

WINTER 2011

CIRCA

Newsletter of the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life

INSIDE

New Adult

Education

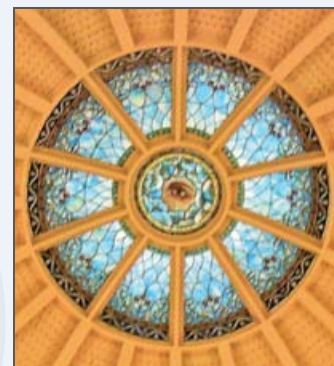
Webinars

History of
the Luling,
Texas Jewish
Community

Rabbi Klaven
visits the Upper
Cumberland
Jewish
Community

Community
Engagement
Department
launches new
literacy program

Guess Where We've Been? On the Road with the ISJL Staff



Can you name the synagogues pictured above?
Find the answers on page 13.

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MSJE to Relocate



Message from
ISJL Board Chair
Rayman L. Solomon

The Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience, the Institute's award-winning oldest program, is relocating. In 2013 the MSJE will leave its more than twenty-year home at Jacobs Camp in Utica, Mississippi for an as-yet-undetermined location. At our October 2010 meeting in Washington and then in two subsequent conference calls, the Board of the Institute thoroughly discussed this issue and decided to take this action. The decision to move was not an easy one for a number of historical reasons, but we think it offers great potential for our programming and the visibility of the Institute.

When our President, Macy Hart, was the Director of Jacobs Camp, he began to develop the vision of what became the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life. He sought ways to help the dwindling Jewish populations in small towns throughout the South. One of the first opportunities that presented itself was to save ritual objects from temples and synagogues that were closing. As more materials began to be collected at Jacobs, a building to house the materials was needed. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, which owned the Camp, was not interested in having a museum, so Macy and a group of supporters organized a separate non-profit organization called the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience.

The Plough Foundation awarded a generous grant to build a building to house the collection, and the understanding was that the Camp owned the building and the MSJE owned the contents. When Macy founded the ISJL and left the Camp in 2000 to become its president, the MSJE continued to operate as one of the divisions of the Institute. We had staff at the site in Utica and would open the building to visitors when possible. We also arranged for traveling exhibits, such as the collection of Bill Aron photographs entitled "Bagels & Grits." The Museum has a satellite site in Natchez and has talked with other communities about opening other satellites.

However, for years we have realized that the location in Utica is not ideal, as it is difficult for visitors to get to and it is not always easy for either the Camp or for us to have staff there. At the end of last summer we were approached by the leadership of the Camp, who asked if we would consider relocating. The Camp is in need of space for arts programming and after considering a number of alternatives their Board decided that what was most feasible was to convert the museum building into an arts center. We reached an agreement whereby the museum can stay at its current site until 2013, so that we will have the time it will take to make our new plans.

The Board views this as an opportunity to develop a new vision of the Museum and its role within the Institute. We have the chance to relocate it to one or more locations that will provide access to more visitors. More people can gain an understanding of the story of the Southern Jewish experience and can learn about the programs of the Institute. Jay Tanenbaum and Morris Mintz have agreed to co-chair a Board committee that will investigate our options and make recommendations. All options are on the table. The only given is that we will find a solution that will enable us to continue to fulfill our responsibility to preserve these ritual objects and also enable us to continue to tell the story of Southern Jews in the same innovative and imaginative manner we have over the past quarter-century.

The transition of the Museum will take resources and a great deal of the Board's focus over the next several years. We hope that we can count on you, our loyal supporters, for both ideas and contributions to make it successful. If you would like to be involved in this exciting effort, please contact me or any of the staff at the Institute.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Solomon".

Here's my wish list



Message from
ISJL President
Macy B. Hart

This past October, I had the unique opportunity to take part in "The Conversation," an annual face-to-face discussion with Jewish leaders and scholars from across the country, sponsored by *The Jewish Week*. Over three days, 55 of us discussed problems facing the American Jewish community and how we can build a better Jewish future. This was not a new conversation for me, as we at the Institute have been wrestling with these issues for the past ten years.

Inspired by this dialogue, I want to dream about the next ten years as we capture the sunlight of the dawn of the ISJL's second decade. Below are just **some** of my wishes for the different future we are helping to shape.

- I wish Jewish children in small and large communities had access to a quality Jewish education regardless of the resources or size of a community. It's important to remember that 90% of Jewish children who are exposed to some form of Jewish education attend supplementary congregational schools.
- I wish communal dollars could be allocated each year according to changing programs and priorities rather than pre-allocation determinations that leave no room for innovation or new opportunities.
- I wish the Jewish leadership across our diverse communities would sit at that table of dialogue and work together instead of living on islands within the same zip code.
- I wish Jewish children in the 4th and 5th grades could have the same

birthright for camp as young adults have for a trip to Israel. The earlier we start them in camp the longer we keep them. As we all know, the earlier kids start a new experience, the easier they learn.

