



chicago jewish historical society

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CHICAGO JEWISH *History*

Compulsion:

Nathan Leopold vs. Meyer Levin: Who Owned the Literary Rights to the Story behind the Murder that Came to be Known as the Crime of the Century?

The case of *Nathan Leopold, Jr. v. Meyer Levin* tried in Chicago over thirty years ago pitted two of Chicago's best-known Jews against one another in a headline-making trial over who had the right to profit from a story. Levin, one of Chicago's best-known novelists, had written *Compulsion*, a thinly-fictionalized account of the crime that had made Leopold instantly notorious, the Leopold-Richard Loeb murder of Bobby Franks in 1924. Leopold, preparing to be released from prison for the first time in the three decades since the crime, insisted he had a right to his own story. The two wound up in court and Chicago's Jewish community watched as some of the most horrifying moments of its history became fresh news again.

Levin was probably best known for *The Old Bunch*, an unsentimental account of growing up Jewish on Chicago's West Side, but his various other novels and widely published reporting added to his fame. By the late 1950s, he had grown bitter over the nature and limits of his fame. He had a vitriolic obsession with the literary establishment for not appreciating his "Jewish viewpoint" and for not granting him the respect he felt he deserved. He had recently lost a separate court battle over the stage rights to *The Diary of Anne Frank*. *Compulsion* had been well and widely received. He was unhappy to return to court and face Leopold.

From the other side, Leopold had spent more than thirty years attempting to be a model prisoner. Where he

continued on page 4

Society Gives Oral History Collection to Asher Library at Spertus

In a special meeting of the Board of Directors on November 1, Chair of the Oral History Committee Sid Sorkin completed the formal transfer of the Society's oral history collection to the Asher Library of Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies. Spertus President Howard Sulkin, Asher Library Director Michael Terry, and Chicago Jewish Archives Archivist

Norma Spungeon *continued on page 3*

Inside:

- Oral History Excerpt from Funeral Director Jules Furth
- Ruth Duskin Feldman Talks of Life as a Quiz Kid and After
- Photograph from Marion Meyer's Family History

President's Column

As many of you undoubtedly know, Jacob Rader Marcus, dean of American



Walter Roth

Jewish historians passed away on November 15, 1995 at the age of ninety-nine. Dr. Marcus was undoubtedly the greatest and most respected scholar in the field of American Jewish history. He taught countless scholars

and rabbis, many from Chicago, during his career.

Dr. Marcus wrote his first historical publication in 1916, almost eighty years ago. It was entitled, "America: the Spiritual Center of Jewry." He continued to work to the very end of his life, keeping a research and writing schedule that began every day but

Shabbat at 9 a.m. and finished at 10 p.m. He recently published a one-volume history of the Jewish people.

Two years ago, I had the opportunity to hear a lecture delivered by Dr. Marcus at Temple Shalom. His mind was as clear as ever and, after his lecture, we had an opportunity to talk to him for a few moments about our effort to preserve the local history of our people. He was most encouraging, stating that he had always given local history the greatest stress in his own research.

Incidentally, I doubt if there was anyone who was as well-versed on Chicago history as Dr. Marcus. On a number of different occasions when I called him for information on Chicago occurrences, he was knowledgeable and forthcoming. He obviously had a prodigious memory.

Dr. Marcus was a former president

of the American Jewish Historical Society. In 1947 he founded the American Jewish Archives on the campus of Hebrew Union College/Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, where he was a professor.

To the professional and lay person alike, Dr. Marcus was a role model. Michael Feldberg, the current Executive Director of the American Jewish Historical Society, recalls the following words of Dr. Marcus on the historian's craft:

One must frantically detest falsehood; one must search every time he writes a sentence. The fact scrubbed clean is more eternal than perfumed and rouged words. The historian's desk is an altar on which he must sacrifice his most cherished prejudices. One must be dedicated to the truth.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have known such a man and I hope his sense of the importance of history informs the Chicago Jewish Historical Society's work as well as my own. □

Society Welcomes New Members from Last Quarter

We are pleased to announce a number of new members to our Society from the most recent three-month period. We are always pleased to add new members both for the reinforcement they bring to the work we are currently undertaking and in the hope that they will help lead us into new projects.

As a volunteer organization, we are proud of what we have been able to accomplish by drawing on the strengths, interests, and talents of our diverse membership. Every new member adds to that diversity and makes it possible for us to accomplish even more. We like to believe that we are more than the sum of our parts.

We look forward to working with the following new members in our continuing as well as in our future

projects:

<i>Library of the University of Illinois at Chicago</i>	<i>Mr. & Mrs. N. Gutstein</i>
<i>Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence Brail</i>	<i>Helen Pearlman</i>
<i>Jeanne Chemers</i>	<i>Rabbi Michael Schorin</i>
<i>Robert Frisch</i>	<i>Beverly Siegel</i>
	<i>Lawrence Stern</i>

In addition, we encourage all of our members to spread the word about the Society. Tell friends and relatives about us; think of it as a way of remaining in contact with Chicago if you are moving away or perhaps spending the winter somewhere warm.

Consider as well giving a membership in the Society as a gift either to an individual or an organization. If your synagogue or local library does not subscribe to our newsletter, consider donating a subscription; the cost for an organizational membership is \$25. □

Correction: Error in Volume Numbering Sparks Confusion

As a result of a composition mistake, recent issues of *Chicago Jewish History* have been incorrectly numbered. Where they ought to have been numbers one, two, and three of Volume 18, they have instead been numbers one, two, and three of volumes 19, 20, and 21.

We regret the error not merely for the confusion it will likely give current and future readers of these issues, but also because we now boast more volumes of the newsletter than we have been in existence as a Society.

In order to bring the counting back into line, we will extend the numbering of Volume 21 for the next several numbers, beginning Volume 22 with the first number published in 1998. □

Oral History

continued from page one

joined the Board for the special presentation and a dinner meeting.

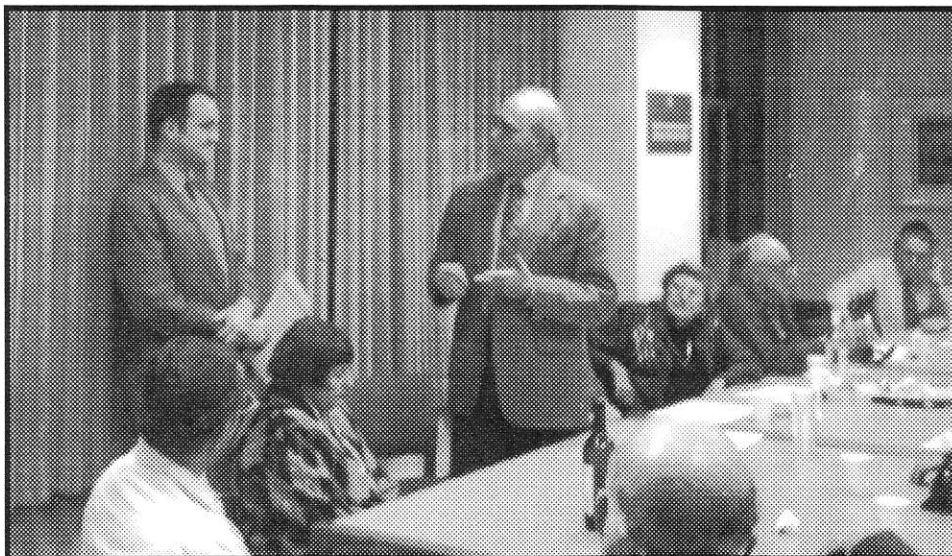
The oral history project has been central to the Society's mission for almost 20 years. The project identifies Chicago Jews who have made unusual contributions to the community or who can speak of otherwise undocumented aspects of Chicago Jewish history. It then takes oral histories from those individuals, preserving their stories on tape and in transcription.

