



# CHICAGO JEWISH History

## Jubilee:

*Chicago Jewish History* asked Society members to contribute personal essays reflecting on 50 years of the State of Israel. Each of our six respondents took the question differently, but each shows how the events of 50 years ago affected Chicago and Israel.

*Milt Shulman:*

## A Chicagoan in the Fighting

I have been asked to recall where I was and what I was doing when the modern state of Israel came into being. My recollections are different than most because I was there at the time. However, I was really too busy trying to do my part to help fend off the attacking Arab armies in the Jerusalem area to recall specifics of that day.

I do recall vividly, however, the night of November 29, *continued on page 4*

*Marilyn Silin Raine:*

## Making Aliyah

In June of 1949, I left Chicago to join my *chaverim* [friends] in Kibbutz Sasa, which had been established by North American Jews in January of that year. Sasa is on the border of Lebanon, not far from Safad.

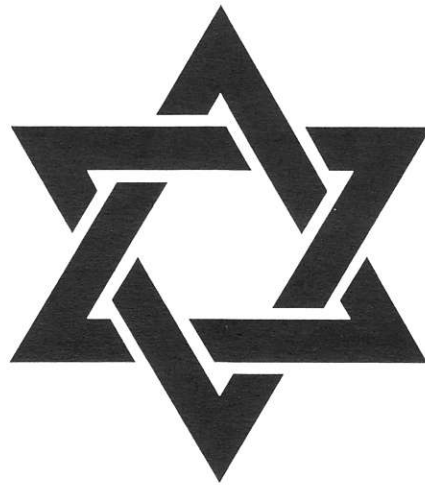
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*Danny Greenberg:*

## Golda Slept Here

Together with Jews everywhere, members of the Labor Zionist Alliance of Chicago rejoice on the Golden Anniversary (*Yovel*) of the State of Israel. For Labor Zionists, there is a special sense of pride and *naches* at being

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*Walter Roth:*

## A Celebration at Chicago Stadium

I came to Chicago with my family in June 1938, refugees fleeing from Hitler's Germany. My introduction to active Zionism came in 1945 when I attended Camp Avodah, a summer work and study camp sponsored by the College of Jewish Studies and located at Clear Lake near Buchanan, Michigan.

In 1947 I graduated from *continued on page 7*

### Inside:

- Judge Henry Dietch on Jewish World War II Veterans in 1948
- Richard Kraus Remembering a 1948 Away from Chicago's Jews
- From the Archives: Chicago's Rich Zionist History
- Myron Fox Wins 1997 Minsky Award
- Chicago's Jewish Untouchable Dies

# President's Column

*For my column this issue, I want to reflect on the life and career of a remarkable member of our community. Al "Wallpaper" Wolff, who passed away on March 21, was the last survivor and the only Jewish member of Elliot Ness's squad of "Untouchable" government agents. I once had the privilege of speaking with Wolff, and would like to reprint the article I wrote for the January, 1990 issue of Chicago Jewish History.*



Walter Roth

"How did a nice Jewish boy like you become part of the Untouchables?" The question has often been posed to Al "Wallpaper" Wolff, not only by the writer but also by many of his friends. He is the last member of a team of fifteen U.S. Government agents known as the Untouchables, who, under the leadership of Elliot Ness, became famous in Chicago from 1929 to 1933 fighting the bootleggers who proliferated during the years of Prohibition (1920-36), when the sale of alcoholic beverages was illegal in this country.

Al now lives in Lincolnwood, is 86 years old, and is planning to write a book about his exploits. Perhaps in his book he will give us the answer to the question I and others have asked him. For the present, Al could not give any reason, and he insinuated that I would have to get my own answer from the story of his life as he tells it.

Al was born in 1903 on Chicago's old West Side near Maxwell Street. His father, Harris Wolff (Hershie

Welfe in Yiddish) had been born in Hamburg, Germany, and married Rosa, an immigrant from Lithuania, became a physician, and opened an office at Twelfth and Canal Streets near the upstairs apartment in which he lived.

Al was born there and remembers that the *cheder* and synagogue he attended as a boy was located at Thirteenth and Sawyer Streets (Shaari Torah Anshei Maariv). He learned his Bar Mitzvah *parsha* by word of mouth from the rabbi there, helped with an occasional *potch* to inspire him.

He attended the Jewish Manual Training School located at Judd between Clinton and Jefferson Streets. That school, founded by wealthy German Jews to educate children of more recently-arrived immigrants, produced many Jewish communal leaders and successful businessmen during its thirty years of existence. Al's mother was quite religious, wore a *shaitel*, and did not ride on the Sabbath. Al's father was, however, more "modern," and his children quickly dropped many of the European religious customs of their mother.

Al grew to be six feet, two inches tall with a large frame that stood him in good stead as he grew up in the Maxwell Street area, a rough neighborhood at times.

He learned the art of prize fighting, and met many of the Jewish boys who later became great fighters, like Barney Ross, "Zibby" Goldberg, Charlie White, and Davey Day. In 1918, though underage, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and was in Hawaii on his way to the Far East when World War I ended.

In 1921, making use of his

father's political connections, Al embarked upon his career as a civilian government employee, with a job in the office of Danny Egan, bailiff of the Chicago Municipal Court. It was here that he earned his nickname, "Wallpaper," when, as bailiff, he evicted someone (pursuant to court order, of course) he moved out everything except the wallpaper.

After four years in the bailiff's office, Al applied for a job with the Federal Bureau of Investigation under the then young J. Edgar Hoover.

He did this despite the advice of Julius "Putty" Annixter, a distant relative of his mother and the owner of a well-known West Side Jewish restaurant and gambling establishment, who told him he could make more money elsewhere.

He did it also despite the fact that there were virtually no Jewish FBI agents.

FBI agents earned about \$2,500 a year at that time. But Annixter also told him that if he was going to be a G-man, then he should be an honest one and never on the "take." It was advice that Al heeded well in his government career, even though there were many times when he was offered bribes.

Assigned to the Alcohol Enforcement Division, Al was sent to places in Kentucky to raid distilleries. In 1929, Al requested a transfer back to Chicago. He was assigned to Elliot Ness's team in Chicago as an undercover agent. Scrupulous honesty and resistance to corruption earned the team the nickname "Untouchables." He has many stories of his raids on the speakeasies and the numerous arrests of bootleggers in Chicago.

Since he was an undercover agent, no one know his true role, so he says, not even his wife and children. As Al remembers it, he looked like a

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## Myron Fox Wins Minsky for Taxi Wars History

Myron "Mike" Fox, a Society member and long time Skokie resident, has won the 1997 Doris and Joseph Minsky Award for his essay, *Through the Eyes of their Children*.

In it, Fox recounts two stories. He tells, first, how he came to learn as an adult that his father had served time in prison, and he describes the experience of learning a great deal about his parents after they were no longer alive.

Second, he recounts the remarkable story of Philip and Bella Fox, a story they chose not to tell their children, and a story hard to imagine more than 70 years later.

The Society presents the Minsky Award annually to a previously unpublished manuscript recounting some element of Chicago's Jewish history.

All Society members receive a copy of the winning entry as one of their membership benefits.

Philip Fox worked as a driver for Checker Cabs in the early 1920s at a time when the competition between the Checker and Yellow Cab companies grew so heated that drivers and hired gunmen came to violent confrontations.