- I wish the Israel experience would be part of an educational track, both in congregational school and Camp, where a 6-week, high-school-age field trip would supplant the 10-day young adult trip.
- I wish the Jewish community could create a feeder system where Jewish youth programs would once again attract large numbers. Early educational intervention must receive the same priority as programs for the teenage years.
- I wish there was a great big funded national *kupah* (pot of dollars) so small and middle-size communities could offer high caliber events like those found mostly in larger urban areas. It would be for these communities as the Soref Fund is for Jewish life on college campuses that are too small for a Hillel.
- I wish large congregations in urban areas would adopt a sister congregation within a three hour drive, similar to the adoption of sister cities in Israel and the former Soviet Union. Think of the camaraderie that would develop from such a "local" approach.
- I wish some of the ego-constructed barriers among Jewish professionals would vanish and that the divisions constructed by lay leadership in congregational life would give way to greater collaboration.
- I wish the "Jewish Community" would embody the meaning of the word year-round, and not just in times of crisis.
- I wish congregations were not treated as simply consumer options.

- I wish many families who drop out after bar/bat mitzvah or confirmation would keep their financial support strong for the younger families who are usually the least able to afford to maintain a communal program. Many congregations across North America are struggling financially and the burden falls on those who least can afford to pay.
- I wish the Movements and national communal organizations really knew their constituents.
- I wish communities viewed supplementary congregational schools as essential to the Jewish future as day schools.
- I wish the religious school was the highest budget priority for each congregation.
- I wish there were funding sources available for congregational schools across North America.
- I wish community engagement and social responsibility were still a major philosophy and practice of the larger Jewish conscience.
- I wish the Institute of Southern Jewish Life could find some angels to assist as we continue to offer enriching programs to many communities that can not afford this on their own.

So these and many more are my wish list for the coming years. I assure you that the ISJL will be out there in the field working to build this ideal future community by showing what can be if there is more conversation and less confrontation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Macy B. Hart'.

ISJL Launches Adult Education Webinars

Here at the ISJL, we like to think of the communities with whom we work as one large, virtual congregation. Like most congregations, we have a rabbi, cultural programming, and a top-notch education program for children. What we have been missing, until now, is adult education. While we have the education conference, teacher trainings, and our weekly "Taste of Torah" emails, we know that there is still a large portion of our community that we are not reaching. Thus, the ISJL is pleased to announce the launch of a new series of adult education webinars.

Combining traditional education and modern technology, a webinar is basically a seminar given over the internet. During the webinar, you can listen to the presenter while seeing photos, text, and other illustrations on your computer screen. The sessions happen in live-time, just like a class, and you and your fellow classmates will be able to ask questions and even engage in discussion. All you need to take part is a computer with internet access.

This spring, we will be offering two tracks of sessions. The first track will be geared toward all adult learners and will feature the wonderful staff of the ISJL. Our second track is specially designed for education directors, teachers and parents, and will be taught by the ISJL's Education Department. All of these webinars are free and open to the public. If you are interested in taking part in one of the webinars, please contact Jordan Magidson at (601) 362-6357; jmagidson@isjl.org.

Track 1 Schedule

**FULL EXPOSURE:
A REVEALING PICTURE OF THE
JEWISH ENGAGEMENT WITH TATTOOING**

Rabbi Marshal Klaven
Tuesday February 8, 2011 8pm EST/7pm CST

**NOT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY: PAULA ACKERMAN &
TEMPLE BETH ISRAEL OF MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI**

Dr. Stuart Rockoff
Tuesday March 8, 2011 8pm EST/7pm CST

**DAYENU:
IS GIVING AND GRATITUDE ENOUGH?**

Malkie Schwartz
Tuesday April 12, 2011 8pm EST/7pm CST

A BRIEF HISTORY OF YIDDISH

Joshua Parshall
Tuesday May 10, 2011 8pm EST/7pm CST

Track 2 Schedule

**BEYOND THE ALEPH BET:
TAPPING INTO THE INTENTION OF TEFILLAH**

Rachel Stern and Mark Swick
Sunday February 20, 2011 12:30pm EST/1:30pm CST

**IT IS NOT IN THE HEAVENS:
THE TEXT OF TEACHING**

Jordan Magidson and Alex Glass
Sunday March 20, 2011 12:30pm EST/1:30pm CST

COEXISTENCE IN THE CLASSROOM

Allison Goldman and Molly Glazer
Sunday April 17, 2011 12:30pm EST/1:30pm CST

BUILDING A CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

Emily Andes, Michelle Blumenthal and
Lauren Fredman
Sunday May 15, 2011 12:30pm EST/1:30pm CST

9th Annual Education Conference to be Held June 26-28 in Jackson

If you are a Jewish religious school teacher in the South, chances are you have heard about the annual ISJL education conference. While the national funding for Jewish conferences and continuing education has plummeted, our conference continues to be a priority for our board and our funders. We see it as our obligation to offer teachers and schools the resources, inspiration, and support they need to do their jobs.