For the last several years, the Society has stored the original tapes of those interviews in its office at the Spertus Institute. As the collection has grown, and as interest in using it as a resource has grown, that arrangement has become decreasingly practical.

Effective immediately, the collection is available for use by the public at the Asher Library. The reference desk has a complete index of the available tapes and transcripts that are available during the library's hours of operation.

Spertus is currently in the midst of a major renovation which should permit it to serve even more fully as a resource for the Chicago Jewish community. Bringing the Society's oral history collection into the broader library collection is a part of that process.

As Sulkin said, "We are deeply committed to archival work. We are



Photograph by Norman Schwartz

Michael Terry listens to Sid Sorkin present Asher Library with the Society's Oral History Project papers as board members watch

deeply committed to Chicago Jewish history. And we are delighted to have this addition to our collection."

Archivist Norman Spungen, who has proved an invaluable resource for members of the Society for several years, talked about the importance of the collection as a reflection of the Society as a whole. "I think this is a project that gives credence to your mission," she said. "In giving these tapes to the collection, you further that mission by preserving those tapes."

Spungen went on to point out that Jewish history is different from other types of history in that it often has fewer artifacts to draw upon than do other

types of history. She said she sees a connection between taking individual oral histories and recovering the history of the Jewish people at large.

"Jewish history has had to play a role for us that more tangible things have played for other people," she said. "We had no country ... that's why archives, museums, and libraries are so important. They are the keepers of the historical memory of the Jewish people."

The Society will continue to supplement the project as it always has. Anyone interested in taking part in future oral history interviews should contact Sid Sorkin at the Society office.

Society Appoints Allen Dropkin to Board Position

Chicago attorney Allen Dropkin is the newest member of the Society's board, having been appointed to fill a vacancy in November. A life-long Chicagoan, Dropkin has been active in a wide range of political and Jewish causes.

Working with the firm of Arvey, Hodes, Costello, and Burman for 40 years, Dropkin is currently with

Fishman and Merrick.

He also served as an assistant state's attorney from 1954-1956 and as special counsel to the Congressional subcommittee on Housing in 1956. He also ran unsuccessfully for 5th Ward Alderman in 1959.

He is a past president of the Chicago Board of Jewish Education (1974-1978) and of the Midwest Region of United Synagogues (1980-1983). A long-time member of Rodfei Zedek, he is currently vice-president of Lake Shore Drive Synagogue.

He attended the University of Chicago for high school, college, and

law school. He received his law degree when he was only 20 years old, one of the youngest law graduates in the university's history.

Dropkin says he is interested in a variety of different projects with the Society. He has recently contributed several documents on Jews in Chicago politics to the Chicago Jewish Archives, and his first-hand experience promises to be a useful source of ideas for the Society and the Board. Those documents and Dropkin's expertise should be useful in the upcoming Spertus exhibit on Jews in Politics, planned to coincide with the Democratic National Convention. □

Compulsion

continued from page one

had once resigned himself to life behind bars, he saw the opportunity to be released on parole and spend the rest of his life with a degree of privacy. He planned his own autobiography, but he resented Levin's efforts to dredge up his past. He wanted to live as quietly as he could so that he might obtain executive clemency so as to free himself of all constraints.

A large, public trial was the last thing either man wanted. Levin worried legal entanglements would further mark him as a controversial, rather than gifted author. Leopold worried that any attention he got would hurt his chances for the quiet life to which he aspired. It was a trial that brought each of them the wrong kind of attention at just the wrong time.

* * *

Meyer Levin was born in Chicago's Maxwell Street area on October 8, 1905. He was a precocious student and attended the University of Chicago at an early age. He soon took a job as a part-time reporter for *The Chicago Daily News*, where his hero, Ben Hecht, worked.

Levin became a full-time reporter in 1924 when Hecht moved on to New York. He was just eighteen years old and he was in a position to be a star reporter for one of the most prestigious newspapers in the country. He had a license to pry into every corner that might interest him.

Just months after he started, the Leopold-Loeb case struck. In his autobiography, *In Search*, Levin recalled, "From the day of the finding of the mutilated body of the little boy Franks, this crime fascinated the world, and little else occupied minds in Chicago. It seemed to us that we were in the center of the world through purest crime -- a crime, as we thought, for crime's sake."

When the trial began, Levin was sent to write features. Leopold and Loeb were nearly the same age as Levin and the three had all been students at the University of Chicago at the same time. Levin had not known them personally for they, like their victim, were members of extremely wealthy South Side (Kenwood) Americanized German-Jewish families, while Levin stemmed from a poorer Eastern European family on the West Side.

Levin often wrote of the tension between West Side Jews and their South Side co-religionists at the

time of the murder, but he felt he understood Leopold and Loeb. As he wrote in *In Search*, "Their act was an extreme expression of an unwholesomeness, perhaps due to our parents and our past, unsure of our place in society."

The two pleaded guilty to the murder. They would undoubtedly have been sentenced to death if not for a brilliant defense by Clarence Darrow. Through an argument relying heavily on the testimony of psychiatrists, a first in Chicago courts, Darrow succeeded in winning them a sentence of life plus 99 years.

After the trial, Levin began a varied career as a reporter and writer. He wrote a series of stories about life in Chicago, graduated from the University of Chicago, and left for a year of study in Paris. He took his first trip to Palestine, and then returned to Chicago and a position as a cultural director of the Jewish Peoples Institute.

Unlike his one-time hero Ben Hecht, Levin openly embraced and explored his Jewish heritage. He had conflicts with leaders of the organized Jewish community as well as with Jews from the old Yiddish-speaking neighborhoods, but he remained conscious and

He was just eighteen years old and he was a star reporter with a license to pry into every corner that might interest him.

open about his Jewishness.

In 1927, he took a second trip to Palestine and lived for six months at kibbutz *Yagur*, an experience that would inform a number of his later novels. When he returned to Chicago, he wrote *The Old Bunch*, a novel that attempted to make sense of the world that Jews of his generation shaped and were shaped by as they grew away from the childhood they had all shared.

The decade after his return from Israel saw him write two other novels as well as become interested in labor and socialist activities. He remained committed to using his writing as a tool to bring attention to social problems, but at the same time he strove to be recognized as a serious author and not merely a journalist.

When the Spanish Civil War began in 1937, Levin left for what proved a several-year career as a foreign correspondent sympathetic to the Republican cause. During World War II, he worked as a director-producer of documentary films for the U.S. Office of War Information, and by the end of the War was a correspondent for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency and the Overseas News Agency.

