

FALL 2011

CIRCA

Newsletter of the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life

INSIDE

Fruits of our Labor

10th Annual
Go & Teach
Education
Conference

Dr. Rockoff
Discovers Texas
Jewish Roots

Spotlight on
North Carolina

AmeriCorps to
Partner with the
ISJL

Mississippi
Humanities Council
Awards Mini-Grant
to the ISJL



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Contents

Chairman's column	1
President's column.....	2
Sowing the Seeds of Faith.....	3
A Magical Summer.....	4
ISJL Exciting News	5
ISJL New Board Members	6-7
Summer Internships at the ISJL.....	8-9
Wharton, TX Interviews.....	10
Dr. Rockoff Discovers TX Jewish Roots	11
Jewish History of Palestine, TX	12-13
2011 Education Conference	14-16
E-Life, Community Engagement pilot	17
Museum	18-19
Spotlight on North Carolina	20
Peddler's Cart	21
Contributions	22-23
Tributes.....	24-25

Summer Update



Message from
ISJL Board Chair
Rayman L. Solomon

One of the greatest privileges of being the chair of the ISJL Board is getting to work with its talented and energetic Board members. During the Institute's eleven year history the Board has grown from the original group of members who were on the board of the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience to a national board with members from coast to coast. Most of us who live outside the 13 state region were born in the South, while others lived in the region for a significant period of time. What unites us is a common commitment to our mission of creating a virtual congregation throughout the South that provides rabbinic, educational, and cultural programming; that documents and preserves the historical record of Jews in the region; and engages with our communities in projects to promote social justice.

Every board faces as its most important task working with the staff in establishing policies and programs to advance its mission. Ten years ago, as the ISJL began to organize its various departments, the Board retained Diane Mataraza to assist in creating a strategic plan. That plan has guided the Institute's work over the last decade. The expansion of our rabbinic program into all thirteen

states, and the growth of our education program to serve over 70 congregations were the result of that initial planning and the brilliant implementation of the plan by our talented staff. At its recent Executive Committee meeting the members decided to again retain Diane Mataraza to assist the board and staff in planning for our future. While we expect the basic mission to remain unchanged, it is time to reassess our programs to determine ways they could be made even more effective. During this planning we would also expect to improve the internal processes of the Board, and its role in providing assistance to the staff in devising programmatic policies. The planning process will take place over the next year, and we look forward to implementing recommendations.

I want to congratulate Jay Tanenbaum, our former Board Chair, and his wife Babette on the establishment of a professorship in Jewish Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A creative business transaction resulted in Jay directing endowment funds to this department, which has a mission that parallels ours. The creation of

this important professorship will strengthen the effort to preserve the legacy and history of Jews in the American South, and develop programs and opportunities for Jewish communities throughout the region. Jay credits his work with the ISJL in inspiring him to give the professorship this mission, and he expects that it will enable the ISJL to work closely with this leading public university in our region.

This being the first Circa of the Jewish New Year, I will follow the tradition of many synagogue presidents by making a Kol Nidre appeal for contributions. If in the future we are to build on our many successes, we must ask each of you to make whatever investment in the ISJL you can afford. You will be joining with the members of our Board, in addition to many foundations and individuals throughout our region and nationally, all of whom generously support our programs. You have my deepest appreciation for your past and future support. Best wishes for a sweet and healthy 5772!

L' Shana Tova and Shalom y'all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay Tanenbaum". The signature is fluid and cursive.

"It ain't bragging if you can do it." – Dizzy Dean



Message from
ISJL President
Macy B. Hart

Over the last 11 years I have written on a variety of subjects, often addressing the dysfunction of the Jewish organizational world. Each article was completely "Hart-felt." But in conjunction with this issue's theme of Sukkot, I want to use numbers in my message to brag about the fabulous "harvest" of our organization, the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life.

We are pleased to announce that 77 congregations have joined our unique and proven education program for the 2011-2012 school year. In nine years the **ISJL Education Department** has grown from four states to all thirteen. It has expanded from one part-time consultant to two credentialed educators who oversee our spiraled curriculum and over 5,000 pages of fully prepared lesson plans. With schools as small as four students and as large as 350, our education program reaches over 3,000 Jewish children, who each receive regular visits from our nine Education Fellows. There is no other congregational education system in the country that contains all of the field support, teacher training, and networking opportunities that the ISJL offers. While I am proud that this innovative approach to Jewish education has emerged from the South, we are open to helping other regions of the country replicate this system. How phenomenal would it be for there to be a consistent and well-coordinated Jewish educational approach that brought regions together?

The **ISJL Cultural Programming Department** delivered 106 concerts and workshops featuring Israeli master musician, Amir Gwartzman. Visiting twelve states in seven

months, Amir played in synagogues, JCCs, churches, schools, libraries, colleges, and other venues. In addition to the fantastic music, this program was in many ways the embodiment of the ISJL's philosophy. The concerts were held in both large and small communities, before audiences that were often predominately non-Jewish. Many of the young people in the audience saw Amir as a role model and wanted "to be like him." These high-caliber programs will have long term implications as the younger members of the audience will seek out these types of cultural experiences as they get older. Especially in smaller cities and towns, this type of quality program will heighten expectations of what can be as they resettle.

The goal of the **ISJL Rabbinic Services Department** is to visit 11 states in 2011. This is quite a feat as there is only one rabbi on staff. Each time our rabbi hits the road, we hear about the life influencing moments his visit inspires. Again, it's about role modeling. Unlike all of our other departments, the ISJL Rabbi only serves congregations that do not have a full-time Jewish professional. When he interacts with non-Jews, he is sometimes the first Jewish person they have ever met. Such encounters often lead to bridge building and dialogue creation. Like the rest of the organization, the Rabbinic Department plants seeds for a richer Jewish future.

The **ISJL Community Engagement Department** pilot program is currently in 5 schools, thus far, in the Jackson area. Middle and high school students are being trained in conflict resolution and peer mediation, while our literacy program uses older children as mentors for younger students. Currently the ISJL is seeking

major funding for a new project on healthy choices and food. As an organization, our vision is to create a better "neighborhood" guided by the Jewish value of Tikkun Olam, repairing the world. It has long been part of the Southern Jewish Experience to give back to the larger community. We hope to be a part of continuing this tradition by spreading the message of community engagement throughout our 13 state territory.

