

Look to the rock from which you were hewn
הביטו אל-צור חצבתם



CHICAGO JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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CHICAGO JEWISH *History*

Moe Berg in Chicago:

Secret Hero of World War II, Allied Spy, Trained Attorney, Advanced Physicist and Master Linguist; Moe Berg Also Played for Chicago White Sox and Won Fleeting Popularity in Chicago Jewish Community

By Walter Roth

In *The Catcher Was a Spy* journalist Nicholas Dawidoff traces the enigmatic life of Moe Berg, a Jewish baseball player, master linguist, amateur physicist, Columbia Law School graduate and United States spy during World War II. Berg's accomplishments ought to make him a legend but he is best remembered for the years he spent as a mediocre back-up catcher in the major leagues. He is still perhaps best-known as "the guy who was fluent in seven languages and couldn't hit in any of them." Dawidoff's book does a masterful job of retelling Berg's life in great detail; in its review of the whole of Berg's life, however, it gives short attention to the years that Berg spent as a Chicagoan, a White Sox player and, in his time, one of the few Jewish players in all of major league baseball.

The story that Dawidoff spins in *The Catcher Was a Spy* is a fascinating one of a man too-gifted to make his life a success. Even as Berg pursued his baseball career, he pursued various courses of study but was unable to settle on any single profession despite having so many from which to select.

The Stuff of which Legends are Made

One pursuit did stand out for him, however, the kind of pursuit of which legends are made: Berg had toured Japan with Babe Ruth and other American ball players in the 1930s and had taken secret films of Tokyo that were later said to have been useful to U.S. intelligence during World War II. Through the enterprise, he came to know Nelson Rockefeller and William "Wild Bill" Donovan who

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Oral History Collection Transferred

*Tapes and Transcripts
from Society Project to
be Presented to Asher*

Sid Sorkin, chair of the Society's oral history project, and Walter Roth, Society President, have announced that the Society will turn over its archive of oral history tapes and transcripts to the Asher Library of the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies. The collection will remain intact but will now be more

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- Book Donated to Archive Records Hart Schaffner Marx Settlement
- Oral History Excerpt of Marion Ascoli, Daughter of Julius Rosenwald
- Society Names Winner of Minsky Award Competition

President's Column

Discovering a bit of history, even an apparently insignificant and obscure bit, is always a thrill.



Walter Roth

Such an event occurred to me several weeks ago when our Past President, Norman Schwartz and I attended the opening reception of the exhibition, "The Grand American Avenue: 1850-

1920" at the Harold Washington Library Center.

The exhibition examines the rise and eventual decline of six prestigious avenues in the development of American cities, including Prairie Avenue in Chicago. After the great fire, many of Chicago's wealthiest families took up residence along Prairie Avenue on the near south side of Chicago near the shores of Lake Michigan.

As a feature of the opening program, Mary Alice Molloy presented a dynamic lecture entitled "Sorrows and Successes in the Melting Pot: Immigrants on Prairie." She recounted the names of wealthy families who lived on Prairie Avenue: the Marshalls, the Armours, and the Pullmans, among others. Only a few wealthy Jewish families were included. The sisters of Michael Reese and Levi Meyer, a well-known attorney for industry, lived there as well.

Molloy then noted that on July 26, 1894, there occurred an event that disturbed the tranquil atmosphere of Prairie Avenue. A Jewish male, she

stated, was arrested for throwing paving stones at the palatial home of George Pullman at 1729 S. Prairie Avenue.

As far as I can tell, no historian -- local or national -- has ever mentioned this incident. My colleague in research, President Norman Schwartz, and I hastened to the libraries the next day to find evidence of the event.

We found that the *Chicago Tribune* of July 26 featured the event in a rather lengthy story. It identified the stone thrower as one Simon Reskin, and began the story as follows:

A 35-year old Russian Jew, Simon Reskin, repulsive and ignorant enough to pass for an Anarchist, created a sensation at 8:00 o'clock yesterday morning by bombarding the private residence of George Pullman with paving stones. ...

Quickly arrested, he was taken to the Morrison Street Police Station where a *Tribune* reporter interviewed him. The report continues:

He managed to say he was a Russian, and had been in the country six years. The reason he threw the stones was that he did not want to see Pullman so rich when he, himself, was starving. When asked if he was an Anarchist, he seemed somewhat amused, and said he was not. As well as one could judge, making allowances for the man's ignorance of the English language, his talk was incoherent and he was insane."

This hitherto unpublicized incident occurred just as the great Pullman

strike was ending. There were federal troops in Chicago to break up the strike, Eugene V. Debs, the union leader, was in jail, and the workers appeared defeated.

As to the fate of Simon Reskin, research has yielded only a few clues. The few Jewish papers of the time do not seem to mention the event. Since George Pullman was out of the city for security reasons at the time, Reskin was charged only with malicious mischief.

The record of the actual court hearing has not been found, but census records for Chicago indicate that a Simon Reskin was incarcerated in the Cook County Insane Asylum at the turn of the century.

The Reskin incident certainly seems inconsequential on its own terms, but it serves as an interesting footnote to two larger stories. In the story of the Pullman strike, it helps indicate the way in which the anger of workers and disenfranchised individuals at the strike's forced conclusion did not dissipate. It may have been possible to call in troops and break up the strike, but it was not possible to heal the anger and frustration that gave birth to and was reinforced by the strike.

In the story of Eastern European immigrants of the day, the Reskin incident shows again the sort of prejudice such immigrants endured. He was depicted in the newspaper account as insane and foreign, as an "idiotic looking man with black hair, dark complexion and stubby black beard." He may indeed have appeared as such, but so too, no doubt, did a number of other recent immigrants.

Whatever Reskin hoped to accomplish with his demonstration, it is clear he was a stranger in a land that had no way to make sense of him. □

Society Announces Summer Tours

Society Board member and director of the Tours Committee Leah Axelrod has announced the schedule for this summer's series of tours of sites of

interest in the region around Jewish Chicago.

There are three different tours scheduled: a walking tour of the Chicago Loop on July 9, a tour of Chicago's Near Northside on July 23, and a day trip to Ligonier and South

Bend, Indiana on August 13.

In each of the past several years, the tours have filled up quickly so Axelrod recommends that you ought to make your reservations as early as possible. You can do so by calling her at (708) 432-7003. □

Oral History

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readily accessible to a greater number of people.

The oral history project has been one of the central ongoing projects of the Society ever since it was founded in 1977.

According to Sorkin, there are 150 separate oral histories in the collection, making it an unusual and invaluable resource for those interested in the history of Jewish Chicago.

So far, only 65 of those oral histories have been transcribed, but even the ones that remain exclusively on audio tape are potentially useful to scholars and individuals curious about local history.

The oral histories have been taken by Society members from distinguished Jewish Chicagoans ranging from Jewish community activists to successful business figures to celebrities from the world of sports or entertainment.

The idea behind an oral history is not that it reveals a "truth" otherwise lost, but rather that it records one individual's remembrance of his or her life and situation.

The oral history is only one piece in a larger history, but it would be difficult to imagine writing that larger history without oral history to draw upon. Oral histories often succeed in preserving stories and random details of every day life that otherwise do not make it into official history and wind up being forgotten.

"We cannot know what future historians will do with the material that we collect through the oral history project, but we know that we are making possible histories that would otherwise never be written," Roth said.