Levin made it a point to be with the advancing columns that liberated many of Hitler's concentration

camps. His reports of Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen, Dachau, and many other camps were devastating and awesome in their depictions of the death and misery inflicted upon the Jews of Europe. These descriptions were often the first direct accounts by a Western reporter of the death camps.

The things he saw had an explosive impact on Levin. He wrote that all of the fears and insecurity he felt as a young Jew growing up on Chicago's old West

Side were re-evoked and that he was traumatized by what he saw in the camps. As he put it in *In Search* when he recalled seeing Jewish refugees, "In that moment an anguished hatred arose in me, pure bile and bitterness against the entire world, the whole rotten putrid human race that could drive its own beings into this. What were these people? They were just any people from anywhere, just a number of families and splinters of families scooped up from St. Louis Avenue in Chicago as well as from Jassy and Bucharest and Wrotzlaw..."

Soon after the War, he threw himself into efforts to bring Jewish survivors to Palestine, where he himself had decided to settle. In the course of such work, he came across an early French edition of *The Diary of Anne Frank* which Frank's father Otto had published shortly after the end of the War. He was among the first to champion the literary value of the *Diary*, and his encounter with it changed his life.

The story of Levin's obsession with *The Diary of Anne Frank* is too long to enter into here, but it is the subject of a recent book by Lawrence Graver. (For some of Levin's own words on the subject, see the insert on page 8). It is relevant to the story of his encounter with Nathan Leopold because, during the time he was involved in the court struggle over the dramatization rights to the *Diary*, he decided to write his next book on



Meyer Levin, circa 1980

a topic that would earn enough to defray his legal expenses.

He recalled the Leopold-Loeb case and imagined a novel based on it would have a guaranteed audience. Three decades later, the case remained a household expression. Loeb was dead, having been murdered in prison in 1936, but Leopold was alive and hoping to earn parole. Levin thought of his proximity to the case as a young reporter, and he began outlining what would become *Compulsion*.

Levin remembered the psychoanalytical studies, the Nietzschean "superman" discourses, and the comparisons between the murder and Raskolnikov's crime in Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. He was interested, he wrote in an introduction to *Compulsion*, in exploring the role a reporter-detective, "as a Jew of Russian extraction pitted against the pair of thrill killers with their superman philosophy."

Levin recounts how he flew to Chicago and met with Ralph Neuman, the owner of the Abraham Lincoln Book Store and literary agent for Leopold. He obtained permission to interview Leopold in prison and then wrote *Compulsion* in quick order.

The book was published in 1957 to critical acclaim in Chicago and most other cities. In New York, the reviews were lukewarm, however. Levin was already openly hostile to the New York "cabal," as he labeled Lillian Hellman and others whom he blamed for

stealing the play of the *Diary* from him; he felt the indifferent acceptance of *Compulsion* by New York's critics was just another example of the conspiracy against him. Because of the literary establishment's "Stalinist tactics" and their denial that the Jews were the principle victims of the Holocaust, they had no use for Levin and his writings.

* * *

Leopold's life story after 1924 is, interestingly, simpler than Levin's harried existence. When he was sent to prison as a young man, he prepared himself never to be free again. He proved to be an exemplary prisoner, an experience he described in his autobiography *Life Plus 99 Years*. He wrote that he began to feel remorse for his crime a decade after its commission and that he was finally able to mature from his "arrested childhood."

During World War II, he volunteered to be a test subject for a government project on controlling malaria and he won a modification of his sentence. Sometime in the early 1950s, he employed Chicago

Jewish attorney Elmer Gertz to help him arrange for publication of his autobiography. Leopold found Gertz so helpful that he employed him as well to help prepare a case for his parole hearings.

Around the same time, Leopold met Levin for the interview that would form part of Levin's research for *Compulsion*. In *Life Plus 99 Years*, Leopold writes that he was horrified that Levin proposed to "drudge up the past again," but then confessed to Levin that he was in fact writing his own book and was cooperating in a series of articles about his life that would soon appear in *The Saturday Evening Post*.

For a time, Leopold considered co-authoring a book with Levin, an idea that Levin apparently welcomed. But Leopold wondered "what effect such publicity would have on my book," so he decided against working with the writer. Leopold claimed that Levin continued "to importune" him and members of his family for information about the murder and his life.

When he heard that Simon and Schuster had agreed to bring out Levin's book, Leopold instructed his lawyers to notify the publishers that he would hold them responsible for any libelous statements. As Leopold wrote, "*Compulsion* was published in 1956... *Compulsion* is at once a horrible, a fascinating, and a beautiful book -- beautiful in the case that the iridescent surface of a swamp is beautiful..."

Compulsion is told through the words of reporter

Sid Silver, who seeks to explain the character and deeds of Judd Hirsch Steiner (Leopold's counterpart). After he read it, Leopold was distraught to see fictional acts attributed to his beloved aunt, his brother, his mother, and counterparts of other people to whom he had been close. He was outraged to read fictional accounts of violent thoughts, attempted rapes, and homosexual activities that were attributed to Steiner. He wrote, "My G-d, what I did is horrible enough and the load of guilt I bear on my conscience is already heavy enough without this additional source of turmoil."

He decided, then, to bring suit against Levin for libel.

* * *

Elmer Gertz recounts the reasons behind the lawsuit in his 1965 book, *A Handful of Clients*. He reports that Leopold had been granted his parole by then Illinois

Governor William Stratton in 1958 on condition that he would avoid publicity. Leopold had already gone to Puerto Rico where he had work in a medical facility and seemed likely to

"From the day of the finding of the mutilated body of the little boy Franks, this crime fascinated the world, and little else occupied minds in Chicago. It seemed to us that we were in the center of the world through purest crime."

remain out of the limelight.

As Leopold's attorney, Gertz remained in Chicago and followed the early success of *Compulsion* warily. He grew particularly concerned when he learned that Twentieth Century Fox was in the process of making a movie version of the book the would star Dean Stockwell as Steiner. He knew that the success of Leopold's appeal to Stratton for executive clemency, Leopold's only hope for true freedom, rested on his keeping a low profile. Gertz feared the continued publicity about Leopold's so-called "perversity" and bad character might kill that hope.

Gertz began designing an unusual argument on Leopold's behalf after he had a series of conversations with another Chicago attorney, Harold R. Gordon. Gordon had won a case on behalf of members of Al Capone's family and another on behalf of the widow of one of Joe Louis's early managers on the theory that there was a "quasi-contractual right to recover unjust enrichment against anyone who appropriated the name, likeness, life-story, and personality of another in a work of fiction that was distributed through the usual commercial channels." Gertz thought the precedent could help him in Leopold's case.

Leopold v. Levin, et. al. was filed in the Chicago courts on October 2, 1959. In addition to Levin, the suit named Simon and Schuster and Twentieth Century Fox.

Since Levin was a resident of Israel at the time, it was difficult but vital for Gertz and the others bringing the suit to serve a subpoena on him. Gertz recounts in his book how he tracked Levin down when he returned for a rare Chicago visit to give a lecture at North Shore Suburban Congregation. As Levin mounted the steps of the Temple, a sheriff handed him the Complaint.

