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2016 was quite a year for the New Orleans Jewish community and our worldwide community. During this period, which encompasses both the years 5776 and 5777 on the Jewish calendar, we witnessed many news stories including a very hotly-contested race for the presidency, catastrophic flooding in our neighboring city of Baton Rouge and an increase in global anti-Semitism.

With the publication of this first Best of the Crescent City Jewish News Yearbook, you can hold this remarkable year of 2016 in your hands and relive many of the local, national and international items that shaped our world.

What distinguishes this publication from others? Well, first of all, it is composed of reprints of existing articles found on the Crescent City Jewish News website (www.crescentcityjewishnews.com). It covers a majority of major news items from 2016 including all obituaries for our local community. Obviously, we cannot publish the entire website, but this yearbook should encourage you to go to the website and check out the latest news and features to be found there. We update every day except for prohibited Jewish holidays like Shabbat.

All of the articles we post online are either original or have been paid for through various news agencies or syndicates. We are proud members of the American Jewish Press Association and the Southern Jewish Historical Society and have been recognized with several first place and other awards for our writing from the Press Club of New Orleans. Our brand and our local connection are most important to us. For the record the CCJN does not now nor has it ever had any direct connection to any other local Jewish medium, whether that be a newspaper, a magazine or a website. All of the articles and photos printed are either original content or have been secured through news services and syndicates and we hold ourselves to the highest of journalistic and ethical standards. Also keep in mind that the Crescent City Jewish News is the only locally-based Jewish medium whose owners are Jewish and who are lifelong “uptowners.” Unlike many Jewish community newspapers, we are not owned by the local Jewish Federation. Our mission statement and goals clearly state our purpose and our direct and ongoing connection to the New Orleans Jewish community. We are proud to be an independent voice to benefit all members of our Jewish community, wheresoever dispersed, and will continue to serve you now and in the future.

We ask you to please support those who advertise within our pages and on our website. Their financial support is an expression of their high regard both for our publication’s journalistic excellence and for our local Jewish community.

Here’s hoping that 2017 will be a meaningful year for you and that it will be full of the kinds of simchas and nachas that we will love to bring to you with the publication of SOURCE 5778 in September and the next Best of the CCJN Yearbook.

Alan Smason, Editor
Arlene S. Wieder, Advertising and Marketing director
The Crescent City Jewish News

presents

The Best of...

2016 Yearbook

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New Hadassah president installed by her children

By ALAN SMASON

When her three daughters were born, Charisse Sands made sure they were all made life members of Hadassah. So, it was only natural when she was due to be installed as the new president of the Greater New Orleans Chapter of Hadassah that her daughters were given a prominent hand in the ceremony.

All three daughters – Chaviva, Sara and Mirit – flew in from New York where they work or are in school to take part in the installation ceremonies by lighting a Chanukiah, denoting the eight officers being installed including their mother as president. The shamash candle stood for the entire chapter and the impetus and spirit behind each of the officers.

The ceremonies took place on Sunday, Jan. 17 at the home of former Southern Region president Lee Kansas in Lake Vista from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

“I spoke with each one individually and I said I would be very honored if she as well as her sisters would install me as their president,” Sands told the CCJN in an exclusive interview.

Starting when they were toddlers, Sands said she has exposed her daughters to Hadassah programs. “They’ve always come to various programs and even after they reached college, they would come to some-thing,” she recalled. “They’ve been involved as much as any child or teenager would (be).” Sands’ husband Marc and son Josh also were on hand, along with dozens of Hadassah members and associates, who witnessed the first part of the ceremonies administered by Julie Schwartz.

Sands has been a life member of Hadassah since 1982 while she was still living in Houston. She and her husband moved here with two of her daughters 28 years ago.

She started her Hadassah career as a board officer – vice-president for education – but after the children became grown and she was responsible for shuttling them back and forth to practices and sports activities, she removed herself as a board member for a time.

In the last several years, though, she returned to the board and was nominated with a slate of mostly new candidates to move the chapter forward from retiring president Ilana Reisin. Reisin will remain as an ex-officio officer with the chapter board.

Prior to Sands’ installation, Schwartz presided over the vote that brought the new slate of candidates into line. Joining Sands on the board for a two-year term are vice-president for programming Joy Feldman, vice- president for fundraising Fran Simon, vice-president for education, Cindy Denn, treasurer Arlene Hines, recording secretary Helen Stone and corresponding secretary Carrie Pailet. The membership chair, Barbara Polikoff-Katz, will serve, but not on the Hadassah board, according to Sands.

Among her goals, Sands says she is looking forward to increasing her new life members by 36, a number she hopes to bypass. She is ready to take the reins of leadership and knows what she is expected to do as the incoming president.

“The main thing is educating people about Israel and also our advocacy work that we do,” she explained.

“It’s all wrapped up with education. We advocate for legislation that affects women, children and families.” Among the advocacy proposals she mentioned are the Lillie Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 and gender equality in medical research to ensure that female patients are included in studies just as men are.

“The other major goals that we have are to raise funds to support our major projects,” Sands continued. She specifically pointed to the Hadassah Hospitals and medical research facilities and three youth aliyah villages they support in Israel. “We (also) have Hadassah Academic College that is also located in Israel and we have programs here as well,” she said.

Sands noted that Hadassah supports Young Judaea and their gap year program called Year Course.

She also touted several medical initiative such as Hadassah’s “Every Beat Counts” for heart health and “Check It Out,” a breast cancer awareness program.

In stressing the goal of new life members, she pointed out that a life membership is only $212. “The biggest bonus is not only are you part of this wonderful organization, but you never have to pay a membership fee again,” Sand boasted.

“Not only are they investing in themselves, but they are investing in Israel as well as for all we do for Israel,” she stated. “It’s the gift that you give yourself that lasts a lifetime and it goes wherever you go too.”
Touro Synagogue hosts Dansker lecture on Stephen Sondheim

At the conclusion of services on Jan. 15, worshippers were privileged to hear local historian George Dansker present a lecture accompanied with singers performing some of Stephen Sondheim’s works. Dansker is a noted scholar with expertise on musical theater and opera.

His talk, “Take Me to the World: The Life and Music of Stephen Sondheim” was part of his lecture and concert series on Broadway and its impact on American culture.

In addition to Dansker’s lecture and slide show presentations, three guest singers provided musical accompaniment for the evening. They were soprano Greer Grimsley, mezzo-soprano Luretta Bybee and Rachel Laufer, a young student from Lusher Middle School.

This event was free and open to the public.

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The first weeks of the 2016 CARNIVAL SEASON

The first week of the Carnival season began in earnest with the Twelfth Night and the streetcar ride of the Phunny Phorty Phellows. It traveled on their traditional route that left the Carrollton barn and traveled up to Lee Circle and back. The French Quarter and Faubourg Mariigny neighborhoods celebrated the evening with the St. Joan of Arc marching krewe.

The second week of the season had the annual B’nai Brith Mitzvah Makers Hospital Parade for shut-ins and hospital patients. It is the 37th year that this annual indoor event has been held. Once the group parades in Touro Infirmary they continue their trek to the nearby Kindred Hospital and Home Life in the Gardens on Aline Street.

The Clown Unit of the Fahad Grotto joined the B’nai Brith group this year.

Jewish celebrities and themes receive awards

The Golden Globe Awards honored the Hungarian Holocaust film “Son of Saul” and actress Rachel Bloom for her performance in “Crazy Ex-Girlfriend.” Additionally, Aaron Sorkin won an award for his screenplay “Steve Jobs” screenplay.

The foreign film winner, “Son of Saul” focuses on a member of the Sonderkommando at Auschwitz-Birkenau who was forced to cremate the bodies of fellow prisoners. In the film he saves his son’s dead body and looks for a rabbi to say Kaddish. This film was funded in part by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

Also announced this week was the 2015 National Jewish Book Awards. Dennis Ross, former Obama advisor won in the history category for “Doomed to Succeed: The U.S.-Israel Relationship from Truman to Obama. Shulem Deen (a former Skverer Hasid) won in the contemporary Jewish life and practice category for his memoir, “All Who Go Do Not Return.” This autobiographical book shares Deen’s blogs under the pseudonym Hasidic Rebel that describe his deep thoughts of losing his faith and eventually his family, too.

The top honor, Jewish Book of the Year was awarded to Bruce Hoffman for “Anonymous Soldiers: The Struggle for Israel, 1917-1947.”

A complete list of the winners can be viewed on the Jewish Book Council’s website at www.jewishbookcouncil.org.
Native New Orleanian prepares to unveil reflective art in Scarsdale

Rebecca Berins Schwarz, the daughter of Lenny Berins and Reva Lupin, is preparing for her first art exhibit in over fifteen years. Schwarz, a graduate of New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts (NOCCA) and Benjamin Franklin High School currently lives with her husband and two daughters in the New York area.

In addition to being a full time middle school art teacher, Schwarz paints using oil, acrylic and watercolor mediums. Her exhibit, called Assimilarium is a collection of her works showing how she expresses her contemporary Jewish experience both as connected and disconnected. The exhibit includes many works of women’s portraits (Zelda series), New Orleans childhood scenes and New York City deli food with huge skyscrapers.

A detailed statement on Schwarz’s website relates the dichotomy of feelings she experienced as a divorced child of an assimilated Jewish New York Dad and her “southern belle” observant mother and how she felt marginalized as a Jew.

Her show will be displayed at the JCC Mid-Westchester (Scarsdale) from January 31 – March 4.
Kurt Weill, the talented Jew who was the most successful composer in Germany prior to his fleeing Nazi Germany, was the subject of a rare cabaret performance by singer Bremner Duthie and a jazz trio Feb. 17 at the Marigny Opera House.

Classically trained, Weill could well have been the leading German classical composer had he not been born the son of a Jewish cantor and run afoul of the Nazis, said Duthie in an exclusive CCJN interview. He first took training under the helm of opera composer Engelbert Humperdinck and later a less conservative mentor.

“I think he had two lives,” Duthie mused. “Kurt Weill had his work in Berlin in the 1920s, after which he fled to Broadway. He soaked up the American vernacular and actually changed his name to Weil. He even refused to speak with a German accent.”

With his non-Jewish lyricist partner Bertolt Brecht, Weill scored major successes with “The Three Penny Opera” and “The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny” in 1928 and 1930, respectively, prior to seeking exile in Paris, Italy and Britain, several years before finally emigrating to America in 1935. “But I don’t think he ever left his classical roots behind,” Duthie stated.

Duthie has garnered critical success for his ‘33 a Kabarett, a one-man show in which he portrays a Weimar cabaret performer who sings the songs of his deceased fellow performers. The riveting show has played at fringe festivals and theater festivals throughout Europe and across the United States. Based on his reception in New Orleans three years ago, he and his wife moved to the Crescent City permanently and now reside in the Bywater neighborhood.

Duthie performed the Weill songbook with pianist Erhan Stern, whose trio includes a standup bass player and a clarinet/saxophone player.

“I stay fairly close to the idea of a cabaret singer,” Duthie explained. “However, all the versions are all jazz renditions, but I try and stay pretty close to the originals. They don’t need much adaptation”

Still, he does expect the trio to jazz it up, but only a little. “‘Weill at Heart’ is a cabaret/concert that shares my sheer delight in the marvelous complexity of Weill’s music,” Bremner’s handouts state. “Weill forces us to open our hearts, to hear and see the world anew; every moment spent with his work is a moment of discovery.”
Israeli-American trio soared in NOFM program

By ALAN SMASON, Exclusive to the CCJN

Chamber music fans were in for a very rare treat on Wed., Feb. 24, when the Goldstein-Peled-Fiterstein Trio started in a program of music sponsored by the New Orleans Friends of Music at Tulane University's Dixon Hall. Prior to their 8 p.m. concert, the trio held a rescheduled master class performance at 5:30 in Nunemaker Hall on the Loyola University campus, which was cancelled due to inclement weather in the area on Tuesday.

The rarity of their appearance was reflected in the nature of this ensemble of Israeli-Americans – pianist Alon Goldstein, cellist Amit Peled and clarinetist Alex Fiterstein – all highly regarded solo performers with their own individual careers and who, only on certain occasions throughout the year, come together to perform as a trio.

The unusual nature of their association was noted in an exclusive CCJN interview with Goldstein and Fiterstein this past week.

“Although we’re not a regular group that practices every week, we have a familiarity of playing together,” Fiterstein noted. “The work that we do carries over.”

Even through the three grew up in Israel before coming to the United States to advance their careers, they did not get to know each other until they had begun spending their summers in America at the famous Marlboro Festival in Vermont more than a decade ago.

It was there they discovered their common Israeli roots and an affinity for the same kinds of repertoire. They began to enjoy each other’s company, while expanding their musical horizons, and formed the erstwhile trio in 2005. Eventually, Frank Salomon and Associates, a noted classical artists agency, invited the trio to take part in the 2009 Peoples’ Symphony Concerts in New York. The trio soon became part of its retinue of artists and Goldstein was signed to an agency.

By ALAN SMASON, Exclusive to the CCJN

Clarinetist Alex Fiterstein, pianist Alon Goldstein and cellist Amit Peled. (Photos by Britt Olsen-Ecker)

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The NOFM program scheduled could be likened to a sandwich. The trio played together during the opening and closing works by Ludwig Beethoven and Johannes Brahms, respectively. In between were solo works or duets by fellow Israeli-American Shulamit Ran, Franz Liszt and Ernest Bloch that allowed each member to show off his prowess as a solo performer.

The Beethoven Trio in B-Flat Major, Op. 11 that began the evening’s program is often performed by string trios with a violin substituting for the clarinet part.

Clarinetist Fiterstein believes the reason it was also scored for a different instrument may go back to Beethoven’s times. “Maybe the reason is the clarinet was not as prominent at that time as it is today and he was maybe afraid it would not be performed as much,” he speculated.

“You’re being much too kind,” Goldstein interjected. “It sounds much much better on a clarinet.”

The piece by Ran, “For an Actor. Monologue for clarinet solo,” allowed Fiterstein an opportunity to show his range. “It’s very modern and very avant-garde, but the structure is very traditional,” he admitted. “It stretches the limits of the clarinet and is a great showpiece for the clarinet.”

The piece, which was privately commissioned in memory of a former actor, was described by the clarinetist as “imitating a monologue in the theater. It’s basically a monologue without the words.”

Goldstein got attention as a solo performer in the deeply romantic Franz Liszt piano transcription of Richard Wagner’s “Liebestod” from the opera “Tristan und Isolde,” which followed. Unlike what some might expect, Goldstein said he is not biased against Wagnerian music, despite its connection to the Nazis and the fact that several of his relatives lived through the Holocaust.

“I think if my grandmother, who went through the Holocaust does not want to listen (to Wagner), I am not going to argue with her or educate her,” he stated.

But the pianist said he accepts Wagner for his musical gifts. “Listen to Wagner. He is a great musician. He was certainly a genius and certainly not a nice man. It is very hard to separate a genius and the personality. We sometimes think that a person who is a genius is also a wonderful personality.” That’s not the case in Wagner’s case or in the case of composer Carl Orff, who was a member of the Nazi Party, he pointed out.

Goldstein returned on the program in support to cellist Peled, who played three sketches from “Jewish Life” by Bloch. Peled played on a Venetian cello, formerly the property of famed musician Pablo Casals and bequeathed to him by his widow several years ago. Constructed in 1735, the instrument, which he calls “Pablo,” is insured for $3 million.

Bloch, who was born in Switzerland to Jewish parents, employed a number of Jewish themes in several of his major works. However, it was historically difficult to be a practicing Jew early in his career in Europe.

“He doesn’t have to practice Judaism,” countered the pianist in speaking about the Bloch work. “I don’t think you get much more Jewish than that.”

In describing one of the works Peled performed, “Prayer,” Goldstein said it was much like a conversation between a cantor and his congregation responding, “It doesn’t get more Jewish.”

Fiterstein, who has played as a solo artist before as a performer with the Birdfoot Festival, said he looked forward to returning to the city, especially highly anticipating the program’s final work, the Brahms Trio for Piano, Clarinet and Cello in A minor.

“I think it’s a great piece,” the clarinetist mused. “Brahms at the end of his life actually wrote four pieces for clarinet. The quintet happens to be considered one of the best pieces for chamber ever written. The trio (Op. 114) is less ambitious than the quintet.”

But the trio they played hearkened back to some of Brahms’ earlier compositions, Fiterstein said. “It shows Brahms’ writing skills when he was much younger, whereas the quintet (Op. 115) is very nostalgic, looking back at (his) life.

“It’s a late piece and has a very upbeat section,” he concluded. “It’s not saying farewell like the quintet and as a clarinetist, I feel we are lucky to have it.”
True to its theme “Reconnect, Renew, Rebirth” more than 300 New Orleanian BBG and AZA (now referred to as BBYO) alumni gathered for an unforgettable reunion weekend held at the end of February. The participants ranging in age from 30 – 85 years came from more than 20 states and France.

The festivities began on Friday night with services followed by a sponsored Oneg Shabbat at Temple Gates of Prayer in Metairie. Numerous individuals rekindled old friendships and reminisced about their bygone youth. At the end of evening the past members gathered together with crossed hands and formed a huge friendship circle. They sang and swayed to their old regional and national tunes.

The actual event took place the following evening at the Southport Music Hall. Toward the end of the event, the attendees enjoyed creating a second line following the live music of the Pin Striped Jazz Band. The BBYO umbrella and handkerchief favors helped add to the celebration and cheerful moods during the second line.

Through this event, more than 70 alumni donated almost $10,000. These funds will be used to help form and develop a Big Easy BBYO group and a NOLA BBYO Alumni Directory.
By ALAN SMASON

rabbi David Polsky, the spiritual leader of Congregation Anshe Sfard, the only non-Chabad Orthodox synagogue still located in Orleans Parish, announced in a newsletter yesterday his intention to step down from his pulpit when his current contract expires on July 31.

Polsky's announcement follows on the heels of a similar letter drafted by Rabbi Ethan Linden of Shir Chadash Conservative Congregation, acknowledging his plans to accept the position of director of Camp Ramah in the Berkshires. With the search still on to replace Rabbi Ed Paul Cohn at Temple Sinai, three area pulpits will be in play over the course of the next several months.

In a praiseworthy open letter to his congregation, Polsky spoke glowingly of how he and his wife Mindy had been warmly welcomed to New Orleans four and a half years ago, as he sought to assume his first pulpit.

He referred to the supportive nature of the synagogue and in general how much he enjoyed being a part of the New Orleans rabbinic leadership. Things changed, he explained, when he and his wife welcomed the first of their two children. “We began to realize how challenging it is to raise children without family support,” Polsky wrote. “Many of us have heard the aphorism, ‘it takes a village to raise a child.’ I don’t know whether it really should take a village, and different families have their own unique needs. I can say, however, that that raising children without an additional support structure has been difficult for us.”

Polsky went on to praise the synagogue leadership, beginning with former president Ben Berman and continuing with current president Gary Remer. In particular, the rabbi thanked Remer and the synagogue for understanding what Polsky termed an “unprecedented” month-long unpaid paternity leave as he and his wife welcomed their second child into the family.

After several trips to the Detroit area, where most of his wife's family lives, it became obvious to Polsky that the support they could receive from family there would make a substantial difference.

“As fun and fulfilling as it is to live in New Orleans, we’ve realized that we have to make sacrifices for our children. And that nothing replaces family,” Polsky continued. “We have therefore made the difficult decision to move to Southfield, Mich., in Aug., after my contract ends.”