For the last eight years, we

have designed a top-flight education conference to honor and support those dedicated to the important task of Jewish education. The conference is not only a place for the teachers of our southern region to network, but also a place where the leaders of Jewish education come to share their knowledge and expertise. This successful formula has transformed what was once a small gathering of congregations into one of the leading Jewish education conferences in the

country, with hundreds of participants.

This year's conference, to be held June 26-28, will feature Ron Wolfson, Ph.D., the Fingerhut Professor of Education at American Jewish University in Los Angeles, the Co-President of Synagogue 3000, and a member of the Consortium for the Future of the Jewish Family. Dr Wolfson is also an author of many books including, *God's To-do List: 103 Ways to Be an Angel and Do God's Work on Earth.*



Wolfson

In addition to Dr. Wolfson, this year's conference will also offer networking opportunities, specialized learning tracks, resource/vendor fair, regional receptions and more.

For more information on the conference or to register, please contact Shirley Eriksen at 601-362-6357; sriksen@isjl.org.

Ivrit Enrichment Taps into Intention of Tefillah

The original ISJL curriculum offered a Hebrew program designed for schools that only meet weekly and teach both Hebrew and Judaics on the same day. As our education program has grown, we now work with many schools that also meet midweek for Hebrew, with some even meeting twice midweek. For this reason, we have expanded our Hebrew curriculum to meet the needs of a more comprehensive Hebrew program focusing on grades 4th-6th.

When creating any program

we always ask the most important question: What are the goals? The main goal that we identified for our new Hebrew program was for Jewish students to value Hebrew prayer and to want to attend services as adults. We looked to the basic components of Jewish prayer for the answer. There are two traditional components of prayer, *keva* and *kavanah*. *Keva* refers to the rote nature of learning the prayers. This is the "how to" of the prayers, making sure that students can read Hebrew prayers with fluency. *Kavanah* refers to

the intention or meaning of prayer.

Our new program, named *Ivrit* (Hebrew) Enrichment combines both *keva* and *kavanah* so that the students have not only a mastery of the words but also a personal connection and understanding of the prayers. The *keva* section consists of drills, games and techniques that help students learn to read Hebrew. The *kavanah* section is unique to every prayer and contains creative activities that connect the prayers to experiences that

will help the students to have their own understanding. *Ivrit* Enrichment also lends itself to a learning stations style of instruction, allowing teachers to meet the needs of each student.

Thanks to Congregation Agudas Achim of San Antonio, Texas, we had a laboratory to test out the lessons as we were writing. The result is our new *Ivrit* Enrichment program, which will help create the next generation of knowledgeable and connected Jewish worshippers.

Read, Lead, Succeed!

Read, Lead and Succeed is a new literacy program that the ISJL Department of Community Engagement is preparing to pilot in early 2011 as part of an after school program in Jackson, Mississippi. With a goal to improve literacy, this program is based on the understandings that fluency is directly affected by how much a child reads and is read to and that younger children admire and often

imitate older students. In this program, high school and middle school students become “Reading Leaders” and are paired with elementary school students. The pair reads together on a regular basis and participates in group activities focusing on particular areas of literacy including speech, grammar, spelling and comprehension.

ISJL Director of Community Engagement Malkie

Schwartz has worked with professionals in the field of literacy education to develop a training workshop that will prepare the high school and middle school students for their role as Reading Leaders. The training will focus on ensuring that all of the students walk away having had a positive reading experience. The second phase of this program will incorporate college students who are “literacy educators

in training.” These college students will receive supervised “hands-on” experiences as they prepare lesson plans for literacy activities for the reading buddies. This training is a key component for the success of this program. We are looking forward to updating you on the development of this program in subsequent issues of *Circa*.