Needless to say, Levin was outraged. In his 1973 autobiography, *Obsession*, he took up the cudgel against the lawyer. He writes that he had met Gertz at a parole hearing and that the latter had told him they had gone to the same high school. He claims Gertz said he "...adulated my writings in the school magazine ... he had wanted to write but had gone into law instead and, I gathered, hoped to become known as Clarence Darrow. Thus, the beginning with Elmer Gertz."

Levin was represented by Ephraim London, a New York attorney who was also representing him in his New York litigation involving the *Diary*. London had instructed Levin to stay out of new litigation at all costs, since he was gaining the reputation of being a litigious writer. It was not to be, Levin reflected in *Obsession*; he had to defend himself against the Chicago suit.

Levin also retained Leon Despres as his local counsel. The two had known each other since the Republic Steel strike in 1937 which Levin covered as a reporter and on which he had based his novel *Citizens*. An attorney who appears briefly in the novel is an apparent counterpart of Despres.

In a recent interview, Despres recalled memories of Levin in the Republic Steel strike when Levin was an avid labor sympathizer. Despres himself was already then a labor lawyer, a Hyde Park resident, and active in liberal politics. In later years he would represent the Hyde Park district on Chicago's city council where he gained fame as an unflappable critic of Mayor Richard J. Daley's administration.

Despres wholeheartedly agreed with Levin that Leopold's suit was groundless. He felt that the

Constitutional guarantee of free speech protected Levin's writing of *Compulsion*.

The *Leopold* case dragged on interminably before a number of trial judges. It took place less in the court room than in various legal offices. Several people had to give depositions, including Leopold in Puerto Rico. It seemed to be going nowhere as it weighed heavily on the minds of the two chief participants.

Finally, the case came to be assigned to Judge Thomas E. Kluczynski. On April 15, 1964, Kluczynski ruled in favor of Leopold on a motion for summary judgment made by Gertz, thereby bringing the case to a temporary close. He ruled that as a matter of law both the book and movie "constitute a classic case of an invasion of the rights of privacy..." The result, of course, stunned Levin, London, and Despres and elated Leopold and Gertz.

Levin and his attorneys would appeal the decision.

* * *

In the four years after the filing of the initial suit, Leopold had been granted the Executive Clemency he had sought. Levin had gone on to write *The Fanatic*, an explosive, angry novel containing Levin's outrage at anti-Semites, self-hating Jews, and many other enemies whom he felt were conspiring against him, principally as an outgrowth of the Anne Frank controversy.

The Supreme Court reassigned the case to Judge Abraham Brussell, a prominent Chicago Jewish attorney noted for his scholarship and a former partner of Arthur Goldberg, soon to be a U.S. Supreme Court Judge.

It took Brussell more than a year and a half to retry the case. He studied precedent and weighed a variety of philosophical issues raised in the writing of fiction drawn from real life. At last he rendered his decision: Levin had been entirely in the right to write the novel he had. Levin and Despres had won the first stage of the retrial.

Levin described the decision in *Obsession*: "At last another judge, after a year and half, together with the

Meyer Levin's Books

Reporter (1929) -- Novel

Frankie and Johnny (1930) -- A Story of Young Love in Chicago

Yeluda (1931) -- Novel based on kibbutz life

The Golden Mountain (1932) -- classic Hassidic tales

The New Bridge (1933) -- Novel of social problems in America

The Old Bunch (1937) -- Novel of

Chicago's West Side

Citizens (1940) -- Novel of the 1937 Republic Steel strike

My Father's House (1947) -- Novel (and later film) of Holocaust and survival

In Search (1950) -- Autobiography

Anne Frank, The Play (1952)

Compulsion (1956) -- Novel of Leopold-Loeb trial

The Fanatic (1963) -- Novel of a writer's obsession with the wrongs

done him

The Stronghold (1965) -- Story of a concentration camp

Gore and Igor (1968) -- Satiric stories of the 1960s, set in Israel

The Settlers (1972) -- Novel about the founding of Israel

Obsession (1973) -- Autobiography

The Harvest (1978) -- History of Israel from 1920s to 1948

The Architect (1981) -- Novel based on the life of Frank Lloyd Wright

whole background of the fictional use of real persons, issues a lengthy analysis of the important trend in modern documentary literature toward merging of invented fiction with factual material. There could be no distinctions, in purpose, between fiction and nonfiction, as was claimed, and there was no ownership of events; all life was open to writers... Costly and protracted, the battle provided a precedent for literary freedom."

* * *

Of course, such a lengthy story had a lengthy denouement as well. Leopold and his attorneys appealed and the case eventually went again before the Illinois Supreme Court. It languished there until May 27, 1970 when Judge Daniel P. Ward issued an opinion upholding Levin's victory.

Judge Ian Levin (no relation to Meyer), currently Judge of Circuit Court of Cook County, worked on the opinion when he served as Ward's clerk and recounted the affair in a recent interview. He said that an examination of many legal authorities and more recent decisions of the United States Supreme Court had made it clear that Leopold had no right of privacy to his story.

For the individuals at the center of the case, there could be no truly satisfying result. While Leopold did receive his Executive Clemency, he lost the case. He managed to live in relative obscurity, but he died in

"There could be no distinctions, in purpose, between fiction and nonfiction ... and there was no ownership of events; all life was open to writers."

1971, 12 years after the trial began but only one year after it was finally decided.

For Levin, the Supreme Court decision was a kind of vindication. Still, it proved in many ways to be a pyrrhic victory. He had originally undertaken *Compulsion* to earn money for his passionate claim to stage *The Diary of Anne Frank* as he believed it ought to have been

staged. Because of the trial, the royalties from the book had been held back for ten years, and its sale had been impeded. Levin never got the financial windfall he had anticipated,

although some money did remain.

Levin lived his final years in modest circumstances, bitter at the many people he saw as conspiring to keep him from accomplishing his dreams. He paid a final visit to Chicago in 1980, one that Society Board members Rabbi Daniel Leifer, Charles Bernstein, and I all recall as disturbing. He seemed still to feel haunted by his enemies and still to feel that he had somehow been denied.

Levin died in Jerusalem in 1981 of a stroke while at work on *The Architect*, a novel based on the life of Frank Lloyd Wright. He is probably best-remembered today as the author of *The Old Bunch* and *Compulsion*, two novels that remain provocative glimpses into the Jewish Chicago that bred him. □

Levin's Obsession, in His Words

The following excerpt is from Obsession, Meyer Levin's autobiography, chiefly concerned with his interest in Anne Frank's Diary of a Young Girl.

In the middle of life, I fell into a trouble that was to grip, occupy, haunt, and all but devour me, these twenty years...

The case in court had arisen from my difficulties over *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank. Continuing from my war correspondent experiences [and] my intense absorption with the Holocaust, I had helped Otto Frank to secure publication of the *Diary* in English, and had dramatized it. Mr. Frank had come to New York, to see to the authenticity of the staging, but at the point the prominent playwright Lillian Hellman and her producer Kermit Bloomgarden, had persuaded him, he told me, that as a novelist I was no dramatist, that my work was unstageworthy, that it had to be discarded and another version written.