Remer said he and congregation members will be sorry to see the Polskys leave. He credited the rabbi with a number of innovative programs, such as programming for young professionals on Friday nights, and said he performed well as a pulpit rabbi to Anshe Sfard as well as for many observant visitors to the city.

Remer said that a search committee is already in place, which will be charged with the responsibility of finding an observant Orthodox rabbi who will fulfill the ritual functions of the synagogue such as leining (reading the Torah), leading the davening (praying) during services, counseling congregation members and visiting the sick.

“We’re going to be conducting a search so that our goal is to have someone in place by the time he leaves,” Remer said. “It might be someone for a year or two or, if we’re lucky enough, to find someone permanent.”

The first of the candidates, Rabbi Garth Silberstein, of Yeshiva Chovevei Torah (YCT) of Riverdale, N.Y., will be returning to New Orleans on March 12 to meet with congregation members. Silberstein, who is receiving his smicha at YCT, had filled in for Polsky during his month-long paternity leave break.

Berman, who oversaw the search committee that brought Polsky to New Orleans, also expressed regret that Polsky would be leaving, especially after having been so much a part of the synagogue and the New Orleans Jewish community for the past half decade.

When contacted by the CCJN, Polsky declined to offer any additional comments.
JCRS’s Jewish Roots of Celebration attracts 450

The Grand Ballroom of the Hyatt Regency was filled with more than 450 supporters of the Jewish Children’s Regional Services at its gala last Friday night, March 5. The event titled Jewish Roots of Celebration: Friends|Family|Frolic|Feast” lived up to its name in every way.

Panorama Jazz Band discreetly played music during an hourlong cocktail hour, while guests congregated in anticipation of a program intended to highlight the many varied charitable programs encompassed by JCRS. Friends and family enjoyed a festive meal catered by five well-known executive chefs and overseen by the Hyatt Regency’s own Eric Damidot. Hors d’oeuvres of duck ragu, whitefish spread, mushroom kugel and latkes were first provided by Chef Nathaniel Zimet of Boucherie Restaurant.

Chef Alon Shaya of Shaya Restaurant offered appetizers of his famous hummus, seared brussel sprouts, beets laneh, lutenitsah and tabouleh for the first course on each table. Entrees of beef brisket with kasha varnishkes and Shabazi Chicken were presented by Chef David Slater of Emeril’s Restaurant and Chef Daniel Esses of The Three Muses Restaurant, while Chef Tory McPhail of Commander’s Palace Restaurant provided a double chocolate bread pudding for dessert.

The short program honored the Oscar J. Tolmas Charitable Trust for providing significant contributions to JCRS. Trustees Lisa Romano and Vincent Giardina accepted the JCRS award designed by Judaica artist Gary Rosenthal. Following a video showcasing his love for horse racing and business success, each spoke briefly on Tolmas, who died in 2013, and his legacy.

JCRS executive director Ned Goldberg presented the other award of the night to attorney and newly minted author Marlene Trestman, a former recipient of JCRS assistance, who was launching the sales of her new book on Bessie Margolin, Fair Labor Lawyer. Margolin, a legendary female attorney and a former resident of the Jewish Orphans Home, the predecessor of JCRS, was a mentor, friend and advisor to Trestman for more than four decades.

A silent auction to benefit JCRS was held with many donated items intended to raise funds for the many varied programs the nation’s oldest children’s charity offers. These include summer camperships for Jewish overnight camps as well as the promotion of the PJ Library and its young readers program.

JCC Adloyadah attracts healthy crowd

The Uptown Jewish Community Center hosted the annual community-wide Adloyadah Purim Festival for four hours in its rear field. In addition to colorful inflatable rides and slides designed for the younger set, ample popular music filled the air while delicious delicatessen food from Kosher Cajun, waffles from Waffles on Maple and even frigid and tasty snowballs from Williams-Plum Street Snowballs were served to the hungry crowd.

Then there were the hamantaschen of all varieties including the very popular traditional dough types filled with mun (poppy seed) as well as fruit varieties like apricot, raspberry and prune.

Children were entitled to unlimited play on the inflatable rides for one low price and several local Jewish institutions like the Greater New Orleans Chapter of Hadasah, Jewish Children’s Regional Service and local synagogues like Shir Chadash Conservative Congregation offered games for kids to play.

Children were encouraged to wear costumes throughout the event.

This Adloyadah festival was held a week earlier than usual because the Limmud-fest New Orleans events were already scheduled.
Limmud finishes three-day run at GOP, Tulane

Limmud Festival New Orleans organizers planned extremely well and the results showed that more than 400 participants had enjoyed three days of prayer, meditation and study under its so-called “big tent” of Jewish learning.

Friday night and Saturday morning, the Limmud team facilitated prayer services for Reform, Conservative and Orthodox worship at Congregation Gates of Prayer in Metairie, while all of Sunday’s activities occurred at the Lavin-Bernick Center on the Tulane University campus.

This was the fourth Limmud presentation held in New Orleans, which was the smallest city chosen to participate when it began in 2010. Organizers have held successive biennial events in 2012 and 2014, when it was expanded to include worship services over Friday night and Saturday morning.

Participants who wanted to walk to Gates of Prayer in accordance with their observance of Shabbat were housed by volunteers in Metairie, and coordinated through Limmud organizers.

All told, 90 presentations divided among 12 different tracts were held over the two day periods from topics such as history, Israel, social justice, family, food and contemporary Jewish life.

Chef Andy Adelman headed up the responsibility of providing a meat meal on Friday night and a dairy meal for Saturday. Meals were catered by Hillel’s Kitchen on Sunday and snacks were provided throughout the two afternoon sessions on Saturday and Sunday.

Brian Hymel stars at Temple Sinai benefit

Brian Hymel, a rising star in the international opera world with an established repertoire at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, headlined a concert titled “Love Infinite” at Temple Sinai on Sunday, March 13.

Appearing with his wife, acclaimed Greek soprano Irini Kyriakidou, Hymel helped raise funds for the recently instituted Rabbi Edward Paul Cohn Rabbi Emeritus Chair and Cantor Colman Concert Fund at the Reform temple.

Hymel is a native New Orleanian. He graduated from Jesuit High School and the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts before he embarked on his college career at Loyola University.

Hymel said that both Cohn and Colman approached him about taking part in the fundraiser. “I used to sing at Temple Sinai as a part of the High Holidays ensemble,” he recalled. “I gave a recital at Temple Sinai in July of 2005, right before Katrina.”

The tenor commented that the sanctuary is a great acoustic hall. “It is a beautiful sanctuary,” he said, “and it’s a great place to come back and sing. Plus it can hold a lot of people.”

Hymel had two halves to the concert – the first was entirely in French. Both he and his wife sang a number of duets and arias from operas like Hector Berlioz’s “La Damnation de Faust” (“The Damnation of Faust”) and “Les Troyens” (“The Trojans”). The second half was only Italian selections.

Tickets for the concert were $35 for general admission or at a patron level of $150 which included priority seating and a post-performance reception with the couple.
JEF’s Annual Event celebrates honorees

By GARY MICHAEL SMITH

The Jewish Endowment Foundation of Louisiana honored several exceptional members of the New Orleans Jewish community at its Annual Event on Sunday, April 17 at the Westin Canal Place in downtown New Orleans.

JEF Executive Director Sandy Levy presented the Young Family Award for Professional Excellence to James Spiro. This award is given for demonstrating extraordinary concern for the needs of the New Orleans Jewish community through wise counsel.

As a fully licensed investment professional for over 30 years, Spiro is a managing director with Morgan Stanley. He has also served as a member of the Jewish Endowment Foundation of Louisiana’s Board of Directors since 2010, and currently serves as vice chair of JEF’s Investment Committee.

On accepting the award, Spiro reminisced: “When I was asked to join JEF I said sure, and it has turned out to be a wonderful experience, seeing people I’ve known and meeting new people I should have known. And when coming to events such as this, I’m reminded that the food is quite good.

“When I was a kid growing up, my dad was a family physician so was in and out, and we didn’t always eat together. But we always made the effort to have breakfast as a family. My mother loved smoked salmon, and so when it was $2.99 to $4.99 a pound, we had it with coffee and scrambled eggs. When it was $10.99 a pound, we just had scrambled eggs.”

Edward Soll, the president of Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans presented the Tzedakah Award to Betty Meyers, which is given for unselfish, meaningful service to the community, especially to and through JEF.

Meyers’ involvement with the New Orleans Jewish community began when she joined the Lemann-Stern Young Leadership Program. She and her family have had a long association with charitable and philanthropic work in the State of Israel. She annually sponsors the former Betty and Phillip Meyers Leadership Development Alumni Event program, which is now known as the Katz-Phillips Leadership Development Program.

“The Helen A. Mervis Jewish Community Professional Award was presented to Wendy Goldberg, associate director of the New Orleans Jewish Community Center.

Born in Brooklyn and raised on Long Island, Goldberg came to New Orleans following graduation from the State University of New York Buffalo State. She has spent her entire career at the New Orleans JCC, first as Young Judaea city director and later as the camp director, the program director at the Metairie campus, the assistant director and obtained her current appointment in 2011. With the help of a JCC Association Graduate Education Scholarship, Goldberg achieved her Masters in Social Work degree from Tulane University.

The keynote speaker was Mike Rogers, a former U.S. representative from Michigan’s 8th Congressional District, who chaired the powerful House Intelligence Committee and served on the energy and commerce panel. He is a noted authority on national security, counterterrorism and cybersecurity.

Currently the host of “Something to Think About with Mike Rogers” on Westwood One, he is also a former member of the U.S. Army and an FBI special agent.

In addition, Rogers is a Distinguished Fellow at the prestigious Hudson Institute and serves on the Board of Trustees at the Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress.

Rogers spoke about coming up through the ranks from the FBI to Congress. Many of his anecdotes regarded military intelligence gathering in his work as chair of the House Intelligence Committee. Rogers concluded with a discussion of the issue of Iran joining the community of nations.

Following his talk, Rogers was asked to give his take on the upcoming presidential election, offering, “My biggest fear is that someone who’s running is going to win.”
A kitchen fire apparently sparked by a self-cleaning oven engulfed the Congregation Beth Israel rabbinic home late Tuesday afternoon, April 19, destroying its contents.

Rabbi Gabriel Greenberg, his wife Abby and their two small children were not inside the home at 4411 Cleary Ave. in Metairie when the blaze broke out shortly before 4:30 p.m. The rabbi and the children were in the back yard when the kitchen erupted in flames as Passover preparations were being made. Greenberg called in the alarm and East Jefferson Consolidated Fire Department responders were on the scene within minutes of the initial call, but by the time the fire was brought under control, the home had suffered extensive damage from the blaze in addition to significant heat, smoke and water damage.

Reports indicate that the fire spread quickly from the kitchen in the rear to the front of the residence, generating enough heat to melt vinyl siding affixed to the home. Fire officials estimated damages at $120,000 at the scene, but many of the items lost or destroyed were of sentimental value and deemed irreplaceable.

Insurance adjusters have been on the scene and contractors are being consulted to determine the extent of the damage. Bradley Bain, the president of the congregation, is cautiously optimistic that the residence can be restored, but no timetable has been given yet on when the job might be completed. The question also remains as to whether another nearby residence will be rented for the rabbi and his family during this period.

While the Greenbergs have found temporary lodging for the upcoming Passover holiday, much of the chore of rebuilding and repairing has fallen upon Beth Israel’s board of directors. Bain noted in an email message that rebuilding “will undoubtedly be a slow and painful process. While the extent of the damage has yet to be fully assessed, we do know they will be temporarily uprooted and forever miss the heirlooms, sentimental objects, and mementos consumed in today’s fire.”

In response to the immediate needs of the Greenberg family, an online fundraising account was established in their name. That campaign had already reached more than $67,000 from approximately 880 donors.

Congregation Beth Israel is also accepting donations for the Greenberg family through its own website.

In speaking to the CCJN via telephone, Bain noted that the GoFundMe site was not set up by the congregation and that it does carry an administrative fee in addition to a processing fee for each credit card transaction.

“We still have to pay a merchant processing fee to run a credit card, but that’s still better than the five per cent that they are taking out for an administrative fee,” he explained. “(As for) the money that is donated to Beth Israel, 100% of that money would actually go to Rabbi Gabe and Abby.”
Rabbi Linden prepares for new challenge at Camp Ramah

By ALAN SMASON, Exclusive to the CCJN

With approximately nine weeks left before he leaves the Greater New Orleans area, Rabbi Ethan Linden is preparing for his last Passover season in New Orleans with mixed feelings. He is looking forward to new challenges ahead, but reluctantly saying goodbye to a community he has helped to transform for the past seven years.

Linden, the dynamic and ebullient spiritual leader of Shir Chadash Conservative Congregation, officially accepted the position of director of Camp Ramah in the Berkshires in Massachusetts a few weeks ago, after privately announcing last year to synagogue officials and members of his intent to apply for that position.

Linden leaves for the Berkshires after Shavuot in order to begin the process of taking over the reins of leadership for the camp located in Wingdale, NY.

The summer camping experience has been ingrained in Linden for a long time. He came to Shir Chadash from a similar-sized camp, Camp Ramah of New England, in 2009 and took on his first role as a senior pulpit rabbi. Linden immediately made himself a vital member of the community rabbinate. He proved to be an impressive and considerate speaker and a valued teacher. But the allure of the lake waters and hills associated with the outdoors and the Jewish camping experience proved too attractive to the youthful rabbi.

"I loved being rabbi here at Shir Chadash," he told the CCJN in a telephone interview. "I loved the pulpit rabbinate, but the opportunity to be the director of a Ramah camp doesn't come up very often and it was an opportunity I didn't feel I could pass up."

Indeed, his words are amplified by Rabbi Paul Resnick, the current director of the camp, who is retiring after 28 years as camp director. Resnick came to Camp Ramah in the Berkshires in 1987.

Resnick said he and his board are looking forward to working with Linden in the coming months as he prepares to begin his camp directorship for the first time next year. He will be at the camp during its full session this year, which more than 740 campers will attend. The campus includes a kosher dining hall, swimming and aquatics at a freshwater lake and several arenas and sports facilities.

Because of Linden's work at Camp Ramah of New England, Resnick was already quite familiar with Linden. "I've known Ethan and was very impressed with him and what he was doing," he said. "I remember him sitting at the table and thinking he was incredibly competent and capable a decade ago. I was certainly excited that he was one of the applicants."

The winter headquarters for the camp is located in Englewood, N.J. and Linden and his wife, Liba Kornfeld, are looking forward to moving their family near there.

As to his work with others, Linden admits he is proud of the interaction he has maintained with other Metairie Jewish community leaders including Congregation Gates of Prayer Rabbi Robert Loewy and present and past Congregation Beth Israel leaders Rabbis Gabriel Greenberg and Uri Topolosky, respectively.

Under his spiritual leadership, Shir Chadash has grown over the last seven years, but in reflecting on his record, Linden is loath to take credit for anything.

"I am very proud of where the synagogue is today," Linden said. "That has less to do with me than the way the community has grown and has been strengthened. In membership, programming and in learning, I think the shul is in a very strong place."

The one area in which he will grudgingly accept credit is in Jewish education and learning. Linden has been an instructor for the Melton School of Adult Jewish Learning since his arrival and his regular weekly "lunch and learn" sessions and Shabbat study sessions have all been well attended through the years.

While things are winding down for the rabbi, he will have a number of holiday-related activities to attend to in the coming weeks including the Yom Ha'Shoah, Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'Atzmaut programs, all of which lead to Shavuot and the time he will be saying goodbye to New Orleans and hello to the Berkshires.
Rabbi Deborah Silver is new spiritual leader at Shir Chadash

Shir Chadash Conservative Congregation announced that a contract has been offered and accepted by Rabbi Deborah Silver to become its first female rabbi and to succeed Rabbi Ethan Linden when he assumes his new duties at Camp Ramah in the Berkshires. The announcement from president Lisa Finkelstein follows an earlier unanimous recommendation by the Rabbinic Search Committee that Silver be extended a contract.

The committee was formed when Rabbi Linden, the spiritual leader of Shir Chadash, announced that he was likely leaving due to his name being considered as the director of Camp Ramah in the Berkshires. Linden accepted that position and leaves shortly after Shavuot.

According to Finkelstein, the recommendation for Silver was based on a number of factors. Finkelstein said the committee had overwhelming positive feedback in the form of congregational surveys the committee received following the visit Silver made in late February. Second, there were Silver's "thoughtful and incisive responses" to a number of questions posed to her from the committee.

Third, there was the rabbi's commitment to egalitarianism as manifested within the Conservative movement.

The contract was approved by a vote of the entire congregation on Sunday, March 27.

Silver will become the first female Conservative rabbi to lead Shir Chadash, which is the combined former Tikvat Shalom and Congregation Chevra Thilim Conservative congregations. She would also be the first female Conservative rabbi to lead any house of worship in the state.

Born in England, Silver was ordained by the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies in Los Angeles in 2010 and worked as the Assistant Rabbi at Adat Ari El, Valley Village near North Hollywood, CA. She has been very involved with theatre and her other interests include music, dance and yoga.

She received a master's degree in Hebrew Studies from Gonville and Caius College in Cambridge, England, and also received a second Master's degree in Theory and Practice of Literary Translation from the University of Essex. While focusing much of her efforts in theater, she also co-authored "The Young Person's Guide to Saving the Planet" released by Virago Press in 1990. Silver also served as senior English editor of the Oxford English-Hebrew Dictionary of Current Usage.

Silver showed an aptitude for the law and subsequently qualified as an attorney. She worked for Mishcon de Reya in London for four years before taking a post at BPP Law School, where she was hired as an associate professor, head of legal research and deputy head of teacher training. She was also very involved in the early Limmud movement, which began in England and has since circumnavigated the Jewish world.
Touro holds 25th Jazz Fest Shabbat

By ALAN SMASON and RACHAEL SACKS

Marking its 25th consecutive year, Touro Synagogue’s Jazz Fest Shabbat proved to be a spiritual and popular haven for both regular Reform worshippers and attendees of the music festival marred by unrelenting rainstorms in its final days. Jon Cleary, the latest New Orleanian to receive a Grammy Award for last year’s “Go Go Juice” (Best Regional Blues Root Album) and his backing group the Absolute Monster Gentlemen, performed to the delight of the crowd on the evening of April 29.

Prior to the opening of the doors at 6:50 p.m., a line spilled from the synagogue’s front door and snaked around the block for more than an hour prior to the 7:30 slated start. After a brief welcome by Rabbi Alexis Berk, who reminded everyone to get into the mood of a worship service rather than a concert, Cantor David Mintz took the lead with his magnificent voice backed by the Panorama Jazz Band and the Touro Synagogue Choir.

Assistant Rabbi Todd Silverman made his first appearance at a Jazz Fest Shabbat, while pianist Adam Matasar and stand-up bassist Josh Gouzy, returned. Terry Maddox served again as music director, conducting the choir and working with the other musicians to back the clergy.

During the service Mintz introduced two new pieces of liturgical music specially commissioned for this year’s Jazz Fest Shabbat. These were the Hashkiveinu (“Spread over Us Your Shelter of Peace”) written by Toby Singer and the Ya Ana Emtz’acha composed by Dan Nichols and arranged by Singer. An arrangement of L’chu N’ran’nu (“Come Let Us Sing Joyously to Adonai” – Psalm 95) commissioned by Touro Synagogue with music by Yoel Sykes and arranged by Singer also returned this year.

