdy enough to carry the bundles across the boulevard and up three flights of stairs to our apartment at 714 South Independence Boulevard. "And, oy, the real work has not even begun." Sometimes, Bev and I went along when Mom did the shopping, so we were familiar with the "operation." There were no delivery boys at any of the stores, so we helped by carrying some of the bundles.

Most of the housewives shopped at a "favorite" fish market and butcher shop, though their choices were really a matter of convenience. Mom patronized the stores on Harrison Street, just east of Independence. There were no numbered slips to keep order, so each woman watched to be sure she got her "next." Mom's first stop was for trout, whitefish, pike, and "a small piece of buffalo" for gefilte fish. (Buffalo fish is a freshwater fish similar to carp.) Then on to the butcher for a soup chicken.

Mr. Kamenetsky would bring a whole bird from the back of the store to the chopping block. Whack! Whack! Whack! Feet, wings, head. Then he'd deftly remove the innards we knew as *gorgl*, *heldzl*, and *pipik*. The liver was for frying in shmaltz, then chopping with griven, onion, and hard-boiled eggs to eat as a *forshpize*. Sometimes there was a little treasure of tender golden eggs inside the chicken that, when cooked in the soup, was a treat for the kids.

On the day of the first Seder, Mom again crossed the boulevard, this time to Tepper's produce market for "soupen greens" and a couple of apples for charoseth.

\* \* \*

Though our little family did not observe the religious aspects of Pesach, we did enjoy the story and some rituals. I had attended the Labor Zionist Y.L. Peretz *folkshule* since I was eight years old and after graduation, the Workmen's Circle *mitlshule*. The holiday legends—Moses, Pharaoh, the plagues, the Exodus, and the Ten Commandments—were familiar to me.

On the evening of the first Seder, Dad came home an hour early from our drugstore, showered, and put on a fresh shirt and tie. Mom had gone to the local beauty shop for a shampoo and set. She wore a dressy dress covered with a hand-embroidered half-apron. Bev and I had new spring "outfits" to change into after our baths. In the afternoon, we had set the dining room table with a white cloth, two tall white candles in fancy glass holders, tiny wine glasses, the traditional Seder plate, matzos stacked in a platter, and a bottle of Mogen David sweet Concord grape wine.

The aromas of warm gefilte fish, simmering chicken soup, and matzo kugel baking in the oven melded into a symphony of scents. Pesach had truly begun.



Adele Chubat, the author's mother, in 1947. photo courtesy of Bev Chubat

We came to the table. Mom lit the candles, and Daddy poured each of us a little wine. He quickly read the opening chapter of the Haggadah in a cadence remembered from his childhood in Ukraine. Bev asked The Four Questions.

Now we were ready for the fish and *chrain* with crunchy matzo. For our next course, Mom ladled out the golden chicken soup, complete with carrots and parsley. I'd like to say that the *knaidlach* floated in the soup, but truth be told, they were usually what we lovingly called "depth charges." (We learned about those munitions when the war news included stories of naval battles.) Then came the chicken, moist and tasteless, and kugel, crispy and delicious. For dessert, Mom brought in a beautiful homemade sponge cake and a plate of store-bought macaroons. Dad and Mom drank hot coffee. By the time dinner was over, he was nodding off and she was flushed and shoeless.

Bev and I played *nislach* with walnuts and filberts on the living room rug, trying to hit them off the line or out of the circle, like the games we played with glass marbles the rest of the year.

There were always enough leftovers, so the second Seder was easy: heat and eat! Mom had worked very hard and deserved a break.

\* \* \*

Mom's older sister, Shaindl Gershman, invited us to her family's Seder every year, and every year Mom declined. She knew that Dad couldn't come home from our store early enough, and she didn't want Auntie to have the extra work and expense of shopping and cooking for four extra people. But most important, Auntie Shaindel and Uncle Avrom were observant, and we didn't keep a kosher kitchen, so we couldn't help by bringing our food.