From the start I had strongly suspected that some doctrinaire formulation rather than pure dramatic judgment had caused Miss Hellman's attack on my play, and after the substitute work written under her tutelage was produced, I became convinced that I had been barred because I and my work were in her political view "too Jewish." The Broadway play omitted what I and others, including several serious critics, considered essential material in the *Diary*. But also, while my work had been flagrantly smeared as "unstageworthy," the Broadway play proved identical in staging, with important scenes startlingly parallel to mine. The whole affair increasingly appeared to me as a classic instance of declaring an author incompetent, in order to cover up what was really an act of censorship. And in this, not only I, but Anne Frank was involved, as well as the public. Yet because of rampant McCarthyism, I could not then make public what I saw as the real issue: doctrinaire censorship of the Stalinism variety. Even at the trial I did not bring this issue out, for fear of supplying material to McCarthy's inquisitors. □

Rogers Park Exhibit Opens at Historical Society

The Chicago Historical Society's exhibit celebrating the history and diversity of the Rogers Park/West Ridge neighborhood has opened at the Society museum.

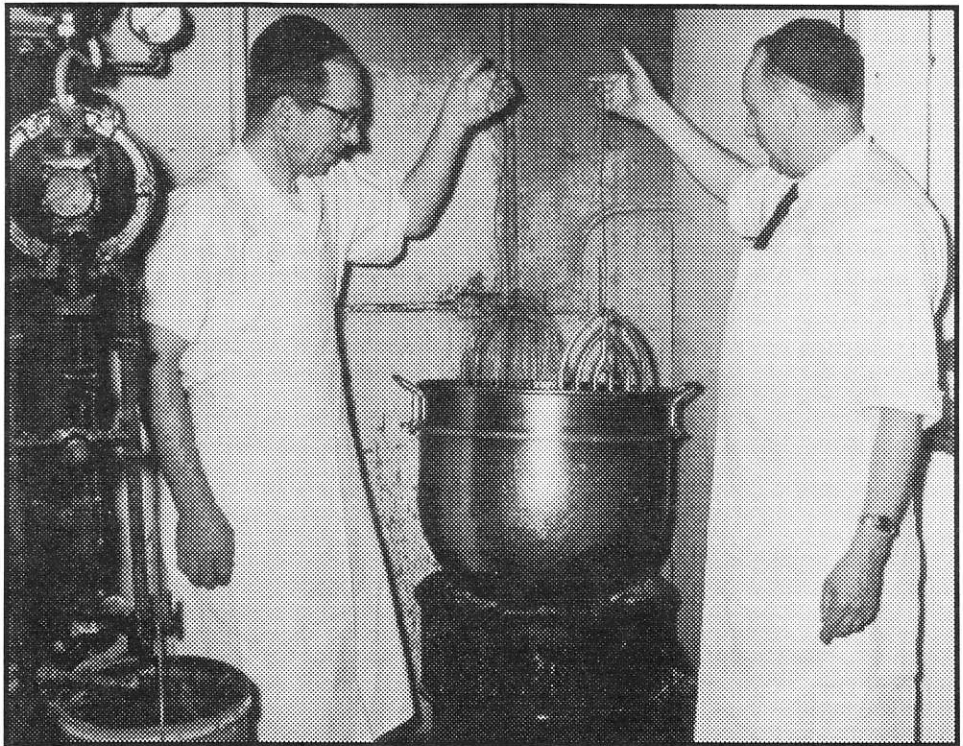
The exhibit features stories and photographs depicting individuals and scenes that represent the broad variety of different cultures that have made the area its home. Jewish life in the neighborhood -- the area contains to have what is probably the densest concentration of Jews within the Chicago city limits -- is well represented.

The exhibit is the second in a planned series of four that will celebrate the role of Chicago's neighborhoods as "Keepers of Culture." The first, featuring the Douglas/Grand Boulevard area, appeared during the last year.

The next, South Lawndale/Lower West Side, is scheduled to open in November, 1996, and should be of particular interest to Jewish Chicagoans as well.

The fourth exhibit will examine the Pilsen/Little Village/Heart of Chicago neighborhood.

The Historical Society plans two upcoming events tied into the Rogers Park/West Ridge exhibit. On Saturday, January 13 at 1 p.m., it has scheduled



Louis Plotznick and Chaim Solewitz Koshering Equipment for Passover in their bakery at 2919 W. Touhy, Rogers Park

Photo courtesy Chicago Historical Society

Kidstory: Around the Block, a two-hour workshop for children and adults that discusses methods of conducting neighborhood history in general and that includes a tour of the exhibit.

On Saturday, January 27 at 2 p.m., the Historical Society will present its *Neighborhood Arts Education Showcase*, an open house showcasing several young artists from the Rogers Park/West Ridge area. Young writers will perform poetry that reflects the variety of different cultures in the

neighborhood.

The exhibition will remain open to the public until August 4, 1996.

The Chicago Historical Society is located at Clark and North Avenue in Chicago. It is open from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday and from noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday. Suggested admission is \$3 for adults, \$2 for seniors and students aged 13-22, and \$1 for children.

For more information, contact the Historical Society at (312)642-4600. □

Two Rogers Park Congregations Mark Centennials

Two congregations currently located in the West Rogers Park area have reached the century mark since their original founding.

Congregation Ezras Israel and Congregation B'nei Ruven have both been located at various places throughout their proud histories, but both continue to thrive today in their North Side homes.

Ezras Israel is formally a Traditional congregation and was founded in 1895. B'nei Ruven is Orthodox and was founded a year later.

Ezras Israel is located at 7001 N. California and is currently served by Rabbi Benzion Kaganoff.

The Congregation has published a book chronicling its history that is available for \$10 by calling (312) 764-8320.

B'nei Ruven boasts one of the strongest connections to the Lubavitch movement in Chicago. When Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe of the time and the

father-in-law of recently-deceased Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, made his first visit to Chicago after being released from a Russian prison in 1930, he stayed with members of the Congregation. He did so again during a subsequent visit in 1942.

B'nei Ruven is currently served by Rabbi Harold Shusterman and is located at 6350 N. Whipple. The Congregation has embarked on a major renovation of its building in honor of the centennial and it is commemorating the anniversary by having a new Torah written and with a series of speakers and a dinner celebration. □

Elmer Gertz to Speak at Next Society Meeting

Well-known Chicago attorney Elmer Gertz will speak at the next Society open meeting on February 18 at Temple Sholom.

In addition to his involvement with Richard Leopold (chronicled in Walter Roth's story on page one of this issue), Gertz has been involved with many of the highest-profile cases in Chicago over the last fifty years.

Gertz's clients included author Henry Miller and Lee Harvey Oswald assassin Jack Ruby.

He has written about his experiences with his different celebrity clients in his own books and in various periodicals.

Gertz's talk promises to be entertaining at the same time as it casts light on what it was like to be Jewish in Chicago's legal field.

Temple Sholom is located at 3480 North Lake Shore Drive. Elmer Gertz's talk begins at 2 p.m. A Society social hour starts at 1 p.m. □

Information Request: Spertus Museum Seeks Material for Two Exhibits

Spertus Museum is in the process of putting together two different exhibits for which they continue to seek material.

For an exhibit on Jewish humor, they seek humorous calendars, sign cards, posters, joke books, games, toys, or figurines.

For an exhibit on Jews in Chicago politics, they seek posters, placards, buttons, or any other objects that help to illustrate the different ways that Jews have taken part in local politics.