"Oral histories are a way of recording the stories and memories that too often wind up getting told and retold without ever getting written down."

Once the collection is available through Asher Library, historians and interested individuals will be able to examine pieces of it by going to the Asher Library during its operating

hours. Since the library is open six days a week, the material will be far more accessible than it has been.

In addition, with the resources of Asher Library and in its proximity to the Chicago Jewish Archives, housed separately at the Spertus Institute, the collection will be part of an unprecedented body of material on Chicago Jewish history.

While the collection will now be housed outside of the Society office, the Society will nevertheless continue the oral history project. We have an ever-growing list of individuals from whom we would like to take oral histories.

We are also constantly on the lookout for volunteers to assist in taking those oral histories, transcribing them, and helping to raise funds that will permit us to process them. Anyone interested in helping out should contact either Mr. Sorkin or the Society office at (312) 663-5634.

With the assistance of consultant Emma Kowalenko, the Society has taken a number of new oral histories already this year and has embarked on an ambitious program of cataloguing and indexing the oral histories by subject and topic.

The Society now has six completed, transcribed, corrected, and indexed oral histories done in such a way as to be listed in reference materials available nationwide.

Readers of *Chicago Jewish History* will recognize the oral history collection as the source for the oral history excerpts that we run in each of our issues.

[This issue's excerpt is with Marion Ascoli, daughter of Sears and Roebuck chairman Julius Rosenwald and begins on page 13.]

We intend to continue running such excerpts and hope that the increased accessibility of the collection will inspire more readers to examine the entire interviews from which the excerpts are taken.

What's more, we welcome correspondance responding to, correcting or amplifying the material that we do publish. □

Bea Kraus Announced as Minsky Winner

The Society is pleased to announce that Bea Kraus, a freelance writer from Skokie, is the winner of the 1995 Doris Minsky Memorial Fund.

Kraus's monograph, an historical review of cantors in the Chicago area, is entitled *The Hazzanut; Sounds of Jewish Chicago*. It weaves anecdotes, interviews, and broad research to bring together an unprecedented record of cantorial practice in Chicago.

Kraus demonstrates in her writing not only that she understands the cantorial art, but also that she appreciates it. She punctuates much of her research with asides about the beauty of the music she describes.

Kraus will officially receive her award at the Society's annual meeting this summer. Her monograph will be published as the third number in the Minsky Manuscript run and will be distributed free of charge to all Society members.

The Doris Minsky Memorial Fund was established in memory of one of the Society's founding members and a longtime member of our board of directors. It is awarded annually to a previously unpublished manuscript that the competition judges deem to be a fresh contribution to the study of Chicago's Jewish history.

The award carries with a prize of \$1000 as well as publication. The first number in the publication series proved so popular that the Society needed to order a second print run in order to meet demand. People interested in submitting entries for the coming year should be on the lookout for announcement of competition details in *Chicago Jewish History*.

Previous winners include Morris Springer for *The Cheyder, the Yeshiva and I*, Eva Gross for *Memories of the Manor*, Beatrice Michaels Shapiro for *Memories of Jewish Lawndale*, and Dr. Carolyn Eastwood for *Chicago's Jewish Street Peddlers*. □

Berg

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proposed to him that he consider other espionage missions. Berg agreed and wound up an important U.S. spy.

Berg's most remarkable mission came late in the war around the time U.S. strategic leaders determined that atomic weapons could theoretically play a significant role in the outcome of the war. They became concerned that German scientists might be surpassing the American scientists involved in the Manhattan Project.

A Gun-toting Physics Student

Berg, always a restless mind, had studied modern physics in his spare time. He also spoke German fluently and, as a reasonably famous American athlete, enjoyed a kind of international *carte blanche* that few other would-be spies could match. So, Berg seemed the perfect operative to determine the status of the German atomic project.

In 1944 Berg was sent to Switzerland to hear a lecture by Werner Heisenberg, the German counterpart to Manhattan Project leader Robert Oppenheimer. He was armed with a gun and his instructions were simple: if Heisenberg seemed to be on target in his work (according to the most developed U.S. understanding of physics) Berg was supposed to assassinate him on the spot.

Heisenberg Off-base

The concept of physics Heisenberg expressed at the Swiss lecture convinced Berg that he was off-base in his approach. Berg left the gun in his pocket and filed his report to the United States. Berg was correct in his determination; the Germans were never close to being able to manufacture an atomic bomb.

Note about the Photographer:

George Brace has been a Chicago area photographer for more than 65 years. He served as the official team photographer of the Chicago Cubs from 1929-1948 and often took photographs of other teams' players as well. He has a file of 30,000 photographs, 11,000 of which he took himself. Anyone interested in ordering photos should write to P.O. Box 41163, Chicago, IL 60641.

Despite such remarkable service, Berg exhibited a troubling blindness. Even though he was in Europe at the end of the War and was a potential witness to the horrors of the Nazi regime, he seems never to have commented on the Holocaust. His voluminous correspondence home does not mention it at all.

An Erratic Genius

Also, despite his command of so many different languages and scientific disciplines, he was disturbingly erratic in his interests and his behavior. Since spy work calls both for brilliance and for stability, Berg didn't last with the C.I.A. Toward the end of his life, Berg became a drifter and a "sponger" off of his friends. He died of heart disease in 1972, his contributions to spy work and baseball largely forgotten.

Dawidoff's book is the most significant work so far in the retelling of Berg's story. *The Catcher Was a Spy*

He was armed with a gun and his instructions were simple: if Heisenberg seemed to be on target in his work (according to the most developed U.S. understanding of physics) Berg was supposed to assassinate him on the spot.

recounts in engrossing detail the way in which Berg could accomplish such astonishing work at the same time as he could manage to be blind to his

own career and to the suffering of Jews in Europe.

The story of Berg's career in Chicago, while nowhere near as dramatic as his subsequent career, has still not been told in great detail.

The Urge to Fit In

Berg was raised in a predominantly Christian neighborhood in Newark, New Jersey. His father, Bernard, was a pharmacist who had come from Kippinya, a Ukrainian shtetl, in 1894.

Bernard knew several languages fluently even before he settled in America and was determined shed the remainder of his old-world "anachronisms." He wanted his family to meld into American culture and he forbade speaking Yiddish at home.

Moe became perhaps more of an American than his father would have wanted. He distinguished himself early as a playground legend at baseball and attracted the notice of coaches and scouts. His father lamented the energy that might have gone into helping out at the family pharmacy; Bernard supposedly refused to see Moe play baseball even after Moe became a major leaguer.

Berg's baseball skills helped earn him a scholarship to Princeton, a considerable feat for a Jewish student at the time. At Princeton, he was a superb shortstop, with

a team acclaimed the greatest in school history. It won 19 games in a row, a record that stood for many years.

After he graduated in 1923, Princeton offered Berg a teaching position, but he declined it in order to study languages at the Sorbonne in Paris.

Professional Baseball Calls

When he received an offer from the Brooklyn Dodgers, however, he decided to sign with them and try to continue his study of languages in this country. In 1925 he entered Columbia Law School even though he was still on the Dodger's roster.

In 1926 he became a player with the Chicago White Sox, a team whose fortunes had sagged after the infamous 1919 "Black Sox" World Series scandal and the expulsion of charismatic stars such as "Shoeless" Joe Jackson and Buck Weaver.