On June 9, 1921, Yellow Cab driver Thomas Skirven was murdered, and Philip, along with another Checker driver, was arrested and charged with the crime.

In custody, Philip had a confession

beaten out of him, and he was soon convicted of murder despite a great deal of evidence suggesting his innocence.

A young man with a wife and family, he spent much of the next several years in prison, pinning his hopes for freedom on appeals cases.

He was finally pardoned in December, 1928 by Illinois Governor Len Small.

Myron Fox has done a remarkable job of reconstructing the particulars of his father's various trials and interrogations.

With few members of his family available to discuss the experience, he researched newspaper documents and court records for long forgotten details.

The result is an account of a single family's involvement in a large and — from the perspective of 75 years later — bizarre chapter in Chicago history.

Philip Fox, an innocent man caught up in difficult circumstances, chose never to share his story.

His son's decision to share it for him turns out to be both a tribute and a valuable contribution to Chicago's Jewish history.

Named for founding Society board member Doris Minsky and recently expanded to include her husband Joe, who also served on the Society board, the fund for the Minsky Award makes it possible for the Society to publish worthy manuscripts.

In addition to publication, the award carries with it a \$1000 hono-

riarium for the winning author.

*Through the Eyes of their Children* will be number five in the series, and Fox is the seventh winning author.

In 1991, the Society awarded two Minsky prizes, one to Carolyn Eastwood for *Chicago's Jewish Street Peddlers* and another to Beatrice Michaels Shapiro for *Memories of Lawndale*. The two comprise publication number one in the Minsky series.

The Society also awarded two prizes in 1993. Eva Gross's *Memories of the Manor* and Morris Springer's *The Chayder, the Yeshiva, and I* comprise publication number two.

In 1995, Bea Kraus, now a Society board member, won for *The Cantors: Gifted Voices Remembered*, which became publication number three.

The 1996 winner was Rabbi Alex J. Goldman whose *My Father Myself: A Son's Memoir of his Father, Rabbi Yehuda D. Goldman, America's Oldest Practicing Rabbi* is publication number four.

*Through the Eyes of their Children* will be mailed to all members of the Society in the fall of 1998. Additional copies will be available for purchase in selected area book stores.

The Society encourages entries for the 1998 Minsky competition. Manuscripts should be substantial in their content and length, but should not exceed 15,000 words.

The deadline for submitting entries is October 31, 1998.

Anyone interested in more information on the competition should contact the Society at (312)663-5634. □

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## Society Newsletter Seeks Memoirs of Jewish Chicago

*Chicago Jewish History*, the newsletter of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society, occasionally publishes memoirs of individual Chicagoans.

Examples of the sort of memoirs we publish include one man's memories of growing up as the grandson of a West

Side butcher and one woman's recollections of helping to entertain Jewish soldiers during World War II.

Individual memoirs give us the opportunity to present history in its narrowest contours. The stories that you might recall from your childhood or from some unusual situation in which you found yourself often prompt other peoples' memories to flow as well.

The memoirs we seek are refined

versions of the same stories you may well tell at family gatherings or when you and old friends come together.

Keep in mind that manuscripts should be no longer than six double-spaced pages. The editors will consider both the caliber of the writing and the originality of the subject matter in weighing which memoirs to publish.

Submissions may be sent to Joe Kraus at 1416 W. Catalpa, Apt. 2, Chicago, IL, 60640. □

# Milt Shulman

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1947, when the United Nations, after prolonged debate and incredible politicking, recognized the right of the Jews to a state of our own. The anniversary of this almost-miraculous event is not generally remembered or observed as is *Yom Haatzmaut*, yet it was the actual beginning of Israel as a state.

After more than fifty years, it is impossible for me to recapture the anticipation and excitement of that night. But, as a good son, I wrote letters home to my parents and I will quote from them to try to convey the once-in-a-lifetime feelings I experienced that night and the next few days.

On December 1, 1947, I wrote:

"The outcome of the vote at the United Nations was by no means certain. We were on pins and needles.

"The news kept coming in in steady streams, first optimistic, then pessimistic, from the time the Ad Hoc Committee made its report and the debate began.

"Friday, when the vote of the General Assembly was scheduled to occur, everyone was at a fever pitch of excitement and the greeting of shalom was replaced by 'What's new at the United Nations?' or 'Do you think so-and-so will change its vote?'

"Discussion was rampant and very little else occupied our minds. When the Friday night session of the General Assembly agreed to adjourn for twenty four hours, pessimism again took over and there were few who remained convinced that right would triumph.

"Saturday was a day of prayer and apprehension and tense waiting for the session to open. The atmosphere was similar to that prevailing just before a presidential election at home, except that the results here were so much more important. Currents of tension were in the air and people lived the day

through in anticipation of the fateful vote.

"Groups gathered around any radio receiver capable of picking up the proceedings of the General Assembly as relayed by short wave. Probably the most powerful

receiver in Jerusalem is at the *Palestine Post* [now *Jerusalem Post*] office so, of course, I was there. [Two of my roommates worked for the *Post*.]

"The office was a combination of the newspaper office of the movies and the smoke-filled rooms so traditional at political conventions. However, the air was charged with much more tension than in either. No one relaxed in his chair and everyone had his own personal score card on which to tally the votes as they came in.

"When the final results were tabulated and the passage of partition assured, the wild celebration which you would expect to take place was conspicuously absent. The first thing we thought of was a quick silent prayer of thanks, and then most of those assembled with us had to rush to get the first edition of the paper on the street.

"Those of us not so occupied went for a walk through town, during which we observed that the streets were deserted as only Jerusalem streets

can be deserted after midnight.

"There was certainly nothing unusual about this since these same streets are deserted every night. But the news came from Tel Aviv that wild celebrations were in progress there and in Haifa. We wondered why not in Jerusalem. However, not to fear. The reaction was just delayed as are so many things in Jerusalem.

"The first sign we had was when we heard that a *hora* was proceeding up one of the main streets. Of course, we ran out to join and we weren't alone.

"Hundreds of people were in the streets in their pajamas, slippers and robes and hundreds of others had taken the time to dress and then join the crowd. The *hora* proceeded to the Jewish Agency buildings and a huge crowd assembled there.

"Up until this time, people were still dazed and hardly realized what was happening. After two thousand years realization doesn't come quickly. The realization came here at the Agency buildings and a spontaneous shout went up for a Jewish flag.

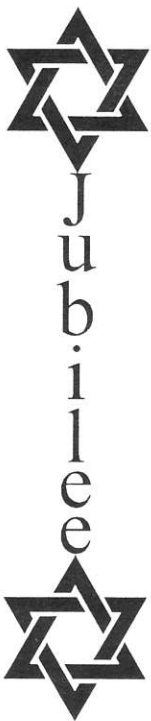
"After much singing and dancing and more shouting, a flag was found and unfurled and the multitude sang 'Hatikva,' our national anthem, for the first time in our own state. What a moment!

"And everyone assembled recognized the significance because there was utter silence for a moment after the song was finished. Then more singing and dancing and parading around town, led by several

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# Marilyn Silin Raine

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The hills there are green, with small scrub oaks, fig trees, and, later on, vineyards and apple orchards. On clear days one can see the snowy cap of Mount Hermon in the distance. Snow sometimes falls in the winter, which delights the former residents of Montreal, Boston, and Chicago.

Sasa had been an Arab village whose occupants were forced to flee to Lebanon during the War of Independence. We inherited their stone houses, and I was assigned to the two story home of the former *mukhtar* [chief] of the village.