If you have material that you believe might be appropriate for either exhibit, contact Olga Weiss at Spertus at (312)322-1732. □

There Might be Gold in Your Attic

One way you can consider helping the Society in our efforts to preserve and retell the history of the Jews of Chicago is to donate archival material that you have tucked away in old drawers, trunks, boxes, or attics.

Given the constraints of our own limited archival storage space, we unfortunately cannot take most documents relating to individual families. What we are looking for instead are documents relating to the history of the larger community.

This might include synagogue directories, programs from Jewish events, records of *landsmenshaften* or other Jewish community groups, or photographs depicting vanished sites of Jewish interest.

In doing local history, it is never easy to know what sorts of documents will unlock the riddles of how the every day life of our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents went.

All too often, the material that might make clear the Chicago of 60 years ago -- or of a century or merely 30 years ago -- got thrown in the trash or was allowed to yellow or decay in the attic.

History is more than a simple jigsaw puzzle, but it still comes together piece by piece. It could be that the tattered yearbook, forgotten old file folder, or faded photograph that you find in your attic will hold the key to some future historian's question about Jewish life in Chicago.

Next time you go through a Passover cleanup or find yourself looking through old family photographs, consider whether anything you find might be of interest to the Society. If you find mysterious items -- photographs you can't identify or programs from events that you no longer remember -- consider sharing them with the Society to see whether we can clear up the mystery.

There is no telling what little treasure will help fill in the story of Jewish Chicago, no telling what yellow page is actually golden. □

Society Looks to Raise Membership

Throughout the year the Society strives to expand its membership base as much as possible. As the calendar year comes to a close, however, we hope to redouble those efforts.

As a volunteer organization, we find our members provide us not merely with financial support but with intellectual and emotional support as well. We could not undertake -- let alone accomplish -- the many projects we do if we did not continue to bring new members into the fold.

As the new year dawns, ask yourself whether you can think of family or friends who might be interested in being part of what we do as a Society. We often find that our most enthusiastic members have heard of us only recently from a friend or a casual mention in some publication.

The back page of this issue contains information on the different costs and categories of membership available. You can tell friends to write to the Society office or you can write on their behalf if you prefer.

The story we tell is a communal story, after all, and each and every one of us in the Greater Chicago Jewish community is a part of it. Every additional member we attract helps us tell that story more fully. In order to tell the story of Jewish Chicago, we need a broad membership. Please help us keep our Society strong and growing. □

Information Request: Seeking Stories from B'nei Ruven

As part of the commemoration for its centennial celebration, Congregation B'nei Ruven is seeking stories from families who have been involved with the congregation at any time during the past 100 years.

Anyone with recollections or artifacts to share should contact Rabbi Boruch Hertz at 743-5434. □



Mayer Book Sets Standard for Privately Produced Family History Works

Marion Steiermann Mayer's recent *History of a Family Dispersed* is both a family history and a history of a family history. It recounts not only what happened to the author's extended family in the century before Hitler forced them out of Germany, but it also tells how she was able to use photographs, mementos, and old correspondence to piece together that story.

Mayer began her project in 1988 when she set out to update her family tree. Fortunate to have had relatives who carefully documented a range of photographs and recorded their own genealogical findings, she found herself with a remarkable range of materials to draw upon. By the time she was finished, she had produced an entire book.

Mayer found that recording the names of her ancestors told only a piece of the story that her research had revealed. She put the book together in part to re-tell the stories she learned about her relatives. As she put it, "A family tree is just a chart until it is brought to life with stories about the people whose names appear."

History of a Family Dispersed boasts more than 90 photographs and 70 family trees documenting the history of the families from which Mayer is descended: the Frohmans of Reinheim, the Feitlers of Seeheim, the Sussmans of Alsbach, the Bentheims of Bickenbach, and the Steiermanns of Biblis.

Although privately published, the book is remarkably well produced. It is a handsome, 9" x 11" coffee-table book with a professionally designed dust jacket and an extensive press packet. The above photo shows a reunion of members of Moses and Eva Steiermann's family in Biblis, Germany in celebration of Eva's 75th birthday on April 12, 1925.

Mayer herself was forced to flee Germany with her immediate family in December, 1937. She and her parents settled in Chicago and she continues to live here today.

History of a Family Dispersed is an impressive record of one extended family's history in a century that took it from the German countryside to Chicago and other parts of America. It recounts that history as both a triumph of the family's cohesiveness and as a bittersweet recollection of a world that the Nazis destroyed. It is impressive for the story it tells, but equally so for the high standard it sets for family history accounts that other genealogists will undertake.

Copies of the book are available from Mayer at (312)667-5471 for \$45. □

Ruth Feldman (the Former Little Ruth Duskin) Tells Tale of Quiz Kids from Behind the Scenes

Ruth Feldman, AKA little Ruthie Duskin, entertained nearly 90 Society members and guests at the December program in a Society program at an appropriate location -- the Museum of Broadcasting in Chicago's Cultural center.

In a fast-paced, one-hour talk which included a delightful segment from one of the *Quiz Kids* TV shows, 200 I.Q., happily-married grandmother enlightened the audience with many facts about the *Quiz Kids* radio and later TV shows.

She updated the audience on many of the Kids. Although one seven year old prodigy wound up tending roses at age 39, most mainstreamed into society.

One, James Watson, won a Nobel Prize for medicine in 1962. Another, Harve Fishman, became Harve Bennett and became a successful Hollywood producer.

Here are some other highlights:

* The radio show was originally broadcast from Chicago's Merchandise Mart and ran for 13 years.

* There were approximately 600 Quiz Kids.

* At the peak of the show's popularity, the Quiz Kids received 20,000 letters a week -- most with suggested questions -- and had 10 to 20 million listeners.

* The Kids travelled the country as goodwill ambassadors for the nation. Feldman recalls, "We entertained soldiers; trounced university professors and business executives in contests; did guest spots with Fred Allen, Bob Hope, Arthur Godfrey, Milton Berle, and many others; visited Paul Revere's house and the White House; launched a ship; made movies; and were turned into cartoons and paper dolls."

* During World War II, Quiz Kids

raised \$118 Million in U.S. Savings bonds. Feldman held the record for sales.

* \$1600 worth in one hour in Gimbel's store window in Philadelphia. The kids received a \$100 bond every time they were on a show -- which paid for Feldman's college education.

* The *Quiz Kids* TV show ended in 1954 and was replaced by *Lassie*

Feldman, who was on the radio and TV show from 1941 to 1950, beginning when she was seven years old, was accused of being a midget posing as a little girl. At one time, she was the show's top female contestant with 146 radio and 11 TV show appearances.

Was there anti-Semitism? "Yes," Feldman admits. In her book *What Ever Happened to the Quiz Kids?* she writes, "Anti-Semitism was rampant in the war years. Yet a disproportionate number of *Quiz Kid* regulars were Jewish, including three of the four top wartime travelers -- Joel Kupperman, Harve Fischman, and Ruth. When we moved through crowds, there were loud remarks of 'Oh, they're all Jews!'"

"When we went to see Henry Ford, a notorious anti-Semite, it was suggested that the one gentile child -- Richard Williams -- go in first. The owners of the department store that arranged our Seattle trip had a plush estate on an island," Feldman recalled, "and invited all the kids -- except the Jewish ones"

Non-Jewish children were cultivated to be on the show. But despite producers' best efforts, Jews still predominated. On one Easter program, all five kids were Jewish. When asked how that happened, producer Lou Coawn replied, "I'll tell you how it happened. They won."