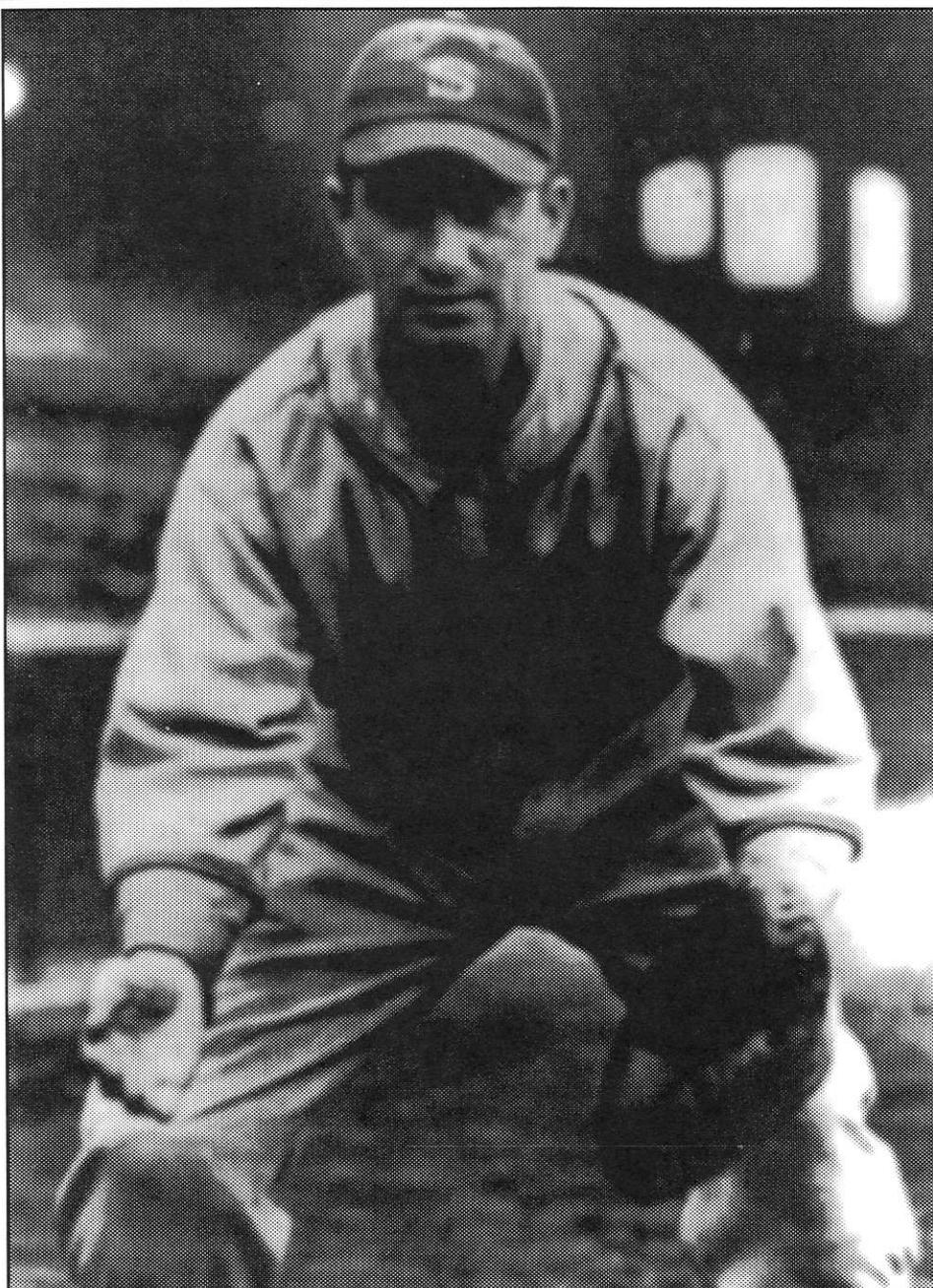
Berg immediately antagonized the Chicago owner, Charles Comiskey, and many Chicago fans and sports writers by announcing that he would skip spring training and the first two months of the regular season so that he could complete his first year of law school.

An Unpopular Start

"It was quite a disappointment to Manager Collins, who had counted upon Berg to handle the shortstop position when the season opened," wrote the *Chicago Tribune*. Berg was, "intent upon being an attorney and wants to finish his law education now so he can practice to some extent in the winter while he is playing and then have an established profession when the time comes that he must quit the game."

The *Tribune* comment notwithstanding, Berg's law school education probably represented a compromise with his father; the son would continue to play baseball, but not at the expense of his education.

Still, like many of Berg's later actions, it was a curious decision. He was undermining his position as a major league shortstop for the White Sox at the very



Moe Berg as a White Sox Catcher, circa 1927

Photograph courtesy of George Brace

beginning of his major league career.

Berg did go to law school and joined the team on May 28, 1926, as a utility shortstop. He played infrequently in his first year and when he did play the press often made fun of him.

Butt of a Number of Jokes

In a game against St. Louis, the White Sox lost as a result of a Berg fielding error. The newspaper comment ran, "our aspiring barrister Moe Berg was guilty of one mistake. He could never convince any jury of laymen that it wasn't his fault."

He played in 41 games in the 1926 season and

batted an unimpressive .221. His one moment of fame came in the City Series, the best of seven post-season series of exhibition games the White Sox played with the Cubs. In the seventh game, Berg's double off the left field wall in Wrigley field drove in the series-winning run for the White Sox.

Tribune columnist Irving Vaughn sarcastically commented, "Moe Berg isn't much of a hitter, but this was a game where *a decorum* meant over \$300 per individual, so Moe hit one."

A New Season: A New Position

Berg reported late again in 1927, after lengthy arguments with Comiskey. When he did report in May, 1927, he sat on the bench.

In August of that year, Berg switched positions, moving from shortstop to catcher. As Dawidoff reports, Ray Schalk, the White Sox manager and catcher, broke a finger. A few days later the back-up catcher was injured as well. The team was out of catchers and Schalk, in despair, looked for help.

In the White Sox dugout, "Schalk heard a low, measured voice say, 'You've got a big league catcher sitting right here!'" The voice was Berg's.

Berg later claimed he had been referring to Earl Sheely, a utility first baseman. Schalk misunderstood, however, and thought Berg was volunteering to catch himself. "All right, Berg, go in there," Schalk said.

A Rookie Catcher

Berg had never caught in the big leagues before. As he donned his gear, he is supposed to have said, "If the worst happens, kindly deliver the body to Newark."

But Berg proved an immediate success. He became a favorite of the White Sox pitchers, particularly Ted Lyons, a future Hall of Famer with an array of different pitches. In one particular game against the New York Yankees, -- not merely the best baseball team of 1927, one led by Babe Ruth at the peak of his career, but perhaps the best team of all time -- the White Sox won 6-3 with Lyons pitching and Berg catching.

Berg made the defensive play of the game when he scooped up a throw from the outfield and tagged out the New York player sliding into home plate. Led by Lyons, the White Sox converged on their new catcher. "He went forward like a shortstop and picked up the half hop," said Lyons. "He caught a wonderful game and handled himself like an old-timer."

Columnist Westbrook Pegler wrote of Berg in the *Tribune*, "The distinguished Korean philologist confessed he was secretly a catcher at the time instead of a shortstop, as everyone thought him. He has been catching very nicely and Mr. Schalk feels faint stirrings of hope that some of his other players will confess to a secret accomplishment, preferably hitting."