Talking through Conflict

The ISJL Peer Mediation curriculum featured in the fall issue of *Circa* teaches middle school students basic conflict resolution skills and encourages them to talk through their conflicts and work together to arrive at peaceful resolutions. The Department of Community Engagement is in the process of producing an instructional DVD that will demonstrate essential skills in conflict resolution. ISJL partnered with Mad Genius, a local advertising and branding company, to produce a DVD that will be an engaging supplement to the curriculum. Mad Genius

has generously supported this project by giving of their expertise, time, and resources. Together, the ISJL and Mad Genius have been working with students from Blackburn Middle School to write the script. The actors—all Blackburn/Jackson Public School students—are active peer mediators and the first students to complete a peer mediation training based on the ISJL program. The creation of this DVD will make it possible to offer the Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation program and curriculum to more middle schools throughout our



Students from Blackburn Middle School in Jackson, Mississippi, posing as “mad geniuses”

region. Upon its completion, the ISJL will work with community partners to

bring the program to schools beyond the Jackson metro area.

Diversity: God's Greatness

Rabbi Marshal Klaven



Rabbi Marshal Klaven with Father Louis Lohan of St. Thomas Catholic Church at a fair to raise money for Katrina relief in Long Beach, Mississippi. Photo by Lori Beth Susman.

Diversity, as we know, is all around us. It pervades our world. In fact, some need only to look at their own families to see the beautiful tapestry that diversity can create. Such is the case in my own family, especially during the winter holidays. With the lights off in the dining room, those in my family who are Jewish light the lights of the Chanukah menorah. Those in my family who are Christian light the lights of the Christmas tree. Those in my family who are of African descent light the lights of the Kwanzaa kinara. And, those in my family who are atheist, well, they flip on the lights of the dining room and exclaim: "Man! It's dark in here!"

Regrettably, these same words could be used to describe the current state of tolerance in America: "It's dark in here." Yet wonderfully, in an attempt to shed some light on the issue, we engage in interfaith,

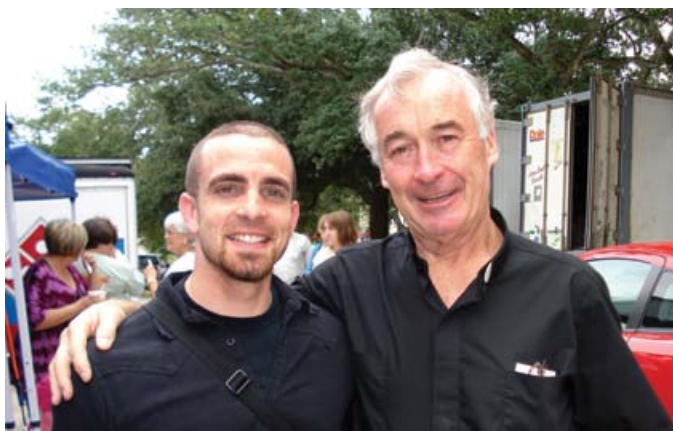
interracial, intercultural dialogue. Though, when we do, let us make sure we do so constructively. Because all too often, when we approach diversity, we tend to whittle down our differences to some common singularity. This is a mistake, as then our function becomes singular as well, incapable of responding to the diverse needs of our time. Though, it is also clear that we cannot maintain the status quo, reinforcing our diversity by allowing any one group to be slated for success while another is allotted to fail. For when one part of this great machine we call America fails, well then, we all stand to fail.

Rather, to achieve the divine promise that is "America," we must stand up together and turn to those simple, yet immortal, words born to so many cultures and to so many faiths: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," as we have here in America; "choose for thy neighbor, what thou would chooseth for thyself," as spoken by Bahauallah, founder of the Bahai Faith; "love your neighbor as yourself," a Biblical quote shared by Jesus, and even "what is hateful to you, do not do to any person," as spoken by the Jewish sage Hillel. For each of these expressions, whether framed positively or negatively,

preserves the uniqueness of our neighbor, while allowing us to see a bit of ourselves in them.

Acknowledging as much, the sages of my faith tradition - in admiration of God's greatness - wrote: "Praise the greatness of the Holy One! For, while man may stamp many coins with one seal and they are all alike, the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be God, stamps every person with the same seal and yet none of them are the same." (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5) In other words, the sages teach that the greatness of God is manifest in our diversity. And to ensure that great strength does not become our greatest weakness we must find a way to (1) acknowledge and value our differences in general without (2) placing a value on those particular differences.

In doing so, in allowing our own light to shine, without attempting to out-shine another, we may light up any room, illuminating a life of less hostility and more reasonability, of less pain and more healing, of less hate and more love, of less war and more peace. Let us continue to be and become that beacon as we emerge from the darkness of winter to the light of spring.



Rabbi Klaven Visits Upper Cumberland Jewish Community

At the ISJL, we work hard to keep track of every Jewish congregation in our 13-state region. There is no greater authority on the state of southern Jewish congregations than the staff of the ISJL. That's why we were taken aback when Rabbi Marshal Klaven was contacted by the Upper Cumberland Jewish Community (UCJC), a group in Crossville, Tennessee, about whom we had never heard. In October of last year, Rabbi Klaven visited the group and offered his support to the fledgling congregation.