Feldman's father, Boris Duskin, played varsity football at the University of Chicago, learned to paint and sculpt, studied farming, and eventually taught high school chemistry. Her mother worked as a secretary. The Duskin family lived in four West Side Chicago apartments in Feldman's first seven years before settling in Jackson Park.

Feldman first attended Pope



Ruth Duskin in 1941

Elementary School. when, at ten, she won a scholarship to the University of Chicago Lab School, one of the popular girls took her aside and advised, "Don't raise your hand so much. Boys don't like it."

When she reached puberty, Feldman opted for a normal social life -- a decision her family encouraged. In her junior year, she transferred to South Shore public high school -- "a school with normal kids" -- where she graduated.

Choosing Northwestern University over the University of Chicago, she graduated with highest honors on her 20th birthday and her first wedding anniversary.

Married to Gilbert Feldman, an attorney, Feldman lives in Highland Park and has three children and four grandchildren. She is a prolific freelance writer, has appeared on numerous broadcast shows and in many newspapers and national magazine articles, and is a leader in the movement for Humanistic Judaism.

Summing everything up, she said, "My asset, for which I thank my parental and Quiz Kid training, is the nerve to try. Deep down, I still believe that I can do just about anything I set my mind to."

-- Morene Dunn

Oral History Excerpt:

Jules Furth Offers a Funeral Director's First-Hand Look at Chicago Jewish History

Jules Furth is a second-generation funeral home director in the Chicago area. He spoke with Society Oral History Consultant Emma Kowalenko in 1995 about changes he has seen in his profession and in the Chicago Jewish community that he has served.

Furth: Today, I would say there is very little left of what you would call the Jewish Aristocracy. It's ... it's almost gone.

Kowalenko: And why'd that change, do you suppose?

Furth: There is not that kind of emphasis placed on society today and the rankings in the social calendar.

Kowalenko: I see.

Furth: And the younger people today feel a lot of equality. They really don't place that much emphasis on social standing. Although we still have the Standard Club and formerly there was the Covenant Club which closed, which were the two Jewish city clubs.

Kowalenko: And where were they?

Furth: The Standard Club is at 320 South Plymouth Court and the Covenant Club was on Clark Street near ... between [Washington] and Madison, I believe. And that went out of existence probably fifteen years ago.

Kowalenko: Can you explain a little bit about these clubs? Were they social?

Furth: Yes. But the Standard Club had the same image and membership of reform Judaism and the Covenant Club was a little more on the European side. It was two very distinctive memberships. Yes.

Kowalenko: So the European side, do you mean people newly arrived from Europe?

Furth: Either that or had Middle East background, middle European background rather.

Kowalenko: So Eastern European.

Furth: Eastern ... Yes.

Kowalenko: Rather than German.

Furth: Yes.

Kowalenko: I see. Okay. So the Standard Club would be more German then?

Furth: Yes. It was practically *all* in the early days.

Kowalenko: Between Eastern European and German Jews in terms of living in the same areas and, you know, working together and going to the same synagogue, was there a marked difference that no longer exists?

Furth: Very definitely ... Well, moreso than now. But the

whole idea of Jewish neighborhoods has slowly ebbed away in Chicago. They were very *solid* communities. You know, the north side where you had the Rogers Park and the West Rogers Park area were predominantly orthodox and conservative. And most of the reform Jews lived on either Lake Shore Drive or in Hyde Park or in that area of the city.

Kowalenko: So it was geographically reinforced.

Furth: And the country clubs also attracted the same type of ... on the South Side, for instance, the Ravisloe was the Standard Club and Idlewild was the Covenant Club membership...

But today, the Jewish community on the South Side of Chicago, south of Hyde Park, there's really only one ... Well, south of the Loop, you only have three synagogues in Hyde Park. You have one still in Lawn Manor that's very sparsely attended. Then you have to go all the way out to the south suburbs before you find another synagogue. And there are what I call three and a half out there.

Kowalenko: Okay. And what about the north? The North Side has more, would you say?

Furth: Oh yes.

Kowalenko: Many more.

Furth: Starting with Loop Synagogue in the Loop and moving north, you have two on ... you know, on Cedar Street and one on Elm. And then you go up to Temple Shalom on Lake Shore Drive. Then there's another one on Sheridan Road. Emanuel. And then just west of there, you have a tremendous amount of conservative and orthodox congregations.

Kowalenko: Yes. Now, that used to be different? Were there ... Was it more balanced in terms of north and south having synagogues? Or were there more on the South Side at one time?

Furth: Oh, yes, there were. There were a lot more on the South Side that have since closed because of neighborhood changes.

Kowalenko: Right. But I mean were there more than on the north side? Or was it always pretty ...

Furth: No, I think there were more ... more synagogues on the North Side than the South Side. Absolutely.

Kowalenko: So that was always the case.

Furth: Yes.

Kowalenko: So people tended more ... more Jews tended to settle on the North Side than on the South Side. That sound ...

Furth: Well, the South Side communities were very solid. But today, the trend of young people is to go northwest. They're moving out to Buffalo Grove and even further northwest than there.

Kowalenko: That's true. So how about the effect of all of these, these trends on your business? That to me would be

an interesting way to gauge. Although all of the people that come to you are not necessarily people who live in the area, I understand

Furth: No.

Kowalenko: but how does that ...

Furth: We had a very, primarily upscale clientele and very ... a lot of prominent people in the community that we took care of. Including Governor Horner which was one of the largest funerals that we've ever had. It was held in the Armory on the South Side.

Kowalenko: Really?

Furth: Yeah.

Kowalenko: When was that, more or less?

Furth: That had to be in the [thirties]. Yeah. And we had [Bobby Franks] the victim of the Leopold-Loeb ...

Kowalenko: Really?

Furth: Yes. And a lot of very unusual situations. And it's been something that I've cherished.

Kowalenko: Sure. Now, when ... when ... I am not sure but when you are in your business ... do you offer a certain type of service ... I mean reform versus traditional or, you know, is that why certain

people would go ... certain families would go to you rather than to another funeral home?

Furth: Yes.

Kowalenko: Because ... so when you're in the funeral home business and it is a Jewish funeral home, do you then offer a certain ...

Furth: We offer all services to all branches of the religion, all

Kowalenko: Oh, you do.

Furth: Orthodox, conservative, reform. However, the majority of our business is split between conservative and reform.

Kowalenko: Okay.

Furth: A firm like Weinstein Brothers, for instance, has a more traditional funeral service, more orthodox, obviously, than we do.

Kowalenko: Okay.

Furth: But that was ... Their history was that they started out on West Roosevelt Road area before they moved out here to Devon Avenue and then recently built up in Wilmette. But that's where the orthodox community was in Chicago at that time.

Kowalenko: But you would say that most ... And how has that changed over time in terms of people that would come to you for your services? Has it changed? You said that you're pretty evenly split between conservatives ...

Furth: It still is today.

Kowalenko: It's always been that way pretty much?

Furth: Yes.

Kowalenko: Okay.