The **ISJL History Department's Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities** has over 200 community histories from nine different states, and is constantly growing. The online encyclopedia has become an essential reference for scholars and individuals seeking to learn about the history of Jews in the South. The histories are designed to get readers to share their own information. One would be amazed at the significant Jewish history that resides in closets and attics. In addition, the **Oral History** program has contributed greatly to the Encyclopedia through digital video of individuals as we preserve their stories for all time. How amazing that one family's heirloom, passed down for many generations, will be the sights and sounds of our ancestors!

A decade and a year are almost complete for the ISJL. Countless individuals have benefitted from the innovative work of our energetic and creative staff. By all of us working together across our region, think of what we could achieve! I think about it all the time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Macy B. Hart". The signature is fluid and stylized, with the first and last names being the most prominent.

Sowing the Seeds of Faith: How the ISJL's Rabbinic Dept. Facilitates Jewish Life-Cycles Throughout the South

By: Rabbi Marshal Klaven



“One reaps what one sows;” an idiom long held sacred to farmers, may seem irrelevant today. But, just because many occupations are no longer tied so closely to the land does not mean this idiom is without relevance. Fact is, in many ways, every day we are sowing the seeds of our future, seeds which - we pray - one day will be reaped



Right: Bat Mitzvah of Sarah Katz in Lake Charles, LA.

Below: B'nai Mitzvah of Jesse and Indy Cooper in Auburn, AL.

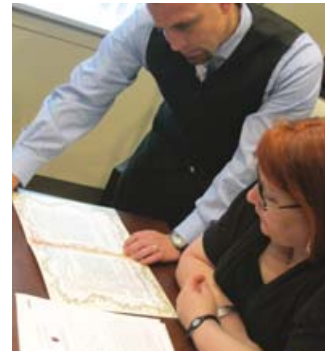


for the great benefit of our families and communities. Such was the case this summer...

Having laid the ground work by way of the ISJL's continued commitment to our Southern Jewish communities, these congregations now reach out to us for assistance in sowing seeds of faith. Specifically, the ISJL's Rabbinic Department was asked to help individuals with the sacred rites of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah as well as becoming a Jew through conversion.

As the Rabbi of the Institute, my heart raced as I was undoubtedly excited. It is one thing to be invited into a community to lead Shabbat/holiday observances, to facilitate an educational opportunity or to provide pastoral care in a time of need. But, it seemed another to begin a task that necessitated more immediate and on-going nurturing from teacher to student in order to yield success. It is also a rare privilege to tutor B'nai Mitzvah students from smaller congregations with fewer and fewer young people.

Just as farming equipment has become more advanced over the years, so too have the tools of the rabbinate, allowing us all to do more with less. In spite of the distance, thanks to digital music files and other



Conversion of Glenda Gault in Tupelo, MS.

technological advancements like Skype (a video-chat program), over the course of a year we provided our students with a deeply meaningful and personal program that gradually nourished and enriched the ground upon which these seeds of faith were planted.

As one student shared with her congregation: “It's kinda weird. Although this is only the second time I am seeing Rabbi Marshal in person, I feel a profound connection with him and the lessons we shared. I pray this relationship continues.” And, as I stated at the time, “so do I.” For when these special life-cycle moments blossom in our communities, they bear fruit which can spiritually nourish us all.

If you or your congregation would like to discuss these or other opportunities for your own community, please do not hesitate in contacting the Rabbinic Department of the ISJL. We look forward to partnering with you, as we sow the seeds of our Jewish faith together!

A Magical Summer

By: Rabbi Marshal Klaven

For anyone who has ever attended a Jewish summer camp before, we know well that these are magical places. In addition to pulling lasting friendships out of such temporary summer moments, these camps magically transport Judaism from the periphery of a child's life to its centrality, making Judaism enjoyable and relevant in every moment of the day. Though, for some, this Jewish centrality often occurs with

one notable absence: the child's rabbi.

However, as long as it is my blessed task to support southern congregations without full-time rabbis, this absence will vanish before your very eyes... poof! Because, for the past two summers, I have had the honor of spending a few days with the campers at the URJ Henry S. Jacobs Camp in Utica, MS: transmitting lasting Jewish values

through daily activities, providing guidance on relevant "hot" topics, and sharing meaningful stories on Shabbat, which further illuminate the sacredness of this day of rest.

Besides the personal joy I received from such fun-filled and sacred moments of camp, the campers - from places like Lake Charles (LA) and Meridian (MS) - shared an excitement to see "their rabbi" there as well.

I suppose, in some small way, seeing "their rabbi" at camp connected them to home as well as it affirmed that no matter how small their congregation may be, they are still integral to the overall magical fabric of the American Jewish South.

In addition to being back at URJ Camp Jacobs, the ISJL Rabbinic Department is looking into the potential of visiting with other Jewish camps in the South next summer, including USCJ's Ramah Darom in Georgia.



photo courtesy of Jacobs Camp



The ISJL has teamed up with the University of Southern Mississippi Campus Link AmeriCorps Program. It is one of twelve AmeriCorps programs funded through the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service. The partnership will launch the Department of Community Engagement's Fellowship Program. Campus Link provides nonprofits with

AmeriCorps teams in order to lower student drop-out rates and promote academic success. The Community Engagement, ISJL Fellowship Program will begin with one full-time AmeriCorps member who will be responsible for coordinating tutoring and mentoring sessions to be facilitated by part-time AmeriCorps members. The program will resemble the model of the ISJL's Jewish Education Department and facilitate the delivery of our programs to schools and community based organizations. Community Engagement



Fellows will be assigned to implement the departments' programs including Read, Lead, Succeed; T.A. P. and E-LIFE addressing literacy, conflict resolution and health respectively. The Fellowship program will allow us to offer these initiatives to many more sites and to reach many more students. We thank AmeriCorps MS and the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service for the opportunity to work with their members and partner with them to positively impact Mississippi.



The ISJL is proud to announce the award of a mini-grant offered by the Mississippi Humanities Council. This grant will go towards the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience Traveling Trunk. This new traveling program consists of lesson plans, artifacts, costumes, maps and photographs that aim to teach Mississippi elementary students about the historic Jewish immigrant experience in the South. With the help of these funds, the trunk will be offered to teachers in schools throughout the state during the 2011-2012 school year.

For more information contact: Rachel Jarman 601-362-6357 or rjarman@isjl.org



Be a part of this special event! November 13, 2011



This year the ISJL is partnering with the Global Day of Jewish Learning, a program dedicated to *Klal Yisrael*: the global Jewish community. Through engaging in study, we can

better approach one another and the noble heritage entrusted to us. The ISJL encourages our Southern congregations to become hosting communities for this day of learning and its

individuals to participate in a program near them. For more information, please check out: www.theglobalday.com.