When it came time to interrupt the service and introduce Cleary and his band’s presentation, Mintz mused about his personal connection to the music. When he was a cantorial student interviewing for the job at Touro, several of the members of the synagogue insisted on taking him out to hear “real New Orleans music.” He was tired, he recalled, but he went along and they ended up at the Maple Leaf Bar. “The act I saw that night, I am proud to say, is the same group we have for our 25th anniversary Jazz Fest Shabbat,” Mintz announced to the roar of the crowd.

Consisting of guitarist Derwin “Big D” Perkins, electric bassist Cornell C. “Nell” Williams and drummer Alex Joseph “A.J.” Hall, the Absolute Monster Gentlemen, led by Cleary on keyboard, began with Professor Longhair’s iconic “Tipitina.”

Following the group’s 20-minute performance, the Touro Synagogue clergy returned the worshippers to reverence with concluding prayers before inviting Cleary and the band back up to lead the Adon Olam to the tune of “When the Saints Go Marching In.”

Earlier in the evening, 231 patrons of the Jazz Fest Shabbat enjoyed a private concert by Cleary and his band and a catered meal before being conducted to their reserved seats in the sanctuary shortly before the service began.

The Jazz Fest Shabbat Committee, consisting of more than a dozen volunteers including executive director Kerry Tapia and President Susan Good, was co-chaired this year by John Antonucci and Aaron Ahlquist. The first Jazz Fest Shabbat was the brainchild of Cantor Stephen Dubov of blessed memory, who seized upon the idea of incorporating the music of New Orleans with regular worship services for the enjoyment of visitors and residents alike who were attending the New Orleans Jazz Festival and Heritage Fair. The New Orleans Klezmer All Stars, a group led by clarinetist Ben Scherick at the time were featured at that first event. Scherick is now the leader of the Panorama Jazz Band.

Over the past quarter of a century, the Jazz Fest Shabbat has featured some of the greatest talents from the Crescent City including the late Allen Toussaint, Irma Thomas, Kermit Ruffins, the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, John Boutté and New Orleans style pianist Marcia Ball.

Immediately following the service, attendees were invited inside the Jacobs Social Hall for an Oneg Shabbat sponsored by the Touro Synagogue Choir.
Shaya wins James Beard Award as Best New Restaurant

Shaya, the Israeli-styled restaurant named for chef-owner Alon Shaya of the John Besh Group, won a coveted James Beard Foundation Award as Best New Restaurant in ceremonies held May 2, in Chicago.

Shaya, who won an individual James Beard Award last year as Best Chef – South, ceded his title to Justin Devillier of Le Petit Grocery, whose restaurant is literally located across the street from Shaya.

With a lifetime achievement award awarded to fellow legendary local cook Leah Chase, the food scene in New Orleans was heralded as the best in the country.

“Words cannot describe how much joy and pride winning the James Beard Award for best new restaurant means to our team,” Shaya said after the ceremonies. “They have all worked so hard and have made Shaya a home for all of us to be proud of.”

Shaya opened the Israeli-styled restaurant last year with an emphasis on local foods. “We have appreciated the love and support from all of our guests over the last year,” the chef continued. “The outpouring of gratitude from our city and the rest of the country inspire us to continue our journey of cooking and serving Israeli food to those who want to explore the diverse cuisine that we love so much.”

Chef Shaya, who was born in Israel and raised in Philadelphia, was only the second Israeli to win a James Beard Award, following his friend and fellow chef Michael Solomonov of Zahav Restaurant.

Yom Ha’atzmaut Celebration held at the New Orleans JCC

Israel’s 68th Independence Day was celebrated with a performance of Israel Story – Live at the Yom Ha’atzmaut Celebration on Wednesday, May 11 at the New Orleans Jewish Community Center.

At 6:30 p.m., the Jewish Clergy Council of New Orleans held its annual Yom Hazikaron service in the Grant Board Room. This service commemorates the soldiers who fell in the defense of Israel and those killed in terrorist attacks.

The fun began at 7:00 with a performance by the team behind Israel Story, an Israeli radio show inspired by the slice-of-life stories featured on This American Life. Using a dazzling combination of radio-style storytelling, live art, music, singing, video, and other multimedia magic, Israel Story – Live provides an intimate glimpse of modern Israeli life.

GiveNOLA Day fizzles

Anticipating as much as $4.5 million in gifts to be generated to area charities, the Greater New Orleans Foundation had high hopes that its Give NOLA Day would be a success as in prior years. Due to technical difficulties with its website the site “crashed” and prevented scores of would-be donors from being able to donate.

This event sponsored by The Greater New Orleans Foundation has about 713 different area non-profits competing for charitable donations. These participating non-profits represent a range of community organizations in the arts, culture, education, community improvement, crime protection and youth development.
Personal story from the son of a decorated Nazi officer
By Alan Smason

Dr. Bernd Wollschlaeger recounted his unlikely metamorphosis from the progeny of Nazis to that of a righteous Jewish convert as the keynote speaker at the annual community-wide Holocaust memorial event. His story could not have been more compelling.

Growing up in the idyllic town of Bamberg, Wollschlaeger heard differing accounts of the war from his parents. His father proudly, but rarely spoke about his service to Germany as the youngest tank commander of the Nazi war machine. He was on the front lines of the Blitzkrieg into Poland, France and the Soviet Union. He also shared that he had been personally awarded the Knight’s Cross by Adolf Hitler for his service to the Third Reich.

“One on the other hand, my mother told me about a completely different story of the war,” he brooded. “Everything was lost. The war for her was a catastrophe.”

The subject was rarely ever broached. Wollschlaeger’s parents were resistant to talk about their participation in the war. Wollschlaeger began to learn more gradually about the rise of the Nazis. He was barely a teenager when his father became a bit more vocal about the war and his participation.

The events during the 1972 Summer Olympics affected him. The games were held in Munich and the family was watching the opening ceremony. When the West German Chancellor Willy Brandt spoke his father yelled “a traitor.” Wollschlaeger later investigated and discovered that Brandt fled Germany when Hitler came to power and that Brandt had been associated with those that fought against the Nazis.

When the Israeli team entered the stadium, there was “an embarrassing silence,” Wollschlaeger related. Sadly, many of the same Israeli team competitors were to be kidnapped and killed by the Black September terrorist group several days later.

The massacre had a profound effect on him. “The headlines read ‘Jews killed in Germany again.’ I didn’t understand the meaning. I asked my father what does it mean?” “It means nothing,” his father retorted angrily. That was when Wollschlaeger began to inquire more about Jews being killed and he ran across references to six million Jews.

“It changed the direction of my life,” he admitted. “I was shocked. I had never heard about it, but my father must have known about it.”

“My father looked at me,” Wollschlaeger continued. “The Holocaust is a lie. Its teachers are Communist. It is just propaganda.”

The teenager started reading everything he could lay his hands on. “The fact that my father was unwilling to talk about it, gave me my own answer,” he said.

The other factor Wollschlaeger was dealing with at the time was his father’s rampant alcoholism, which made him vicious and aggressive.

Without informing his parents, Wollschlaeger started on a path of connectivity to the Jewish people. He became a “Shabbos goy” to assist the community of 25,000 Jews that were left in his area.

One Christmas Eve, his parents expected him home to celebrate, but since this coincided with a Friday night his duties at the synagogue required him to be present there. His father demanded an explanation. “I don’t want to sit at the same table as one who is wearing a blood-stained cross around his neck,” Wollschlaeger remembered saying. “I don’t want to celebrate the birth of Christ with you.”

The answer from his father was “Raus! (‘Out!’). They never spoke again.

One day after his father had died, a German military historian brought him a suitcase. When he opened it, he found ripped pieces of Torah scrolls that had been removed from synagogues and deliberately destroyed. “He was one of the murderers,” Wollschlaeger told the crowd. “This was hard to accept.”

As he learned more about Judaism, Wollschlaeger decided he wanted to take the ultimate step and convert. In the spring of 1986 he was accepted for a rigorous path of study and dedication. Many tried to talk him out of it. With each barrier, he became more and more entrenched.

He endured what he called “a little plastic surgery,” a reference to a bris milah (circumcision).

When he presented himself to the rabbinic committee, “they wanted to know who I am, why I am doing this and why I made my decision,” Wollschlaeger recalled.

His answer was that he wanted to become a Jew and go to Israel through the Law of Return. On January 7, 1987, he left Germany and landed in Tel Aviv.

Immediately, he became eligible for the draft and eventually found his wife and began to raise a family. Wollschlaeger went to college and studied medicine.

One day his son asked him who his grandfather was. “In that moment I knew I had to tell him,” Wollschlaeger confessed.

When his son blurted out to his classmates that his grandfather was a famous Nazi, it created quite a stir. “Needless to say this caused a problem in the Jewish zone,” he said.

Eventually, a rabbi prodded him to tell his story, which he wrote as “A German Life.”

He returned to Germany after reunification to close the early chapter of his life. “Hate is not this dark energy that pervades the universe and that we have to act upon,” he mused. “No, hate is words. These words sprout into deeds. These deeds sprout into habits. These habits, if unchecked, can become social norms.”

Wollschlaeger urged everyone to be vigilant and speak out whenever they see injustice. He recalled Auschwitz and he included more modern examples of genocide found in Uganda, Serbia and Cambodia. “You have to speak up,” he concluded. “Otherwise you’re guilty as charged.”
During the weekend of May 12-15, when the children’s opera, Brundibár, was being performed in the U.S. Freedom Pavilion of the National World War II Museum, 85-year-old Ela Stein Weissberger was seated in the audience. She is the last surviving member of the original main cast and she was there to speak to the audiences after each performance.

For Weissberger watching these performances will, once again, be a time for her to reconnect with a segment of her past that took place 73 years prior. A time of one of the darkest periods in recorded history.

Brundibár composed by Hans Krasa in 1938 from a libretto by Adolf Hoffmeister, was first performed at a Jewish orphanage in Prague. Four years later, Krasa and set designer Frantisek Zelenka were transported to Terezin. This concentration camp which held many of the leading Jewish artists, musicians and intellectuals from Czechoslovakia, Germany and Austria. By July 1943, nearly all of the children from the original chorus had also been transported there.

Reunited with the cast in Terezin, Krasa reconstructed the full score of the opera, based on memory and the partial piano score that remained in his hands, adapting it to suit the dozen or so musical instruments available in the camp. Zelenka designed a new set and directed the productions there which began performances on September 23, 1943. Krasa accompanied the orchestra on piano. Ela Stein Weissberger reprised and sang the role of the cat in all 55 performances of the production there.

Brundibár is the fanciful story of a young boy, Pepíček (Little Joe) and his young sister, Aninka (Annette) whose widowed mother is ill and needs milk to help her recover. The two children go out to sing in their village square, hoping to raise donations and, with the help of a Dog, a Cat, a Sparrow and a chorus of other children, they do.

However, a cantankerous organ grinder named Brundibár (Czech for “bumblebee”), who is also performing there, chases them off and steals their money. The Dog, Cat and Sparrow chase him down as he attempts to flee and they recover the money. Then the children, the animals and the chorus sing a victory song, lauding the triumph of good over evil.

To the inmates of the camp who witnessed the performances, the mustached organ grinder was a Hitler prototype. The opera and its moral gave them a glimmer of hope for his downfall and an end to their suffering.

While interned in Terezin, all of the prisoners were required to wear yellow stars that read “Juden,” identifying them as Jews. “The only time we were allowed to take our stars off was during performances,” Weissberger recalled.

A special performance of Brundibár was staged in 1944 for representatives of the International Red Cross who came to inspect living conditions in the camp. Knowing the visit was coming, the Nazis orchestrated the scenario in Terezin to make it appear that the Jews housed there were living well and were happy. The inspectors were given maps with red lines indicating the path they would be traversing and they were not given an opportunity to inspect behind the facades. Nor were they allowed to interview inmates who might have had adverse things to say about their living conditions.

A Brundibár production was also filmed for a Nazi propaganda movie titled Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt (“The Führer Gives the Jews a City”). Ela Stein Weissberger was in portions of that film, performing her role.

Soon after completion of the filming, nearly all of the participants in the Terezin Brundibár production were herded into train cattle cars and sent to Auschwitz. Most were gassed immediately upon arrival, including Krasa, many of the performing children and the musicians of the opera.

Ela, her mother and her aunt were miraculously spared and were still alive when the camp was liberated by the Russian army in May 1945. The three returned to Prague, where they refused to accept communist rule and emigrated to the newly independent State of Israel.

While in Israel, Ela enlisted in their navy’s Secret Service and later married an Israeli soldier named Leopold “Leo” Weissberger. In 1954 they had a daughter they named Tamar and five years later the family emigrated to the U.S. where Ela pursued a career as a graphic artist and interior designer.

By the 1980s, with renewed interest in Holocaust survivor stories, she began traveling throughout the country and abroad, attending Brundibár productions and speaking about her experiences.


In a recent interview with the American Grandparents Association, Weissberger stated, “I’m the bridge between today’s children and generations to come. And if we, as survivors, keep talking, we’ll be heard. We can’t keep it silent. It’s a part of our bodies.”

Tamar “Tammy” Grinshpon, who has accompanied her mother throughout the U.S., Europe, Africa and South America for most of the past three years, is in awe of everything that the Holocaust survivor who gave birth to her has accomplished in her lifetime.

“She was the Cat in the opera and they say that cats have nine lives,” Grinshpon said. “My Mom has gone through so many different lives from the child opera singer to the soldier, to the commercial artist, and now to the renowned public speaker traveling the world and telling her story. She’s had such an amazing life.”

(To read the original article in its entirety – which includes the specifics of the local performers, director and set design staged at the WWII museum go to www.crescentcityjewisnews.com)
Hadassah’s Keepers of the Gate dinner

Randy Gorod, the Southeast development director for Hadassah, was the special guest speaker at the recent Keepers of the Gate event dinner hosted by the Greater New Orleans Chapter of Hadassah. Gorod spoke at the home of Patti and Randy Ungar in Metairie on Sunday, May 15.

Gorod, who is a paid executive, spoke about research happening at the Hadassah hospitals in Jerusalem. “The research is happening because Hadassah has this tradition of ‘from bench to bedside,’” he explained. “The researchers are the doctors and the doctors are the researchers. At Hadassah, they are one and the same.”

The number of medical papers published by the doctors at Hadassah is more than every other hospital or other medical institution in the rest of Israel, he asserted.

Gorod shared a recent video detailing Hadassah’s medical research with stem cells, which has halted macular degeneration in laboratory test subjects and is seen as a possible future cure for debilitating diseases like ALS (or Lou Gehrig’s Disease), multiple sclerosis (or MS) and Parkinson’s Disease.

Host Patti Ungar spoke about all the work made possible by the Keepers of the Gate, a select group within Hadassah that give annual amounts of at least $1,000 per year. Former Southern Region president Lee Kansas introduced her predecessor Dana Waxler, who represents the Keepers of the Gate on the national board of Hadassah.

Julie Schwartz, was also called upon to speak to the group and she announced she had decided to increase the amount of her gift from $1,000 to $1,800 annually. Concurrently, she inspired audience member Fran Simon to do the same, thus establishing them both as “Chai” Keepers, the next level of annual gifting up to $4,999. Keepers of the Gate who contribute $5,000 or more per year achieve status as “Gold” Keepers.

The dinner event was catered by Lee Sands.

AVODAH honors Glaser, Usdin at Partners brunch

By ALAN SMASON

AVODAH, the Jewish Service Corps, held its annual Partners in Justice Brunch at Touro Synagogue on Sunday, May 15 to a full crowd gathered in the Jacobs Social Hall. For the third time in as many years they honored two community members for their contributions towards fighting poverty and implementing social justice in New Orleans.

Honored were Cathy Schatz Glaser, the former South Central Region executive director of the Anti-Defamation League and Dr. Linda Usdin, a scholar and community development leader.

Attendees were treated to jazz music supplied by a trio of performers: drummer Benny Amon, trumpeter Alex Owen and keyboard player Steve Pistorius, all known collectively as the Messy Cookers. Amon and Owen are past residents of the AVODAH Habit (House) from 2011 and 2012, respectively. The name refers to the condition of the kitchen at the Habit on Jefferson Avenue.

Following an invocation by Touro Synagogue

Alexis Berk, event co-chair Bobby Garon welcomed everyone on behalf of himself and his co-chair wife Robin Levy.

Attendees were invited to enjoy a kosher brunch prepared by Andy Adelman.

(To read the entire article that describes the speakers and presentations at the event - go to www.crescentcityjewishnews.com)
NCJW announces 2016-17 board leaders

Officers and board members for the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) Greater New Orleans Section were elected to its board at the closing luncheon held May 15 at Magnolia Mansion. At the event, the NCJW president, Susan Kierr, presented member Madalyn Schenk with the President’s Award for her efforts in designing and implementing NCJW Way, a unique young leadership training and development program.

Madalyn created NCJW Way and also administered the nomination process, the sessions, activities and follow-up of six young women’s participation over a two-year period. The Oscar J. Tolmas Charitable Trust chose to support this program with a generous grant that helped the candidates travel to the NCJW Washington Institute, where the six women received national attention for their dedication to the future of NCJW.

“An investment in the future and development of new leaders is essential if NCJW’s decades of community service and advocacy are to continue,” said Kierr. “Madalyn’s vision and her passionate pursuit of a strong future for us is a priceless gift to tomorrow.”

The featured speaker at the luncheon was Jonathan Ferrara, owner of Jonathan Ferrara Gallery, who spoke on the topic of “Art as Social Justice”. Ferrara is a New Orleans artist, gallery owner, community activist and arts entrepreneur who is a leader in the movement to make New Orleans a national and international arts destination. He is passionate about his current project Guns in the Hands of Artists which seeks to establish a national dialogue about guns and gun violence. In the process of touring the country, Ferrara has worked with many leaders who care about the issue including Former Congresswoman Gabby Giffords, Captain Mark Kelly and Walter Issacson.

Joan Axelrod Bronk, former NCJW GNO President and one of three national NCJW presidents to come from the New Orleans NCJW, led the installation of the new board.

Reimer chosen as new Temple Sinai rabbi

Temple Sinai members gave Rabbi Matthew A. Reimer congregational approval on Friday, May 27 as the new senior rabbi of Temple Sinai at their annual business meeting held prior to religious services. Beginning July 1, Reimer succeeds Rabbi Ed Paul Cohn, who assumes the title of emeritus rabbi.

Reimer’s recommendation to assume the rabbinate came with unanimous recommendations from both the rabbinic search committee and the Temple Sinai Board of Directors. With this selection he becomes the ninth senior rabbi in the history of Temple Sinai, the state’s largest Jewish Congregation and oldest Reform temple in the New Orleans area.

Reimer, 41, grew up in West Orange, New Jersey and has had a strong background in Jewish education and activities throughout his life. Ordained in 2007 by the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), Reimer comes to Temple Sinai from his most recent position as the senior rabbi at The Shul of New York.

Before that he was the assistant and then associate rabbi at Congregation B’nai Jeshurun in Short Hills, New Jersey, from 2008 through 2013. He had also served previously as the interim rabbi at Port Jewish Center in Port Washington, Long Island.