Furth: We always have had a small orthodox following but it's not like what Weinstein would be doing, for instance.

Kowalenko: Now your business has grown, it seems like. Now you're in three different ...

Furth: Well, we're serving the public out of three

Kowalenko: three different locations.

Furth: locations.

Kowalenko: So, how do you explain that? How ... you know, what changes have happened in terms of ...?

Furth: Well, the reason I did that was so I didn't have to build another one building, to limit myself to one community.

Kowalenko: I see.

Furth: Now I'm able to serve our clientele ...

Kowalenko: Better.

Furth: Yes, surely.

Kowalenko: Now, the services ... I mean the religious services ...

Furth: Yes.

Kowalenko: How would they differ between let's say conservative and reformed?

From your perspective?

Furth: Traditional services have different customs. And it follows pretty much with the three divisions of the religion would follow any way. Your more stringent, disciplined religion, obviously, is orthodox and your more liberal is reform and I think the funeral customs would normally follow that pattern. There're a lot of restrictions that you have in an orthodox or conservative service that reform do not follow, necessarily. I mean, some do. When I say "reform" I ... There's still three branches of reform. There's very traditional, middle and then there's classical or almost ... Classical reform actually evolved out of the World War II practically when it was a way ... a much needed method of saving Jews from leaving Judaism and going into ethical culture and Christian Science and other, other Christian religions. But moreso, they did not leave to go into Catholicism. They left to go into more of the ... what I would call border religions that ... in ... that would be gentile, or non-Jewish, Christian. And it served its purpose well. It kept a lot of people into Judaism. Today, classical reform is very limited. There's probably only three or four classical reform congregations in the country.

Kowalenko: Really? And is Sinai one of them?

Furth: Yes. But Sinai unfortunately has dropped from a

But politics for me has been very interesting ... my father always said to me, "As a business, we take care of both the Republicans and the Democrats ... and please try to stay as neutral as you can."

membership which once was around 2,000. They're down to about 350 members now.

Kowalenko: So ... Well, that's an interesting trend. And why do you think that's happened?

Furth: Well, it happened for two reasons. One, they were still located in Hyde Park and a lot of their members moved out of the South Side region. I think most congregations find that almost seventy or eighty percent of their congregants live very close to their building. And sometimes it was a problem for people to travel back to the South Side. And a lot of Sinai's members moved up to the North Shore suburbs. So, you know, Highland Park, Wilmette, Winnetka. And for them to travel all the way back was difficult. And I think another thing that classical reform is doing is that they're having a tremendous outreach program which is taking care of the mixed marriage situation. And obviously, in the conservative or an orthodox congregation, you won't have [those

types of numbers]. In fact, it's not permitted in the orthodox, obviously. And there's a huge conversion process involved for conservatism. But reform is welcoming and adopting mixed marriages under various rules and regulations and policies of each congregation. ...

Kowalenko: You said you're on the board of Temple Shalom?

Furth: Yes.

Kowalenko: What kinds of ... would that be one of the issues that would come up? To set these kinds of policies of the board?

Furth: Absolutely. The life cycle policy is very strong there. As far as the rabbi's concerned, they will not officiate for any non-member. They stay within their own ... You must have congregational membership. Mixed marriages are not performed. No...

Kowalenko: Do you have stories you can share about Chicago and its politics?

Furth: Oh, absolutely. Being a member of Sinai at that time, [Rabbi] Dr. [Louis] Mann was always being called on ... [and] would be take me along. And I think the most memorable thing that I ever did is he asked me to chauffeur him to the Republican National Convention at the Amphitheatre where he gave the opening benediction. That was when Eisenhower was nominated. And that was just a thrilling event for me because I had a floor pass and I could wander anywhere for the rest of the convention and came back, which I did.

Kowalenko: That must have been great fun!

Furth: But politics for me has been very interesting personally. Because my father always said to me, "As a business, we take care of both the Republicans and the Democrats ... and please try to stay as neutral as you can." And I did for many years and finally I decided nobody would not come to me if I were a Democrat and they were a Republican and visa versa. Living in Hyde Park, we always had a very strong connection to our alderman and we had a string of very fine, ethical, powerful aldermen who looked out for our neighborhood as best they could and ... However, even up until recently with Larry Bloom, it was very difficult for a liberal alderman to get things done in the city council. The city council was always known as a primarily Irish organization and they ran the city. We used to say Hyde Park was more a state of mind than anything else.

Kowalenko: Now what I wanted to talk about and probably a lot of people talk to you about is, life and

death. Because, you know, you are ... well, two things.

Furth: My father was my teacher. And he was always looked upon in the business industry here as one of the most ethical professional people and was admired, respected by everybody. Arranging funerals can ... not to be flippant about it. You can train a chimpanzee to arrange a funeral, to send a car and do the other things. Actually, the interest and the emphasis that he taught was trying to determine what people's needs were: emotionally. You're always dealing ... In any family cycle event, there's always situations that come up where possibly there's a division in the family. People aren't talking to each other. This is a traumatic situation.

And the old school funeral directors, or undertakers as they were known in those days, did not have the training or the background to do any personal counseling even on a minor basis, or to truly recognize some of the people's emotional needs. And my father's generation started to bring that training into view so that there was more emphasis on understanding what a family's needs were rather than emphasizing a funeral ceremony, rites, caskets involved and cemeteries. In fact, we still believe that the funeral service itself is the most important thing and all the other trimmings are simply a reflection of the way people live.

To be able to recognize and be sensitive to these issues that we're called upon, as I'm called upon frequently ... and to be able to take a family through two or three days of a difficult time, for me is a challenge which I absolutely love. □

About the Society

What We Are

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society was founded in 1977 and is in part an outgrowth of local Jewish participation in the American Bicentennial Celebrations of 1976. Muriel Robin was the founding president. It has as its purpose the discovery, preservation and dissemination of information concerning the Jewish experience in the Chicago area.

What We Do

The Society seeks out, collects and preserves appropriate written, spoken and photographic records; publishes historical information; holds public meetings at which various aspects of Chicago Jewish history are treated; mounts appropriate exhibits; and offers tours of Jewish historical sites.

Minsky Fund

The Doris Minsky Memorial Fund, established in memory of one of the Society's founders and longtime leaders, seeks to publish annually a monograph on an aspect of Chicago area Jewish history. Members may receive a copy of each monograph as it is published. Manuscripts may be submitted and contributions to the Fund are welcome at any time.

Membership

Membership in the Society includes a subscription to *Chicago Jewish History*, each monograph published by the Doris Minsky Memorial Fund as it appears, discounts on Society tours and at the Spertus Museum Store, and the opportunity to learn and inform others concerning Chicago Jewish history and its preservation. Membership in the Society is open to all interested persons and organizations.

Dues Structure

Membership runs on a calendar year, from January through December. New members joining after July 1 are given an initial membership through December of the following year. The following dues schedule applies to categories indicated:

Regular Membership.....	\$25
Family Membership.....	\$35
Society Patron.....	\$50
Society Sponsor.....	\$100
Senior Citizen Membership.....	\$15
Student Membership.....	\$15
Synagogue or Organization.....	\$25
Life Membership.....	\$1000

Checks should be made payable to the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. Dues are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

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Chicago Jewish History

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