One year, Mom thought of a plan that was SO GREAT. We would have our usual Seder dinner but no dessert. Then we would take the 36 Douglas bus to the Gershmans—Auntie, Uncle, and their kids, Theresa and Bernie. (Their eldest, Sammy, must have been in the Navy already, because I don't remember his being there.) They lived in an apartment building next to the Roumanian shul on Douglas Boulevard. We would get there just in time to share their dessert and stay for the second half of the Haggadah. Mom didn't tell Auntie ahead of time. We just walked in. And what a great welcome we got! Their home still held the good aromas from their meal. The candles hadn't quite burned out. Desserts were plentiful and delicious.

Uncle Avrom sat at the head of the table near the windows, dressed in his white kittel, and leaning to one side against the several pillows on his chair. Auntie wore a dressy dress and a hand-embroidered half-apron just like Mom's. The sisters looked so much alike and were obviously so happy to be together, I think we all felt their joy. Theresa wore an elegant dress and high heels. Her shiny black hair was brushed into a stylish pageboy. Bernie wore a long-sleeved white shirt, a tie, and long trousers. The two of them sang *Chad Gadya*, *Echad Mi Yodea*, *Eliahu Hanavi*, and *Dayenu* in their beautiful voices while the rest of us hummed along.

It was almost midnight when we left for home. Bev and Daddy fell asleep on the bus.

This Pesach "tradition" lasted for a few years, but it was no longer a surprise.



The author and her younger sister, Bev, at Lincoln Park Zoo in 1941.  
photo courtesy of Bev Chubat

## Park Progress

**C**JH is pleased to report that a national park named in honor of the late Chicago Jewish philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, the part owner of Sears, Roebuck and



The late Chicago philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, part owner of Sears, Roebuck and Company

Company, is closer to becoming a reality. According to an item in the Spring 2021 issue of *National Parks* magazine, the passage and signing of the Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools Act this past January advance plans to develop a park that pays homage to Rosenwald, who was responsible for the creation of the “Rosenwald Schools,” schoolhouses that served Black people in rural areas throughout the South.

The son of German Jewish immigrants in the clothing trade, Rosenwald was born in Springfield, Illinois, in 1862, and died in the Chicago suburb of Highland Park in 1932. He is buried in the Jewish section of Chicago’s Rosehill Cemetery, the burial grounds of many Jews of German extraction.

In related news, CJHS member and architectural historian, preservationist, and urban planner **Julia Bachrach** co-authored the study, “Analysis of Sites in Chicago Associated with the Life and Legacy of Julius Rosenwald” (August 2020), to assess the appropriateness of various venues for a multi-site Rosenwald park.

## Letters

**Editor’s Note:** CJH received a number of letters in response to our Winter 2021 feature on Chicago’s Jewish stadium vendors. More will appear in the Summer 2021 issue.

**I** was a vendor at the 1959 World Series between the Chicago White Sox and the Los Angeles Dodgers.

I vended between 1957 and 1960. I was a junior at Sullivan High School. I had a friend whose older brother was a ballpark vendor, and he brought me into the vending fraternity. We were too young to join the union so we paid a daily fee to work. The union was dominated by people with Italian and Jewish surnames. The union’s president, “Frenchy” LaPapa, was aided by his capable son, Nick LaPapa.

We reported to Wrigley Field, Comiskey Park, or Soldiers Field several hours before the gates opened to paying customers. After you were assigned to an item—you usually started with peanuts or popcorn—you worked your way up to Coca-Colas, ice cream, frosty malts, hot dogs, and the most desired of all items: beer. “Cold one here! Who wants a cold one? Pass this down, please.” Before work, the vendors sat around, read books, and talked about cars, girls, and what they hoped to do in their future lives.

At Wrigley, we occasionally walked down Addison Street to a public school near Halsted Street and played a game of 16-inch softball. If the game started at 1:05 p.m. we were peddling our wares by 11 or 11:30 a.m. At Comiskey Park, if there was a rain delay, the vendors hung out in a clubroom and played cards.