Board members give of their time, their resources and their unique perspective in order to further nurture an organization they deeply believe in. The ISJL is proud to welcome these newest members of our board.



Art Salomon

Art attended Old Miss and is currently retired and living in Jackson, MS. He worked for Plough Pharmaceuticals in Memphis, TN. He refers to himself as a “plain old Country Boy” living on a lake and enjoying hunting and fishing. Art volunteers at the Mississippi Natural Science Museum and belongs to civic organizations that are concerned with the welfare of children. He was drawn to the board of the ISJL because of the dedication to Southern Jews by Macy Hart. Art is married and has one son.

Mary attended Brown University and currently lives in New York City with her husband Sandy Cohen, and they have 2 children. She is a financial advisor for Merrill Lynch. Mary says, “Despite living in NYC for over 30 years, I still feel very attached to my Jewish upbringing in Jackson, MS and connected to Southern Jewry. Many of my friendships today began in Jackson or through SoFTY. It is part of my heritage!”

Mary L. Wiener



Pepe Finn

Pepe is from New Orleans, and currently lives in St. Louis with her husband Terry and 3 children. She attended LSU and St. Louis University J.D. She is a Chairman at Stern Brothers & Co., an investment banking firm specializing in public finance. Pepe is a board member for NCJW, KETC Nine Network of Public Media, Temple Israel and the St. Louis Metropolitan Sewer District. Pepe says, “I was very involved in SoFTY growing up in New Orleans and that experience and my experience at Jacobs Camp were what provided me with my strong sense of Jewish identity. A lot of my friends were from small towns and so I see the tremendous value in ISJL as a “regional congregation” that is able to provide small and large Southern Jewish communities with spiritual and cultural connections...”

Fred S. Zeidman

Fred attended Washington University in St. Louis and has a Master's in Business Administration from New York University. He is married with 4 children and currently lives in Houston, TX. Fred is Chairman Emeritus of the US Holocaust Memorial Council and was appointed by George W. Bush in March 2002. He is a much accomplished business and civic leader and is a Principal at XRoads Solutions Group and Chairman of the Board of SulphCo. Inc. along with serving on several other professional and volunteer boards. Fred is on the board of the ISJL because of his family involvement with the Museum along with Macy having instilled in him a belief that we need to maintain the history of Jewish people in the South.



Wynnie Hoodis

Wynnie attended the University of Texas, Austin and the University of Arkansas. She currently lives in Shorthills, NJ with her husband and 2 children, and is doing her Internship as a registered dietician. Wynnie is a member of Temple Sinai in NJ and her "home" congregation Etz Chaim in Bentonville, AR. She is a member of AIPAC-SPCA. Her motivation for serving on the board of the ISJL is her determination for Jewish children to have a strong religious school experience. She became a fan of the ISJL curriculum while teaching religious school herself.

Rachel Reagler Schulman

Rachel attended Indiana University and JD from University of Illinois. She currently lives in Highland Park, IL with her husband and 2 children. She serves as General Counsel to a privately owned company and is a member of Congregation B'nai Torah in IL. She is active in Sisterhood and the Chicago Bar association. Rachel says, "I had a desire to pay it back and pay it forward; love and interest in the history and future of the Jews and Jewish life in the South. I spent 10 years at Henry S. Jacobs Camp as a camper and counselor, my family remains in Arkansas and is very active in the Jewish life of Hot Springs."



Jay Meredith Stein

JayMere attended the University of Texas, Austin and currently lives in New York City. She is an associate buyer at Polo Ralph Lauren. She was born in Greenville, Mississippi and grew up in Jacksonville, FL. Her personal interests are theater, music, art, travel and her family. She has a passion for arts education in schools and its influence on the growth and self expression of children. "I joined the ISJL board because my family's rooted within the traditions of the southern Jewish culture and I hope to carry that on to the next generation."

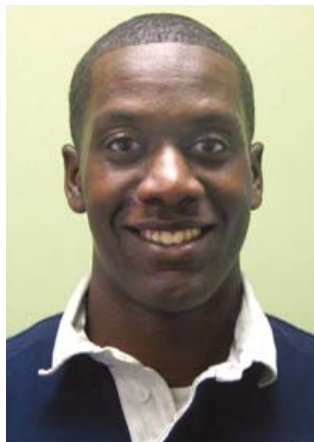
Summer Internships at the ISJL

Every summer the departments of the ISJL are greatly enhanced by the work of Interns. For a period of 8 – 10 weeks these college students from all walks of life hone their skills, get a taste of the southern Jewish experience and enhance their resumes through the work of the Institute. This year was no exception as we were privileged to have at the ISJL 6 Interns who were gracious enough to share their thoughts with us at the end of the summer. For more information on our Summer Internships, check out our website, www.isjl.org



**Mandy Benter –
University of Wisconsin- Madison
Hometown – Milwaukee, WI**

I was drawn to the novelty of an institution dedicated to the Southern Jewish community. My father is a delta blues enthusiast; therefore my family would often travel to Greenville, MS for vacation, so I am no stranger to Mississippi. I always wanted to work in a museum and I thought this was a great opportunity for direct contact and preservation of countless artifacts.



**D'Cory Owens –
Tougaloo College; Jackson, MS
Hometown: Memphis, TN**

I applied for the Community Engagement Internship under department head Malkie Schwartz because I wanted to explore other cultures. The experience has broadened my knowledge of need in our communities and how very many ways we can make a difference. This was also my first exposure to the Jewish experience, and learning the basics of Judaism and Southern Jewish life.



**Joseph Robinson –
American Jewish University
Hometown: Lake Forest, CA**

In my studies to become a Rabbi, one of the areas I felt was lacking was the practical hands on experience. The ISJL Rabbinic Internship under Rabbi Marshal Klaven gave me the opportunity to find my own voice and process within Judaism. The ISJL offered the real life training that I was looking for among welcoming communities. This fall I will be entering my final year of rabbinic studies.

**Lindsay Sprechman –
University of North Carolina at Chapel
Hill**

Hometown: Miami, FL

The History Internship combined history and geography, two of my favorite subjects (and my two majors), so the job was perfect for me. Also, travelling to small, southern communities and researching their Jewish histories was very intriguing and exciting. This experience has taught me how to be a true historian by looking through census files, original documents, old newspaper articles, talking to various people and so much more.