In an eventful weekend, Rabbi Klaven led the seven-year-old congregation through a baby naming ceremony, an adult education session, and a combined celebration of Simchat Torah and Shabbat. UCJC has a congregational e-mail list of about 30 households, while major holidays can draw as many as 65 people. Rabbi Klaven's visit attracted new worshippers. Because UCJC advertised the service in two local newspapers,

"many people heard about a significant Jewish presence in this area for the first time," Rabbi Klaven said. "And in my remarks to the community, I challenged them that in addition to now knowing that you are not alone, we should utilize the collective strength of each individual, with the support of the ISJL, to continue the great energy and excitement that was present there that night."

The Rabbi brought the two Magdovitz Torah scrolls borrowed from the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience. "In all of UCJC's history, in the regular worship they had engaged in, they had never read directly from a scroll," the Rabbi said. "The community was enthralled by the uniqueness of having the Torahs present – so much so, that everyone wanted their picture with a Torah." One worshiper remarked he was "so thrilled at the service, as this was the first time my daughter has heard Hebrew in our prayers."

The UCJC's congregants include people who live there only during the summer, though most



Norton Goodman (left), president of the Upper Cumberland Jewish Community, and Rivki Ackerman (right) holding the Magdovitz Torah scrolls during worship led by visiting Rabbi Marshal Klaven (center).

members live in the area year-round. Many congregants are what folks in those parts call "halfbacks," i.e., northerners who retired to Florida, then decided to move northward and settled in Tennessee and the Carolinas, about halfway back to their original homes. UCJC President Norton Goodman describes UCJC as "a rather informal group. We meet every other Friday night at a local church," where usually a Hebrew-reading congregant leads services. "Somehow we get a challah – sometimes from Chicago or Knoxville or even shipped from New York," Goodman said.

At the baby-naming, the Rabbi noticed "that most of the congregation was in tears. I felt it too. There was something extra

present there with us. I, not surprisingly, would say it was God. But, I am not the only one." The baby's grandmother, congregant Beverly Press, told Rabbi Klaven in an e-mail that he had "brought new life to us here in the sleepy hollow. As for Saturday, I believe, especially after listening to the things many people said, that you brought a new sense of Jewishness and love of the religion to us."

Rabbi Klaven's visit to Crossville sums up the mission of the ISJL Rabbinic Department, to reach out to small and remote Jewish communities and to engage, support, and celebrate their Jewish faith.

A Weekend on the Road with the

Our Jackson office is typically quiet on Friday afternoons as everyone heads out on the road to begin their weekend of work. On any given weekend, a large number of our staff is traveling to serve Jewish communities large and small all across our thirteen-state region. The timeline shown here is a snapshot of a typical weekend of ISJL programs.

6:30 pm
Friday Night Services
Congregation B'nai Israel
Natchez, MS
Rabbi Marshal Klaven

7:00 pm
Dr. Seuss Shabbat
Lake Norman Jewish Congregation
Lake Norman, NC
EF Lauren Fredman

10:00 am
Hannukah Celebration
Congregation B'nai Israel
Natchez, MS
Rabbi Marshal Klaven



Friday December 10th

Saturday December 11th

6:00 pm
Youth Group Event
Congregation Emanu El
Houston, TX
EF Emily Andes

7:15 pm
Children's Shabbat Service
Congregation Etz Chaim
Bentonville, AR
EF Michelle Blumenthal

9:30 am
Junior Congregation
Ahavath Achim
Atlanta, GA
EF Molly Glazer

7:00 pm
Yoga Havdallah
Congregation
Sha'arey Israel
Macon, GA
EF Claire Solomon



2:00 pm
International Story Hour
Congregation Etz Chaim
Bentonville, AR
EF Michelle Blumenthal

EF- Education Fellow



12:00 noon
 Combined School Program
 Congregation Sha'arey Israel and Temple Beth Israel
 Macon, GA
 EF Claire Solomon and EF Mark Swick

10:30 am
 Education Committee Presentation
 Congregation Emanu El
 Houston, TX
 EF Emily Andes

12:00 noon
 Confirmation Class
 Ahavath Achim
 Atlanta, GA
 EF Molly Glazer

Sunday December 12th



10:00 am
 Jewish Heroes All -School Program
 Lake Norman Jewish Congregation
 Lake Norman, NC
 EF Lauren Fredman

11:00 am
 Tikkun Olam Program
 Congregation Etz Chaim
 Bentonville, AR
 EF Michelle Blumenthal

7:00 pm
 History Lecture
 Jewish Community Center
 Houston, TX
 Dr. Stuart Rockoff



Luling, Texas: Promise Unfulfilled

The ISJL History Department has been working hard to research and write the histories of the Jewish communities of Texas. Later this year, these histories will be added to the Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities on the ISJL website. Below, is an abridged version of the history of Luling.