From my porch, I could see Syria and Lebanon. It made us uncomfortable to be dwelling in the homes of formerly peaceful Arabs because we were all members of the *Hashomer Hatzair* [the Young Guard] movement and believed in peaceful coexistence with our neighbors. But we understood why the authorities sent us there: to guard the borders of the new state.

I made *aliyah* in June, arriving at the port of Haifa on the ship, the *Kedma*, which had sailed from Marseilles loaded with immigrants from Europe.

I tried to block out the intense talk in German, Hungarian, Polish, and Italian on the deck as I tried to memorize phrases from my Hebrew conversation book. Boxes of family possessions were stored everywhere. People were crammed into small rooms, but excitement, seasickness, and anxiety made the five-day voyage seem endless.

Suddenly, one early morning, a sailor cried, "Land!" and we all rushed to the deck to get our first sight of Palestine, as we called it. Then, miraculously, a young boy appeared on the top deck with a violin in his hand. He placed it under his chin and began to play "Hatikvah." Silence. Tears. And then an outburst of prayers and dancing.

As the ship pulled up to the busy port area, I spied Aryeh Greenfield, also from Chicago. He waved at me with a big grin and motioned where he would be after I finished clearing customs and

interviews with Jewish Agency people.

After two hours, I finally walked down the gangplank, and there was Aryeh with a hug and an ice cream cone! Then and there I decided Israel had the best ice cream in the world.

We had to hurry to the bus station because there was only one bus to Sasa, and it left every day at 3 p.m. Miss it, you stay in town. We made it.

Chaim Moscowitz, from Milwaukee, was the driver of the Egged bus, and he placed my suitcase on the roof, next to boxes of supplies, burlap bags of potatoes, and crates of live chickens.

As the bus started up the mountain road to the kibbutz, the top load shifted from side to side. To my surprise, nothing ever fell off.

The bus was filled with Jews living in Acre and Nahariya, and Chris-

tian and Druze Arabs living in villages in the Galilee. The trip to Sasa took over three hours because the bus had to go off the main road many times to enter a village, discharge its passengers, and unload the boxes from the roof.

There were sheep and goats on the hillsides, sometimes on the road, chickens wandering around small houses, and grape vines growing over arched entrances to cafes where Arab men were sipping coffee or playing Pish Pesh.

There were few signs of the war which had ended a little over a year before, and there were far fewer Israeli soldiers than one sees now. I had never seen olive trees before. They were grey, gnarled, with shiny leaves, and in the Arab villages, tobacco was planted under the trees to use every available bit of land. Most of it was rocky, and we at Sasa spent many months picking up the stones, putting them in black rubber baskets to be piled up at the end of the rows, later planted with grape vines.

Seeing the sign "SASA" in English, Hebrew, and Arabic was unbelievable because we were finally at the gate of the kibbutz. The bus drove up the stony, narrow road to park at the side of the *chadar ohel*, the dining hall, and there to greet me was Lee Isan Cohen whom I had known since eighth grade.

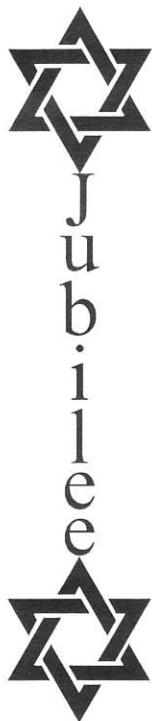
The journey from Chicago had ended. The new journey was about to begin.

*Marilyn Silin Raine is a Psychologist living in Skokie.*

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*Miraculously, a young boy appeared on the top deck with a violin in his hand. He placed it under his chin and began to play "Hatikvah."*

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# Danny Greenberg

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part of the World Labor Zionist Movement whose leaders were so instrumental in the founding of Israel, its leadership, and its development.

When the State of Israel was declared in 1948, the American Labor Zionist movement consisted of the Labor Zionist Organization-Poale Zion, the Jewish National Workers Alliance-Farband, the Pioneer Women's Organization, and Habonim Labor Zionist Youth. Today, in Israel's 50th anniversary year, the Labor Zionist movement consists of the Labor Zionist Alliance (the result of a 1971 merger of the Labor Zionist Organization and JNWA-Farband), Na'amat USA (the name adopted by the Pioneer Women's Organization in 1985), and Habonim-Dror Labor Zionist Youth (a merger of Habonim and Dror in 1981).

The Labor Zionist Organization-Poale Zion was organized in 1905 in Baltimore with a local group in Chicago established about the same time. At the defining convention in Chicago in 1909, a platform was adopted which synthesized the normalization of Jewish national life in Palestine with the pro-labor philosophy of a social welfare economic system.

Veteran LZA members vividly recall visits to the Chicago Labor Zionist movement in the pre-state years by leaders of the Labor Zionist movement in Palestine, including such luminaries as David Ben-Gurion and Golda Meyerson (Meir), both later prime ministers of Israel; Yitzhak Ben Zvi and Zalman Rubashov (Shazar), both later Presidents of Israel; Moshe Chertok (Sharett), the first foreign minister of Israel; and Yosef Sprinzak, the first speaker of the Knesset.

Meetings were held in the homes of individual members or in the Chicago Labor Zionist "home," the National Socialist Institute at 3322 W. Douglas Boulevard. (The latter was succeeded in the 1950s by the Max A. Dolnick Community Center at 6122 N. California Avenue in West Rogers Park.) On occasions when the movement could afford to go "big time," a mass meeting or rally would be held in larger quarters such as the

Temple Judea auditorium on Independence Boulevard.

Many members recall — either personally or through stories they heard — how future international personalities slept at homes of individual members when visiting Chicago. There were no funds to pay for their hotel accommodations and, indeed, it would have been considered a bourgeois practice. Golda Meir, in particular, during her extended stays in Chicago, "lived" in homes of her many fellow Labor Zionist friends.

The huge annual clothing (*schluss*) banquets sponsored by the movement and held at the Aragon Ballroom starting in the 1930s were held on behalf of the annual fund-raising campaign for the Histradut, the General Confederation of Labor Palestine. These festive events attested to the growing bonds between the Jewish labor movements in the United States and in Palestine. Among

the prestigious keynote speakers over the years were Rabbi Solomon Goldman of Anshe Emet Congregation and Rabbi Jacob J. Weinstein of K.A.M. Congregation.

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*Many Chicago Habonim alumni, together with others, volunteered for work on "illegal" immigrant ships and served in the struggle for Israel's independence.*

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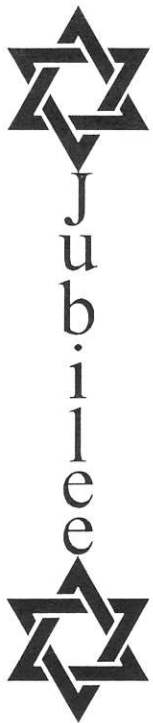
The LZO supported the Hechalutz pioneering movement initiated by Ben-Gurion and Ben Zvi and dramatically reflected in the cooperative kibbutz and moshav settlements in Palestine and, later, Israel. Habonim-Dror, the Labor Zionist youth movement, began as the Young Poale Zion Alliance in 1935. Since that time, many Habonim graduates, including a significant number of Chicagoans, have made *aliyah*.