Left – Right: Lindsay, Jon and Harum

**Jonathan Cohen –
McGill University; Montreal, Quebec
Hometown: Newton, Massachusetts**

The History internship at the ISJL offered serious and challenging work, as well as the unique opportunity to broaden my intellectual horizons while experiencing a new cultural environment. The work with Dr. Stuart Rockoff, the ISJL historian has improved my skills as an historian and a writer. As a born-and-bred Yankee, my knowledge of the south prior to this summer was only through history books. Spending a summer on the other side of the Mason-Dixon Line gave me an experience that no book could have taught: the definition of a “southern experience”, and a Jewish one at that.

**Harumendhah (Harum) Helmy –
University of Missouri
Hometown – Jakarta, Indonesia**

I was looking for a fun summer job where I could polish the skills I’ve learned from both of my majors: anthropology and multimedia journalism. The oral history intern position was a perfect fit. The job involved me working as a multimedia assistant to Josh Parshall, the oral historian, as he conducted unstructured interviews collecting life stories. My time at the ISJL allowed me to learn a bit about cultures I’ve never known: the Southern culture, the Jewish culture and the nonprofit culture. I also learned much more about the civil rights movement.

**Internships are available in the
following ISJL Departments for
summer 2012:**

Rabbinic – Contact Rabbi Marshal Klaven

History – Contact Dr. Stuart Rockoff

Oral History – Contact Josh Parshall

Museum – Contact Rachel Jarman

Community Engagement – Contact Malkie Schwartz

Wharton, TX Interviews

By: Josh Parshall

The ISJL Oral History Program had a busy summer, and the excitement is continuing into the fall. Oral historian Josh Parshall continues to conduct interviews with outstanding participants in support of ongoing research for the online Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, and several new video clips have been added to the Encyclopedia. Most recently, excerpts from interviews with Adine Holland and Larry Wadler have been added to our article on Wharton, Texas. The Wharton clips were assembled by Oral History Intern Harum Helmy, whose assistance with recording, post-interview processing and video editing made the summer a major success.

Also, the Oral History Program has taken on a number of commissioned projects—sponsored oral history videos that honor elders and preserve their memories for generations to come. In addition to individual interviews, we are also available to conduct multiple interviews within the same community. These larger projects weave together multiple perspectives to provide an overview of a community's Jewish history. No matter the project, commissioned interviews add to our archives and help to support all of our important historical research.

Thanks again to everyone who has participated in the program by nominating an interviewee, giving an interview or commissioning the interview of a loved one.



Adine Holland and Larry Wadler shared memories of Wharton Synagogue Shearith Israel's annual chicken barbeque and of the local Hadassah chapter.

Some Southern Jewish History with a Personal Twist

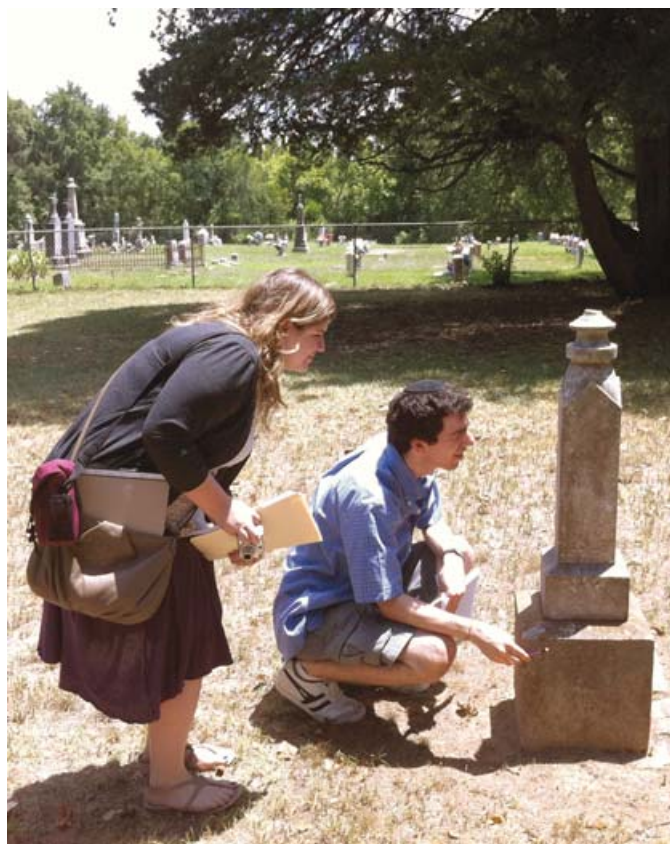
By: Dr. Stuart Rockoff

This summer, my research into Texas Jewish history got personal. In Palestine, my interns Jon Cohen and Lindsay Sprechman and I visited the Jewish cemetery. We already had a complete list of burials there, except for one gravestone which was entirely in Hebrew. This stone stuck out because the rest of the gravestones were almost entirely in English, representing the Reform, assimilated nature of the Palestine Jewish community at the time. Jon, who is fluent in Hebrew, took a crack at deciphering the unknown grave. The stone was weathered and very hard to read. We soon gave up and headed to the Palestine library, which had a local history room.

There, I found a file of obituaries of the people buried in the Palestine Jewish cemetery. I saw a picture of the unknown Hebrew grave, which has an English date:

Dec. 5, 1905. I then flipped the page and saw a local newspaper article about a tragic fire, and realized that the unknown Hebrew grave was that of Chaike Ratner, my great grandfather Moses Shapiro's first wife. I had always heard that Moses' first wife had died, and then he had a new wife sent over from Russia. It was his second wife who gave birth to my grandfather Sam Shapiro. I never knew how his first wife died, where she was buried, or even her name. According to the newspaper article, Chaike perished after her dress caught fire from a stove in her house in the tiny town of Oakwoods. They buried her in Palestine since it was the closest Jewish cemetery.

After this discovery, we went back to the cemetery and worked harder at trying to decipher the gravestone, and sure enough we found the Hebrew phrase "Wife of Moishé Shapiro" on it. One of the reasons it was so hard to read is that the Hebrew carving is quite shallow. While the English date is



ISJL History Interns Lindsay Sprechman and Jon Cohen try to decipher the gravestone of Chaike Ratner.

professionally done, the rest was clearly done by an amateur. Moses may well have done it himself. Living in rural east Texas, my great grandfather was probably unable to find a stone carver who knew Hebrew.

Finding this small gravestone, which helped unlock my family's mysteries, was a meaningful and poignant reminder of how we are all connected to our history.