Focus on Catching

Berg now decided that catching was his calling, and in early 1928 he obtained a leave of absence from Columbia University Law School for the balance of the year. He joined the White Sox for spring training in Shreveport. Starting the season on the bench, Berg became the regular White Sox catcher by mid-season.

He had lost track of the number of outs and the runner at third raced home with the winning run. The White Sox pitcher, Tommy Thomas, never tired of telling Berg, "You can speak a dozen languages, but you can't count to three." Of errors such as this one, legends are made.

A *Tribune* columnist compared Berg to Gabby Hartnett, the great Cub catcher.

Hartnett, he said, was the harder hitter, but both, "...are nifty dressers and single. ... the single big

difference between the two boys is that Hartnett drives one of the most costly of domestic cars, while Berg still clings to his boyish love for the bicycle.

"He can be seen every morning, rain or shine, in the vicinity of 53rd Street and Hyde Park Boulevard. Berg speaks from seven to twenty-one languages, while Gabby speaks but one -- rock-ribbed English."

Berg resided at the Del Prado Hotel on Chicago's South Side where many of the out-of-town ballplayers lived.

A Character is Born

Berg was obviously becoming popular with the press and the Chicago fans. On a poor team mired in the second division, he was a "character," a scholar who read literature (in foreign languages, no less) between innings. He was also a handsome man with great wit. In the City Series of 1928, the Cubs won 4-3 but Berg, who caught every game for the White Sox, batted .333.

Chicago Jews were obviously proud of having a Jew in the line-up of the White Sox. Many oldsters remember him, though often with vague recollections. It seems Berg was an "outsider" to the Chicago Jewish community. There appears to have been no special treatment of him in the Chicago Jewish press.

Dawidoff reports that Chicago fans raised over \$25,000 for a "Berg Day" at Comiskey Park, only to have it turned down by Berg. It was rumored in the fall

of 1928 that the New York Yankees, eager to have a Jewish player in their line-up, had proposed a trade for Berg.

There was no trade to the Yankees. Instead, Berg had trouble in law school during his last year at Columbia. He failed Evidence and did not graduate with the class of 1929. He did manage to pass the New York State bar exam later that spring.

Trouble Starts Again

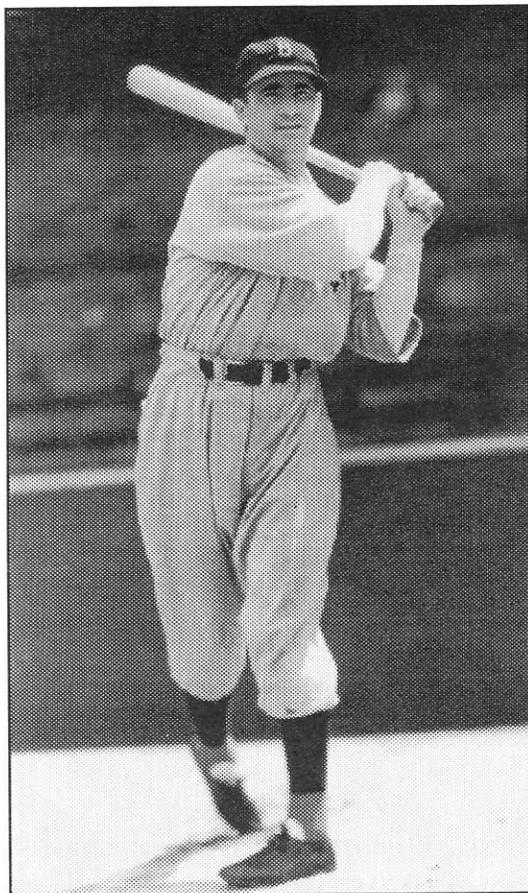
The 1929 season was a difficult one for Berg, whose mind was often elsewhere. On September 7, Berg caught a foul pop-up with a runner on third, the score tied at one, and one out. After catching the ball, he threw it toward the pitcher's mound and began heading for his dugout. He had lost track of the number of outs and the runner at third raced home with the winning run.

The White Sox pitcher of that day, Tommy Thomas, never tired of telling Berg, "You can speak a dozen languages, but you can't count to three." Of errors such as this one, legends are made. Berg's "weirdness" was reinforced.

Still, Berg batted a respectable .288 for the season and was considered a fine defensive catcher.

The Veteran Gets Along

In New York, Moe repeated his Evidence course,



Berg as a Boston Brave, middle 1930s
Photograph courtesy of George Brace

passed it this time, and received his LLB on February 26, 1930. He was now a veteran on the White Sox and the team's starting catcher. While he was considered aloof and preoccupied because of his literary pursuits, he seems still to have enjoyed good relationships with a number of

players, particularly Ted Lyons.

On April 6, 1930, as the White Sox were travelling north from spring training, Berg suffered a serious injury in an exhibition game in Little Rock, Arkansas. While rounding first base, he caught his spikes in the turf and felt a sharp pain in his knee.

He soon left the team altogether without informing team officials where he was headed. On May 2, 1930, a notice appeared in the *Tribune*, "If anybody in Chicago knows how Moe Berg, the first string catcher now laid up in Chicago, is getting along will they please communicate with the ballclub."

AWOL

Berg, who had apparently headed east to be with his brother, a doctor, soon returned to Chicago. His career with the White Sox was just about over, however. His torn ligament was healing, but it would obviously never be strong enough again for the rigors of squatting as a catcher every day behind home plate.

He did play in a few games for the White Sox in 1930 and was put on waivers in April, 1931, at the start of the next season. The Cleveland Indians promptly claimed him. That began the final phase of his big-league career. He lasted several years longer in the major leagues as a journeyman back-up catcher before retiring into the exotic career that Dawidoff uncovers.

Remembered Fondly by Sportswriters

Even after Berg left Chicago, he continued to be remembered fondly. Jerome Holtzman of the *Tribune* and Ira Berkow of *The New York Times* (a Chicago native himself) were two of Berg's favorites. Both wrote regularly about him after his career was over; his unusual intelligence and education made him good copy even when he wasn't playing.

Berg's final days were unhappy ones. After his death he was cremated and buried in Newark. A few years later, his sister Ethel dug up the urn, flew to Israel and, with the assistance of an anonymous Rabbi, reinterred his ashes on a mountain in Jerusalem. The actual place of burial for his ashes is unknown.

There is something appropriate about Berg's ashes being in the Holy Land but lost at the same time. Always a mystery, usually estranged from the Jewish people, he was nevertheless a remarkable man who led a remarkable life. Dawidoff's book goes a long way toward making it possible to understand the whole of his life as well as toward appreciating the early experiences he had as a Jewish baseball player in Chicago.

Walter Roth is the President of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society.

Book Recounts History of Hart Schaffner and Marx Labor Dispute and Peace

Gift from Sol Brandzel Enriches Chicago Jewish Archives and Makes Possible Retelling of Labor Settlement

By Norman Schwartz

In 1910 in Chicago, thousands of largely immigrant clothing workers went on strike against Hart Schaffner and Marx, one of the nation's largest manufacturers of men's clothing. The bitter four-month work stoppage pitted a predominantly Jewish labor force against a Jewish-owned industrial giant and was not entirely free of attitudinal and other differences which had for many years separated earlier-arriving "German" Jews from the masses of more-recently-arrived "Eastern European" Jews.