Many Chicago Habonim alumni were instrumental in founding and developing kibbutzim such as Kfar Blum, Maayan Baruch, Gesher Haziv, Urim, Grofit, and Gezer, and Moshavim such as Bet Herut and Orot.

There are also large numbers of former Chicago Habonim who can be found in every area of Israeli life. Just prior to and during Israel's War of Independence, many Chicago Habonim alumni, together with others, volunteered for work on "illegal" immigrant ships and served in the struggle for Israel's independence.

Another direct Labor Zionist link to Israel is the ongoing Habonim Workshop, the concept of which Habonim pioneers in 1951. The Workshop, a year-long work study program in Israel for pre-college youth, has always had a strong Chicago representation and continues to this day.

To further its special Zionist ideals, the American Labor Zionist movement established a national network of secular, Zionist schools



# Walter Roth

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Hyde Park High School on Chicago's South Side and entered the University of Illinois at Navy Pier, Chicago, where I joined and became an active member of the Intercollegiate Zionist Federation of America ("IZFA"), which promoted active cultural and political programs in support of Zionist causes in Chicago and in Palestine.

It was as a member of IZFA that I attended two great programs that occurred in Chicago in November 1947 and May 1948 to celebrate the creation of the new State of Israel.

The first event, held on Sunday, December 21, 1947 at the Civic Opera House, celebrated the adoption by the United Nations Assembly on November 29, 1947 of a resolution favoring the establishment of a Jewish state in a part of Palestine. It was coincidentally also the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Chicago Zionist Organization in 1897 and the holding of the First Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland.

It was a grand celebration, as I recall, and in the tradition of the Chanukah festivals of earlier years for which Chicago was justly famous.

But the grand event was the second program, held on Sunday, May 16, 1948 at the Chicago Stadium, celebrating the actual establishment of the Jewish State a day earlier.

The Stadium was packed with over 25,000 persons, seated and standing in the aisles in this magnificent hall. It was the largest assembly of Chicago Jewry since July 4, 1933 when 125,000 Jews gathered at Soldier Field to view the pageant called "The Romance of a People".

The May 16, 1948 celebration was an unforgettable event. For a young person, fortunate to have escaped from Germany, it was without doubt as if a miracle had taken place.

A giant portrait of Theodore Herzl hung over the Stadium floor. Underneath his portrait, in large letters, hung the banner carrying Herzl's famous vision, "IF YOU WILL IT, IT IS NO DREAM."

There were many speakers at the event. Two of them I still recall from the celebration.

One was Bartley Crum, a well-known attorney and liberal Republican who had endeared himself to American Jews as a member of the "Anglo-American

Committee of Inquiry on Palestine," which, after much bitter debate, had urged the British to permit 1,000,000 Jewish refugees to enter Palestine.

Crum was a powerful speaker, and described the urgent need for a Jewish homeland for the Holocaust survivors languishing in Europe.

The other notable speaker of the event was Reuven Dafni, a Commander of the Haganah, (Israel Defense Forces). He was also a most powerful speaker, who shook the Stadium crowd repeatedly with his words describing his activities as a parachutist during the Second World War in helping to rescue Jews in Yugoslavia and surrounding areas.

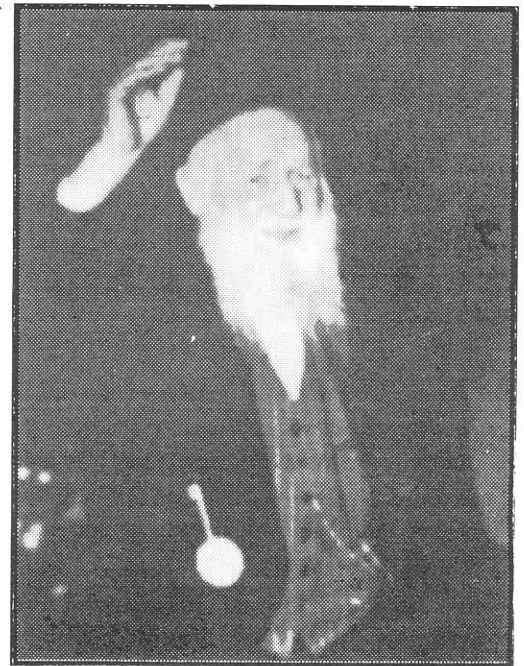
He later became the Israeli Consul General in New York and other cities, but unfortunately, not Chicago. Fifty years after the event, one can still hear this heroic man pleading for support for Israel.

The evening ended with the lighting of candles and the *Shehecheyanu* prayer, and then 25,000 voices sang the national anthem of the new state, "Hatikva."

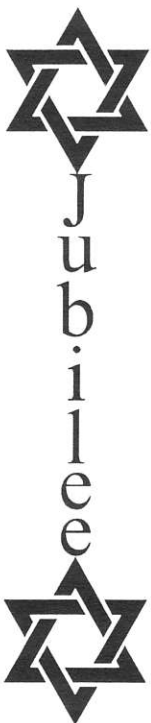
Then, of course, came the unforgettable spectacle of an "Old Patriarch," a bearded Jewish man, who, overcome by the passion of the moment, leaped to his feet and began a Chassidic dance on the Stadium floor.

His picture appeared in many of the newspaper reports of the event the next day, and today he is pictured on our Chicago Jewish Historical Society membership brochure as one of the high points of our Chicago history. Years later we discovered that his name was Elisha Kite.

Of course, there have been spectacular celebrations in Chicago since 1948, such as a huge spectacle held in Grant Park in 1967 after the victorious Six-Day War, but none, I believe, can match the power and the joy expressed by our people fifty years ago when Israel declared its independence.



**Elisha Kite**



Judge Henry X. Dietch:

## Jewish War Veterans Made Their Voices Heard

My father was a Zionist, beginning about 1920. I remember his reading the Yiddish papers to me on Sundays and deploring the killing of Jews (in then Palestine) by Arabs in attacks on the Jewish settlements.

We always were apprehensive of the survival of the Jews and deplored the actions both of England, as the mandate power, and the Arabs for violating the terms of various agreements and the Balfour Declaration.

It was, therefore, natural that I grew up as a Zionist. In addition, I added my pennies to the "pushke box" of the Jewish National Fund, which my mother fed regularly and religiously, turning in the money every two months.

Thus, it was natural that I became a lifelong member of the Zionist Organization of America through the Zionist Organization of Chicago.

When I returned from service in World War II with the U.S. Air Corps, I watched the development of events in the Near East with great apprehension and hope as to the establishing of the State of Israel.

In the months before the proclamation of an independent Jewish state, we all held our collective breath as a parade of events unfolded.

In 1947, when the partition was before the United Nations, the Jewish War Veterans initiated an American Veterans War March down State Street. We put on our uniforms and marched proudly to demonstrate to the U.N. that we were in favor of a Jewish state.

Thereafter, on November 29, 1947, the U.N. ordered partition into projected separate states for Arabs and Jews.

Almost immediately thereafter, all kinds of violence and terror erupted. The British were anxious to give up their mandate from the League of Nations, the predecessor of the U.N., and desired to leave as soon as possible.

After much squabbling, the British set their pullout

date for May 15, 1948.

Both the Jews and Arabs skirmished to increase their respective areas set aside by the U.N. Charges were made that the British authorities were favoring the Arabs, and everyone wondered if independence would become a reality.

On January 12, 1948, a Jewish Provisional Government was set up with a 15-man cabinet as determined by the Jewish Agency. More violence broke out, and attacks on each other's strong points were reported every day.