Jews Found a Promised Land in Palestine, Texas

By : The ISJL History Department

In the mid-19th century, Palestine was a small town of about 200 residents with only a few businesses. In 1866, following 20 years of growth after the city's formation, the populace voted to expand Palestine's borders and incorporate as a city. Some Jews, almost all of them immigrants to the United States, had arrived in Palestine in the years prior to the town's incorporation. Among the first Jews to settle permanently in

Palestine was Phillip Unger, a Hungarian immigrant, who according to legend, arrived in town with his belongings tied in a red bandana. He became a peddler in the 1850s, opened a general store by 1866, and later became a farmer and a gardener. Unger was known for his charity, helping new residents of Palestine establish themselves in the city. Among those who received his assistance was Michael Ash, a German

immigrant, who, in the mid-1850s, arrived in Palestine and found work as a clerk. Ash later became a successful banker and dry goods merchant and was instrumental in helping to organize Palestine's Jewish community.

By 1880, Jewish immigrants were playing a prominent role in Palestine's commercial economy. Several owned dry goods stores, while other Jews found work as clerks, often in stores owned by other Jews. Sam Lucas started out working as a clerk in the store of his uncle Charles Jacobs, but later became a prominent merchant and cotton buyer.

Upon visiting Palestine in 1879, newspaper editor Charles Wessolowsky noted the zeal with which Jewish residents "engaged in business."

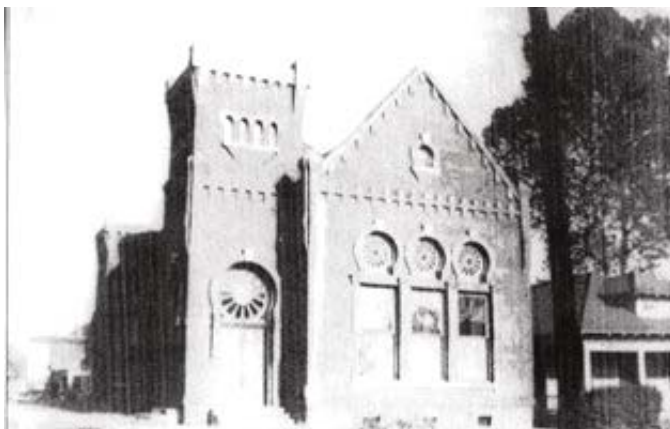
Wessolowsky, too, noted that the Jews of Palestine, satisfied and happy in their current environment, omitted the traditional recitation of the line "next year in Jerusalem" from the Passover Haggadah. However, Wessolowsky bemoaned the fact that, despite the presence of eleven Jewish families and 100 total Jews, no Jewish organizations existed. Perhaps due to his expression of concern, that fact soon changed.

In the early 1880s, the Jews of Palestine finally began organizing themselves formally. An 1882 newspaper article noted that high holiday services were held in the Masonic Temple with a sermon delivered by Manuel Winner. Winner, a German immigrant, was a jeweler and watchmaker by trade. For many years, though referred to as "rabbi" or "reverend" by newspapers, Winner served the Jews of Palestine as lay-leader. Winner performed weddings as well as high holiday services, including those in 1885 held at Library Hall. Sometime prior to 1883, local Jews founded the Palestine Hebrew Association. In April, 1883, Michael Ash purchased an acre of land and deeded it, alongside part of another tract, to the association. This land became the Jewish cemetery and, upon Ash's death in May, 1883, his will bequeathed funds for the continued upkeep of the burial ground in which he was laid to rest. Jewish communities in other towns utilized the cemetery as well and individuals from Bryan, Crockett, Henderson, Oakwoods, and Tyler are buried there.

Soon Palestine Jews began to discuss constructing a synagogue. The fundraising effort had begun in the 1880s. In 1883, Michael Ash left



Sam Lucas's store was located on this block of downtown Palestine



Beth Israel's synagogue, completed in 1901



The Palestine Jewish cemetery, the lone vestige of its once thriving Jewish community

money for a synagogue in his will. Two years later, Palestine Jews held an elegant Purim Masquerade Ball at the Temple Opera House to raise money for a synagogue. However, a formal fundraising campaign was not started until 1900. It was soon successful and by April of that year, they bought a plot of land on the corner of Magnolia and Dallas Streets. The synagogue, dedicated to the memory of Michael Ash, was completed on the site in 1901. The *Palestine Daily Circular* described the synagogue as a “magnificent house of worship” and “one of the most beautiful and elegantly constructed architectural buildings in Texas.” Around the same time that they dedicated the synagogue, 25 Palestine Jews formally established the congregation Beth Israel.

In its first ten years, Beth Israel was served by various rabbis. Reform Rabbi L. Weiss led the congregation from 1901 until 1904. Following Rabbi Weiss’ tenure, the *Palestine Daily Herald* reported in 1905

that Rosh Hashanah services would be conducted by Rabbi Alfred Godshaw of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations [UAHC] of Cincinnati, Ohio. Rabbi Henry Cohen from Galveston and rabbis from other Texas congregations also served Beth Israel when possible. By 1905, the congregation, which met on holidays and held services in English, had affiliated with the UAHC. Also by 1907, a Ladies Auxiliary of Beth Israel Congregation and a B’nai B’rith chapter had been founded. In 1907, Beth Israel had a Sunday School with four classes and 20 students.

Around 1910, Beth Israel hired Rabbi Solomon Schaumberg, a German native, as their spiritual leader. Rabbi Schaumberg served the congregation until 1930 when his eyesight began to fail and he was forced to resign. He was followed by Rabbi Gottlieb. In years when Beth Israel did not have a rabbi, visiting rabbis or lay-leaders, such as congregation president Leo Davidson, led holiday

services. In 1935, H.J. Ettlinger, a mathematics professor at the University of Texas, led high holiday services in Palestine.

Palestine Jews maintained their commercial and civic influence within the city during the early 20th century. Harry Myers ran the Grand Leader Department Store in the early 20th century and was a leader with the local Chamber of Commerce. Also an attorney, Myers served as president of the Palestine Bar Association. He was named “Mr. Palestine” for his extensive civic involvement. Jews’ success in Palestine during the height of a period marked by Ku Klux Klan activity illustrates how well they were received in the city. According to one contemporary estimate of the early 1920s, while Beth Israel’s membership numbered 40, the Klan, by far the largest “Fraternal Organization,” in Palestine, boasted 1125 members. However, there are no reports of local Jews facing any prejudice or discrimination. Jews were among Palestine’s most

notable citizens, involved in the commercial, civic, and social leadership of the city.