Reimer is an experienced educator and was the high school and youth programs director of Park Avenue Synagogue in New York City.
Rabbi Cohn feted at Temple Sinai annual gala

By DEAN M. SHAPIRO, SPECIAL TO THE CCJN

Standing before a roomful of congregants, dignitaries, family members and friends, Rabbi Edward Paul Cohn expressed his "gratitude and appreciation" as he prepares to step down as senior rabbi at Temple Sinai after 29 years.

The occasion was the temple’s annual Golden Gala on Saturday, May 21 in Goldring Hall, attended by several hundred guests, including present and past mayors Mitch and Moon Landrieu, New Orleans Archbishop Gregory Aymond, former City Councilmember Jackie Clarkson and pastors from other religious congregations throughout the city.

Earlier in the evening, Mayor Mitch Landrieu presented Cohn with a framed certificate containing a Key to the City.

During his brief speech, the soon-to-be rabbi emeritus assured those present that, although he will no longer be Sinai’s senior rabbi, he is not leaving New Orleans and he will continue to be active in the affairs of the synagogue.

“If your friends from down the street or from across the country ask you ‘What did old Cohn have to say at Sinai tonight,’ be sure to tell them, ‘He was overwhelmed and deeply grateful.’” Cohn began. “I am far more comfortable offering praise than receiving it. And so I am deeply humbled by all that you have done, worked on, produced and labored over, and all that has been said here tonight.”

Cohn went on to call the Golden Gala “a golden and truly unforgettable and heartwarming occasion – a milestone in the life of our family. And it’s so special that we are here together as a family tonight in all of our generations.”

He also had special words of praise for Saundra “Sandy” Levy, Temple Sinai’s president during Hurricane Katrina. “No words could adequately express our appreciation to our precious friend Sandy,” Cohn said, noting that their families evacuated to Jackson, Mississippi together.

“She was the president of our temple and she held it together, along with our board members and our leadership and all of you who stood with us through that disastrous time. And now she has created this most beautiful and elegant gala in the history of our congregation, along with so many of the wonderful people in our office.

“We are a family and we pride ourselves in that and it gives us such strength to know that,” the rabbi added.

He also praised Cantor Joel Colman, whom Cohn was instrumental in having appointed as the congregation’s first cantor and for whom he expressed his “most sincere appreciation for all these years of a treasured partnership and friendship.”

Looking back over his long tenure in the Temple Sinai pulpit, the rabbi told the crowd he recently started going through the office files to early 1987 when he was still under consideration for the position. As he recalled, “Standing in the Feibelman Chapel in my tryout before anyone in the congregation who wanted to come that night, I admitted to the gathering, ‘What shall I say to you? Should I be ponderous or should I be blunt? Should I tell them any jokes? I should tell them about my dream. Who I am. What makes me tick, as a person, as a Jew, and as a rabbi? That’s what I need to share with them.”

Then, as he has done so many times over his tenure, Cohn harkened back to his earliest years growing up in the only Jewish family in the Baltimore, Maryland suburb of Glen Burnie. It was there he met his future wife, Andrea Levy Cohn.

“She has been my partner,” Rabbi Cohn said. “A silent partner and sometimes a not-so-silent partner, helping me realize my life’s greatest calling. I can honestly say that you, as a congregation, have given me the greatest, most delightful adventure and a fantastic ride and journey. Andrea has always been there, as a counselor, as a great, steadfast devotee.

“So often we forget about the person who supports the rabbi; his cheerleader, his confidant, his friend, his lover, his wife. Andrea is always happy for me to be the up-front person, but in her quiet way, she has celebrated with you (the congregation) and your children and your children’s children in every one of your joys and your successes. And she has, as well, grieved with you over your sorrows, your sicknesses, and your disappointments. Indeed tonight is her night too.”

Wrapping up his remarks, Cohn said, “So this is not a farewell that you’ve heard because, honestly, if it was a farewell, I would be brokenhearted. As old soldiers just fade away, I have no intention of doing so. I pray that, with you, we will all of us join in welcoming an exciting new chapter in this great congregation, Temple Sinai.”

Quoting from the words of the sages of Israel, the rabbi concluded, “Let us joyously devote ourselves that the old shall be renewed and the new shall be sanctified with very great love.”

Vocalist Amy Alvarez performed a number of songs accompanied by Temple Sinai organist Marcus St. Julien. The songs were “Try to Remember” from The Fantastics “New Orleans is the One I Love” written by local musician and composer Craig Costello, “What a Wonderful World” and “One” from A Chorus Line. The rabbi’s daughters and granddaughter also performed a special song in his honor as well.
Shakespeare helps actor find link to her Jewish forebears

By ALAN SMASON, Special to the CCJN

Playing non-traditional gender roles in Shakespeare has informed much of the artistic and scholarly career of Lisa Wolpe. The 57-year-old female interpreter of such traditional male roles as Hamlet, Romeo, Brutus and Shylock says she has found inner peace and joy in her performance work. She claims a world record for playing Shakespearean male roles as a female. Aside from the personal satisfaction of connecting with her audience, her unusual cross-gender portrayals have also permitted her to connect to her Jewish father, a man she hardly knew, who took his life when she was just a toddler.

Such a painful loss would be enough to bring most youngsters to the brink of despair as they matured, but Wolpe had the almost unfathomable hardship of going through the entire ordeal again a decade later when she was barely a teenager. This time her mother, stricken with multiple sclerosis, also committed suicide and Wolpe was taken in by her septuagenarian grandmother, who raised her under the Catholic faith.

The subject of suicide was never really addressed in her family due to the stigma attached to it. “People don’t want to talk about it because it causes too much grief,” Wolpe said in a phone interview with the CCJN. “They don’t want to go into the shadowland.”

Wolpe immersed herself in her studies and fancied journalism when she began attending the University of California at San Diego. But she discovered the discipline of theatre during her freshman year and began to gravitate towards it. “I found the world of journalism was very cold and heavily censored by multi-national interests,” she mused. “In theatre you can really free your mind and speak from your soul.”

She found a love for Shakespeare grounded her and she took so many theatre courses that when she graduated, it was with a double major in journalism and theatre. Wolpe enrolled at Goddard College in Vermont as a graduate student, seeking a master’s of fine arts degree in interdisciplinary arts.

While she was preparing to write a thesis on Shakespeare for her MFA, she produced an all-female cast of “The Merchant of Venice” with a company she had founded some 15 years previously. She used that opportunity to investigate the spread of anti-Semitism while she played the titular role of Shylock.

With Shylock as an example of a victim of anti-Semitism, Wolpe delved into the themes of intolerance and discrimination and with the backdrop of her parents’ suicides investigated the motivation behind those Shakespearean characters who literally fall on their own swords or ponder suicide such as Hamlet in his famous “To be or not to be” soliloquy.

She knew that her father was Jewish and had heard the horrific story that everyone in her father’s family in Belgium had been killed in the Holocaust. She was able to trace her family’s influence and determined that many of her predecessors had been famous rabbis during the time when Shakespeare penned his works and others – Marrano Jews – had been very involved as experts on music.

“I found all of my family members had numbers tattooed on their arms and had been transported in cattle cars. Their houses were stolen,” Wolpe recalled, giving thanks that she had somehow brought them back to life through her research. “I feel they are looking down from wherever. They are rooting for me, telling me to tell them (the living) who they were.”

“‘Tell them who our names were,’” she imagined them saying to her through the veil of time.

The work she continued to do in researching her family led her to discover that her father had relatives living in the United States.

As a Christmas present to her brother and sister several years ago, Wolpe purchased a family tree, which was posted online. Within a few

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days of that posting, she was contacted by a man over the telephone who wondered aloud if she was their long lost cousin. It turned out to be Rabbi Gerald “Jerry” Wolpe, a noted Philadelphia area rabbi of blessed memory and the father of Rabbi David Wolpe, the spiritual leader of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles and considered one of the most influential rabbis in the nation.

She learned from her elder cousin, whom she called “Uncle Jerry,” a number of new facts. Over the course of a weekend, she interviewed him and recorded it on video. “I sat with him for a weekend and videotaped him answering every question I could ask him about my dad,” she explained.

According to the rabbi, they had met her father by chance at Harvard after World War II. They had become close, especially after establishing a familial bond. The rabbi related stories that he had heard first-hand from her father, including the fact he was a bona fide war hero. She learned in her amazement that her father had been responsible for capturing or killing large numbers of Nazis during World War II, while a member of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles infantry unit of the Canadian army. The unit was famous for landing in Great Britain in 1940 following the beginning of hostilities in September of 1939.

She further gleaned from him that, despite a plethora of hardships, her father had achieved great academic ranking, earning a Ph.D. at Harvard and becoming a professor at Stanford after receiving his doctorate. Wolpe’s mother was one of his undergraduate students. They soon married, but despite the chemistry, the pressures came to bear that her father found inescapable. His inner demons came to play when Wolpe was only two years old.

Following up with her connection to the Jewish Wolpes, she was introduced to her other famous rabbi cousin David. They have had several opportunities in the intervening years to bond over shared meals and develop a genuine friendship. Early on, though, when Rabbi David Wolpe heard that she had been portraying male Shakespeare characters as a female, he invited her to perform solo at Sinai Temple.

The cathartic release she felt in playing her characters and the research that was yielded helped to give her a better understanding of her father’s emotional outlook. “I continue to find new connections and understanding, meeting people who actually knew my dad,” she continued.

She now considers her performances to be a celebration of his life, as she explores the motivations of the Shakespearean characters and their response to outside stimuli such as discrimination and intolerance. She calls it her great life lesson. “So many of these important subjects are taboo,” she explains. Paramount among them, she says are isolation, loneliness and despair.

“There is a lack of tolerance for differences in the human flower bouquet, she continues. “They find themselves isolated and alone and cannot find a place in the world – and then they commit suicide. People have to stop hating on each other. People can begin to understand instead of lashing out in fear and ignorance.”

All of this gender bending is part of a nationwide trend. Wolpe points to Glenda Jackson’s portrayal as King Lear and an all-female production of “The Taming of the Shrew” in New York this summer as just two examples that she is on the cutting edge.

(Postscript: Wolpe was a featured performer in the New Orleans Shakespeare Festival at Tulane University held on May 20 and May 22 at Dixon Hall. She performed a distilled down version of her two-hour long work, “Shakespeare: The Alchemy of Gender.”)

**Anshe Sfard held study on suicide**

Congregation Anshe Sfard held a special “Study with a Buddy” session on the subject of suicide. Rabbi David Polsky facilitated the study, which was held at the synagogue’s social hall on May 24, 2016.

Although the event was sparsely attended, all attendees felt the study was worthwhile and their time well spent.

Suicide, although not explicitly forbidden in the Talmud there are numerous Jewish views depending on one’s branch of Judaism. The topic of suicide has evolved in recent times within the Reform and Conservative movements. Most Orthodox still maintain the act is forbidden, however some modern orthodox Jews take the position of compassion and view suicide as part of a mental disease or result of depression or other similar disorders.

Assisted suicide is never condoned.

This study was held in memory of former synagogue attendee, Trevor Dreyfus of blessed memory.
Deb Marsh, an administrator for the Jewish Community Day School (JCDS) for the past decade, said goodbye to her students May 22 and they and her colleagues on the school’s faculty paid homage to her in word and song.

Marsh, who retired from JCDS at the conclusion of this term, is bound for Brooklyn and the unfamiliar skyline of the Big Apple. She and her husband will be moving to be close to their grandchildren.

While caterer Andy Adelman cooked up hot dogs on the grill (both meat and vegetarian varieties), nearly a hundred guests, students, parents, teachers and friends gathered to congratulate Marsh on a job well done.

Well wishers were encouraged to write to Marsh on post cards with New York scenes, while red paper apples were made available for students to write their thoughts.

Most of the students splashed and played in the swimming pool, while popular slides and games were played in the rear yard of the Goldring-Woldenberg campus, where the event was held.

A charm bracelet from Moments Jewelers with charms representing various New Orleans institutions like the Saints NFL team and the 504 area code was given to Marsh as an expression of appreciation by JCDS.

JCDS head of school Sharon Pollin spoke briefly and wished Marsh the best in her move. She then introduced the students, who performed a version of “New York, New York” with new lyrics aimed at thanking Marsh. Before Pollin called up for the faculty members to also tender a goodbye to Marsh in song, she noted that Marsh, who is a lifelong resident of New Orleans, may be living in New York, but will always be a New Orleans lady. The faculty then sang new lyrics to the song “New Orleans Ladies.”
Friends of Jewish Family Service (JFS) turned out on May 22 at the Audubon Tea Room to honor one of their own, Julanne Isaacson, their charismatic executive director who served from 1971 to 1994.

“(For) the 21 years that you were director of Jewish family Service, you provided both vision for what the agency could be and the leadership to get us there,” said Deena Gerber, the now-retired JFS executive director whose term of office immediately followed Isaacson’s. Gerber who was honored at the 2014 Rhythm and Soul gala had the privilege of bestowing this year’s Rhythm and Soul Award to Isaacson at the conclusion of the banquet.

“A friend of mine who worked for you at the time told me that I would be lucky if I got a job with you. And she was right,” Gerber recalled when she interviewed for a position there. “Jewish Family Service has changed and evolved a great deal in its 68-year history and what you did during your tenure was to move the agency forward and to keep it abreast of the latest research and methods of providing social services.

“JFS in New Orleans has always been a small agency, but your lasting legacy is showing how even small organizations can be cutting edge and make a big impact.”

Gerber listed several current programs either initiated or vastly expanded under Isaacson’s leadership that are still major components of JFS social work programs 22 years after her retirement. These include the Homemaker Program, which offers in-home assistance for the elderly and infirm; the Teen Life Counts teenage suicide awareness and prevention program; and the personal medical response system, Lifeline.

Isaacson was also commended for her sparking the Passover Food Basket program and publishing two important books under the JFS banner, “Family Stories: An Oral History Guide” and “Caring for the Elderly: A Workbook for Caregivers.”

“You have taught generations of leaders the importance of strategic planning,” Gerber continued. “As I look around this room I see many people who were involved in how your planning processes and how you brought board and staff together to identify goals and to really bring core values to life.”

Earlier in the evening, JFS president Julie Wise Oreck, who served as the evening’s emcee, and current executive director Roselle Ungar both spoke glowingly of Isaacson’s past, acknowledging the legacy she left behind and the high standard of leadership she created. “JFS touched 6,000 individuals during the past 12 months,” Ungar stated. “Touching people each day as we do, it allows us to touch someone’s life and affects us as individuals and as a community.”

Oreck introduced Isaacson’s son, Dr. Tom Haspel of San Andreas, CA., who briefed attendees on highlights of his mother’s life. Born in Vicksburg, MS. during the 1920s, she graduated at the top of her class at Newcomb College and was a member of Phi Beta Kappa before marrying his father, a career Navy officer during World War II, he noted.

She is still the youngest president to ever serve the New Orleans Section of the National Council of Jewish Women and has been a recipient of its coveted Hannah Solomon Award, he said.

Haspel credited her strong will to succeed with having inspired him and his siblings to do good works in their chosen endeavors.

“She would say that her accomplishments are modest, but of course one person can only do so much,” Haspel mused. “What should not be dismissed as small, however, is the part of her heart that answers that call with action. That heart part, which is in all of us is great indeed.”

Also on hand were Margie Bissinger and her daughter Nancy Bissinger Timm, last year’s recipients of the Rhythm and Soul Award. Bissinger, who recited the Hamotzi prior to the meal is the sister of Dr. Irwin Isaacson, the man whom

Julanne married in the 1980s.

Haspel explained that Dr. Isaacson had commented that he knew his wife back in high school and that she was “a nice girl who was easy to talk to.”

“I researched 1940s Jewish Southern gentleman speech and discovered that translated as ‘very to extremely hot,’” the step-son and fellow physician quipped.

Isaacson received her master’s degree in Social Work from Tulane University in 1965 and worked for a short time for Traveler’s Aid and the Family Service of Greater New Orleans.

She received accolades throughout her career from the United Way and the Louisiana Association of Social Workers, who presented here with both the Social Worker of the Year Award and a Lifetime Achievement Award.

During her 21-year tenure, she served under 12 different JFS board presidents, many of whom
were on hand to pose in a picture with Isaacson along with current board members.

According to her son, she partnered with both the Tulane University School of Social Work and the Louisiana State University School of Social Work, providing leadership and internship opportunities, while promoting scholarship and continued research.

Gerber provided some insight into Isaacson’s high standards. “Providing the very highest level of social services has always been of utmost important to you,” she considered. “I think the strengths that you brought to Jewish Family Service was (sic) creativity, commitment to excellence and belief in people – belief in the abilities of staff, belief in the abilities of the board and belief in the ability of clients to make their lives better.”

Just before presenting the Rhythm and Soul Award, Gerber said this “Julanne, you have been my boss, my mentor and my friend. I am incredibly lucky to have you in my life.”

Isaacson then accepted the award, which was represented by a glass plate engraved with the image of a trumpet above which are trees and small Stars of David representing the New Orleans Jewish community.

“I’m a little overcome with emotion and it’s not really like me, but I just am so overwhelmed by all of this praise,” Isaacson said in her address to the crowd. “You do all these things and you work on all these programs and all these items, but they spread over years and year and then, all of a sudden you hear about them all at once.”

Respectfully, she reminded Gerber that another of her programs that she was proud of initiating was the helping hand extended to the Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union during the 1980s.

Isaacson brought it all full circle when she read an account of how the early Jewish immigrants in the 19th century were given aid by the Hebrew Benevolent Society and others Jewish societies intended to prop them up financially. After reading a passage, she explained that the work from which she was reading was a master’s thesis at Tulane University on “Jewish Philanthropy in New Orleans” written in 1937 by her mentor and mother-in-law, Irma Isaacson.

**Annual Yom Hashoah Memorial Program**

**By ALAN SMASON**

In addition to the annual remembrance honoring the six million Jewish souls slain in the Holocaust, the 2016 Yom Hashoah Community-Wide Holocaust Memorial Program on May 1 also included a short portion from “Brundibár,” a children’s opera and the keynote speaker, Dr. Bernd Wollschlaeger.

The two-hour long event started with the Procession of the Survivors, four of whom holding memorial candles were escorted by family members. They were followed by student delegates of the Anti-Defamation League’s Donald Mintz Leadership Mission to Washington, D.C. into the Mintz Auditorium at the uptown JCC.

The program also allowed for a short presentation from the upcoming children’s opera “Brundibár,” which plays next weekend at the National World War II Museum Freedom Pavilion on May 14 and 15.

The evening was officially closed by the Holocaust Memorial Committee chair Henry Rosenblatt.

(This is an abridged version of the original article. To read the complete article go to www.crescentcityjewishnews.com.)
Documentary film ‘Presenting Princess Shaw’ showcases local talent

By ALAN SMASON

In one of the most bizarre pairings made possible by social media, an unknown New Orleans singer became a celebrated star in Israel because of a connection her YouTube videos made with an Israeli musician and composer.

“Presenting Princess Shaw” tells the improbable tale of how New Orleans elder-care worker Samantha Montgomery was discovered in Israel by cutting edge arranger Ophir Kutiel, popularly known as Kutiman. The documentary film directed by Ido Haar was largely filmed in New Orleans. It received nominations at two international film festivals. It will have a week-long run beginning Friday, June 3, at the Broad Theater.

What makes the film even more unlikely is the clash of cultures. Montgomery, who uses the stage name of Princess Shaw, is a resident of a post-Katrina blighted and crime-ridden New Orleans neighborhood, Gerttown. She labors during the day at the Poydras Home taking care of infirm and elderly patients, but at night self-records her own original songs on her cellphone and uploads them to her YouTube channel.