The Haganah had, in effect, become the Jewish Defense Force and protected the Jewish areas.

Everyone was waiting for the arrival of the U.N. Implementation Commission to oversee the termination of the British Mandate on May 15. The Arabs were determined to prolong the date as much as possible, believing the delays would serve their interests.

The U.N. Commission, however, was in place by May 1 and determined the details of the British evacuation and the turning over of civil rule to the appropriate authorities. The tenseness of the situation was palpable, and we in the United States urged the U.S. government to act in concert with the U.N. to follow up on the partition.

On May 13, 1948, the press in the U.S. reported "Jewish forces called upon all trained men and women of fighting age to mobilize for the 'zero hour' in Palestine when a Jewish state is proclaimed."

The exhilaration, and also the fears, became heightened. I can clearly remember the trepidation as well as the enthusiasm which swept through the Jewish community in Chicago at the thought of the reestablishment of a Jewish state two thousand years after its demise. After all, just several weeks before, we had again recited the *haggadah* passage at the Passover seder, "next year in Jerusalem."

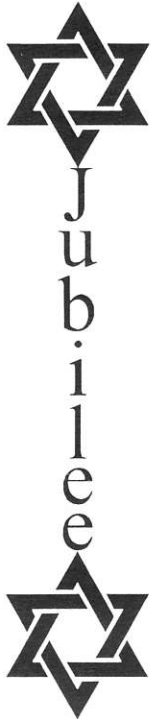
The Arabs formed into a seven nation Arab League consisting of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Trans-Jordan (now Jordan), Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. The Arab League prepared to invade. The armies of Syria, Egypt, and Trans-Jordan actually invaded, the most feared being the Arab Legion of Trans-Jordan.

The Jewish provisional government decided to proclaim the Jewish State, to be known as the State of Israel, on May 14, 1948, effective one minute after midnight when the British mandate ended. In Tel-Aviv,

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*The miracle of a  
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from centuries of  
diaspora was now  
full circle. We felt  
we had been a part  
of this miracle.*

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Richard Kraus:

# Events of 1948 Appear Different in Afterthought

When I was asked to remember what my feelings were 50 years ago on the founding of the State of Israel, I had to confess I had none.

I remember exactly where I was, what I was doing, and how I felt on Pearl Harbor Day, on the day FDR died, and when John Kennedy was assassinated — but I can only deduce by putting the dates together that I was in Ann Arbor nearing graduation when the State of Israel was born.

That event, so important 50 years later, made little impression on me.

I had grown up in Albany Park during the Depression and enlisted in the Army Air Force when I was 17. I had little Hebrew education and probably was Bar Mitzvah only because I was saying *kaddish* for my father, a man who was more interested in socialism than Zionism and who probably would have been indifferent, if not opposed, to my becoming Bar Mitzvah.

When I came back from World War II,

I went almost directly to the University of Michigan, where most of my closest friends weren't Jewish.

Since I spent most of my undergraduate days on *The Michigan Daily*, I monitored the teletype and was aware of the founding of Israel, but not of its having any great significance for me.

When I returned from service, my widowed mother had married Joe Stein, who had opened a restaurant on Roosevelt Road during the war.

My college vacations brought me into contact with the West Side of Chicago, a tighter more completely Jewish world than that of my Albany Park boyhood, but even there I heard little excitement

*Without the kind of Jewish community I left behind in Chicago, I could not appreciate 50 years ago what the founding of Israel could mean.*

over the founding of Israel.

In retrospect, I imagine the enormous significance of the event was most apparent to Jewish intellectuals and long time Zionists. As a young boy and a young Air Force veteran, I had not met many of those.

Without a stronger sense of Jewish community — the kind of Jewish community I left behind in Chicago — I could not appreciate 50 years ago everything that the founding of the State of Israel could and would mean for us.

*Richard Kraus is a Chicago native currently living in Granville, Ohio as an emeritus professor of English at Denison University.*



This headline from the *Chicago Sun and Times* on November 30, 1947 is only one piece of many in the Chicago Jewish Archives. See page 13 for other material and for Archivist Joy Kingsolver's discussion of the importance of ephemera in recording local history.

Letters:

## Saul Silber Helped Shape Mt. Sinai as Jewish Institution

To the Society:

My grandfather, Rabbi Saul Silber (1880-1946), was very active in the Chicago Jewish community. Even recently, he has been called "the greatest Orthodox rabbinic leader in Chicago's history."

In addition to serving as rabbi of the prestigious Congregation Anshe Sholom (originally known as Ohave Shalom Mariampol), he was a founder and first president of the Hebrew Theological College, the first Orthodox rabbinical institution established in the Midwest.

Rabbi Silber was also among the founders of numerous other Jewish institutions; one of these institutions was Mt. Sinai Hospital, where he was one of the directors in 1912 when the institution was known as Maimonides.

Silber received the following letter from Dr. Harry M. Richter, a surgeon who at one time was Chief of Staff of the hospital. It illuminates an aspect of Jewish history to which, undoubtedly, little attention has been given.

Dec. 25, 1919

Dear Rabbi Silber,

The action of the Congregation Anshe Sholom in presenting to me a beautiful token of good will is so unusual and so beautiful in spirit that I am at a loss adequately to express my feelings.

I assure you that I regard it as one of the finest compliments that I have ever received, and I wish to thank you, and through you, the congregation.

May I ask you to say to the congregation for me, and I am sure that I express the attitude

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*We wish most of all to have this hospital thought of as the home of the sick Jew ... where Jewish hands will serve him and kosher food will tempt his appetite.*

---

of the entire medical staff, that we wish most of all to have this hospital thought of as the home of the sick Jew; a place where when sick he may feel himself not merely a guest, as the term hospital implies, but truly as at a home where Jewish hands will serve him and kosher food will tempt his appetite.

The hospital will not be a stranger's house to you.

If in the beginning we must rely upon non-Jewish nurses to

a great extent, it is because we have depended on others so long that it is now difficult to make our Jewish women realize that they are needed to care for their own people.

But our call to young Jewish women to take up nursing — the nursing of their own sick — will surely be answered, and that, with medical care and kosher food, will do much toward easing the hours of illness.

With sincerest thanks to the congregation, and my greatest personal appreciation of your own good will, I am

Most cordially yours,  
Harry M. Richter

It is interesting to note that in later years the descendants of both Dr.

Richter and Rabbi Silber entered the medical profession as both doctors and a nurse.

In addition, a connection was maintained by our family with Mt. Sinai Hospital, where my mother, Esther Silber Kopstein, was named Volunteer of the Year in 1967 for her many years of dedicated service.

And, very briefly because of the nursing shortage during World War II, at the age of twelve I worked at Mt. Sinai one summer as a nurse's aid.

— Michele Vishny

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## You Can Get Tax Benefits from your Society Donations

With April 15 just behind us, it seems appropriate to remind you that you can receive tax benefits for contributions to the Society.

Of course, your annual dues are tax deductible. But, did you realize that any additional gifts during your lifetime also qualify for an income tax deduction (assuming you itemize de-

ductions), and that gifts given at death qualify for a charitable deduction against an otherwise taxable estate?

While we hope you will want to make lifetime gifts so you can see the good that is accomplished, it is very easy to make testamentary gifts by your last will or living trust. Simply have your attorney include language similar to the following in either your will or your trust, as the case may be.