One of my memories of working at Comiskey Park was buying a beer from one of the vendors. We were underage, but usually by the seventh inning, word got around that one of the vendors was in the upper deck behind the seating area with several stacked cases of beer. He was ready for the vendors to take some of the brews off his hands.

During the era when Bill Veeck owned the White Sox, employees would put certificates for various prizes under seats. Some of the vendors followed nearby and occasionally took the certificates for their own use. This was either courageous or foolhardy, since if you were apprehended, you would be summarily fired.

During the late 50s, the Cubs were a terrible team. By September, they were usually 20 or 30 games out of first place. The attendance might be 1,000 to 2,000, at best. It was difficult to sell items to such a sparse crowd. Once I went out to the left field bleachers, sat down with my Coca-Cola tray next to me, and stretched out on the concrete seats. Suddenly, I was brought to my feet by one of the union representatives. He said that he had been watching through binoculars and that I should go to see Mr. LaPapa. For this transgression, I received a day off from vending privileges.

There were days when vending did not produce much money, and others when you thought, as a 16- or 17-year-old, that you could never spend all that you had earned. There was no hourly salary. You only earned commission on what you sold. When I vended, we received 20 percent of what we sold. If you were a hustler, you schlepped double and triple loads of soda pop and ice cream to avoid returning to the commissary and wasting time. I remember a White Sox–New York Yankees double



## Poetry Corner: “The Shabbos Candles”

ALICE MARCUS SOLOVY

I lit the match  
And touched it to  
The wick of the  
Shabbos candle.  
It lit as other  
Candles had  
Many times before.  
I touched the match  
To the second candle.  
The flame appeared  
Then dwindled down  
To a small blue ball.  
I stared, wondering if  
The flame would rise  
Or flicker and die.  
I waited till it  
Slowly rose  
Suddenly bursting into  
A light higher than  
The first candle.  
What does this mean?  
I wondered.  
Is it a sign  
That sometimes  
We must wait  
Till the hopes, the dreams  
Our hearts desire  
Can come to fruition?  
Have faith must  
Be the message  
Of the little blue fire  
That grew into a  
Full-sized flame  
Of sacred light.

## About the Poet

**C**HJS member Alice Marcus Solovy was born in Chicago. She had a great-great-grandfather who escaped the Chicago Fire by hiring a farmer to take him out of the city. When he stopped before the agreed-upon destination, her great-great-grandfather, who had been in the Prussian army for a short time, pulled a pistol. The farmer continued to the point he promised. Some of Solovy’s family came to the United States shortly before the American Civil War; some came around the turn of the last century.



Solovy writes, “The earliest thing I wrote was a self-pitying autobiographical short story at age 6 about a little girl with mumps. My mother was not impressed.”

Solovy’s first published poem appeared in an anthology, “America Sings,” when she was 15. She had a teenage gossip column in the Chicago edition of *The Jewish Post and Opinion* for about six months when she was in her late teens. She has also written several genealogy articles, mostly in nonprofit publications, and self-published a historical novel, “Beyond the Scent of Olives.” For a short time, she had a cooking column in *JUF News*.

The writer’s poems are occasionally read at the end of Friday night Zoom services at Temple Beth Israel in Skokie, and some appear on the Highland Park Poetry Organization (HPPO) Facebook page. One poem is in the anthology “The Majesty of Trees,” published by the HPPO.

“My writing choices are eclectic, and I love doing all of it,” she says.

Early in her career, Solovy worked for the Illinois State Employment Service, where she supervised a unit of employment interviewers as an Employer Relations Representative. She subsequently married, was a homemaker, and enjoyed raising her two daughters with her husband, Sheldon, who died about seven years ago.

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header when I sold ice cream bars at 15 cents apiece. I earned more than \$100 that day. It paid for my tuition for one semester at the University of Illinois at Navy Pier!