Across the world, 7,000 miles away in Israel, her work is seen by Kutiman, who uses other YouTube performers’ works as well as those of his own troupe of live musicians to integrate with Princess Shaw’s haunting voice. The result is a transformative set of several vocals and a musical collaboration that is first created in the studio without Montgomery’s knowledge and then gains fame over YouTube and Israeli radio.

The clash of cultures from a backwards and impoverished New Orleans to a bustling and thriving Tel Aviv is palpable. The majority of the movie was filmed in New Orleans and Israel.

The native New Orleanian with crimson colored hair and a prominent set of argent braces stands in contrast to Kutiel’s full scruffy beard and curly black mop top. While she lives in a clean and orderly home in a neglected neighborhood, he lives on a kibbutz. Hers is a typical African-American dialect, while he speaks English with a thick Israeli accent and effortlessly goes in and out of Hebrew.

We see Montgomery’s journey from an unknown hopeful living a meagre existence into that of a genuine star on a Tel Aviv stage as Princess Shaw in front of hundreds of enthusiastic audience members. They are among the millions who have seen Kutiman’s updated videos go viral on the Internet and have heard his work over Israeli radio.

Haar’s lens lovingly captures the entire process of her reaching out to a potential audience, not completely understanding why, nor imagining that it could lead to a genuine career as a musical artist. He is there when she is surprised to find out that Kutiman has taken her raw, improvised songs and – without her approval or knowledge – transformed them into polished works of musicianship, which he claims. We learn that she is so pleased with Kutiman’s video manipulations that she hops a plane bound for Israel in order to thank him personally.

Their meeting and rehearsals in Israel and the live concert appearance she makes give this unusual documentary film an almost scripted treatment. But despite its incredulity, this is a real story and we are there to take the ride as Princess Shaw achieves her 15 minutes of fame in 83 minutes.
Shir Chadash Congregation uses camp theme for the Lindens sendoff

Shir Chadash said goodbye to the rabbinic family of Rabbi Ethan Linden, Liba Kornfeld and their children on Sunday, June 5 with a sendoff of love and best wishes from 4-7 p.m.

Musical groups the Iguanas and Jennie and the Klezmorim kept the celebrations moving along to a happy beat, while Andy Adelman provided kosher catering for a seated meal. The hallways were decorated with reminders of camp and a children’s program operated separately in the Chevra Thilim Chapel administered by Jewish educator Deborah Mintz.

Rene Lehman spoke on behalf of the synagogue, recounting major moments in the life of the Lindens. A Gary Rosenthal streetcar tzedakah holder was presented to the rabbi by congregation president Lisa Finkelstein.

The Lindens responded with a script of questions and responses that changed throughout the years and they became more involved in the Jewish community and learned about such topics as Jazz Fest and Mardi Gras.

Several congregants calling themselves the Avenue KooF Players presented a musical based in part on the music from Avenue Q. Afterwards, the entire congregation using special Shir Chadash handkerchiefs and second lined to the food to eat.

The event was styled after summer camp because the Lindens came from Camp Ramah in New England prior to joining Shir Chadash and the rabbi will now be moving back to Camp Ramah in the Berkshires to begin work as the executive director of the camp there. Of course, an additional loss to the community will be his wife Liba who will be leaving her post as the Jewish Family Life director at the Jewish Community Center.

GiveNOLA Day awards an extra $10K to Federation of Greater New Orleans

Despite a number of technical flaws and a website that was fairly non-responsive, the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans was given the nod as the most responsive of the small non-profits competing for dollars on GiveNOLA Day, last month on May 3.

As a result, the GiveNOLA Foundation presented the Federation of Greater New Orleans with an additional $10,000 to add to the $96,000 it raised that day, putting them over the $100,000 figure they had never broken.

Israel’s rhythmic gymnastics team wins historic gold medal at European Championships

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel’s rhythmic gymnastics team earned several medals — including a gold for the first time at an international competition — at the European Championships held on its home turf.

On Sunday June 17, the Israelis won in the clubs and hoops category at the competition, which was held over the weekend in Holon, in central Israel.

A day earlier they won a silver for the team ribbons routine. On Friday June 15, Israel took the bronze in the all-around category.

The team will travel this summer to Rio de Janeiro to compete in the Brazil Summer Olympics.
'Wicked' wizard is worthily wonderful – and Jewish, too!

By ALAN SMASON, Exclusive to the CCJN

As the beloved Wizard of Oz, Stuart Zagnit is the essence of charm, oiling his way across the New Orleans Saenger Theater stage in a grand and gregarious manner while the sycophants of his domain sing his praises. Zagnit is bathed in the brightest light on stage with the Emerald City boldly beaming behind him. Donning a tall top hat with a long, gray overcoat, he plays this role with delight, dancing across the stage and weaving a web of treachery and fear in his wake as he warbles his signature tune “Wonderful.”

But this is not the benignly beneficent wizard of L. Frank Baum’s creation. No, this is the darker and dastardly foe of the witches of Oz first re-imagined in Gregory Maguire’s novel and now retold in the wildly successful Wicked, featuring Winnie Holzman’s book and Stephen Schwartz’s music and lyrics. The production, a part of the East Jefferson Broadway Across New Orleans series and will play through June 19.

For eight performances a week the New Jersey-born Zagnit has the privilege of playing what has proven to be one of his favorite roles to date. His original nine-month contract was recently extended another six months and he has already portrayed the Wizard for more than 300 performances.

While this is the fourth time Zagnit has been to the Crescent City, he still cannot forget his very first time over 30 years right after he graduated from college.

“I got hired to do a children’s theatre that toured the state of Louisiana. We’d go out to various cities during the day, but we’d always come back to the French Quarter. We kinda made that our headquarters,” he recalled in a CCJN telephone interview. “The first night that I was in New Orleans I took a stroll down Bourbon Street and saw a man in a business suit smoking a cigarette under a street light and he kinda looked like an illustration and… (dramatic pause) it was Tennessee Williams.”

The arc of his story rises as does the tenor of his voice. “So my first night in New Orleans I met Tennessee Williams on Bourbon Street and I thought ‘It doesn’t get much better than that.’”

He came through New Orleans some years later on a four-city tour of Al Jolson Tonight, which starred the late Larry Kerr in the title role. As happens quite often, however, the funding for the Broadway run fizzled before they made it to the Great White Way and, without sufficient backing, the promising show folded leaving him in its dust.

Zagnit came back to New Orleans once more as a cast member of the 1994 national tour of Crazy for You, billed as “the new George and Ira Gershwin musical.” Consisting of a new book by Ken Ludwig and with songs culled for the most part from Girl Crazy, it was named the Tony Award winner for Best Musical in 1992.

More recently he was associated with another big Broadway blockbuster, Alan Menken’s Newsies, based on the 1992 Walt Disney cult film flop that starred Christian Bale. Zagnit was eventually chosen to play the swing, which meant he was regularly called to fill five roles of all the major adult male characters with the exception of the role of Joseph Pulitzer. Zagnit remembered that he auditioned for the role of the Wizard in Wicked on the same day as when he had a callback audition from Newsies. When he accepted the contract for Newsies, neither he nor the producers had any clue as to how much of a juggernaut it would become.

“Being with it from the beginning, there’s nothing that quite matched the excitement of being in that theater the night of our final invited dress rehearsal, before we started our previews, and the excitement of the audience seeing it for the first time on stage,” he recalled of Newsies. “Seize the Day,” one of the musical’s first big numbers, created such a stir with a standing ovation that the crowd had to be calmed down before the remainder of the first act could continue.

He stayed with the show for its entire two and...
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a half year run and then cooled his heels taking short jobs while he angled for a bigger role.

Prior to his accepting the role in Wicked, he took time out to play another role on Broadway as Grandpa Who in Dr. Seuss’s How the Grinch Stole Christmas in 2014 and then took on the grueling role of Max Bialystock in a regional production of The Producers last summer. “It was a dream come true to play that role,” he confessed, but he acknowledged it was taxing on his voice.

It was during that first week when his voice was particularly challenged that his agent notified him that the producers of Wicked wanted him for an audition on his first rest day for the role of the Wizard. “I didn’t have any voice. I got there and spent the night before drinking tea and trying to rest, but I knew my top notes were gone. My chords were like raw,” he recounted. “I want you to know that before I do anything that I have all of these notes – they’re all in my range” Zagnit told the associate assistant director. She encouraged him and eventually reassured him by saying that she knew he had the notes in him and “Besides,” he remembered her saying, “the Wizard doesn’t have to sing that well.”

With a nervous laugh in response, he relaxed and in short order a few weeks later, he was coached and finally given the approval for the casting he had hoped to snag five or six years ago. “I’m having a ball,” he boasted.

Zagnit points to the opening of the show, which sets up the action that follows. “It’s not only just musical, but it’s such great storytelling,” he said. “It’s such a kick to be part of that right now. My voice is there at the beginning and just to have that kind of impact and to move the story along, I feel it’s a great gift to us and it’s a responsibility I accept gladly.”

He credited the stage management team with allowing all of the actors to find their own truth in the characters and not force each other to emulate stellar performances such as those of the originator of the Wizard role, Joel Grey, or his replacement on the road, John Davidson. “They didn’t make us replicate anyone else’s performance and they smartly let me find my way,” he said. “Because of that it has a true line that makes sense to me and I can communicate to the audience. I like that.”

As the character of the Wizard, he is seen as more manipulative and plotting than the sympathetic lost charlatan Baum had described in his books. The witches Elphaba and Galinda, later renamed Glinda, at first believe him to be a magnificent, caring figure. Later, they learn of his ulterior plan to rid Oz of animals and consolidate his power.

Wicked recently became the tenth longest running show in Broadway history and cracked the one billion dollar box office record in a record 13 years compared to the number one show Phantom of the Opera, which took 28 years to do so, and Disney’s The Lion King that cracked the billion dollar barrier in 18 years. Worldwide, the show has taken in more than four billion dollars in box office sales.

The millennial generation might not readily recognize him on stage, but might recollect his voice when he speaks. That’s because for the first nine seasons of Pokémon, he was the voice of kindly Professor Oak. It’s a role that proved to be financially rewarding and got him notice among the younger generation.

Another role he said he was especially taken with was as Teyye in 2007 at a Syracuse production of Fiddler on the Roof. “That was life-changing, that role,” he boasted.

For a man who hailed from a traditional, but not overly observant family (“We did observe the High Holidays.”), Zagnit was very delighted to portray the titular role of Kuni Leml in a 1983 mounting of Abraham Goldfaden’s Yiddish musical by the now defunct Jewish Repertory Theatre. He credited that show and his role as critical to his professional success. “It was such a lovely little show, the perfect little jewel box show,” he said.

The character, who was half-blind and disabled in a variety of fashions had to be portrayed in such a way as to not be ridiculed. “I always called him a Jewish ‘Elephant Man,” Zagnit mused. In order to convincingly carry off the role, he borrowed a stammer from an uncle, copied a pronounced limp from a neighbor and created the physicality of a humpback. “I needed a chiropractor after that role,” he chuckled.

But something else came his way as a result. “I got a Hirschfeld out of it of myself in character that ran in the New York Times,” he beamed. Although it cost him dearly at the time, it is among his most precious of possessions.

Zagnit looked back at his Jewish upbringing. He still lives in Brooklyn with his wife and a 20-year-old son. “I grew up in a house that didn’t keep kosher, but we didn’t put milk on the table with meat,” he explained. But being observant is always compromised by having to perform on stage. “You can’t be a religious Jew and work in the theater,” he opined.

Then again, if it weren’t for his being exposed to theatre in his Jewish religious school, Zagnit might never have found his way to the stage. “My first performance, literally, was playing Haman and I so got off playing the villain,” Zagnit concluded.
Op-Ed

NCJW Section president decries gun violence

By SUSAN KIERR

The fear engendered by gun attacks on civilians spiked Sunday when we learned of the mass shooting in Orlando. It occurred on Shavuot, which commemorates the giving of the Torah, the laws intended to help people live together in peace.

The deadly attack on people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer is a contradiction of our basic Jewish values and the Talmudic teaching that taking a life is like destroying the universe and saving a life is like saving the universe.

NCJW volunteers and advocates try to turn ideas into action. So now we join all who deplore gun violence and hate crimes. The National office of NCJW is calling out, again, in the name of all of us, for the end of gun violence. We in New Orleans are proud to be included in that call.

(Susan Kierr is the president of the Greater New Orleans Section of the National Council of Jewish Women.)

RASHI, RAMBAM and RAMALAMADINGDONG

A Quizbook of Jewish Trivia Facts & Fun

By New Orleans native, Mark Zimmerman

Alexander Hamilton had a little-known connection to Jews. What was it?

A. Hamilton and his wife Elizabeth Schuyler had eight children, including their daughter Eliza. Eliza married a Jewish physician and converted to Judaism. Because Hamilton was killed by Aaron Burr when Eliza was only four years old, he was not around to see his daughter grow up; however, Hamilton’s wife Elizabeth attended Eliza’s wedding and later attended the bar mitzvah of Eliza’s son Alexander, at Congregation Shearith Israel on Manhattan’s Upper West Side.

B. While little is known about Hamilton’s mother, she was known to be of French Huguenot and British ancestry. There is some evidence that she was the illegitimate daughter of a member of the Rothschild banking family. While this has not been proven, one piece of evidence for this story is that when Hamilton founded the Bank of New York, among the original members of the bank’s board of governors was Jakob Mayer Rothschild, who was part of the French branch of the family and was one of the two Jewish financiers (the other being Haym Solomon) of the American Revolution.

C. Because Hamilton’s mother had never divorced her first husband, Alexander was considered illegitimate in the eyes of the Anglican Church. As a result, he was not allowed to attend the local Anglican school, but instead attended a Jewish Day School where he learned to recite the Ten Commandments in Hebrew.

D. Charlestown, where Hamilton grew up on the island of Nevis, had a large Jewish population as a result of immigration from Spain and Portugal at the time of the Inquisition. Hamilton’s best friend growing up was a Jewish boy named Moises de Leon. Hamilton later wrote that he first learned about what freedom meant by going to a Passover Seder at his friend Moises’ house, and this influenced his views on liberty and religious freedom in the newly independent United States.

The correct answer is C.
Theatre critic Alan Smason is the theatre critic at WYES-TV. "Steppin' Out," the weekly arts and entertainment program in New Orleans and a member of the American Theatre Critics Association, the society of professional theatre critics.
Jewish Museum’s exhibit Mizrahi loves company displayed through August 7

By PAUL OSWELL

The last time I really thought about the fashion world was in September 2001. When the planes hit on the morning of the 11th, the city was replete with fashion journalists, who had all converged in New York to cover New York Fashion Week. As events unfolded, fashion correspondents became the reporters on the ground, way out of their comfort zones, and what resulted were strikingly human reports, devoid of accepted newspeak.

I think that’s why I generally avoid reading about fashion. I presume it’s a world devoid of real humanity, interchangeable clothes horses paraded around exclusive paddocks, sporting nothing that the average person could or would ever wear. I realise it’s a vaguely ignorant viewpoint, but it’s one that kind of fuelled itself.

The Jewish Museum in New York City wasn’t the place I imagined I’d have humanity in fashion demonstrated to me, but exploring Isaac Mizrahi: An Unruly History, was like being sideswiped.

Mizrahi’s back story helps: a pudgy Jewish kid with ridicule issues is fortunate enough to have the parents (with the generosity/resources) to escape his strict religious school to go to New York’s High School of Performing Arts and Parsons School of Design.

By 26, Mizrahi is showing his own designs, rocketing into the NY fashion scene, acting in Woody Allen movies and starring in charismatically candid documentaries about the fashion world (1995’s Unzipped) – self-effacing and insecure enough to garner sympathy from the accessibility, something you suspect not many high-end designers could pull off.

The exhibit begins with a huge wall of swatches, meticulously arranged and speaking to Mizrahi’s dedication and panoramic arsenal of influences. The first room is his broadside on fashion from early shows that would become his signature – a satirical, almost political mix of luxurious fabrics and ideas mixed with everyday, mundane items.

“Baby Bjorn Ball Gown” (1998) is a red satin dress accessorized with a baby carrier. This juxtaposition would stay with his through to works such as “Elevator Pad Gown” (2005) a floor-length skirt that assembled from (fake, but still) pieces of gray and blue movers’ quilts. There’s a snoon being cocked at convention and the line between fake and authentic, because what are those things, anyway?

Some of the pieces might be obvious, one-line jokes, but I imagine that’s way more jokes than most designers ever tell. Added to his showpieces are otherworldly opera costumes and some incredibly engaging colour sketches. The clothing slowly hints at his evolution into his present day focus: making high-street looks for mass consumption. The t-shirts and leggings are already there in his couture repertoire; having dressed Naomi Campbell and Kate Moss, Mizrahi now looks to providing for the everywoman.

The show ends with a video montage of Mizrahi’s career, with the glamour and the catwalks and the knowingly moody shots of him playing piano to his dog and the talk shows and the shopping channel segments. What comes across in all of them is the unabashed joy, and a true love of women. Mizrahi is like the kid who got the keys to the kingdom when life could have been so different. It takes work and talent to stay there, but I assume it takes even more to consistently retain the humour and the humanity, and that’s what An Unruly History celebrates.

“Isaac Mizrahi: An Unruly History” showed at the Jewish Museum in New York City until August 7.

(Originally hailing from England, Paul Oswell is a New Orleans-based travel journalist who has been living here since 2011. He is the author of a number of guide books on the Crescent City and occasionally performs stand-up comedy. He has a travel website called Shandy Pockets.)
Elie Wiesel gave the Holocaust a face and the world a conscience

By SARAH WILDMAN

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Elie Wiesel, the Holocaust survivor and Nobel laureate who became a leading icon of Holocaust remembrance and a global symbol of conscience, died on Saturday June 2 at 87. His death was the result of natural causes, the World Jewish Congress said in a statement.

A philosopher, professor and author of such seminal works of Holocaust literature as “Night” and “Dawn,” Wiesel, perhaps more than any other figure, came to embody the legacy of the Holocaust and the worldwide community of survivors.

“I have tried to keep memory alive,” Wiesel said at the Nobel peace prize ceremony in 1986. “I have tried to fight those who would forget. Because if we forget, we are guilty, we are accomplices.”

Often, he would say the “opposite of love is not hate, it is indifference.”

The quest to challenge indifference was a driving force in Wiesel’s writing, advocacy and public presence. Through he considered himself primarily a writer, by the end of the 1970s he had settled into the role of moral compass, a touchstone for presidents and a voice that challenged easy complacency about history.

Wiesel spent the majority of his public life speaking of the atrocities he had witnessed and asking the public to consider other acts of cruelty around the world, though he drew the line at doing comparisons with the Holocaust. “I am always advocating the utmost care and prudence when one uses that word,” he told JTA in 1980.

“The State of Israel and the Jewish People bitterly mourn the passing of Elie Wiesel,” Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a statement Saturday. “Elie, the wordsmith, expressed through his extraordinary personality and fascinating books the triumph of the human spirit over cruelty and evil.”

He won a myriad of awards for his work, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Congressional Gold Medal and the National Jewish Book Award. “Night” is now standard reading in high schools across America. In 2006, it was chosen as a book club selection by Oprah Winfrey and, nearly half a century after it was first published, spent more than a year atop the best-seller list. He would also take Winfrey to Auschwitz, that same year. Writing for the New York Times Book Review in 2008, Rachel Donadio said that it had become “a case study in how a book helped created a genre, how a writer became an icon and how the Holocaust was absorbed into the American experience.”