Luling, Texas was created when the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railroad terminated its line in a rural area not far from Plum Creek in 1874. Developers quickly swooped in, including Thomas Pierce of Boston, Massachusetts, who divided much of the land into lots and sold them to newly arriving settlers, many of whom came from nearby towns that had been bypassed by the railroad. Luling quickly became a little boom town, reaching a population of 2,000 by the end of 1874. Among the earliest settlers of Luling were a handful of Jewish merchants who set up shop along the newly formed streets flanking either side of the train tracks.

A list of people who bought Luling's original lots from Pierce contains several Jews, including Joseph Josey, who was perhaps the first Jew to live in the area. A native of Bavaria, Josey moved to Texas in 1861. By 1870, Josey lived in Lockhart.

Four years later, he moved fifteen miles south to the burgeoning town of Luling and opened a grocery and hardware store. Polish-born B.J. Kamien and Prussian-native Louis Lichtenstein also bought lots from Pierce in 1874, with both opening retail stores in Luling.

In 1879, Charles Wessolowsky, a correspondent for the *Jewish South* newspaper, visited Luling and reported that there were ten Jewish families living in the town. He remarked at how quickly the town and its Jewish community had developed. Indeed, Luling Jews established a Jewish cemetery in 1875; its first burial took place four years later after local peddler William Finkelstein was murdered while on the road. In 1879, Luling Jews founded a Hebrew Benevolent Society that oversaw the cemetery and dispensed charity to Jews in need. The society also held services for the high holidays of Rosh Hashanah



Max and Goldye Finkel stand in front of their store in downtown Luling. Photo courtesy of William Suhler.

and Yom Kippur. In 1878, the local newspaper noted that “the Hebrew merchants of Luling” would close their stores for two days for Rosh Hashanah and would hold services in a building downtown. By 1888, Luling Jews were holding high holiday services in the local opera house, which attracted numerous Jews from neighboring towns. Luling Jews continued to hold these services as late as 1900. These services were likely Orthodox since they celebrated Rosh Hashanah for the traditional two days. Nevertheless, these merchants regularly kept their stores open on Saturday since that was their biggest day for business.

By the 1880s, Jews played a prominent role in the local economy. In 1882, Jews owned 14 of Luling's 69 businesses, or 20%. Three of these retail businesses were run by women, including Rachel Finkelstein and Sarah Marx, who both owned grocery stores, and Sallie Cohn, who ran her family's general store. Of these fourteen businesses, half were grocery stores while four were general dry goods stores. According to the 1880 census, eighteen Jewish families lived in Luling, consisting of 62 total Jews.

One of the most prominent members of the Luling Jewish community was Reuben Jacobs, who had left his native Poland in

1867. After living in upstate New York, Jacobs began to peddle his way southward, eventually settling in Atlanta, Texas. When Luling became the railroad terminus in 1874, Jacobs moved to the new town, opening a dry goods store with another Jewish immigrant, Hyman Kleinsmith. Later, Jacobs took over sole control of the store, renaming it R. Jacobs. According to family lore, Reuben once sold goods to the notorious outlaw John Wesley Hardin, who paid him in gold. Reuben became a respected and successful local businessman. His department store occupied two buildings in downtown Luling. Reuben's son, Ben Mark Jacobs, joined his father in the store, which became known as R. Jacobs &

Sons. Ben Mark was elected mayor of Luling in the 1930s.

Reuben Jacobs was the exception among the first wave of Jewish settlers in Luling, most of whom left the town within a few years. By 1890, only six Jewish businesses remained in Luling, down from fourteen just eight years earlier. The great expectations for Luling's growth just after the railroad was built did not pan out. The early 1880s would prove to be the apex of Luling's Jewish community, and for the next century, the Jewish population underwent a long, slow decline. In 1920, there were only five Jewish families in Luling, representing 23 total Jews. By the early 20th century, Luling Jews no

longer held religious services; instead, they would travel to nearby Lockhart for the high holidays. Some also joined congregations in Austin and San Antonio.

Max and Goldye Finkel were among the last Jews to live in Luling. Max had left Lithuania in 1909, and spent time in New York City before moving to Texas in the 1910s. After World War I, he opened a dry goods store in Luling. According to a feature in the local newspaper published in 1936, "the store grew in prominence and became one of Luling's better established firms." Finkel was joined in Luling by his older brother Louis and his family. Louis opened the Popular Dry Goods Store, which he ran with his sons Harry and Larry Finkel, who later took over the business on their own, operating it through the 1960s.