You had to have clout or connections to sell certain items. Many of us wanted to be responsible for what we called the Smokie Link Wagon. As I recall, there were three Jewish vendors—a father, uncle, and son—who patrolled the concrete divider between the box seats and the grandstand and pushed a wagon on which they cooked sausages. We had no idea how much these folks earned, but in our minds, this was the end all and be all.

Vending proved to be one step toward realizing ambitions in higher education, health-care professions, and more. I left vending after three years to pursue other career goals, but will never forget putting on the vendor’s uniform, often with Coca-Cola stains, and selling peanuts, popcorn, sodas, hot dogs, and beer. While teaching at the University of Illinois in Chicago, I often mentioned to my classes that I was with the White Sox when they won the 1959 American League pennant. The class would look at me apprehensively. I’d then say, “I don’t look like a fleet-footed center fielder or strong-armed pitcher. I was a vendor!”

For the 1959 World Series, the LaPapa family gave me White Sox World Series yearbooks to offer to the fans. The result: I sold out by the fifth inning and carefully watched the rest of the World Series game that was won by my White Sox.

**Dr. Edward Mazur, Past President, Chicago Jewish Historical Society**

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## Journalist and Historian Matthew Nickerson Joins CJHS Board

Author, journalist, and historian Matthew Nickerson, a longtime member of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society, was recently named to the organization's Board of Directors. Nickerson, 54, a former *Chicago Sun-Times* and *Chicago Tribune* editor, has written two Chicago neighborhood history books for Arcadia Publishing: "Lake View" and "East Lake View." He currently works as a private historian who assists individuals in turning their families' histories into books. He said that he joined the CJHS seven years ago because he saw the Society as a helpful resource. Many of his clients, he said, come from Jewish Chicago families.



The only non-Jewish CJHS Board member at present, Nickerson is descended from William Nickerson, a 17th-century Puritan who came to the Massachusetts Bay colonies to escape religious persecution. Raised in Wilmington, Delaware, he said that he grew up in a "typical professorial agnostic household." (His father is a professor emeritus of English at the University of Delaware.)

A self-described history aficionado, Nickerson said he "gobbled up" every type of history as a youngster, particularly books concerning military histories. He came to Chicago more than 35 years ago to attend the University of Chicago, where he majored in history. He later earned a master's degree in European history from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Nickerson lives in Chicago's Lake View neighborhood with his wife, the Rev. Elizabeth Nickerson, a minister at Southminster Presbyterian Church in Arlington Heights, and their two high school-age children, Julia and John.

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## Zoom Program Round-up: The Greater Chicago Jewish Festival

Scores of CJHS members and friends gathered virtually in February to listen to a presentation by Michael Lorge, who discussed the creation of the Greater Chicago Jewish Festival, the largest Jewish cultural event in the Chicago area, as well as the largest ongoing Jewish festival of its kind in the United States.

Lorge, an attorney and Chicago Jewish community stalwart who helped found the festival in 1980, spoke at length of its origins and *raison d'être*. The festival arose out of two crises—one international, one local—that had deeply shaken Chicago's Jews. The first, in November 1975, was the passage of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3379, which declared that "Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination." The 72 to 35 vote, with 32 abstentions, was followed a few years later by American Nazis' threats to march through the streets of Skokie, Illinois, then home to one of this country's hugest concentrations of Holocaust survivors.

There was a feeling at the time, observed Lorge, that "[w]e can't just respond to crisis .... We have to be engaged in the positive" aspects of the Jewish community.

Ergo, the birth of the Greater Chicago Jewish Festival.

Over the years, Lorge noted, the festival has grown to include musical and dance performances, a curated fine arts and crafts show, family education and children's activities, and kosher food offerings. While well-known artists in the Jewish community, including Craig Taubman, Debbie Friedman, Theodore Bikel, and the Maxwell Street Klezmer Band, have taken to the stage at the festival's venue in St. Paul Woods at the suburban Cook County Forest Preserve in Morton Grove, Lorge and other festival organizers have made it a point to introduce attendees to Jewish performers from off the beaten path, including musicians from Uzbekistan and Uganda.