“There is no way to talk about the last half century of Holocaust consciousness without giving Wiesel a front and center role,” said Michael Berenbaum, a professor at the American Jewish University in Los Angeles and former director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum’s research institute. “What he did, extraordinarily, was to use the Nobel Prize as a tool to call attention to things, and as a vehicle to scream louder, shout more, agitate more.”

Born in the town of Sighet, Transylvania, then and now a part of Romania, in 1928, Wiesel was deported to Auschwitz in 1944 with his family. He was 15. His mother and one of his sisters would disappear forever when the family was forced aboard the cattle cars, murdered immediately. His father, who traveled with him to the camps, died of dysentery and starvation in Buchenwald before liberation. Two sisters would survive the war.

In “Night,” Wiesel describes pinching his face to see if he is dreaming when he sees the murders of infants.

“In those places, in one night one becomes old,” Wiesel told NPR in 2014. “What one saw in one night, generations of men and women had not seen in their own entire lives.”

Wiesel was liberated from Buchenwald in 1945. He went on to study at the Sorbonne and moved to New York at the end of the 1950s, where he lived in relative obscurity. He worked hard to find a publisher for “Night,” which initially sold poorly.

“The truth is in the 1950s and in the early 1960s there was little interest and willingness to listen to survivors,” said Wiesel’s longtime friend Rabbi Irving “Yitz” Greenberg, who had read a copy of “Night” in Israel in the early 1960s. “In 1963, someone told me this author is alive and well in New York City and I somehow managed to find him and go see him.”

Wiesel was “gaunt” and “working as a freelance reporter, a stringer, for a French newspaper, an Israeli newspaper and a Yiddish newspaper — and for none of the above was he making a living,” Greenberg said.

Greenberg was determined to help Wiesel find work. “He had this magnetic presence,” he said. “He was quiet but with tremendous force and he felt the vividness the Holocaust had a message.”

In the late 1960s Wiesel finally began to...
emerge as one of the preeminent voices in Holocaust literature. By the end of his career, he had written some 50 books.

In 1978, Wiesel became the chairman of the Presidential Committee on the Holocaust, which would ultimately recommend the building of a Holocaust museum in Washington. As his public presence grew, he began to visit the sites of other genocides. In 1980, he traveled to Cambodia. In an interview with JTA, he called the Cambodian refugee camps “spectacles of horror” and noted, “That these things could happen again simply means that the world didn’t learn — or that the world didn’t want to learn.”

In 1985, Wiesel’s reputation grew beyond the Jewish world when he challenged President Ronald Reagan on live television over his intention to visit a German cemetery that housed the remains of Nazi soldiers. In the Oval Office to receive the Congressional Medal of Achievement, Wiesel chastised Reagan.

“This is not your place Mr. President,” Wiesel famously said. The president visited the cemetery anyway but changed his itinerary to include a visit to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

Wiesel challenged the White House again in 1993, when he charged the newly inaugurated President Bill Clinton to do more to address the atrocities then unfolding in Yugoslavia.

“Most people don’t confront a sitting president that way, and he confronted two,” said Sara Bloomfield, the museum’s current director.

“He saw people would listen to him,” said Stuart Eizenstat, who held senior positions in multiple presidential administrations and was a key figure in the negotiation of Holocaust restitution agreements with several European governments.

“He became more aggressive about showing that it is not just the Holocaust governments, but applying lessons to rest of the world as well,” Eizenstat said. “He became more active in other genocidal or world conscious issues. He wanted to use that power for the cause not just of Holocaust memory, but also to prevent genocide.

At the inauguration in 1993 of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Wiesel said, clearly, “I don’t believe there are answers. There are no answers. And this museum is not an answer; it is a question mark.” That question mark, he applied to global atrocities, as well as historical ones.

His later years saw him wade into politics. He met frequently with President Barack Obama but also loudly chastised the president for calling for an end to settlement construction and for brokering the Iran nuclear rollback-for-sanctions-relief deal, positions that led to criticism, even from long-time admirers. His very public support for Netanyahu was also questioned. Peter Beinart, writing in Ha’aretz, said: “Wiesel takes refuge in the Israel of his imagination, using it to block out the painful reckoning that might come from scrutinizing Israel as it actually is.”

The final years of his life also saw financial turmoil. His personal finances and $15.2 million in assets of the Elie Weisel Foundation For Humanity were invested with Bernie Madoff, who was convicted in 2009 of fraud. Wiesel’s fortune and the reserves of his organization were wiped out.

And yet he did not cease his work. Just months after the scandal broke, in June 2009, he led Obama and German Chancellor Angela Merkel on a trip to Auschwitz where he noted he was at his father’s grave. He then gave a searing indictment of the world’s continued inability to learn.

As a public figure who was also the very symbol of the Holocaust survivor in America, Wiesel acted as a moral compass, his personal history lending unequalled gravity to his public remarks on genocide, anti-Semitism and other issues of injustice worldwide,” said Ruth Franklin, author of ‘A Thousand Darknesses: Lies and Truth in Holocaust Fiction.” “Wiesel never pretended that he understood the Holocaust. He spoke of it as a horror beyond explanation, a black hole in history. As the virtual embodiment of the catch phrase ‘never forget,’ he did more than anyone else to raise awareness of the Holocaust in American life.”

Wiesel is survived by his wife, Marion, and a son, Shlomo.

‘Wonder Woman’ trailer starring Israeli actress Gal Gadot released

(JTA) — Warner Brothers released its first official trailer for “Wonder Woman,” starring Israeli actress Gal Gadot in the title role.

The trailer debuted at the annual Comic-Con in San Diego, California. Taking place during the World War I era, the movie will introduce Wonder Woman’s alter ego, Diana Prince, and her origins on the Amazonian island of Themyscira.

“Wonder Woman” is scheduled to open in theaters in June 2017. The character was introduced in DC Comics movies several months ago in “Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice.” She is also scheduled to appear in the superhero film “Justice League,” which comes out in November 2017.

“Wonder Woman has the heart of a human and the strength of a goddess, and combination of the two is very powerful,” Gadot said during a question-and-answer session at Comic-Con.

“Knowing how many people care so much for this character … it was important to portray [her] in a way everyone can relate,” Gadot also said.

Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, left, and human rights icon and Chairman of the Executive at The Jewish Agency for Israel Natan Sharansky, right, at the 2012 General Assembly of the JFNA. (Photo: David Karp)

Elie Wiesel and wife Marion in 2012. (Courtesy of Wikimedia)
Polish president slams anti-Semitism on anniversary of Jewish massacre

(JTA) — The president of Poland strongly condemned anti-Semitism and all forms of racism and xenophobia in leading the commemorations marking the 70th anniversary of a massacre of Jews after World War II.

Andrzej Sebastian Duda spoke Monday in the southeastern town of Kielce, where communist police and a mob killed 42 - nearly all Jews - on July 4, 1946.

"In a free, sovereign and independent Poland, there is no room for any form of prejudice, for racism, for xenophobia, for anti-Semitism," Duda said, according to remarks carried by the Polish news agency PAP, The Associated Press reported.

Coming so soon after the Holocaust, the killings - spurred by a false rumor that returning Jews had attacked a local boy - sent a wave of fearful Jews out of Poland and left those remaining afraid of living in their homeland. Poland had an estimated 250,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors in a pre-World War II Jewish population of 3.5 million.

In recent months, Duda has strongly condemned anti-Semitism and xenophobia several times after sending mixed messages on matters of prejudice since the election last year that brought his coalition to power, AP reported.

A day earlier, the prime minister of Poland in a message to a Kielce commemoration said there is no place for racist violence in her country.

Andrzej Bialek, the vice president of the Jan Karski Educational Foundation, which organized the commemoration, read aloud a letter from the prime minister, Beata Szydlo, to the gathering of some 200 people.

"Seventy years ago, shortly after the devastating war and the Holocaust drama, in Kielce again flowed the blood of innocent people," the letter said.

Szydlo said there was no provocation that can be an excuse for anti-religious and racist violence. She said the tragedy is still being studied by historians.

Anna Azari, the Israeli ambassador to Poland, also spoke at the ceremony, saying "We have to act together against racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia."

Bogdan Bialek, the Karski Foundation official who organized the ceremony, spoke of a world without violence and hatred.

"We do not gather here in this place against anyone, even against those whom we think in our minds as our opponents, and perhaps — God forbid — as enemies," Bialek said. "We gather here for us, for all people, for a better future."

The Jan Karski Educational Foundation, named for the Polish underground fighter and righteous gentile who was among the first to report the dimensions of the Nazi genocide, promotes Catholic-Jewish interchanges and seeks to instill Karski’s example in young people.

Jewish reporters snag several Press Club Awards at fete at Marriott Riverside

Investigative reporters Lee Zurik of WVUE- TV (Fox8) and David Hammer of WWL-TV’s Eyewitness News each picked up a total of three first place awards at the annual Press Club of New Orleans gala on Saturday, July 9.

Held for the first time at the Marriott Riverside Convention Center Hotel, the event honored local publications, radio and television broadcasters and public relations members with a series of awards honoring coverage in sports, still photography, writing, digital media, broadcasting and television videography.

Hammer picked up the top award for his investigative report on the “Library Foundation,” took top honors in Environmental/Science coverage for his story, “B.P. Oil Disaster: 5 Years Later” and shared a first place win with WWL’s Katie Moore and fellow Jewish reporter Michael Perstein of the New Orleans Advocate for their “N.O.P.D. Call Waiting” series.

Zurik followed with three first place awards for his story on “Jindal’s Presidential Run” in the Governmental/Political category, the story titled “Swiped” on financial mismanagement in the Continuing Coverage category and also for his “Billion Dollar Blueprint” story, which was listed under TV’s Public Affairs category.

New Orleans Saints offensive tackle Zach Strief served as the emcee for the awards, which also bestowed Lifetime Achievement Awards to New Orleans Magazine editor and WYES producer Errol Laborde (“Informed Sources”) and Action Reporter Bill Capo of WWL-TV.

The Crescent City Jewish News (CCJN) has been honored for the past two years with two first place awards in both Infographics (“Jewish New Orleans and Timeline”) in 2014 and in Entertainment writing (“Valerie Sassyfras: A Musical Phoenix Emerges”) in 2015. Last year the CCJN also received a third place for Features Writing (“Jews and Jazz, Part One”). While the CCJN was not nominated for a Press Club Award for journalistic excellence this year, Southern Jewish Life magazine did earn a second place in the category of Special Section for its story on Hurricane Katrina.
2 score since Entebbe, American Bicentennial

By ALAN SMASON, CCJN Editor

July 4, 1976 may have been the most planned day in American history. For months in advance preparations were made locally, regionally and nationally to make the celebration of the nation’s independence from Great Britain 200 years earlier a momentous event. Tall ships filled New York Harbor as part of Operation Sail and President Gerald Ford waved from the deck of the first supercarrier, the U.S.S. Forrestal, named for America’s first secretary of defense.

Dazzling pyrotechnic displays in Washington, Boston, Philadelphia and New York were the fitting tributes to America’s prowess on the world scene as the nation tried its best to forget the aftermath of the Viet Nam War.

While the colors of red, white and blue waved proudly on the shores of North America, the white and blue banners of the State of Israel were also waving as celebrations of the daring raid at the Entebbe Airport by Israeli commandos became known and spilled out into the streets.

Operation Thunderbolt, later renamed Operation Yonatan in honor of its fallen leader, Yonatan “Yoni” Netanyahu, was a 2,500-mile gambit by Prime Minister Yizhak Rabin to rescue 105 Israeli and Jewish hostages being held by Palestinian terrorists and members of Idi Amin’s top Ugandan troops. Planes flying at altitudes of less than 1,000 feet above ground bearing trained members of the Sayaret Matkal special forces were dispatched. On the first, Mercedes-Benz limousines meant to resemble Amin’s own escort vehicles were driven off ramps so as to surprise the outside troops. The other planes landed just short of a huge hole in the runway that would have spelled disaster for the daring Israeli commandos and the hostages inside.

As fate would have it, the planning and the luck were both on the Israelis side. Israelis acquired the architectural plans for the airport and its airfields.

With the exception of three Israeli hostages killed by friendly fire at the airport and one elderly hospital-ridden hostage executed on Amin’s orders after the raid, everyone else was miraculously spared, some 102 in all. The only Israeli military casualty suffered during the entire 53-minute ordeal was Netanyahu, the older brother of Israel’s current Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.

Just as John Kennedy was thrust into the national arena of American politics following the death of his older brother Joseph during World War II, so, too, was Benjamin Netanyahu set upon a political trajectory after the death of his older brother.

Like America’s post-Viet Nam War fugue, Israel was still reeling from the loss of pride from its nearly disastrous Yom Kippur War, when the country was caught off guard and suffered staggering losses in its early days. The Entebbe raid in all of its miraculous ways, gave Israelis a chance to be proud and defiant again in the face of a terrorist world.

Some 40 years later, Americans have suffered through a series of terrorist challenges that began with the Oklahoma City bombing, a domestic terrorist event, and continued with the coordinated 9/11 attacks in 2001. The recent shootings in San Bernardino and in Orlando have given us notice that these kinds of domestic and foreign threats will continue. In Israel a security wall has been erected and several wars have been fought with the Gazans and the Hamas terrorist organization that now occupies the land Israel gave of its own accord in the hopes of seeking peace.

Today we do not have the same kinds of celebrations on both sides of the globe that we enjoyed in 1976. But we can still mark this day with reverence and joy, if perhaps with a note of caution.

These 40 years later the two songs that still resonate together on this special day are “God Bless America” and “Am Yisrael Chai.”
Rabbi David Polsky was given a Mardi Gras themed catered luncheon at Congregation Anshe Sfard on Sunday, July 17 at noon. The luncheon titled “Farewell to Krewe D. Polsky,” honored the rabbi for all of his many contributions and spiritual leadership throughout his last five years. The room was full of his congregants and fellow well-wishers.

The Polsky family is leaving New Orleans for an unchartered path of new challenges in the Detroit suburbs. While this move will bring him closer to family members, it will also take him far away from New Orleans, the city he has called home and, more specifically his first pulpit as a rabbi.

The rabbi was especially fond of the congregation’s Purim celebrations and second lines that traveled through the neighborhood and ended at the Avenue Pub on St. Charles Avenue. Those events will always serve as a special fun highlight of his time spent in New Orleans.

Following tribute addresses by congregant Joseph Stahl, Leopold Sher, Karen Remer and President Gary Remer, Polsky thanked everyone for his time at the only remaining non-Chabad Orthodox synagogue in Orleans Parish.

Congregant Sheryl Title prepared a special “second line” umbrella for the rabbi, while Gary Remer presented him with a Gary Rosenthal tzedakah box in the shape of a streetcar attached to a commemorative plaque.
Tal’s Hummus doubles number of Israeli restaurants in New Orleans

By ALAN SMASON, Exclusive to the CCJN

While Shaya has received a 2016 James Beard Award and a citation from Esquire as the Best New Restaurant in America, Tal’s Hummus has quietly opened giving Magazine Street its second and, arguably, most genuine Israeli restaurant in New Orleans.

Tal Sharon, the Israeli owner and chef behind the restaurant at 4800 Magazine Street, has had considerable experience running several other restaurants in a career that started in Israel, blossomed in Costa Rica and had now brought him to the Crescent City. But his latest restaurant venture wouldn’t have happened if it weren’t for his love of hummus and a happenstance trip to chef Alon Shaya’s self-named restaurant back in the winter.

The restaurant opened a few months ago with little fanfare, but the style of fresh Israeli food items has brought a steady stream of customers into the welcoming and bright institution.

The entrepreneur began his restaurant career shortly after leaving his two years of required service in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). He attended classes at the very exclusive Tadmor Culinary Institute and years of studies ventured out into the competitive world of Tel Aviv restaurant life. He worked and studied over the next decade. Finally, when he was in his early thirties he opened his first restaurant Pastaria, an Italian kitchen specializing in fresh, homemade pasta.

The restaurant’s bill of fare has all manner of fresh Israeli-style food. The centerpiece is the hummus, which he makes daily and with which he offers several different side items to enhance the taste. The creaminess of the concoction is giving Shaya’s roasted cauliflower and mint variation a run as best hummus in the city.

Most of the items are vegetarian, although he does stock non-kosher beef and chicken for several of his dishes. Shakshuka, the Israeli meal with eggs and fresh tomatoes, is a big favorite. Falafels are also quite popular.

The pita bread along with 40% of the items in the kitchen pantry are imported from Israel. That includes the baklavah he sells for dessert.

Although he keeps kosher himself, Sharon ultimately rejected making the restaurant conform to kosher status because he would have had to close for a minimum of 100 days out of the year, he contended. These include Shabbats with a half day on Friday and a full day on Saturday, plus other observant holidays where he would have been closed.

Tal’s Hummus at 4800 Magazine Street is open 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week.

You can find the complete article in the 5777 SOURCE guide to Jewish living in New Orleans or on the CCJN website - www.crescentcityjewishnews.com.
For most of us, the advent of August means the last few days of vacation time from work or a signal that only a short time remains before a new school terms begin. But in New Orleans, this August means a time to say both hello and goodbye to several of our rabbinic leaders.

In previous weeks, we have said so long to Rabbi Ethan Linden, who left his pulpit at Shir Chadash Conservative Congregation to take over the camp directorship at Camp Ramah in the Berkshires. Congregation Anshe Sfard’s Rabbi David Polsky left his spiritual family of five years to move closer to his actual family in the suburbs of Detroit. His congregation hired as their interim rabbi, local Rabbi Yonatan Rivkin to serve as his replacement.

This week Rabbi Deborah Silver began her new pulpit at Shir Chadash with a welcome Kiddush event. Meanwhile, Rabbi Ed Paul Cohn at Temple Sinai assumed the emeritus rabbi position after 29 years and his successor, Rabbi Matthew Reimer began his role as the new senior rabbi there.

If there is one certainty to life, it is that there is no certainty of anything. The revered rabbinic leaders of the past have moved on to greener, larger pastures in other communities or may have decided to slow down and enjoy their later years.

Whatever the reason we wish them all luck and good fortune. We should look to the leaders who remain to lead our community and wish them the very best of our support and strength. They are the leaders who, through the time-honored traditions of l’dor v’dor (“from generation to generation”) and tikkun olam (“healing the world”), will ensure our survival as a religious community and will keep safe and inviolate the very best of what we offer our community at large as a people of charity and service.

It is not an understatement to say that the future of New Orleans’ Jewish community is truly in their hands.
NOLA mobilizes to extend hands of charity to Baton Rouge

By ALAN SMASON

The Jewish community of New Orleans has extended its heart to families in Baton Rouge and other areas hit hard by the flooding associated with torrential rains last Friday August 18. While the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans, the Jewish Endowment Fund of Louisiana (JEF), the Jewish Children's Regional Service (JCRS) and Jewish Family Service (JFS) are all at the forefront of providing aid to those who have been displaced from their homes and who have lost most of their possessions, many local synagogues and individuals have taken it upon themselves to bring clothes, toiletries and gift cards for victims of the floods.