In 1919, The American Jewish Year Book estimated that 95 Jews made their home in Palestine. A small number of Jews settled in Palestine in the 1920s, including the merchants William Kelfer, Abraham Skuy and Abe Roth, all of whom were born in Russia. By 1927, an estimated 120 Jews lived in Palestine. Over the next decade, the Jewish community went into sharp decline as much of the young generation left for larger cities like Dallas, San Antonio, and New York City. By 1937, only 56 Jews still lived in Palestine. In 1940, Beth Israel closed its doors and the congregation disbanded. The synagogue was sold in 1950 and demolished in 1964. Some of the Jews who remained in Palestine following Beth Israel’s closing joined other congregations in the area. The last recorded Jews in Palestine, shoe-store owner Henry Leon and his wife Diane, arrived in 1938, two years prior to Beth Israel’s closing. Their son, Larry, the last Jewish graduate of Palestine High School, moved to Dallas as an adult. Both Henry and Diane were involved in the preservation and upkeep of the Beth Israel Cemetery and Henry was buried there in 1986. Diane, the last Jewish resident of Palestine, passed away in 2002. Hers remains the last burial in the Jewish cemetery.

The 10th Annual Go and Teach Conference

By: Jordan Magidson and Rachel Stern

Inside the Education department there is a special excitement, just before the annual education conference. There are so very many inspiring, “goose bump” moments that happen throughout the two days that we are all gathered together in Jackson, MS. This year marked the 10th Go and Teach Education Conference and the preparations had their beginnings mere days after the 9th conference ended.

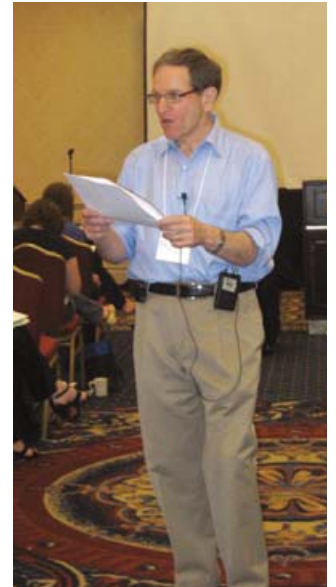
Each year we look forward to seeing how much we have grown since the previous conference. This year we had the pleasure of welcoming 158 people to Jackson, representing 77 different congregations and 63 Religious schools. The conference

participants traveled from congregations as close as Hattiesburg, MS and from as far away as Warrenton, VA. We were also thrilled to welcome our newest education partners for 2011 – 2012: The Louisville Hebrew School, Louisville, KY; Temple Emanuel of Virginia Beach, VA; Beth Israel Synagogue of Fayetteville, NC; Congregation Beth Israel of Greenville, SC; and Beth Yeshurun of Houston, TX as well as welcoming back: Temple Shalom of Northwest Arkansas, Fayetteville and Shir Tikvah Frisco, of Frisco, TX.

Our lineup of speakers for this year as with other years was simply amazing! Our conference has earned a

reputation of being the one to attend for participants as well as speakers. This has given us the opportunity to invite leading educators from the Jewish Professional world. This year we were delighted to welcome Joel Lurie Grishaver from Torah Aura, Fran Perlman from Matan, Debi Mishael of Houston, TX, Alicia Jo Rabins “Girls in Trouble” and our keynote speaker, Dr. Ron Wolfson of the American Jewish University and Synagogue 3000! This line up of speakers provided a transformative experience for everyone! We are still aglow at the success we felt in June, talking to and hearing from congregations about special moments and favorite speakers.

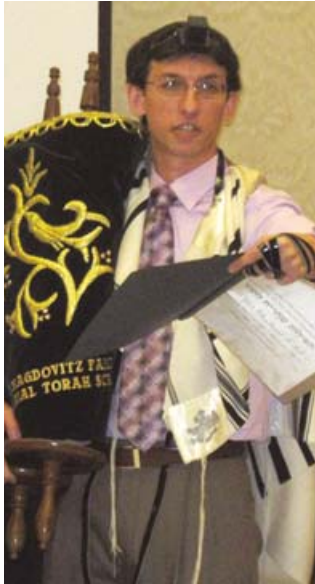
However, the highlight of the conference has always been the opportunity to build community. We build and strengthen our relationships with our education partners as well as watching these congregational representatives build friendships with each other. Whether sitting together in sessions, services or meals or schmoozing together in the hotel lounge, each year we see firsthand the powerful community.



Our Education Fellows were highlighted as they also led sessions, assisted presenters, ran the registration process, answered a million questions and made their own presentations.

For some participants, the experiential minyanim were the highlights, for others it was the music of Max Einsohn or Alicia Jo and for many it was a sense of





gearing up for the coming year, recharging the educator batteries and learning new ways to impart our history, practice and faith to our children.

If you weren't able to attend the conference this year or would like to see more of what it is all about please visit us on Facebook! And

you can watch the wrap up video of the whole conference at www.youtube.com/user/TheISJL. Please mark your calendar

for the 11th annual Go and Teach conference in Jackson, MS June 24-26, 2012!

Reflections on the conference

By: First year Fellow, Reva Frankel



The first few days following the conference seem deathly still after the hyperactivity of the previous month. Anxious anticipation pervades the education department as we await our fates until finally we are called into a department meeting.

As if peering over taller heads to see the cast-list that just went up, we each scan the list for our names as soon as we receive it. The fortunate difference in this scenario is that no one is left off or upset for not scoring the lead role because we are each given the opportunity to play the role of the Fellow in seven communities scattered throughout the South. The tension has suddenly evolved into palpable excitement as we each remember community members from the conference that we will now get to see again.

And then the stress factor returns as we try to map out our summers, attempting to give as many communities as possible their first choice dates. In the summers, we travel in groups, both for logistic and economic reasons, and because second-year Fellows travel with first-year Fellows to lend support.

Trying to accommodate as many considerations as possible seems like an impossible feat, and yet somehow we walk out of the meeting with a jam-packed schedule and begin calling our contacts and planning our visits.

The fluctuating emotions that have coursed through the beginning of July lead into August and dissipate as we begin our visits. My first visit this summer was to Congregation *B'nai Emunah* in Tulsa, OK. I first met with the teachers and the Education Committee and then headed out the next morning to Turner Falls in Davis, OK for the *B'nai Mitzvah* camping trip. Being able to participate in an event like this was an added bonus because I was able to get to know some of the students and lead programs like a Yoga afternoon *Mincha* service.