Recently the Chicago Jewish Archives were enriched by a gift from Sol Brandzel of a slender volume which chronicles the agreement which ended that strike and reflects upon the unusual results of that agreement.

The agreement not only produced an unparalleled peace for the clothing industry, but it also made labor history by pointing the way to improved labor relations throughout the United States.

The Society is indebted yet again to Mr. Brandzel, who is a Society founder and past officer as well as an honored community leader. He was long the distinguished counsel and officer of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, successor to the original striking union, the United Garment Workers.

The Union is now known as the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union. Merger discussions are currently taking place between the ACTWU and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.

Entitled *The Hart Schaffner and Marx Labor Agreement: Industrial Law in the Clothing Industry*, the volume was compiled in 1920 by Earl Dean Howard, a

Northwestern University professor who served for many years both as director of labor for Hart Schaffner and Marx and also as head of the Board of Labor Managers for the Clothing Industry. Both positions were created as outgrowths of the strike.

Included in the compilation are the text of the original arbitration agreement, developments in labor relations in the ten years thereafter, and an essay on the epoch-making effects of the settlement.

Most interesting for the general reader are two "popular" articles, written by a noted journalist of the time, which trace the history of the strike and discuss the nature of the settlement and its broad effects upon American labor-management relations.

These articles as well as others in the volume emphasize that the settlement involved an agreement containing principles which are still valid today. One learns that "...this experiment has been tried under *ideal* conditions -- *idealistic* employers, *conscientious* and *capable* leaders, *wise* and *experienced* administrators and arbitrators..."

The bitter four-month work stoppage pitted a predominantly Jewish labor force against a Jewish-owned industrial giant and was not entirely free of tensions which had for many years separated "German" Jews from the masses of "Eastern European" Jews.

The main features of the agreement were dealing with the union as an equal in settling problems -- the shop council plan for timely resolution of grievances and continuous negotiation, the creation of a Trade Board as a

primary vehicle for adjusting grievances, and the establishment of a Board of Arbitration which "shall have full and final jurisdiction over all matters arising under this agreement and its decisions thereupon shall be conclusive."

The book dwells upon several individuals who were instrumental in developing this agreement. It writes of Joseph Schaffner of Hart Schaffner and Marx, "When the great strike began in 1910 it nearly broke his heart. It seemed the height of ingratitude on the part of the workers. But unlike many employers who have to face the problem, he did not become blindly angry and assume that he was all right and the workers all wrong."

It describes Sidney Hillman as a natural born leader and writes that he "developed a wonderful influence over all who came in contact with him on account of his high ideals, his patience under trying circumstances, and his indomitable faith in the ultimate success of right method. He has a quality that is even more remarkable. That is his absolute integrity."

Others singled out included John E. Williams, first chairman of Hart Schaffner and Marx Board of Arbitration, 1912-1919; Clarence Darrow, appointed by the Joint Board of the local unions to the Arbitration Board; Carl Meyer, prominent attorney of the firm of Mayer, Meyer, Austrian and Platt, appointed by the company to the Arbitration Board; James Mullenbach, acting supervisor of the United Charities, chosen as first chairman of the Trade Board; Earl Dean Howard, the compiler earlier referred to and a Professor of Economics in the College of the Liberal Arts and Professor of Banking and Finance in the School of Commerce of Northwestern University.

These remarkable men, operating under an agreement forged with difficulty but with faith in its ultimate value, made this pact work and serve as a model for agreements across the country. To them we owe a debt of gratitude.

The reasoned tone of the agreement is apparent from its preamble:

On the part of the employer it is the intention and expectation that this compact of peace will result in the establishment and maintenance of a high order of discipline and efficiency by the willing co-operation of union and workers rather than by the old method of surveillance and coercion...

On the part of the union it is the intention and expectation that this compact will, with the co-operation of the employer, operate in such a way as to maintain, strengthen and solidify its organization, so that it may be strong enough and efficient enough

to co-operate as described in the preceding paragraph...

On the part of the workers it is the intention and expectation that they pass from the status of wage servants, with no claim on the employer save his economic need, to that of self-respecting parties to an agreement which they have had an equal part in making.

The parties to the pact realize that the interests sought to be reconciled herein will tend to pull apart, but they enter into it in the faith that by the exercise of the co-operative and constructive spirit it will be possible to bring and keep them together.

One should remember some of the conditions prevalent for workers at this time: They worked a 54-hour week, one that was eventually reduced to 44 in 1919. Owners held strong

objections to the idea of a closed shop in which all employees were required to be union members; eventually the two sides settled on the idea of a preferential shop. Workers were given insufficient notice of when they would be required to work overtime. And children were often mistreated in the workplace.

All the fine details of this agreement are available in the copy at the Chicago Jewish Archives on the third floor of the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies. Those interested in reading through the entire work will find a careful record of a dispute that helped reshape the modern work place.

The book is a remarkable document. It shows what can be done by people of high purpose and will. □

Former Chicagoan Identifies Faces in Watenmaker Photo

Edith Wanamaker has written to identify the individuals in a photograph showing her father and ten other individuals.

We mistakenly wrote the original name of her family as "Wantamaker" when it ought to have been Watenmaker.

In addition, Wanamaker pointed out

The great strike nearly broke Joseph Schaffner's heart. It seemed the height of ingratitude on the part of the workers. But unlike many employers who have to face the problem, he did not become blindly angry and assume that he was all right and the workers all wrong.

that we ought to have spelled "Untersteitzung" as Unterstutzung. Maurice Watenmaker was an officer in the Nickolaever Unterstutzung Verein before he moved to Los Angeles in 1948.

With the assistance of Alex Addison, Wanamaker was able to identify all eleven figures in the photo.

They include Hyman and Dora Diamond, Joseph Berg and his wife, Hyman and Sonya Parker, Alex and Pauline Addison, Herman Stein and his wife, and Maurice Watenmaker.

Maurice's wife Molly is not included in the photograph.

As always, we are grateful for any assistance readers and members can offer us in answering questions out of the past.

We invite corrections whenever you are able to identify errors we have made.

We also invite you to submit photographs or other artifacts that conjure up Chicago's Jewish past but raise some questions they are unable to answer. □

Letters:

Portrait of Rabbi Starr an Injustice to a Great Teacher

Dear Mr. Roth,

This letter is in reaction to "The Chayder, the Yeshiva and I," in the *Doris Minsky Memorial Fund Publication, No. 2* of your organization. I must say that I was appalled by the caricature in that article of one of the great teachers of the Hebrew Theological College, Rabbi Selig Starr, of blessed memory.

I think that someone who taught at that institution for more than 50 years, and was instrumental in molding the minds and characters of some of the finest Rabbis in the country, deserves better.

The author of the article, a former student at the college, sums up Rabbi Starr as an abrasive teacher who was insensitive to the feelings of his students and whom, without naming any names or offering any proof, he accuses of causing the loss to the rabbinate of many souls who otherwise "might have been saved."

The author seems to forget that Hebrew Theological College was a *college* and not a high school or grade school. There were two parts to the institution, the *Eits Chaim* or pre-college division, and the Rabbinic Department. Rabbi Starr taught in the latter division.

Rabbi Starr took his teaching seriously and expected his students to have the same serious attitude towards their studies.