For unrestricted gifts:

"I give \$\_\_\_\_\_ (or specified property) to the Chicago Jew-

ish Historical Society, of Chicago, Illinois, for the unrestricted use of the Society, as determined by its Board of Directors."

For restricted gifts:

"I give \$\_\_\_\_\_ (or specified property) to the Chicago Jewish Historical Society, of Chicago, Illinois, to be used solely for the purpose \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_."

If you or your attorney has any questions about this, please give us a call. □

## R. James Taylor Talks on Israelite House of David

R. James Taylor, secretary for the trustees of the Israelite House of David in Benton Harbor, Michigan spoke before a Society open meeting on January 18, 1998 at Temple Sholom.

Organized in 1927 by Mary Purnell after the death of her husband Ben, leader of the House of David, the group had to distance itself from the notoriety of its predecessor organization.

The House of David gained fame in the 1910s for a barnstorming baseball team that it organized and sponsored and for a successful amusement park that it ran.

The earlier group was also notorious for its unusual mixture of traditions taken out of Jewish practice and apocalyptic proclamations.

Taylor spoke before a crowd of Society members and their guests and

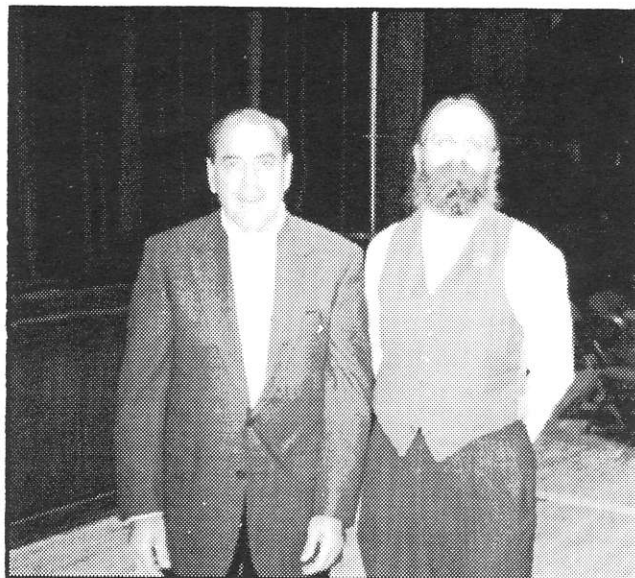
described the theology that members of the Israelite House of David continue to observe today.

He reported as well that many Chicago area Jews regularly visit the Israelite House of David facilities as a resort.

The Society presents five open meetings a year.

The next Society function is the annual membership brunch and meeting on Sunday June 7 at 11:30 a.m. at the Spertus Institute for Jewish Studies, 618 S. Michigan Avenue.

Members will have the opportunity to vote on a slate of candidates for membership on our Board of directors.



Photograph by Norman Schwartz

**Society Vice President Burt Robin and Israelite House of David Secretary R. James Taylor**

Singer Ella Altshuler will perform Jewish and Broadway songs, and the Society will provide brunch for members. □

## Society Welcomes New Members

We are pleased to welcome several new members to the Chicago Jewish Historical Society.

All of the following have joined in the last three months:

<i>Peter Ascoli</i>	<i>Herbert Eiseman</i>
<i>Prof. Steven Balkin</i>	<i>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Steven</i>
<i>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Walter</i>	<i>Levin</i>
<i>Blinstrub</i>	<i>Arnold Panitch</i>
<i>Melvin Blum</i>	<i>Dr. S. Schaffner</i>
<i>Anne Boll</i>	<i>Harold Shapiro</i>
<i>Denise Bolon</i>	<i>Mrs. Esther</i>
<i>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Leonard</i>	<i>Shlensky</i>
<i>Cohen</i>	<i>Henriette Simon</i>
<i>Edith Fantus</i>	<i>Chris &amp; Paul Singer</i>
<i>DeMar</i>	<i>Edmund Smason</i>
<i>Judge &amp; Mrs. Henry</i>	<i>Helen Stopek</i>
<i>Dietch</i>	<i>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Eugene</i>
<i>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Rolf</i>	<i>Terry</i>
<i>Eder</i>	

We welcome our new members and invite them to join us in all of our

activities.

We encourage all of our members to look at *Chicago Jewish History* and additional mailings for information on our open meetings, annual membership brunch, and special events.

We hope you will consider participating in our oral history project, on one of our committees, and in the planning process behind the many events we undertake.

## Premium Still Available to New Sponsor Members

Looking for a thoughtful present for a friend, family member, or neighbor? Know someone who has left Chicago but still wants to feel a part of the old town?

Consider purchasing membership in the Society as a gift. It's a good way to promote the work we do, and

it's a good way to include someone else in our ongoing project.

You can find the complete schedule of membership possibilities on the back page of *Chicago Jewish History*, our quarterly publication that is just one of the benefits of membership.

In addition to the information you will find in that schedule, we are still offering, as a special premium to new members at the \$100 level or higher, a copy of *Romance of a People*, the Society's video history of the first century of Jewish life in Chicago.

Other benefits of membership include a copy of the annual Doris and Joseph Minsky Memorial Award winning manuscript, invitation to the Society's annual membership brunch, and the opportunity to participate in ongoing Society projects.

Help us spread the word about who we are and what we do. The best advertising we know of is to point to you, our members, and to raise the profile of the work we do. □

*In Memory:*

## Elliot Gertel Remembers Long Time Jewish Activist and Leader Nell Pekarsky

*The following is an excerpt from a eulogy for Nell Ziff Pekarsky, a Society member and a long time resident of Hyde Park and Evanston, delivered by Rabbi Elliot Gertel on January 16, 1998. In addition to serving as rabbi for Congregation Rodfei Zedek, Gertel is a Society board member.*

Nell's story began in 1910 in the unlikely place of Hurley, Wisconsin. There, her parents, Nahum and Minna, settled and opened a dry goods store. Nell recalled her home town with a chuckle as a place of bars and brothels. Her family lived behind the jail and saw the drunks being hauled in on Saturday nights. Yet, she learned from her parents that it is not the place that matters, but the values one cherishes in home and synagogue.

Nell was always grateful to a Mrs. Schwartz in Minneapolis, where her family moved while she was in college, for rebuking her during school vacations for not using her talents and Jewish commitments by becoming a member of Junior Hadassah. Nell followed that good advice and soon became a national officer. In no time, she was asked to assume the national presidency. Her mother was understandably worried about the pressures of high office for one so young, but Henrietta Szold, the founder of Hadassah, told Nell she wanted her to be the president. "I think a great experience is before you," Szold told Nell in 1938.

So Nell took her place among the builders of Zionism and the State of Israel. During Nell's presidency from 1938-1941, Junior Hadassah grew from 20,000 to 25,000 members, and Nell found herself leader of a major organization. Her capacity to make friends with people of all ages became legendary while she was still quite young. She had, after all, shown the courage to come to New York, barely 21, and to begin a new life and to make new friends.

She also had the courage of true leadership. She pushed for Junior Hadassah to respond to Eleanor Roosevelt's call to join an American Youth Conference, despite the doubts of parochialists. Junior Hadassah was the largest national youth group at that time in the United States, and Nell was asked to join the executive committee of the conference. ...