Early on, Lorge said, discussion among festival organizers often centered on the identity of the "Jewish artist." Would festival planners just invite Jewish artists and performers whose work centered on Jewish themes? Or, would they also include those who happened to be Jewish and were involved in creating compelling work? Over time, he said, they opted for inclusivity, making the festival Jewish "in the broadest sense" possible. As the country and world slowly reopen in a vaccinated, post-COVID-19 world, Lorge and other festival organizers look forward to the resumption of the festival in 2022.

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## Board Member Appointment and Reappointments

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society is pleased to note the reappointment of the following Board members for three-year terms:

**Term ended in 2020. New term expires in 2023.**

Leah Axelrod  
Irv Cutler  
Elise Ginsparg  
Rachelle Gold  
Jacob Kaplan

**Term ends in 2021. New term expires in 2024.**

Jan Iltis  
Joy Kingsolver  
Jerry Levin  
Mark Mandle  
Frances O'Cherony Archer  
Patti Ray  
Alissa Zeffren

The Society also welcomes the following new Board member:

Matthew Nickerson

## Welcome New Members of the Society

Zoe Grenfield  
Evanston, IL

Michael and Susie Lorge  
Skokie, IL

Lois and Hal Rose  
Glenview, IL

Iris H. Rudnick  
Chicago, IL

Miriam Socoloff  
Chicago, IL

Julius Wineburg  
Naples, FL

## Thank You

The CJHS gratefully acknowledges a significant gift from active Society member Dr. Chaya Roth, widow of longtime President Walter Roth. We thank Dr. Roth and her family for their ongoing and generous support of CJHS, which allows us to advance our mission of promoting the history of Chicago's Jews through programs and publications.

## Meet Dr. Gensheimer

continued from page 13

extended family or Jewish community would step in to take care of the widow and children. There was a self-help ethic. The same concept applied to business credit. Credit reporters looked askance at Jews early on, but family members gave newcomers a start in business. And B'nai B'rith (a Jewish service organization founded in 1843) established a national network, and the Quincy chapter sometimes lent money to struggling Jewish businessmen.

**RNM:** What is the Jewish background of your family?

**CG:** My family is from Eastern Europe and arrived later than the Jews I study. Both of my parents grew up in upstate New York—in Rochester. My father, Norman Francis, who died this past January at 98, was a nuclear physicist, the quintessential absentminded scientist, who came from an Orthodox Jewish family. His mother, Jennie Levy Francis, was from a poor family of Polish Jews who immigrated to Rochester from London, England, via Toronto. I vividly recall my grandmother's generosity and heard often about her pushke for the Jewish National Fund. My mother, a 96-year-old retired schoolteacher, came from a Reform Jewish background, and both of her parents were born in Rochester.

When I was growing up in Schenectady, we attended the Reform Congregation Gates of Heaven. I may have been the only one in my confirmation class who loved it, and our rabbi's sincerity and goodness left a permanent impression on me. My father served on the temple board for many years, and he was also the head of its Historical Records Committee. When he was secretary of the Board, he brought a tape recorder to meetings, and my mother ended up transcribing the minutes.

Interestingly, while conducting research, I discovered that Rabbi Eppstein of Kansas City and Quincy had a brother who had been the rabbi of my family's synagogue many years before we had any affiliation with it. (The Schenectady synagogue, founded in the mid-1800s, is still thriving. Sadly, the Quincy temple building was deconsecrated in May 2019.)

**RNM:** What are your current research projects?

**CG:** I am creating a detailed website to describe Jewish benevolence in Quincy and its environs during the 19th century. In addition, I am writing a book about the first Jews who attended all of the Seven Sisters colleges. This would be an extension of the article about Helen Solomon.

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-four 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](http://www.chicagojewishhistory.org)

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

Inquiries: [info@chicagojewishhistory.org](mailto: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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