The author admits that even before entering Rabbi Starr's class he had become an apathetic student "ill motivated to continue Talmudic study" and that his preparation of his lessons was "at the most half-hearted." One can be sure that this did not escape Rabbi Starr, who was one of the sharpest and most insightful teachers I have ever encountered.

I think that it is wrong to emphasize examples of impatience with individuals who were not serious students and lacked either the will or the ability to engage in intensive Talmud study, as rightly could be expected of a rabbinic student.

Rabbi Starr was a master teacher. Ask any of the rabbis who received *Smicha* at the college while he was on the faculty, and they are likely to say that it was Rabbi Starr more than anyone else who taught them how to analyze a Talmudic text.

Similarly, many learned lay leaders who did not complete the rabbinic program at the Yeshiva but make Talmud study a regular part of their lives have acknowledged their indebtedness to Rabbi Starr for giving them a thorough grounding in that subject.

He drilled into his pupils the principle that the first step in mastering a text is to know what you know and what you don't know. He taught us not to be Charlie McCartheys, parroting what we have read or heard from others but not understanding what we say. He trained us to be exact in our reasoning and to answer questions directly rather than evasively.

I recall, for example, how he would express strong disapproval when a student would begin with the words, "It depends," in answering a question for which there was a plain answer.

Rabbi Starr was also strong on ethics. He would often quote comments of our great sages concerning how one should conduct his life. One of these sayings which has remained with me and is especially apt in our times was the observation that it is possible to slay with the word no less effectively than with the sword.

Also indelibly imprinted in my mind is the emphasis he placed on loving our parents because they are our parents and for no other reason.

Rabbi Starr, himself a holder of a master's degree in history from the University of Chicago, extolled for his students the importance of a secular

education.

He told us how amazed and impressed he was when his professor at the University admitted that he did not know the answer to a question posed by a student. This taught us that even scholars are not expected to know everything and that we should not pretend to know what we do not know.

He also preached that one cannot satisfactorily lead a cloistered life because at some point he will have to enter society, and if he is not prepared for it, he will either give up his religion or become mad. He said that this was the fate of many Europeans who, for one reason or another, left the ghetto life and came to America.

Rabbi Starr was a monumental individual who taught his students so much about life and learning. It is sad that the author of the article in your publication did not use his impressive writing skills to share with his readers the instructive elements he must have absorbed from his years as a student of Rabbi Starr's instead of concentrating on the negative.

-- Sinclair Kossoff

Information Request: Society Seeks Photos and Film Footage for Video History Effort

As part of our ongoing project to produce a video history of the Jews of Chicago, the Society seeks material that we might be able to incorporate into the scenario we have sketched.

We are most interested in film footage of public events taken any time before the 1960s.

We might be interested in film footage of more private events within the Jewish community as well as still photos of public events.

Anyone with material that might be useful for the project should contact project director Beverly Seigel at (312) 478-9290. □

Alderman Burt Natarus Talks of Jews in City Council and Old-Style Chicago Politics

Forty-second Ward Alderman Burton Natarus spoke before an open meeting of the Society on February 5 and entertained a capacity crowd at Temple Shalom.

Natarus prides himself on being an old-school politician, one who puts his constituents' needs above all else. He also tells a good story. Although the nominal subject of his talk was Jews in Chicago politics, he ranged freely across his experiences serving on City Council under seven different mayors.

In the course of his talk he recounted his memories of Jewish aldermen from a handful of wards in the city. There are Jewish aldermen in the 50th Ward (Bernard Stone), the 46th (Helen Schiller), and, until recently, the 43rd (Edwin Eisendrath) and the 5th (Lawrence Bloom).

Natarus also demonstrated his solid grasp of the particulars of government. When asked a question from the audience about city plans for the creation of a new light-rail transit system, he related the manner in which he had proved a serious thorn in the side of city planners. He was able to describe three separate proposed layouts for the system and then able to assess the advantages and disadvantages for his constituency under each one.

He also proved he remembered the politicians who had helped develop the successful career he has had. He paid respect to former Cook County Board President George Dunne, one of his early mentors.

He also acknowledged Judge Abraham Lincoln Marovitz who was in the crowd as one his listeners. On seeing Marovitz seated before him, he confessed he felt uncomfortable telling a story that Marovitz knew so much better.

[Marovitz in fact has given a talk

before the Society on the history of Jews in Chicago politics.]

But most of all, Natarus demonstrated that he has the thick skin that a dedicated Chicago politician needs in order to survive. He recounted his dedication to the business of governance even before he won the aldermanic seat.

As he told it, he made himself useful to the political organization of his ward. He learned the way that services are delivered to the ward's constituents. And he made certain that he was never in a position of owing someone else a political favor.

He derided newer model politicians who manage to cultivate smooth public images but overlook the business of taking care of every day neighborhood needs.

Although Natarus spoke just days before he faced re-election, he abided by the Society's request that he not turn the talk into an election speech.

Natarus did win re-election and he promises to continue providing the same caliber of service he has always offered the people who have elected him. □

Consider Us for Your Passover Discards

Now that Passover has come and gone and you have taken the opportunity to go through old trunks and boxes, consider passing along some of your old treasures the Society.

We're not interested in hand-me-downs or worn out things, but we are interested in artifacts that help us tell the history of the Jews of Chicago.

If you've found programs from Jewish events of long ago, newsletters from organizations that have faded or changed dramatically, photographs of groups, or anything else that you think tells more than the story of your own family, please consider allowing us to take care of them.

There is no telling what scraps hold clues to stories that we have not yet told and even to stories that we do not yet know we ought to be telling.

We will place appropriate materials

in the Chicago Jewish Archives, located at the Spertus Institute for Jewish Studies where they will be available to scholars and the interested public. □

Fund in Memory of Elsie Orlinsky Seeks Continued Gifts

The Society is pleased to announce that the Elsie Orlinsky Memorial Fund is growing.

The fund, established recently in memory of our long-time board member will make possible an annual meeting with awards available to college and high school students presenting papers on Chicago Jewish history.

Orlinsky, as most Society members will remember all too vividly, was killed near her Hyde Park home after she was the victim of a car-jacking. Her attacker has not yet been brought to justice.

The fund is only one way to remember the contributions she made to our Society and to life in general in the city.

It was not until details of Orlinsky's life made it into newspapers and onto the television news that most of her friends became aware of the breadth of her volunteer activities.

In addition to her work with the Society, she taught bed-ridden children at LaRabida Hospital, served on the Citizens Committee for Theater on the Lake, worked in various ways to support the Hyde Park Art Fair, and raised funds for Misericordia.

We hope that the fund will serve not merely as a way of furthering study of Chicago Jewish history, but also that it will help encourage a new generation of students to look at the history of their community as a personal history that is open to their own exploration and retelling.

Those interested in contributing to the Elsie Orlinsky Memorial Fund can do so by writing to the Society office at 618 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60605. □

Chicago Historical Society to Stage Exhibits of Four Neighborhoods

The Chicago Historical Society has announced that it will be staging a series of four exhibits celebrating the history of Chicago neighborhoods that have varied ethnic pasts. Jews have been part of all those neighborhoods and central to at least two of them.

The series is entitled *Neighborhoods: Keepers of Culture* and the Historical Society sees it as the first project in a new approach to depicting the history of all Chicago.

The first exhibit focuses on the neighborhood around Douglas and Grand Boulevards on the South Side. It opened in April, 1995.