Max Finkel was a longtime member of the conservative congregation Agudas Achim in San Antonio. When he died in 1975, he left money to both Agudas Achim and the Reform congregation Beth El in San Antonio. He also gave money to the National Jewish Hospital in Denver, the Jewish National Fund, and the

B'nai B'rith Charity Fund. Finkel's will reflects the fact that although he lived in a tiny Jewish community that never had a synagogue or formal congregation, he still maintained a strong Jewish identity and supported national Jewish causes.

Finkel continued to run his downtown store until his death, when the business was closed. The closing of Finkel's, which was the town's last Jewish-owned business, marked the end of a century of Jewish merchants in Luling. The building that housed Finkel's burned down in 2000. The semi-enclosed lot is now used as an arena for the watermelon seed spitting contest held each year during Luling's famous Watermelon Thump Festival.

Today, the small Jewish cemetery north of downtown remains the only vestige of Jewish life in Luling. While Jews were among the earliest settlers in a town that seemed to hold such promise, most soon moved on to other cities and towns that offered greater economic opportunity. The few that remained set down roots and became fixtures in the local community for a large part of the 20th century.

An overgrown cemetery is all that remains of the Luling Jewish community. Photo by Stuart Rockoff.



Israeli jazzman Amir Gwartzman returning to the South!



Adored by audiences, admired by peers, Israeli multi-instrumentalist Amir Gwartzman is a hit wherever – and whatever – he plays. Amir is master of saxophones and clarinets of all sizes, flutes from around the world, bagpipes, vuvuzela and a woodwind section full of other African, Asian, European and Middle Eastern wind instruments.

Amir has performed worldwide as a solo jazz musician and a member of the Israeli world music band Esta. He is releasing his first solo CD. In early 2010, the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) brought Amir to perform and teach in seven southern states. He was serving as a Schusterman Visiting Artist, an initiative sponsored by the ISJL and the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation.

In response to popular demand and his own heartfelt request, Amir will make a return visit from **February-April 2011**. We hope you will seize this special opportunity to host a world-class musician for a reasonable price in your community, be it large or small. With Amir, you will enjoy the sounds of Israel, share Israeli and Jewish culture with your neighbors, and hear the music of many cultures.

Host communities will provide for local expenses – housing, transportation, food, equipment rental (if needed) and an honorarium to the ISJL to support continuation of this innovative Visiting Artist program.

For more information, contact the ISJL at information@isjl.org or 601-362-6357.

Rockoff Elected President of SJHS

Director of the ISJL History Department, Dr. Stuart Rockoff, has been elected president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society. Rockoff will serve as president of the SJHS for two years. Since its founding in 1976, the SJHS has worked to foster scholarship about the experience of southern Jews. With an annual conference, academic journal, and active grant and award programs, the society has helped to move southern Jewish history from the margins of the American Jewish narrative into the mainstream. The ISJL has always had a close relationship with the society, and Rockoff hopes to pursue additional collaborations between the two organizations during his term as president.

TJHS helps underwrite Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities

The Texas Jewish Historical Society, which has been working to preserve the history of Jews in the Lone Star State since 1980, has agreed to support the ISJL's effort to write the Texas section of the Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities. With their generous grant, the TJHS will help underwrite the substantial costs of travel, research, writing, and publishing the histories on the ISJL website. With well over 50 community histories, the Texas section of the encyclopedia will be



the largest by far, and such financial support will ensure that this monumental task is completed.

According to Dr. Stuart Rockoff, Director of the ISJL History Department, "the ISJL has always pursued collaboration with like-

minded organizations. The Texas Jewish Historical Society is an outstanding organization with an impressive track record of success in documenting and preserving the history of Jews in the state. We are greatly honored by their show of support for our work." In addition to their financial support, the members of the TJHS have been essential resources for Dr. Rockoff and Oral Historian Josh Parshall as they have traveled across Texas collecting information about the Jewish communities of the state.

ANSWERS to "Guess Where We've Been" on front cover

1	4
2	
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5	

1. Ahavath Achim, Atlanta, GA
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New ISJL Director of Programming



We are thrilled to welcome Ann Zivitz Kimball to the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life as the new Director of Programming. Born and raised in New Orleans, Ann is the immediate past president of that city's Temple Sinai, serving from 2007-2009, after participating on the board and committees for a number of years. She has been on the Board of Trustees of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans, including serving as an advisor to the Young Leadership group of that organization. She's been

on the steering committee for Limmud New Orleans for the past three years. Ann has created programs and worked with speakers and performers for her synagogue as well as regional events. Ann has one son, Harrel Carlton Kimball, who is a Black Hawk Helicopter Crew Chief in the U.S. Army.