Federation started the donation ball rolling with a $25,000 grant to the Federation of Baton Rouge. Baton Rouge Federation executive director Ellen Sager’s own home reportedly suffered extensive damage due to the flooding. JEF followed up with a $10,000 grant to the Baton Rouge Federation, announced by JEF president Richard Cahn, who evoked the memories of Hurricane Katrina and the flooding that followed.

“In 2005, when we were in dire straits, Baton Rouge and communities throughout Louisiana reached out to us and took us in. The needs of the Baton Rouge Jewish community, and the community at large, are great at this time,” Cahn stated in an email. “We know that the Baton Rouge Federation will put this grant to good use.” Cahn asked that the owners of JEF donor advised funds consider distributing some funds to help the Baton Rouge community.

New Orleans Federation arranged for the Jewish Federations of North America to collect funds from other member Federations across the country and to make donations directly to the Baton Rouge Federation. So far they have raised between $6,000 and $8,000.

NECHAMA, an organization that is well known to locals following the recovery from Hurricane Katrina, has a number of people providing home remediation. Federation hopes to keep NECHAMA informed as to where the most distressed victims are to be found, so they can coordinate efforts together.

Led by Federation staffer Jeff Gubitz with boots on the ground in Baton Rouge, Federation has also made its presence known with several in-kind donations and dispersal of several gift cards to those in need. Gubitz and Federation president Jeffrey Bender have been working tirelessly to advise Sager of their ongoing efforts. Sager, who was working by herself and having to deal with her own personal problems, warmly welcomed the relief.

Gubitz has traveled to Baton Rouge and back each day this week and reported no impediments on being able to reach the Federation offices or to be able to tour areas hit hard by the flooding. He has been coordinating efforts through AT&T and Entergy, both of which suffered major loss of service to customers. AT&T’s cell towers were especially affected earlier in the week, but they seem to have corrected most of the outages, Gubitz reported. Entergy still has thousands of customers affected by loss of electric service, he said.

He is realistic about the amount of time it will take to remediate housing and to get those affected back to normalcy. “I would think at least a year and possibly longer,” he stated. “There were, as of yesterday on a phone call that I was on that 88,000 people in this area that had registered with FEMA and there are roughly 4200 people in 31 shelters.”

JCRS executive director Ned Goldberg reported that his organization had identified a small number of four to six families that have suffered losses in Baton Rouge and Denham Springs. “We don’t have all the details, what they’ve lost and what they want,” he continued. He and his office have urged any victims of the flooding to register immediately with FEMA “because that’s where the biggest source of money is,” he explained. He also suggested registering with their synagogues to help Federation know where the biggest needs exist.

Part of JCRS’s biggest focus will be on replacing items lost by the children they serve, he pointed out. “We are urging everyone to make their gifts through the Federation so we have a comprehensive idea of what our funds are,” Ellen Abrams from JEF said. “We are accepting gift cards to Lowe’s including items like building materials and for appliances we’re accepting gift cards from Kohl’s, Walmart and Bed Bath & Beyond.”

Volunteers from jNOLA, the young professional division of Federation are expected to be in Baton Rouge over the weekend, Caitrin Gladow reported.

JFS plans to send several volunteers to Baton Rouge and other areas affected by the flooding including providing on-site counseling from social workers for those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Chabad of Baton Rouge and Chabad Lubavitch of Louisiana have continued their efforts to helping displaced Jewish persons.

All local synagogues have organized efforts for flood relief. Will Samuels has coordinated most of the relief effort for Shir Chadas, while Jayne Stillman, who works with planning and allocations at Federation and is a licensed social worker has been coordinating efforts with the United Way in Baton Rouge and local synagogues.

Among the youngest of volunteers, students from the Jewish Community Day School have collectively decided to raise tzedakah for flood victims. Students are collecting clothing, toys, toiletries and diapers, and even pet food. “What a bunch of mitzvah menschen we have here at Jewish Community Day School!” wrote head of school Sharon Pollin in a release urging parents and well-wishers to drop off donations at the school in the lobby.
FIRST PERSON: Baton Rouge — A call to action

By BRIAN SEYMOUR

(Editor’s Note: This past Wednesday, August 24, The Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) Emergency Committee chair, Brian Seymour and JFNA senior vice president for Public Policy William Daroff met with volunteers in Baton Rouge. They presented $112,000 towards disaster relief in the area, the first installment from the Federation’s Baton Rouge flood relief fund.)

The two men met, and were briefed by local Jewish community leaders. They also visited the flooded home of Ellen Sager, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Baton Rouge, and other destroyed or damaged homes in partnership with the Jewish disaster response organization NECHAMA.

Two years ago, when I became chair of the Emergency Committee of The Jewish Federations of North America, I hoped to never experience the kind of situation we were created to address. Unfortunately, that has not been the case. Since I came to the helm, we’ve had to provide critical aid for several communities around the world impacted by severe natural disasters, but thereby making a crucial difference in their recovery and rebuilding efforts.

I just returned from Baton Rouge. You may know a little about what happened there, but it didn’t get the news coverage it deserves. What I saw was devastation on a scale I’d never previously witnessed. The area was hit with a 1,000-year flood event—the kind of intense rainfall expected only once in an entire millennium. Nobody could have prepared for such a crisis.

The impact is devastating and far-reaching. Approximately 110,000 people have made requests for federal assistance for their homes. In one area, 90 percent of homes were damaged, as were 91 percent of businesses. Approximately 10 percent of the Jewish community has been directly impacted, with many more affected indirectly by a loss of a job, or by the now dire need to feed and house friends and family.

I was honored to meet with some of the leaders of the Baton Rouge Jewish community and see the places they are proud to call home. They are resilient. They are organized. They are one people working together. And they need our help.

With so many businesses shut down and so many people affected, the needs of just the Jewish community alone are estimated to top $1 million. Take, for example, the story of David Spivak. Five feet of water inundated the small home he lives in with his twin 15-year-old sons. Think about that for a second. Water five feet deep - taller than some people you might know. David had to wade out of his home to catch a rescue boat.

The water came in so fast, David could not save much of anything. Outside his home now is a pile of refuse over six-feet-high that includes his furniture, drywall that volunteers have pulled out of his home, his stove, and virtually all of his possessions. His cars are destroyed. His sons cannot go back to their home. No one knows when they can return. David told us that they couldn’t even stand to be there to help clean up. Emotionally, it was just too much.

David’s story is one of thousands. The debris piles stretch for miles in front of homes and businesses. Some had flood insurance. Most, not being near a flood zone, did not. Regardless, they all need help. Insurance cannot cover total losses. Neither can FEMA, which typically allocates an average of approximately $5,000 and no more than $33,000 per home. Survivors need food (the local food bank was flooded out, as were the local Salvation Army warehouses), clothing, furniture and housing. And they urgently need emotional and psychological support and counseling; some children are now scared of the rain, with every drop increasing their fear.

The Baton Rouge Jewish community is, as they described and I saw, “small but mighty.” They have neither an established Jewish Family Services nor a JCC. They do have a part-time Federation CEO, a wonderful and dedicated woman who knows this devastation all too well; her own home was completely flooded. The focal points of the Jewish community are their synagogues, which are coordinating efforts with the local Federation. Rabbis and congregants are all pitching in.

(The entire letter along with donation information can be found on the website at www.crescentcityjewishnews.com)
Rio pays tribute to 11 Israeli victims of ’72 Munich Olympic massacre

The International Olympic Committee, the Israeli delegation, Brazilian delegation and other athletes participated in a special commemoration ceremony to the 11 Israeli team victims at the 1972 Munich Olympics.

The international Jewish community has waited for this memorial event to happen. There was much anticipation that this event would take place in 2012 on the 30th anniversary of the event. Unfortunately those members of the International Olympic Committee four years ago rejected the idea.

Brazil’s foreign minister, Jose Serra expressed the views of the hosting country stating “I believe the IOC, in all these years, hadn’t held the homage it deserved” referring to the horrific terrorist act against the Israelis.

Unlike the event held on August 4 at the Olympic Village, this event was devoted to the murdered Israelis. Eleven candles were lit at the memorial event. The candle holders included 2 widows of the victims and Rio judo bronze mentality for Israeli, Ori Sasson.

2016 Olympics: 7 Jewish American Olympians to watch in Rio

By GABE FRIEDMAN

(JTA) — There are athletes, and then there are Olympic athletes. And then there are Jewish Olympic athletes.

When the 2016 Summer Olympics open Friday, we’ll of course be cheering the American athletes — all 555 of them — and we’ll be rooting for Israel, too, which this year is sending its largest ever cohort to Rio.

But we’re saving a special shout-out for some of the Jewish-American Olympians who have given the Tribe extra reasons to be proud this year. (Interestingly, Jews make up about 2 percent of the U.S. population — and by our calculations, they’re represented by nearly the same proportion on Team USA.)

Here are seven Jewish American athletes we’re expecting to make waves in Brazil.

Aly Raisman (Gymnastics)

At the 2012 London Olympics, Aly Raisman quite possibly became the most popular Jewish athlete in the world when she won a floor gymnastics gold medal while performing to “Hava Nagila.” She didn’t stop there: Raisman brazenly noted the 40th anniversary of the massacre of 11 Israelis at the 1972 Munich games to reporters after her performance — the International Olympic Committee declined to recognize the killings by Palestinian terrorists.

Alas, four years is an eternity in the gymnastics world. At 22, Raisman is nicknamed “Grandma” by her teammates (not just because of her “advanced” age — she apparently also likes to nap). Nonetheless, the laser-focused star was recently named team captain. We’re rooting for her to make her mark again in Rio.

Nate Ebner (Rugby)

Until a couple of weeks ago, Ebner was “only” known as one of the few Jewish players in the NFL — the 27-year-old special teams ace and safety helped the New England Patriots win the Super Bowl in 2014.

But Ebner will now become the only active NFL player to make a U.S. Olympic team.

After being granted a leave of absence by the Patriots in May to train, Ebner — whose father was the Sunday school principal of Temple Sholom in Springfield, Ohio — made the rugby squad earlier
The leap didn't appear out of nowhere: Ebner was an All-America rugby player at Ohio State and played for the U.S. National team at 17, the youngest player to do so.

Rugby hasn't been played in the Olympics since 1924, when the U.S. won a gold medal led by a Jewish player and manager, Samuel Goodman. It will be making a vivid return this year - the only style of the game to be played in Rio will be sevens, a fast-paced version featuring seven players per side and seven-minute halves compared to the typical 15 players and 40-minute halves.

Merrill Moses, a water polo veteran of the 2008 and 2012 Olympics - and now a member of the Southern California Jewish Sports Hall of Fame - will do just that when he celebrates his birthday in the middle of the Rio games.

His secret might be his 6-foot-8-inch wingspan - or maybe it's his confidence.

"I've been the best goalkeeper in the United States for 15 years," Moses told Tribe Magazine last year. "I've seen the shots, been in this pressure."

Moses will likely be in the starting lineup for his third straight Olympics. Here's hoping the U.S. water polo team will win a gold medal this time; they took home a silver in 2008.

Merrill Moses (Water Polo)

Not many athletes stay in peak shape long enough to participate in an Olympics at 39. But Merrill Moses, a water polo veteran of the 2008 and 2012 Olympics and now a member of the Southern California Jewish Sports Hall of Fame, will do just that when he celebrates his birthday in the middle of the Rio games.

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Merrill Moses of the U.S. team playing in a match against Russia at the 16th FINA World Championships in Kazan, Russia, July 27, 2015. (Streeter Lecka/Getty Images)

Anthony Ervin (Swimming)

Born to an Ashkenazi Jewish mother and a father with both African-American and Native American heritage, swimmer Anthony Ervin has an interesting identity. He also has an unusual career arc for an Olympian.

After winning a gold medal in the 50-meter freestyle at the 2000 Olympics at age 19, Ervin felt burned out. He quit swimming in 2003, and as he details in a memoir published in April ("Chasing Water: Elegy of an Olympian"), spent his 20s experimenting with drugs, playing guitar and teaching the sport in Brooklyn. He nearly committed suicide by overdosing on the medication he takes for his Tourette syndrome. In an even more symbolic split from swimming, Ervin auctioned off his gold medal for $17,000 and donated the money to the Tsunami Relief Fund.

Remarkably, he made a comeback at the 2012 Olympics, placing fifth in the 50-meter freestyle. But he hasn't stopped there: He called his latest Olympic trials his best ever and qualified for both the 50-meter freestyle and the 4x100 meter freestyle relay in Rio.

Anthony Ervin preparing for the 50-meter freestyle semifinal at the FINA World Championships in Barcelona, Spain, Aug. 2, 2013. (Clive Rose/Getty Images)

Monica Rokhman (Women’s rhythmic gymnastics)

This year marks only the second time that the U.S. women’s rhythmic gymnastics team has qualified for the Olympics; the sport has been contested at the games since 1984. (In 1996, at the Atlanta Games, the squad was an automatic entry because it was representing the host nation.)

A rising star in this rising sport is Monica Rokhman, 19, who grew up near San Diego and is the daughter of Russian-Jewish immigrants. Rokhman and her twin sister, Jenny, also a gymnast, have been living in Chicago’s North Shore suburbs to train. Jenny will serve as an alternate for the U.S. team.

In women’s rhythmic gymnastics, five athletes perform routines with props like hoops and ribbons.

Merrill Moses of the U.S. team playing in a match against Russia at the 16th FINA World Championships in Kazan, Russia, July 27, 2015. (Streeter Lecka/Getty Images)

Eli Dershwitz (Fencing)

Don’t confuse Harvard undergrad Eli Dershwitz with the famous Harvard professor Alan Dershowitz. While the latter is a respected lawyer and author, the former happens to be one of the best fencers in the world.

Dershwitz, 20, of Sherborn, Massachusetts (just a few miles from Aly Raisman’s hometown of Needham), is one of only two U.S. men’s saber fencers heading to Rio. His performance at the fencing World Cup in February helped the U.S. saber team rise to a No. 1 world ranking. Look for Dershwitz, one of the youngest saber fencers in the world’s top 25, to seriously compete for a medal.

Eli Dershwitz celebrating victory in an FIE Grand Prix match in Seoul, South Korea. (Mark Deibert/FIE via Getty Images)

Zack Test playing at the 2016 Wellington Sevens pool match against France in New Zealand. (Hagen Hopkins/Getty Images)

Zack Test (Rugby)

Remarkably, Nate Ebner isn’t the only Jewish member of the U.S. rugby team heading to Rio - he will be joined by Zack Test, 26, a standout on the men’s sevens roster.

Unlike Ebner, who took time off from the sport for his football career, Test has played eight consecutive years of international competition. The Northern California native and Jewish day school graduate is also one of the best players on the team - he tallied the third most points and second most tackles on the squad during its 2014-15 World Rugby Sevens World Series run.

Zack Test playing at the 2016 Wellington Sevens pool match against France in New Zealand. (Hagen Hopkins/Getty Images)
Katie Ledecky, Olympic gold medalist swimmer, lost family members in the Holocaust

RIO DE JANEIRO – (JTA) – It isn’t up for debate — Katie Ledecky is currently the best female swimmer on the planet. The 19-year-old from Bethesda, Maryland, who won a gold medal in the 2012 London Olympics at age 15, has never lost a final of a major international race. Now she has a good chance of taking home five medals from the Rio Olympics, and she might break some world records along the way (she has already broken multiple ones during her short career).

How is someone under the age of 20 poised to enter the discussion of best-ever female swimmers?

Part of Ledecky’s inspiration, as revealed in a Sports Illustrated profile in June, comes from the story of her Jewish grandmother, Berta, 83. Berta, who is Czech, is the mother of Ledecky’s father. Berta and her non-Jewish husband Jaromir (who went by Jerry), met in the United States in 1956, about eight years after Jerry had immigrated from Prague with only five dollars in his pocket. Berta — whom writer S.L. Price describes as a “formidable” woman — once spent a year working as a translator for Albert Einstein at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn.

When Katie was 10, Berta took her to a Jewish cemetery in Prague and showed her graves of her family members who died during the Holocaust. Price doesn’t mention the exact number Berta’s family lost during World War II, or provide details of Berta’s experiences during the Holocaust, but the memory clearly stuck with Katie. Although Ledecky is Catholic and famously recites the Hail Mary before her races, Price writes that the “fuel” that drives Ledecky includes the visit to “a Jewish cemetery in Prague.”

So who knows — when Ledecky goes for gold this week she might just have her Jewish grandmother on her mind.
First female Rabbi Sally Priesand figures prominently in new book

By ALAN SMASON, Special to the CCJN

The sweet, unassuming voice on the other end of the line is warm and friendly. “We just celebrated my mother’s 101st birthday,” she says as she explains why she had just returned from Cleveland, Ohio, the city of her birth. While the voice might easily belong to that of a favorite aunt or a beloved schoolteacher, there is little to indicate it belongs to a figure of historic proportions in Judaism.

But Rabbi Sally Priesand is like that. She regards herself as a platitudinous figure, not as some might wrongly assume, a trailblazing feminist intent on becoming the first woman ordained a rabbi in America. “I didn’t do it to be a pioneer. I just wanted to be a rabbi and I was very fortunate because I wanted to be a congregational rabbi and that is what I was able to do, she confesses. “You know, not everybody gets to have their dream come true.”

Since her 1972 ordination with the 35 other all-male class of rabbis from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in Cincinnati, Priesand has had to bear the moniker of being the first. It has been a mantle that she has worn with pride and humility, but also one that she has invariably found to be trying and challenging.

Today’s incoming rabbinic classes boast a much higher incidence of women than ever before. “I think obviously there are many more options available, but we still have a ways to go,” she reflects. “We’ve been making progress, but it’s only been over the last two or three years, I would say, that congregations are really opening up to being able to welcome women as the senior rabbi in a large congregation.”

Priesand’s story and those of the more than 1,000 female rabbis who have followed her are found in a massive new volume of essays, reminembrances and interviews published by the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), the rabbinic arm of the Reform movement. Titled “The Sacred Calling: Four Decades of Women in the Rabbinate,” this 776-page tome is broken down into seven segments, which feature essays by rabbis, laypersons and scholars examining the evolution and condition of women clergy within the body of Judaism.

“I do want to emphasize how important I feel this book – ‘The Sacred Calling’ – is,” Priesand says. “I’m just so excited about it and I think I said in my first sentence in the foreword ‘This is a book of history.’”

Priesand’s personal history is well documented in the book. While she has become a pivotal figure in Reform circles, few know that she first attended a Conservative synagogue. She became acquainted with ritual practice as a young lady.

Her family moved and she was affiliated with Beth Israel The West Temple in the eighth grade. “I remember the first time that I went to services there. A woman was reading from the Torah. I just couldn’t believe that,” she reflects with incredulity. “I thought it was terrible, because I came from my Conservative background.”

It wasn’t long, however, she began to alter those views, especially when exposed to the religious school run by volunteers, most of whom worked as NASA scientists during the workweek. “They taught me how important it is to have a temple family and also they taught me the importance of tikkun olam,” Priesand considers. “They were very involved with social action and they were really the founders of the Cleveland movement on behalf of Soviet Jewry.”

Encouraged to apply as a rabbinic student by famed archaeologist Herman Gleuck, the president of HUC-JIR, Priesand took exception to being referred to as a “special student” in letters sent to her. The explanation was simple. There were no existing facilities for women there. She would need to be housed off campus, for example.

Once she was enrolled, it was another matter for her to excel in matters never before tackled by a woman. “I felt that I had to be better and do better than everybody else,” she admits. “But I was also very focused on what the ultimate goal was and quite frankly when people used to tell me why there shouldn’t be women rabbis, I would never argue. I would just say ‘Thank you for sharing your opinion’ and walk away.”