While laboring so hard making an important place for Junior Hadassah, Nell was earning money for her rent working for Meyer Weisgal, the great Zionist organizer. He entrusted her with the task of writing to Jewish Com-

munity Federations to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for a Palestine Pavilion at the World's Fair, whose theme would be the Jewish hope to create a homeland in modern Zion. The newspapers carried a photo of her selling the first ticket to Governor Al Smith. The significance of Nell's efforts, of her toil and creative work for Weisgal and the cause, cannot be measured.

She always spoke with suspense of the fateful night before the March of Nations, after the State Department had repeatedly said that they would not sanction the Jewish Pavilion in the parade — this was 1939 — because there was no state, no flag, no constitution. Anti-Zionist sentiments in the State Department were strong. Yet Nell and Weisgal and a small group of devoted workers waited up all night with a seamstress on hand to see if they could march with flag and costumes. Their prayers were answered when, after 5 a.m., word came from the negotiators that the Jewish Pavilion could in fact march. ...

During this time, Nell's talents were in demand throughout the Zionist organization, for they recognized that she made any office there an effective, devoted, and idealistic enterprise. Yet Nell could not turn down the privilege of becoming executive secretary to Mordecai Kaplan, founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, during one of Kaplan's major anniversary years. ...

Nell had found a respected and indispensable place and transformed the workplaces of the Zionist and Reconstructionist organizations. Often, as a Junior Hadassah officer and as a cherished staff member of the Zionist Organization, she would introduce the revered orator and leader in Zionism and social justice, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise. And though it was far from politically correct or even tactful, Wise would start his speeches by sighing, "What are we going to do about Nell, to find her a *chasen*, a groom?"

In the late 1930s, she met Maurice Pekarsky just while doing her office tasks. He had, by coincidence, been a friend of Rabbi Wise's son, James, when they were both active in the Avukah, the student Zionist group. ... When Wise heard a few years later that Maurice and Nell were engaged to be married, he sent Nell a wire, saying, "*Mazal tov*. Why the hell didn't I think of it?"

Nell and Maurice were deeply in love and devoted to one another. She became very close to Maurice's family, keeping in touch with his siblings Max, Herman, and Rosalie, and his nieces and nephews.

Nell gladly began a new life with Maurice in Illinois where he was the rabbi at the Northwestern Hillel and then at the University of Chicago. They created a loving, warm home, a magnet for students and faculty. ...

We shall always be proud that Hyde Park was Nell's place. I distinctly remember looking at her last Shabbat and thinking to myself, as I often did, what a privilege and honor it was just to have her walk into the synagogue. □

# Ephemera of Chicago's Zionist Past Show Details We Might Otherwise Lose

By Joy Kingsolver

Chicago has always played a leading role in the Zionist movement, beginning with the founding of the Knights of Zion, the nation's first Zionist organization, in 1895. In succeeding decades the movement flourished in a variety of organizations and produced many leaders of national renown.

The Chicago Jewish Archives is home to several collections which document the history of Zionism in Chicago, including the Zionist Organization of Chicago, the Labor Zionists, and the Farband, as well as personal papers of some local activists.

FROM THE  
CHICAGO  
JEWISH  
ARCHIVES

In addition to correspondence, memos, yearbooks, and other documents, these collections contain many examples of ephemera. Ephemera are documents that, when created, were intended to be thrown away after use. Leaflets, menus, tickets, flyers, programs, and postcards are all examples of ephemera. Despite their name, however, ephemeral items have become a valued part of most archives, supplementing the more detailed records that form the mainstay of a good collection.

Ephemera can help document events, supplying details which may not be recorded elsewhere. But their value goes beyond this concrete information. The unique combination of typeface, graphics, and text conveys a sense of the era in a way that facts alone can miss. It is

because of this visual quality that ephemera are prized as exhibit material.

Shown are two examples of ephemera from Zionist activities in the 1940s. The flyer [above] calls for a mass meeting at the Chicago Stadium to protest Britain's White Paper Policy of 1939, which

rescinded support for a Jewish state and imposed limits on Jewish immigration to Palestine.

Truman's plea for the admission of 100,000 Jewish immigrants went unheeded, and Zionists everywhere were outraged.

This flyer, though it bears the "Zion-O-Gram" logo of the Zionist Organization of Chicago, shows an effort to unite Zionist organizations of all philosophies in the protest, and to galvanize those still uncommitted to the cause.

The effort was largely successful; the membership of the ZOC, for example, grew by 200% between 1942 and 1946, and other groups showed increases as well. Though they were separated by differences in outlook, the Zionist groups were united in this issue.

The flyer [on the left] advertises a 1944 National Conference for Palestine, to be held at the Hotel Stevens in Chicago. Appearing at the conference were Stephen S. Wise, chairman of the United Palestine Appeal, and James G. McDonald, who later became the first U.S. ambassador to Israel.

The conference featured other nationally known leaders such as Abba Hillel Silver, Nahum Goldmann, and Solomon Goldman, whose pictures are shown on the inside, making it a unique visual record of the event. It also illustrates the prominent role Chicago played in the Zionist movement.

By all accounts, the conference was a success, and contributed to the ability of Zionist organizations to rally support to the cause. The United Palestine Appeal itself grew by leaps and bounds at this time, and in 1944 adopted the largest budget to date.

The historical record is enhanced by the archiving of ephemeral items like these flyers. Though archivists sometimes must be selective in preserving them due to the volume of these papers now being produced, ephemera remain an important part of every archival collection, and have much to teach us about the past. □

SPECIAL INSERT

**ZION O-GRAM**

**MASS MEETING**  
Chicago Stadium — 8 P. M.  
**MONDAY, OCTOBER 15th**

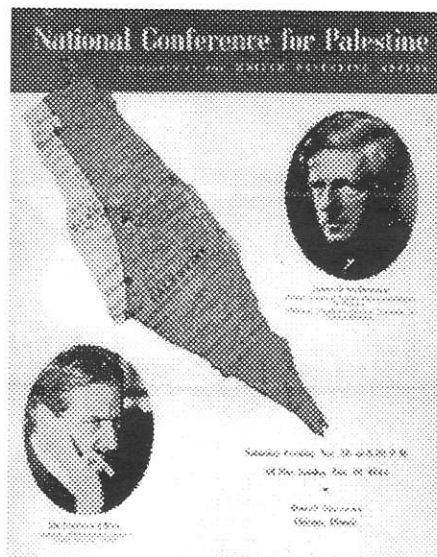
THE COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE TO THE SUPREMACY OF THE  
JEWISH SURVIVORS THROUGH OPENS THE GATES INTO  
PALESTINE, HAS CALLED A

**MASS MEETING**  
At the CHICAGO STADIUM for  
Monday Evening, October 15th, 1944, at 7:30 P. M.

TO EXPRESS TO PRESIDENT TRUMAN & THROUGH OUR REPRESENTATION  
OF THE ACTION HE HAS TAKEN ON BEHALF OF THE  
JEWISH PEOPLE CALLED TO PROTECT THE GREAT BROTHERHOOD  
THE CONTINGENTS OF THE WHITE PAPER POLICY OF 1939 AND  
THE REASON OF THESE POLICY SHOULD BE RECONSIDERED INTO THE  
S.A.L.C.'S DECLARATION FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF  
THE JEWISH HOME IN PALESTINE AS A  
GENUINE JEWISH DEMAND.

Chicago Jews to Open 11:00 to Attend the Meeting to Hear the Minutes.