The second exhibit will explore the history of Rogers Park and West Ridge, a neighborhood that remains home to the largest concentration of Jews in the city today. The area has been home to generations of Jews, and has most recently seen an influx of Soviet Jews settling there.

The organizers of the exhibit are still in the process of assembling material for it. They are holding a series of organizational meetings that will not

only determine what information the exhibit will display but also the way in which the material will be gathered, annotated, and represented.

The exhibit is scheduled to open in November, 1995 at the Historical Society. It will travel to various sites in the neighborhoods themselves, but those sites have not yet been determined.

The third and fourth neighborhood exhibits in the series have not yet been as fully planned, but they will focus on the histories of the Near West Side and Garfield Park as well as the Lower West Side and South Lawndale, both of which have had substantial Jewish populations at one time or another.

The Historical Society sees the series of exhibits as a new way to document the history of Chicago that has some times seemed too commonplace to make it into official history. The buildings of a neighborhood may remain unchanged from decade to decade, but their changing tenants reflect quiet and profound changes in the city at large.

As the Historical Society puts it, "The staff of the Historical Society has the opportunity to move outside of the boundaries, physical and philosophical, which have previously distanced us from many racially and economically diverse communities.

"By sharing authority with the various 'keepers of culture' in the

neighborhoods we encounter, we set new standards for the validation of culture and challenge the existing power imbalances. And hopefully we also create lasting partnerships that will eventually remake the culture of the Historical Society itself.

"For the neighborhoods involved, we create an opportunity to collect, preserve and share their histories with each other and the rest of the city. In addition, through an internship/apprentice component, we introduce young people from diverse backgrounds to the fields of history and museum practice.

"And finally, we hope that the end products generated through this process will be useful in addressing the contemporary issues facing us all as members of urban communities and neighborhoods undergoing rapid and often devastating changes."

Individuals interested in providing information or assistance of any kind for any of the three exhibits that are still in the planning stages should contact the Historical Society at (312) 642-4600.

The Historical Society is located at Clark Street and North Avenue in Chicago and features items from its permanent collection alongside assorted special exhibitions.

In addition, it features a library and archive that are open to the public at large. □

Society Welcomes New Members from First Quarter

The new membership year is getting off to a good start as we are proud to boast of a long list of new members already.

We cherish our ongoing members, but welcome new ones as well. It is only by continuing to grow that we will be able to fulfill our mandate to collect, store, question and retell the history of Chicago's Jews.

The job of telling the history of our community is possible only when all

of us participate in it.

We are grateful for all of our continuing members as well as the following new members:

Mr. Harry Dreiser
Sue Ann Fishbein
Mr. and Mrs. Robert
Fragen
Mr. and Mrs. David
Heller
Belle Holman
Charles Krugel
Lester Lunsky

Mr. and Mrs. Jack
Mason
Jill Mesirov
Lillian Miller
Mrs. L. Newberger
Yoji Ozaki
Aaron Ragensberg
Jeffrey Rothstein
William Seiden
Berneice Simon

We invite everyone to participate in all of our activities. See the newsletter

and other mailings for announcements of our quarterly open meetings and consider participating in our oral history project, our proposed video history of the Jews of Chicago, and in the planning process behind the many events we undertake.

What's more, we ask you to consider giving memberships to our Society to friends, family members or former Chicagoans who may have left the city but not gotten it out of their hearts entirely.

If you have friends who have forgotten to renew their memberships, please remind them to do so. □

Oral History Excerpt:

Marion Ascoli Speaks of Her Father, Childhood and Memories of Loeb-Leopold

Marion Ascoli was an accomplished philanthropist and educator as well as a prominent Jewish Chicagoan for most of her life. Her father, Julius Rosenwald, was the chairman of Sears, Roebuck and himself a renowned philanthropist.

Mrs. Ascoli offered her oral history to Society members Walter Roth and Sid Sorkin on July 25, 1988 when she returned to Chicago to visit her son and daughter-in-law, Peter and Lucy Ascoli.

Historical Society: You were talking about [family] dinners that you couldn't attend. ... Where was the children's dining room? Where did you eat? In the back?

Ascoli: No, no -- in the breakfast room. Cute little room. But most, as [my brothers and sisters and I] grew older, ate at the big table, but not if there was company. Sunday dinner was the exception. My father invited very distinguished people for Sunday dinner. He felt that this was part of our education.

This is very cute, I think. Every Sunday, there was a ritual that my brother and I -- [my father] would signal to us -- would get up from the table, walk around -- this was now a long table full of people -- and sit on his lap. [Chuckles] We always did that. As we grew older, you couldn't even see my father. He wasn't a very big man -- not very tall. We covered him completely. But he loved that. He liked carrying that on. We enjoyed that. We enjoyed meeting the people.

The next oldest in the family was my sister Edith.

You tell me if I'm on the wrong track.

Society: No, no. Go right ahead. You're on the right track.

Ascoli: My sister Edith was seven years older than I, so she should have known better. We had a man named Shmeryah Levin from Israel. Very famous.

Society: Very famous?

Ascoli: Like many people born and raised in that country, he couldn't talk without using both of his hands. My sister Edith was sitting in between us, so she should have known better. My brother and I began to imitate him and mimic.

Society: But he didn't speak English, did he? Do you remember?

Ascoli: Shmeryah Levin? He spoke very broken

English. Nothing deterred people at my father's table. They all liked to talk and my father encouraged it. If you didn't understand everything, you got the gist of it.

My father would never serve any alcohol at all in the house. [Chuckles] For big dinner parties, we had a bottle wrapped in a white cloth and carried around by our Japanese butler, Kiko -- he was a part of the family. He poured it with style, but in it was grape juice, red grape juice. [Laughs]

Society: He never served hard liquor either?

Ascoli: Nothing.

What do you mean, "either?" If you served anything, you served wine. You shouldn't serve grape juice. I think it would have been better advised to serve nothing. I don't know how often he did that, but I know it happened. ...

Society: Let's go back many, many years ago. It's around 1900, before the First World War. Was your father involved with Palestine at all in those days? Do you remember?

Ascoli: Oh, no. My mother was the one who was. My mother was very pro-Palestine. They went there together and they had exactly opposite reactions. My father said, "This is not a viable country."

You know all this. This has been in one book after the other.

Society: I know.

Ascoli: I can't repeat what's in all those books.

Society: Tell us about your mother. That's not very ...

Ascoli: My mother became an instant enthusiastic Zionist, and she never changed. My father was very tolerant of this difference, but he wouldn't change either. Now they may have had terrible fights, but we never heard that. And I doubt it.

They used to write. My father, as he became more and more prominent, spent less and less time at home. He had to go to public dinners and he was in great demand as a speaker. My mother used to write him little notes and leave them on his dresser, on his big, tall, dressing table. One day she wrote him a note which said, "Speak to me about our trip to Europe." [Chuckles] It was the first he'd ever heard of it.

You tell me what other kinds of things you want to know.

Society: Your father was a great philanthropist. He gave many things to Jewish causes.

Ascoli: And other -- and Negro.

Society: And Negro. Did he ever take you to the West Side when the Russian Jews came into Chicago?

Ascoli: No. He took us all to Tuskegee. We had a

private train. You know these stories. I know they've been in books. We had a private train and we used to go all together to Tuskegee for Founder's Day. When this family got together, we laughed from morning 'til night. [Chuckles]

One day, I think my brother and I, the youngest brother, were doing something and we got left behind. The train had to go back for us. My father was not amused. [Chuckles]

Society: He didn't think it was funny? Did you go with him on any of these trips? Did any of the children go with him on the trips to Palestine or to Europe? Did any of you go?