For information about any of the exciting cultural programs offered by the ISJL, contact Ann at: akimball@isjl.org, (601) 362-6357.

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 during 2010, to enable our important work.

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Contributions received between
September 1, 2010 and
January 7, 2011.

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*Ilene Engel & Bob Arotsky's
anniversary*
-Joan & Milton Loeb

Harry H. Bayer's recovery
-Ilse, Gail & Mike Goldberg

Michelle Blumenthal, ISJL Ed Fellow
-Congregation Rodeph Sholom-
Rome, GA
-Shelly & Jeffrey Peller

Suzy Boshwit's birthday
-Julie & Jerry Klein
-Deborah & Steve Bilsky

Levi Dov Fishman-Braunig's birth
-Helaine & Bill Braunig

Max Kolb Braunig's birth
-Helaine & Bill Braunig

Tobias Neal Braunig's birth
-Helaine & Bill Braunig

RoseMary Brooks' birthday
-Edye & Kenny Mayers

Susan Raphael Calman
-Harrylyn & Charles Sallis

Charlie Chasen
-Rabbi Joshua Lesser

Rita Chouinard
-Judy T. Robinson

Carole & Arthur Cohn's anniversary
-Barbara & Marty Coopersmith

*Minette Cooper's ISJL/MSJE Board
Service*
-Betsy & Marc Rosen

Richard Dattel
-Mary Jane & Mike Lamensdorf

Prof. Marc Dollinger
-Rabbi Allen Krause

Shirley Eriksen
-Ann & J. Kent Friedman

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-Karolyn & Jack Grundfest

*Pepe Prince Finn's ISJL Board
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-Miriam Freedman

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-Charlett & Marshall Frumin
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Ronne Hess' birthday
-Susan & Macy B. Hart

Rabbi Martin Hinchin's birthday
-Julie & Jerry Klein

*Wynnie Hoodis' ISJL Board
appointment*
-Betsy & Marc Rosen

ISJL Programs
-Golda M. Cohen

Burt Jaeger's birthday
-Reva & Ellis Hart

Betsy & Ed Karotkin's anniversary
-Susan & Macy B. Hart

Carolyn Katz
-Keith Katz

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-Anshe Chesed Congregation-
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-Temple Shalom-Lafayette, LA
-Ghislaine & Robert Rabin
-Temple Beth Shalom-Auburn,
AL

Julie & Jerry Klein
-Dr. Leon Aronson

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-Bettye Sue & Stan Kline
-Leslie & Fred Miller
-Pat & Phil Kline
-Robin & Evan Torch
-Laura & Henry Kline, II
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-Harriet Stern

Jessel Hart Martin's birth
-Lani & Spencer Preis
-Joel & Dub Ashner
-Leah, Eric & Lev Tennen

Janet Mayersohn
-Arnold Mayersohn

Doris & Joseph Metz' birthdays
-Gloria & Steven Simon

Jean & Saul Mintz
-Siesel Maibach

Ellyn Polsky - Happy Chanukah
-Barbara & Eugene Levy

Dr. Stuart Rockoff
-Marvin Rich

*Alison Jill Rosen becoming a Bat
Mitzvah*
-Ellsworth & Janet Birnkrant
Levine

Ann Rosenzweig's recovery
-Lotty Brodsky

Robert Roubey
-Joanne & Barry Roberts

Chuck Salomon's birthday
-Sandi & Bob Kahn

Betty Claire & Harold Samuels
-Bettie Cox & David Powers

Deborah Schneider's birthday
-Robin & Evan Torch

Rudi Scheidt's birthday
-Janet H. Brueck

Mr. & Mrs. John Sebastinas' anniversary
-Marilyn & Alvin Wexler

Mr. & Mrs. Bennie Shanker
-Marilyn & Alvin Wexler

Lou Shornick
-Phillippa Newfield

Lou Shornick & Family
-Jack Falk

Rabbi Steve Silberman
-Mr. & Mrs. Ken Bloch

Leanne & Alan Silverblatt
-Woods E. Eastland

*Sheri & Mickey Simon - Happy
Chanukah*
-Barbara & Eugene Levy

*Stephanie & Joel Sklar, Happy
Chanukah*
-Barbara & Jeff Levingston

*Linda Ellen & Ron Sklar, Happy
Chanukah*
-Barbara & Jeff Levingston

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Atlanta
-Karen Katims

*Josh Stokes position with Senator
Lieberman*
-Judy & Charles Stokes

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