**LET NO JEW REMAIN AWAY**  
THIS GATHERING MUST EXPRESS TO PRESIDENT HARRY S.  
TRUMAN THE DEMANDS FOR JUSTICE TO WORLD JEWRY !!!



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## Milt Shulman

*continued from page four*

[British] army and police armored cars upon which people had crowded and upon which they raised our flag. What a sight! And all day today was a holiday with parades, dancing, flags flying from all windows and a general spirit of celebration.

"No one has slept since Saturday morning and it will all continue tonight. How thankful I am that I am privileged to be here at this time!"

Several days later, on December 6, 1947, I wrote another letter in which I described the beginning of Arab reaction to the events described above, both positive (yes, opposition wasn't total yet) and negative. But in the spirit of this narrative I will quote other portions of this letter.

"The radio is now playing z'mirot, signaling the end of the first Shabbat in what has been recognized as the Jewish state by the world at large [at least at that time]. The end of this Shabbat also ends the first week of our modern statehood, even if the details remain to be worked out. And what a week it has been!

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*No one has slept since Saturday morning ... How thankful I am that I am privileged to be here at this time!*

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"Today was a day of thanksgiving proclaimed by the Chief Rabbinate, and in honor of the occasion special Hallel prayers of thanksgiving were said in all the synagogues in the country.

"When we reached the verse 'zeh hayom asah hashem, nagilah v'nism'ha bo — this is the day which the Lord has made, rejoice and be glad thereon' — all our voices rose loud and clear and just about everyone had tears in his eyes. [Ever since, whenever I recite this verse, I get goose-

bumps.] "As we recited the prayers, I reflected on what happened just one short week ago. Just to see the blossoming of ev-

ery window and porch with Jewish flags, to hear truck after truck full of young people driving up and down the street singing 'David, Melech [King] of Israel' as the symbol of what had occurred, to participate in the great demonstrations in front of the Agency buildings and sing 'Hatikva' for the first time in our own state, to participate in the hora around the main square in town are things I will never forget and for which I gave heartfelt thanks."

*Milt Shulman is a Society Board member and a professor emeritus of Information Sciences at Depaul.*

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## Danny Greenberg

*continued from page six*

(*shuln*) — a first in American Jewish education. In Chicago, the movement schools, whose curricula included the study of Hebrew, Yiddish, Jewish history, and Zionism, were also the first of their kind.

As early as 1913, a Labor Zionist school was established using the facilities of the John Smyth public school at 13th Street and Blue Island Avenue. Later schools included the Y.L. Peretz School at 3322 W. Douglas Boulevard, the Syrkin School in Albany Park, the David Pinski School in West Lawndale, the Borochov School in Humboldt Park, and, in 1956, the Max A. Dolnick School in West Rogers Park.

Among the many Labor Zionists who settled in Israel, a number distinguished themselves in special areas of service. In the military, Hayman Schechtman (Shamir) served as Deputy Commander of the Israel Air Force during the War of Independence.

In the arts, Judith Shapiro Gottlieb served for many years as Executive Director of the America-Israel Cul-

tural Foundation, nurturing the careers of performers such as Daniel Barenboim, Yitzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zuckerman, and many others.

In the field of public health, Dr. Jack Zackler, former president of the Chicago Labor Zionists of America and the former assistant commissioner for the Chicago Department of Health, established a ground-breaking medical program of prenatal and maternal clinics.

In the area of service to immigrants, Dr. Herman Pomrenze, another former LZA president, together with Esther Zackler, the former president of the Chicago and national Na'amat USA, were among those who conceived the idea and were key founders of the Association of Americans and Canadians in Israel. That association proved to be the most important agency for helping North American immigrants in the adjustment to and integration into Israeli life.

Fifty years after the founding of the state, the Labor Zionist movement continues its ongoing commitment to a democratic and secure Israel, an Israel based on principles of human dignity and social justice as well as a strong and democratic American Jewish community.

*Danny Greenberg is a long time member of the Labor Zionists and is a Society board member.*

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## Judge Henry X. Dietch

*continued from page eight*

the state was proclaimed on that date early in the evening to avoid such action on the Jewish Sabbath.

Within hours, the U.S. government recognized the State of Israel with President Truman's strong endorsement.

The excitement now was delirious even though much fighting remained before peace came about. The miracle of a Jewish state arising from the despair of centuries of diaspora was now full circle. We felt that, as Jewish War Veterans, we had indeed been a part of this miracle.

*Judge Henry X. Dietch is a member of the Jewish War Veterans, a former mayor of Park Forest, Illinois, and a retired Circuit Court judge.*

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## President's Column

*continued from page 2*

"Kraut," and, when he didn't shave, he looked like an Italian.

Al was married in 1926 to Hannah Rubens at Temple Beth Israel, a congregation to which he still belongs, by Rabbi S. Felix Mendelsohn. He and his wife had two sons and one daughter who now live in other parts of the country.

The stories Al tells of his adventures with the Untouchables would fill a book, and hopefully Al will do that in the near future. For now, Al says he has no hard feelings about the Chicago gangsters and bootleggers, even though he fought them at the time. As Al puts it, "They were doing their job, and I was doing mine."

By the late '20s, Prohibition was so unpopular in larger cities and public patronage of bootleggers so widespread that they were often thought of as ordinary businessmen. Repeal was near at hand.

He is reluctant to name people he knew or met who were engaged in illegal activities. He doesn't want the children or grandchildren of these men to be brought into the public light again. From his viewpoint, he says, many of the so-called gangsters were good guys to their people. Even Al Capone set up soup kitchens for poor Italians at Christmas time.

He knew many of the Jewish bootleggers but always gave them equal treatment. He remembers going to the bathhouses on Fourteenth Street and, in his undercover role, overhearing the bootleggers discussing their illegal activities. On their way out, he would have them arrested. Al says he was at the railroad station when Al Capone was finally sent away after his conviction for income tax

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*It was here that he earned his nickname, "Wallpaper," because when, as bailiff (pursuant to a court order, of course) he moved out everything except the wallpaper.*

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evasion.

Shortly after that, in 1932, the Untouchables were disbanded, and Al was assigned to different areas of government service. At various times he was in the Narcotics Division, the Internal Revenue Service, and, during World War II, the Office of Price Administration.

In his years of service, he often encountered open anti-Semitism, but his toughness enabled him to survive.

As World War II ended, Al returned to Chicago and ended his government employment. He owned and operated a number of restaurants ("Wolff's Inn") in the downtown area and wound up his business career with the operation

of a private club at 201 East Superior Street.

Since Al had been an undercover agent, no one knew of his true identity until the filming of the movie *The Untouchables*. Then, Paramount Studios discovered his whereabouts and used him as a consultant for the movie which, of course, memorialized Elliot Ness and his federal agents. With the passing of his wife a few years ago, Al lives in the limelight and glow of Chicago's turbulent past.

He is a proud American Jew, finally able to talk about his undercover days as an Untouchable. In reminiscing about his extraordinary career in the service of his country and

his love for America, he put it this way:

"I think my destiny was for a nice Jewish guy to overcome all these obstacles to working in all those departments as the only Jew. There is no country in the world like America because we still have freedom, we still can pray and do anything we want. We can get married and have children.

"I am proud to be a Jew, but I'm an American first. I was born and went to schools here. I served in the American army. I was born an American citizen. I don't know of any other country like America. I was blessed being born here.

"I would have swum across the ocean to get to America." □