Ascoli: We all would go to Europe, sure. But my father didn't go to Palestine.

Society: Oh, he never went?

Ascoli: He went once with my mother.

Society: But not the children?

Ascoli: No children that I remember. I can't swear to it. See, because for a lot of their lives, I was just a very small kid. I didn't even know whether... They may have gone to Palestine and taken my brother with them. But we would have been about six or seven years old, and I certainly don't remember it and it didn't make a dent on me.

Society: When did you leave the Kenwood home?

Ascoli: No it's not on Kenwood.

Society: In Kenwood, on Ellis. Sorry. [Chuckles]

Ascoli: On Ellis Avenue. When did the family leave?

Society: No. You. When did you leave?

Ascoli: When I went away to college.

Society: When was that?

Ascoli: Let's see, I was nineteen, I guess. I'm now eighty-six, eighty-seven.

Society: You went to Wellesley?

Ascoli: Yes. I went to Wellesley for one year and then I got married.

Society: Do you remember why you picked Wellesley?

Ascoli: Yes, very well. I went to a camp and had a counselor there. This is actually why I wanted to go to college. I didn't care about going to college. I thought I'd skip that. This woman -- Did you ever hear the expression, "I got a crush on her?" It belonged to that era. I got a crush on this counselor. They were very fashionable at that time. No, she didn't go to Wellesley. But she convinced me to go to college.

Now why did I go to Wellesley? I think I knew a girl there. I knew somebody there.

Society: How did you meet your husband?

Ascoli: I had two.

Society: Your first husband.

Ascoli: Peter's name was Ascoli. My name was Stern for many, many years. I met my first husband in Chicago when I was very young. I was engaged at eighteen and married at nineteen. In fact, all my father's daughters were married by nineteen -- three of us.

Society: Where did you live when you were married?

Ascoli: I lived at my parents' home first. And then, we rented a house in Winnetka for the summer to give them a little rest. But we must have lived at my parents' home for a year. To tell you the honest truth, I don't know where we went from there.

You know, I am an old lady, so this was a very long time ago. [Chuckles]

Society: What about Ravinia? or Peter Pan Cottage?

Ascoli: I got married, and then I left and got a place of my own and went to a place for the

summer, too, because that was the thing to do. That was in Winnetka. That's when I left that house. First, I left for college for one year.

Society: Were you still [in Chicago] when your father passed away?

Ascoli: No.

Society: Were you there at the time of the Loeb-Leopold case? Remember that?

Ascoli: Yes. Oh, do I! Listen, I went to school with Dick Loeb. He and my father -- his father was the vice president of Sears Roebuck. The two families were very close. Dick Loeb was always held up to us as an example of what a child should do. He didn't play outdoors. He didn't play baseball. He read books. He studied. He was brilliant. He graduated in knee pants. I saw it. [Chuckles] He was just a little kid. He graduated from high school. My father was jealous because his children were just ordinary kids. They liked fun and weren't scholars. I don't think Dick Loeb came to such a good end, as I remember.

Society: No, he did not. He was killed while he was in prison.

Ascoli: So much for scholarship. [Chuckles]

I can remember when I first heard -- you know, we all heard about the murder of the Franks boy. The papers had headlines every day. I heard before it hit the press. My mother and father suddenly went into Chicago. We were out in the country. We went into Chicago because the Loeb's were very close friends of

theirs. They had asked them to come in.

When I heard that this boy, who had been held up to us as an example of everything that was wonderful, had done this -- I can remember sitting on a bluff overlooking the lake and literally feeling the earth rock under me. I really felt as though the earth rocked under me.

It was such a terrible shock.

Society: Did you go to any of the trial that they had afterwards?

Ascoli: Oh no. I couldn't have done that. My father and mother wouldn't have let me. We had lots of leeway and lots of fun, but when they said, "no," it was no. One thing my mother and father were very good about with both my brother and me ...

My brother was brilliant, so there was no excuse for him. This is always my younger brother.

Society: You're talking about William?

Ascoli: Bill, yes. We didn't get very good marks in school. We'd bring home these very mediocre and sometimes really awful report cards. My father never turned a hair. I can never understand that. He never scolded us. He'd scold us a lot about other things, but he never did. I don't know whether he didn't understand what report cards were [chuckles] or whether he thought they were unimportant.

Society: Did your mother react to the report cards?

Ascoli: Same way. Nobody scolded us when we brought back terrible reports. You would think they would. I mean, in the Jewish tradition...

Society: Were your father and mother still observant in any way in your home for Jewish ... Did they observe any rituals still in your home?

Ascoli: I hate to tell you this. You're going to be horrified. But we had a Christmas tree. [Chuckles]

Society: That's not unusual.

Ascoli: And we loved it. We sang carols. ...

Society: We were starting to talk about this earlier. How did your father get involved with Negro philanthropy? What motivated that?

Ascoli: Oh, he read a book called *Up From Slavery* and he met Booker T. Washington. He thought he was one of the great men of America and I guess so he was. From there he used to go to Tuskegee. Now, there, he took us. We had a private train, and he took as many of us children as could go. Sometimes we had school or

we couldn't get away or we had the chicken pox. But as many of his children as could go went on this train to Tuskegee.

Society: You had a private train from Chicago to ...

Ascoli: Yes, indeed, we did -- a private train. Either that or we had a private car. I guess we had a private car hooked on to a train, and then shunted off with a little putt-putt engine to take us the rest of the way. But we had a car all to ourselves. When I was a kid, I guess I thought that was a private train.

Society: Sure. You would stay down there for ...

Ascoli: As long as the family stayed. If we went, we stayed. We weren't so crazy about anything except the train ride. [Laughter] Well, because there was an awful

lot of hymn-singing and church-going and ceremonials and things. It wasn't much fun. But on the train, it was a riot.

I can remember sitting on a bluff overlooking the lake and literally feeling the earth rock under me [after hearing about Loeb]. I really felt as though the earth rocked under me. It was such a terrible shock.

Society: Did your family enjoy it?

Ascoli: My family had the best time together. We made fun of my mother and we made fun of my father and they didn't mind. We laughed. And we just had a wonderful time. We almost never quarreled.

Society: Didn't Booker T. Washington also come up to Chicago sometimes then and see your father?

Ascoli: Yes, I guess once or twice. ...

Society: Your father was also involved with Chicago politics from time to time.

Ascoli: He was interested.

Society: Did any mayors, do you remember, ever come to dinner? Any people in Chicago?

Ascoli: The most fascinating people in Chicago came to dinner: politicians, opera singers, visiting [dignitaries].

Society: Do you remember any of the opera singers who might have come?

Ascoli: I remember them. Rose Riesa.

Society: Rose Riesa who lived in Chicago?

Ascoli: Yes. And then there was one guy who had a neurosis. He thought he was losing his voice. [Chuckles] These were all things that enlivened our childhood because lots of this grown-up stuff was boring, but some of it was so funny. ... This man kept testing out his voice to see if it was still there. [Chuckles]

He'd be sitting at the dinner table, and he'd be going, "Mi, mi, mi, mi." [Laughter] We remember him with deep affection. ... □

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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*Indicates Past President

Chicago Jewish History

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