On my visit to Temple Emanuel in Winston-Salem, NC I led a teacher and *madrachim* training with the Education Director, Molly Glazer, a previous ISJL Fellow. Standing in front of a room of experienced educators leading my first teacher training was fairly

intimidating, but tag-teaming with Molly made me feel more confident. We started by leading an ice-breaker together, and then switched back and forth between text studies and trainings.

With the end of August comes the end of summer visits, and planning for the fall is already in full swing. Luckily for me, my fall visits began shortly after the summer visits ended. Even though the summer of a Fellow is a bit chaotic and I was traveling more than I was in the office (I was only in the office for a total of ten days in August!), knowing that the summer was only the start of the year is exhilarating. Visiting my communities is the highlight of my job and fall visits are the opportunity to begin to really get to know the congregations and community members. I will be able to participate in community events and work more closely with the education directors, teachers, and students. I am most excited to experience *Shabbat* and the varied ways it is celebrated in the seven fabulous communities I will be visiting again this fall.



Education Department August Travel Calendar

Summer Highlights

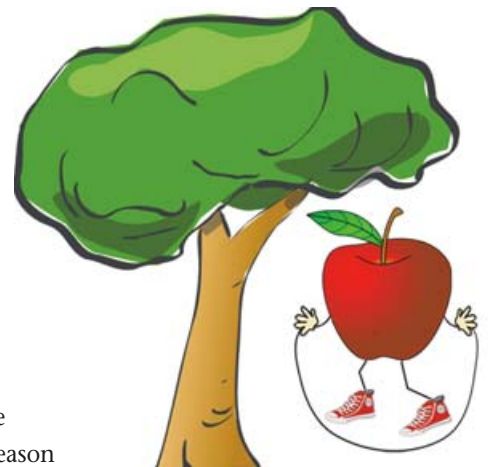
By: Malkie Schwartz

The Department of Community Engagement was fortunate to have D'Cory Owens; intern over the summer with us, building the groundwork for a health initiative that is still in the early stages of development. D'Cory, a rising senior at Tougaloo College here in Jackson, MS and a native of Memphis, TN, has already completed a range of impressive design projects. D'Cory's summer project was to develop colorful and engaging characters and materials that we can use as we work together with children and adults in our community to exchange information on health related topics and encourage healthy living habits. His experience, creativity and wide range of graphic design skills is evidenced by the significant collection of animated characters and images that he

e-Life Health Initiative
ENVIRONMENT | EATING | EXERCISE

created. We are looking forward to using his artwork as we participate in efforts combating the South's high rates of obesity and other health related issues.

This year, yet again, Mississippi was ranked the most obese state in the country. Obesity, however, is not an issue that exclusively affects the state of Mississippi. In fact, according to the most recent study released by Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 7 of the 13 states in the ISJL's region have a child obesity rate of more than 20% and the remaining 6 states have a child obesity rate of between 15%-20%. The ISJL's Department of Community Engagement is committed to working with community partners to intervene and help curtail this growing trend.



While we continue to respond to these overwhelming statistics, the ISJL has reason to be optimistic. We were recently notified that T.A.P., the peer mediation program that we launched at Blackburn Middle School, was selected to be featured as the Mississippi Kids Count Success Story in the 2012 Kids Count publication for the School Safety category. While this program is still in the piloting stage, we are already aware of the positive impact it is having at Blackburn and can potentially have in schools throughout the region. We recognize that for our children to work toward high academic achievement they must feel healthy and safe. We look forward to making these programs available to more students in our region.

Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience Leaving the Utica location by January 2013

By: Rachel Jarman

The Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience is set to relocate from its site in Utica, MS in 2013 and the ISJL staff and board committee have been busy putting together a strategic plan for the future of the MSJE. This July, ISJL staff and board members took a research trip to Philadelphia, PA to visit the recently opened National Museum of American Jewish History and the National Constitution Center.

At the NMAJH we had the pleasure of meeting with the staff behind the development of the new museum. They answered questions from our group on the process of moving out of their old space

and developing the new multi million dollar museum directly on Independence Mall. We were also given a behind the scenes tour of their remarkable exhibit which cover 350 years of American Jewish history using a combination of artifacts and the latest in museum technologies. Our group was inspired by the expansive museum and the creative ways they have told the story of Jews in America.

We also toured the National Constitution Center which is a great example of a modern museum that teaches using theatrical performances, multi media technology and interactive exhibits. We met

with staff to discuss their success in marketing and education outreach and were inspired by the wide range of themes covered in the museum which enables them to reach a large audience, especially school groups.

After our whirlwind day, our group was able to debrief about what we took away from these museums and what we would like to include in the future MSJE. The trip established that our group is committed to bringing the history of the Southern Jewish Experience to life by utilizing technologies and techniques that are successful in today's top museums.



Inspired by their location on the mall, the exhibit is themed on the Jewish experience of freedom in America.

Josh Perelman, Deputy Director of Programming at the National Museum of American Jewish History, giving ISJL staff and board members a tour of the museum in Philadelphia, PA.

Reflections from summer Intern Mandy Benter

The Museum Department was proud to have intern Mandy Benter, a history student at the University of Wisconsin join the team this summer. She brought fantastic energy and knowledge to the department and successfully helped execute a variety of projects ranging from updating the collection database to the development of a traveling education program. Below is a reflection Mandy wrote on her summer experience at the ISJL.

“I worked to preserve recent donations such as a few decades’ worth of sermons from Rabbi Ackerman of Temple Beth Israel in Meridian, MS and made sure that every object received an accession number and an acid-free home.

Other days I had the opportunity to give tours to small groups. Some were Jewish professionals wishing to know the history of their southern congregations. Others had family members that made the journey across the Atlantic to Southern harbors. A few simply came across a Jewish cemetery in Louisiana and got hooked on this often overlooked narrative.

My main project this summer was developing the MSJE Traveling Trunk Program. This is a traveling education program that will give students the unique opportunity to learn about Jewish European immigrants and their experience adapting to life in the South. MSJE Project Coordinator, Rachel Jarman and I wrote a series of lesson plans and assembled 40 artifacts that teachers can request to supplement immigration and cultural diversity lessons in their classrooms. Students will be able to calculate the time it would take to sail to the Port of New Orleans, dress in period costumes, research primary documents

and create their own Southern Jewish store!

One of my last assignments led to one of my favorite moments this summer. As some may know, the MSJE will be leaving its current location in 2013, and the ISJL is actively looking for thoughts on future exhibits. I held a focus group of several campers and had a great time showing them our extensive and diverse collection while obtaining valuable suggestions for the future. Turns out, the kids had a good time too.

Ultimately, I enjoyed every aspect of my role as Museum Intern, and I am most proud



of my impression on the next generation of Mississippians, Jews and non-Jews alike. Wherever the MSJE Traveling Trunk Program makes a stop, children from every background will learn about the impact Jews made and continue to make in their Southern communities.”



NORTH CAROLINA

Some Fun North Carolina Jewish History

In 2009, Boone’s Jewish community held a congregational meeting in two places simultaneously, Boone and Boca Raton, Florida, to vote in favor of building their first synagogue. Many of the members of the “Temple of the High Country” are retirees who spend part of the year in Florida.

In 1942, Charlotte Jew Harry Golden started “The Southern Israelite” newspaper, a progressive voice in the South during the Civil Rights era. In response to lunch counter sit-ins, Golden satirically advocated “the vertical Negro plan.” Golden noted that whites seemed to have no problem standing next to African Americans, so he called for the removal of all seats in restaurants.

Gertrude Weil of Goldsboro became a leader in the suffrage movement in North Carolina, serving as president of the North Carolina Equal Suffrage League in 1919. She later became an activist against child labor and lynching.

Brothers Moses and Caesar Cone helped to transform the small town of Greensboro into a center of the textile industry with their Proximity Cotton Mill, established in 1895. The Cone family later became leading philanthropists in Greensboro.

Aaron Lazarus moved to Wilmington in 1795 and became one of the city’s leading businessmen. Since there was no Jewish congregation in the town at the time, Lazarus joined the local Episcopal Church, claiming he could “worship Jehovah in any of his temples.” Despite this, Lazarus observed the Jewish Sabbath in his home.



Beth Israel, Asheville

Beth David, Greensboro



Beth Israel Fayetteville



Rabbi Marshal Klaven went to Statesville in March. It was our first rabbinic visit and he celebrated Purim with the Religious school.



For more stories about North Carolina Jews, visit the Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities at www.isjl.org.



Batsheva and The Baal Shem

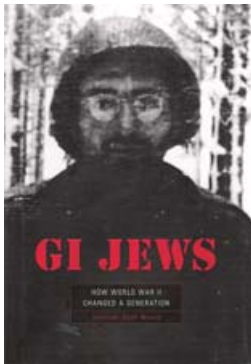
Tones, both 2011-2012 ISJL Musical

Presenters, performed at the 3rd annual Shalom Lake Norman, Festival at the Lake.

Batsheva also appeared at Temple Emanuel in Winston-Salem and the Baal Shem Tones appeared at Congregation Beth Israel in Asheville.

In each of the upcoming Circa issues we will be spotlighting one of our 13 states. Be on the lookout for your state soon!

The ultimate Southern Jewish shopping experience



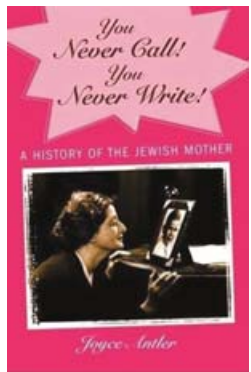
Book Clearance Sale

For all items including new and sale items, check out our website www.isjl.org.

Chicken Soup for the Jewish Soul edited by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen and Rabbi Dov Peretz Elkins—These 86 stories deal with the themes of life, being a Jew, love and kindness, humanity and family. was \$12 now \$9

GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation

by Deborah Dash Moore—This book follows the lives of fifteen young Jewish men as they faced the demands of military service. was \$26 now \$20

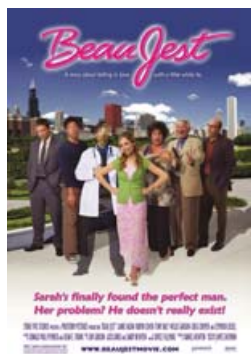


Glass Hearts by Terri Paul—This novel traces the lives of a Hungarian Jewish family during and after World War II. was \$25 now \$20

Jewish Confederates by Robert N. Rosen—In his latest study, Robert Rosen introduces readers to the community of Southern Jews in the 1860's. was \$40 now \$30

Landsman by Peter Charles Melman—Landsman is the Civil War story of Elia Abrams, orphan son of an indentured Jewish immigrant who flees his sordid New Orleans gangland home to enlist with the Third Louisiana infantry. was \$25 now \$20

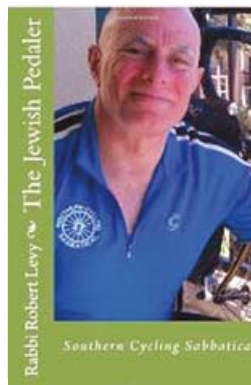
You Never Call! You Never Write!: A History of the Jewish Mother by Joyce Antler —Antler provides an illuminating and often amusing history of one of the best-known figures in popular culture—the Jewish Mother. was \$25 now \$20



New Jewish Comedy: **Beau Jest!**—Sarah invents the perfect boyfriend and delights her parents with stories about the man of her mother's dreams. When her parents insist on meeting this nice Jewish surgeon - Sarah resorts to desperate measures. Enter Bob, an actor, to play the role of her new beau. The antics that follow are what have made this comical, heartwarming tale such a huge success since its first stage production in 1989. DVD \$20

Your purchase supports the ISJL's work!

Visit the Peddler's Cart online at www.isjl.org Ordering is a simple click away.



Let's be honest, not many of us could bike across one state, let alone four while stopping to support small Jewish congregations along the way. Yet, that is exactly what Rabbi Robert Levy did on the ISJL Southern Cycling Sabbatical last spring. And, now - thanks to the publication of his inspiring journey, *The Jewish Pedaler* - you can ride tandem. Join Rabbi Levy, as he guides the reader over amazing obstacles on his path of discovery: finding new friends and new perspectives of the American Jewish South.

The ISJL sincerely thanks Rabbi Levy. In addition to donating his time and energy for this amazing journey, Rabbi Levy is also donating all proceeds from the sale of this book to the ISJL. *The Jewish Pedaler* is available in paper-back through the ISJL's Peddler's Cart. Enjoy the ride!

Thank You to Our Contributors!

In these CIRCA pages, you can see the impact our education, history, museum, cultural and rabbinic programs have on thousands of people just like you. With deep appreciation, the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life extends thanks to everyone who made a contribution from January 1, 2011 – August 15, 2011, to enable our important work.

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