Priesand also believes her timing at entering rabbinic studies was well-timed.

Community eruv down in Metairie and should be approved for next Shabbat

According to a message from Congregation Beth Israel administrative rabbi, David Posternock, the community eruv is down and was not going to be restored for the first Shabbat in September. An eruv, or enclosure, allows certain forbidden Shabbat practices in the observant community such as carrying items or pushing a stroller to be acceptable. Rabbinic opinion is that the enclosure establishes a Jewish community or shtetl within it, similar to the old walled cities.

The Metairie eruv was originally installed under the rabbinic authority of Rabbi Uri Topolosky formerly of Congregation Beth Israel using highwire lines constructed between tall utility poles and natural barriers such as the levees that run along Lake Pontchartrain. After Topolosky left New Orleans, the responsibility for its upkeep was passed to Rabbi Posternock and now to Rabbi Gabriel Greenberg.

Crews from Entergy reconnected a small length of fishing wire that extended between two of its poles, according to Rabbi Gabriel Greenberg, who supervises and attests to the validity of the eruv each Shabbat.

That wire finishes the enclosed structure, which is also defined by the levee that runs along Lake Pontchartrain.
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binitic school could not have been more fortuitous. It was, after all, the dawning of the nascent feminist movement. “I’ve always believed that in terms of feminism there have to be people out there speaking marching, etc. and then there have to be people who are doing the things,” she posits. “I always thought of myself more in the role of accomplishing something that could then become a role model.”

When she was formally ordained by Glueck’s successor Fred Gottschalk, she received a standing ovation from her class of male peers. “They were always great and encouraging and everything,” she notes. But her path was a lonely one and without the support of other women. “When I see today the wonderful kinship the women have with each other, I think it’s a wonderful thing.”

Changing the mindset of Reform congregations to accept female clergy was also daunting for Priesand. In the book she recalls one incident where she interviewed via conference call for a temple position. When the interview concluded, they neglected to terminate the phone call properly on their end. Curious to hear how she did, she eavesdropped and was delighted when she overhead them declare how great a candidate she was. But she was crestfallen when, in the next breath, they agreed they would never hire a woman. She never revealed the incident until many years later.

“Well, obviously I was very upset, but I was also well aware that that was still the opinion,” Priesand demurs. “That was a long time ago. I think today there are probably very few congregations that would probably say something like that.”

After seven years at one temple as an assistant rabbi, she was passed over for promotions to a senior rabbi position. That led to her accepting a post at Monmouth Reform Temple in New Jersey, a Jewish community of 70,000. She served her community for 25 years before retiring.

“They always accepted me as their rabbi, not as the first woman rabbi. That was terrific,” she reflects.

Throughout her career, her being the first American woman rabbi manifested itself in many ways. “I never really remembered what my role is or was until I went to a biennial, for example, or a convention of some sort, where my congregants tell stories of people pushing them out of the way just so they could get to me,” Priesand continues.

“I was just always aware that I would get into an elevator at a hotel of a convention and people would whisper ’That’s her. That’s her.’” She chuckles to herself.

Even at this past year’s biennial, her celebrity continues to soar. “I was going by myself (and) I thought, ‘Well, I’m older now and it’s probably not going to be a problem.’” She continues to chuckle. “I was quite surprised. I never took so many ‘self’ies’ in my life.”

While Priesand deprecates her own importance to the binitate, she is quite attuned to providing historical perspective to those that will follow in the generations to come. That point was driven home when she and other women rabbis learned of Regina Jonas, the first woman rabbi, who was privately ordained in 1935 in Germany and was a victim of the Holocaust interred at Theresienstadt (Terezin) for two years and later killed at Auschwitz in 1944.

Priesand remembers examining the ordination papers and the only two photos of Jonas that are known to exist, which only surfaced after the reunification of Germany. She and several of her fellow American rabbis traveled to Terezin to deliver a plaque in memory of Jonas.

While in Germany, Priesand was overcome with emotion and several strikingly similar aspects in Jonas’s life and her own. “Her mentor died the year before she was supposed to be ordained and so did mine,” she muses. “She also made the decision not to marry and have children. She loved to preach and to teach, which I also love. She was also told to be patient; that’s a word I heard quite a lot. You know, there were so many similarities, it did kind of shake me up a bit.”

Jonas’s almost forgotten story brings her back to “The Sacred Calling” and the importance of cataloguing the history. “It’s so important to be able to have the history for future generations,” Priesand emphasizes. “The book is incredible. There’s so much in it and it lays a real foundation for the future for scholars who want to write about the history of women in the rabbinate.”

Part of the history involves the struggle of openly gay rabbinic students and the fight for LGBT equality at HUC-JIR and the Jewish Theological Seminary, which ordains Conservative rabbis. Aside from a pre-history and a full examination of the Reform movement’s commitment to the inclusivity of female rabbis, the work is subdivided into seven different sections including Women Rabbis and Feminism, Congregational Culture and Community Life, Image, Jewish Life and Ripple Effects: The Impact of Ordaining Jewish Women.

So that her entire history will be preserved, Priesand has arranged for all of her papers to be donated to the American Jewish Archives (in Cincinnati) at the time of her passing. She has invited all women rabbis of whatever domination to do the same.

In the tradition of social activism she learned as a youth, Priesand became a force for social action in Monmouth for decades. She still chairs Interfaith Neighbors, an organization founded to provide rental assistance for poor local workers, but which now provides programs for urban farming, business development and also encourages internships in the restaurant industry for at risk youth.

In her own community her rabbinic star rose throughout her tenure and eventual retirement at Monmouth Reform Temple. Early in her career another Reform rabbi was called away at the last moment at a community event. Priesand remembers being asked to lead the Kaddish prayer only moments before the invitation was unexpectedly rescinded due to objections from more observant quarters.

“I have a tendency to just forget the negative,” she confesses. “I kinda accepted that and continued to do my work and it was only when I was about to retire that we were having the Yom HaShoah service and they asked me to read El Mole (Rachamin) in Hebrew and the Orthodox rabbi would stand next to me and read it in English. That was big progress. Just even the visual was important.”

At the time of her retirement, there were questions about her health. “I’m in great health, but the truth is I’ve had cancer three times,” she confides. “I’m a great survivor.” Her voice resounds strongly and assured.

When she announced her retirement, she insisted she would devote herself to her artwork, a series of watercolors. “I tell people that I failed retirement. I didn’t learn how to say no,” she contends. “The first
Rabbi Sally Priesand, center, celebrating her 40th anniversary of being ordained. (Photo courtesy of American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio)

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year I retired I got on five different boards in my community, each one of them had a project. Now I’m off all the boards except for Interfaith Neighbors and, you know, I’m hoping to get back to painting. It’s fun to match wits with the paint.”

The changes in the makeup of the rabbinate from entirely male-dominated to more accepting of women are deeply appreciated by Priesand. When the Orthodox Union came out with its statement opposing the ordination of women rabbis, she felt compelled to answer them publicly. She was also present at the ordination of Sara Hurwitz, who calls herself a rabba and is the co-founder with Rabbi Avi Weiss of Yeshivat Maharat, an Open Orthodox seminary in New York that ordains female clergy. “I think all of us should stick together,” she suggests. “We have to stand up for each other.”

As a means of illustrating how ingrained the concept of women rabbis in today’s culture has become, Priesand uses an example of a recent talk she gave to first graders at a Solomon Schecter Day School.

“I said ‘When I was just a little older than you, I wanted to be a rabbi. But there was a problem. Do you know what that problem was?’”

Seated on the floor, one little boy raised his hand and said ‘You were too young.’” Priesand responded with peals of laughter.

“The answers were just like that,” she beams. “It never occurred to these kids that a woman couldn’t be a rabbi and that was a great sign of progress.”


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Congregation Anshe Sfard dedicated ‘new’ building 90 years ago

Congregation Anshe Sfard, which is now the oldest Jewish Orthodox congregation in Orleans Parish, was a relative child 90 years ago when the membership decided in 1925 to relocate their synagogue, which was then located at the corner of Erato and S. Rampart Streets.

The men who worshipped at this facility wanted to move closer to their businesses on Dryades Street and their uptown residences. The membership sought a parcel of land on which to build their new synagogue. To help with the task, congregation president William Feldman, along with a six-man building committee, (see the photo of the cornerstone) initiated their search.

Eventually the committee did find a suitable piece of property, with the assistance of Latter and Blum real estate agents M. Pailet and L. Fellman. The parcel of land for sale faced Carondolet Street and was sold for $7500.00 from the Whitney family. The tract of land was actually next to the Whitneys’ carriage garage on the rear of the family’s St. Charles Avenue mansion.

The transaction was filed with the city on April 21, 1925. About a month later the position of spiritual leader was offered to Rabbi Meyer Goldberg. At the time Goldberg was the full-time rabbi for Congregation Chevra Thillim (on Lafayette Street.) He gladly accepted the additional duties of also becoming the acting rabbi at Anshe Sfard. This made Goldberg the official rabbi of two of the three Orthodox synagogues in the city. The other congregation, Congregation Beth Israel, was the largest Orthodox congregation in the city and its spiritual leader was Rabbi Rafael Gold.

Just who was Rabbi Goldberg? According to the 1925 article found in the local New Orleans B’nai B’rith publication, The Jewish Ledger’s May 29, 1925 issue, Goldberg had been a spiritual leader for more than 20 years in the community. It was stated, “his fine qualities—his learning, which he bears with extreme modesty, his sincerity, and his piety, which is marked by intellectual honesty and is free from fanaticism and ostentation.” Additionally he served as the city’s mohel and donated a lot of his time and energy to the relatively new Communal Hebrew School.

Once the congregation contracted a rabbi their next step was to obtain the necessary funds to pay for an architectural design firm and to raise the funds to build the actual facility.

Another year followed and finally the building committee felt confident that the congregation was ready to start construction on the building. On May 9, 1926 the cornerstone was laid, however due
Federation wants CCJN to pay $50 to cover event

The Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans and Jewish Endowment Foundation of Louisiana (JEF) will be holding a joint “Federation de Fete” celebratory event Thurs., September 22, at which it will recognize several noted community volunteer leaders and the conclusion of Federation’s capital campaign.

The Federation de Fete will be held at the posh Audubon Tea Room, beginning at 6 p.m.

The decision to combine the annual meeting and the Federation’s campaign celebration was reportedly agreed upon by the Federation’s board members at a retreat more than a year ago. It was their decision to make the evening a pay-to-attend event, according to executive director Michael Weil and confirmed by Federation president Dr. Eddie Soll. Media was not exempted from paying the fee.

Previously, the Federation and JEF have held their annual joint meeting at the Uptown Jewish Community Center or occasionally at the Metairie JCC and admission has been free. The campaign celebration event was always a pay-to-attend event. In the past CCJN has always provided coverage for both events.

NCJW recognizes Gershaniks with Hannah Solomon Award

The New Orleans Section of the National Council of Jewish Women recognized Ana and Dr. Juan Gershanik with its prestigious Hannah G. Solomon Award at their annual luncheon held on Monday, September 26, 2016 in the Grand Ballroom at the Westin New Orleans Canal Place Hotel.

Dr. Gerhanik is a renowned pediatric neonatologist has been equally involved in community affairs and has volunteered his efforts for causes that benefit the health of NCJW recognizes Gershaniks with Hannah Solomon Award

The award was presented to the couple by Loel Samuel, the chair of the event and 2016 selection committee. She spoke highly of Ana’s achievements as an award winning columnist, who has devoted a lifetime of service to enrich public education programs in the arts, including music enrichment programs.

Federation clarifies its position on ‘Fete’

Dear Editor:

The Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans is pleased to announce that its new gala event “Fete de Federation” to be held this Thursday September 22 is sold out.

This gala event is new to the Jewish calendar and combines two historically held separate events, namely Campaign Celebration and the Annual Meeting.

The event takes place in accordance with our Bylaws and the Board of Trustees.

The Fete de Federation will open with a short election portion followed by a gala dinner, dancing and awards.

Anyone wishing to attend just the election portion may do so at no cost. All others (including the media) wishing to participate also in the rest of the evening will be expected to purchase an event ticket as is the practice at most community events.

We have offered to send photos of the event to Jewish media that are unable to be present.

We look forward to a wonderful evening and we will evaluate its success in the course of the year to decide whether to continue this new event format in the future.

Dr. Eddie Soll
President
Michael J. Weil
Executive Director

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Andy Adelman acquires Casablanca Restaurant

By ALAN SMASON, Exclusive to the CCJN

Andy Adelman, a caterer with his own kosher take on local favorites such as jambalaya and red beans and rice, recently took over the ownership of Casablanca Restaurant, the Middle Eastern restaurant established and run by Linda Wàknin for the past two decades.

Despite his being of Ashkenazic heritage, Adelman says it’s a dream come true. “This is what I’ve always loved to cook,” he revealed in a recent CCJN interview. “When I would fantasize about opening my own restaurant it would have been a Middle Eastern restaurant.”

A participant in the Federation’s Newcomers Program, Adelman arrived in New Orleans with his fiancée in 2010. She had received two years of schooling and a livable stipend through the Avi Chai Foundation, which mandated a three-year stint as a teacher at a Jewish day school in return. Through her
acquaintance with Shir Chadash Rabbi Ethan Linden, she was able to make contact with Bob Berk, who was then head of the New Orleans Jewish Day School. By the time Berk hired her, Adelman, who had only been to New Orleans once before as a chaperone on an alternative break trip for college students doing rehab work after Hurricane Katrina, was on his way back to the Crescent City to live here full time.

Adelman had considerable experience working as a line cook, a host, a server, a pantry cook and a bus boy in previous stints at restaurants in California and Colorado. That experience qualified him to help organize food for a Shir Chadash retreat a year or so after his move to New Orleans. His cooking turned out to be so successful that it generated requests for more from nearby Congregation Beth Israel and, eventually, every other synagogue in the area as well as for special events at the Uptown Jewish Community Center.

Adelman's food was featured at the Uptown Jewish Community Center's Morris Bart Lecture series once a month.

Recently, he had also been operating the school lunch program at Jewish Community Day School (JCDS) under a contract he had signed with Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans to rent the kitchen space on the ground floor of the Goldring-Woldenberg campus. In that capacity he sold parents lunch packages for students at JCDS.

As Adelman tells it, he was dining at Casablanca Restaurant a few months ago, when he was unexpectedly approached by Wänkin. She inquired as to whether she might be able to telephone him about an undisclosed matter later and he agreed. When she talked to him privately, she informed him she was looking to retire and wondered whether he might be interested in taking over the operation and ownership of the restaurant.

It didn't take long before Adelman had secured financing and inked the contract with Wänkin. In his mind part of the deal hinged on his being able to keep the present trained staff and all have elected to stay in their present positions. That includes Wänkin's daughter Ailene, who has also agreed to assist him in making the transition orderly and smooth.

In order to concentrate on running the restaurant properly, he notified Federation he would be electing to opt out of the kitchen rental at JCDS. Kosher Cajun New York Delicatessen and Grocery has since taken over the daily lunch program there.

In the six weeks since he took over operations, Adelman has been very hands on. He believes the current nationwide trend towards seeing Mediterranean food as a healthy alternative is a big draw. “I think this type of food is definitely one of the hot trends right now in the restaurant business industry,” he said.

But Adelman is also interested in making Casablanca more than just an eating establishment. “One of my philosophies about food is that I think it really brings people together,” he mused. “When you sit around a table and you have food and you have conversation, a lot of special things can happen at the dinner or lunch table.”

He hopes to beef up more business in several ways and one of them is to reach out to local residents and business people who might not know Casablanca, nestled in a strip mall at 3030 Severn Avenue opposite Lakeside Shopping Center.
Bob Dylan awarded 2016 Nobel Prize in Literature

(JTA) — American singer, songwriter and New Orleans resident Bob Dylan has been awarded the 2016 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Dylan, 75, was recognized for “having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition,” the Swedish Academy, which is responsible for choosing the Nobel laureates in literature, announced Thursday.

Born Robert Allen Zimmerman and raised Jewish in Minnesota, Dylan wrote some of the most influential and well-known songs of the 1960s. His hits include “Blowin’ in the Wind,” “Like a Rolling Stone” and “Times They Are a-Changin’.”

Among his many honors are an Academy Award and a Golden Globe for his original song “Things Have Changed” from the movie “Wonder Boys,” 12 Grammy Awards including one for Lifetime Achievement and a 1988 induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. Dylan received Kennedy Center Honors in 1997 and was also awarded a Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2012 by President Obama.

Dylan is the first American to receive the prize in more than 20 years; novelist Toni Morrison won in 1993. He will receive the $927,740 prize in Stockholm on Dec. 10, which is Alfred Nobel’s birthday.

3 nights of Moscow Nights company preforming at Gates of Prayer & Marigny Opera House

By ALAN SMASON

Natasha O. Ramer is anxious as she prepares her Moscow Nights company in its most ambitious program in some time. This time the non-profit organization that has in the past produced small theatrical ventures or Russian plays, is ready to embark on a very large program of Jewish and Russian song works and instrumentals gathered from the time of World War II.

Ramer, an actor, singer, director and producer who left the former Soviet Union in 1982, has served as the artistic director of Moscow Nights since its founding in 1999. “It’s a big program,” she announces. “It’s the biggest international program I’ve ever done.”

Ramer has been seen on local stages in several years past, most fondly remembered for her cabaret act “Natasha O. Ramer: 20 Years in America” in 2003 and as one of the performers in Harry Mayronne’s production of “Centennial Celebration” in 2000. Ramer is also a graduate of the Yale International Cabaret Conference in New Haven, CT.

Joining Ramer on stage will be Aelita, one of the foremost international singers and recording artists. Singing in 16 languages, she is going to be singing some songs in Russian and others in Yiddish as part of the program. Aelita has been passionate about the preservation of Yiddish music and has recently produced a program “Yiddish Cabaret – Songs from the Heart.”

A third woman – Theresa Tova – will be joining Remer and Aelita on stage. Tova is a film, TV and theatre star as well. She starred in the first national tour of “Ragtime” as Emma Goldman and also played the role of the matchmaker Yenta in a production of “Fiddler on the Roof” at Stratford Festival in Canada. She has authored two musicals. The first, “Still the Night” is based on her mother’s tale as a partisan fighter during World War II. Her latest music is titled “Bella: The Colour of Love” and has played to sold out houses in Warsaw, Halifax, New York and Philadelphia.

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Also on stage will be pianist Boris Fogel, a Russian-born concert artist, who has specialized for the past three decades as a solo performer and accompanist. He has toured Europe and Asia and has returned to Russia to assist two theatres there, the Moscow Academic Theater of Satire and the Vakhtangov State Academic Theater. Recently, Fogel published his first book “Concertmaster’s Notes,” which is enjoying its second printing as of last year.

Vadim Kolpakov a Russian-Roma performer. He specializes in performing on a seven-string guitar; additionally, he is an accomplished dancer and vocalist. He will be performing the only piece that is neither Russian nor Jewish.

Rounding out the cast of players will be retired Tulane faculty member John Joyce, who will provide percussion for the group.

The first night, October 28 the program will be held at Congregation Gates of Prayer, 4000 West Esplanade Avenue in Metairie.

The second and third nights will be held at the Marigny Opera House, 725 St. Ferdinand Street in the Faubourg Marigny neighborhood.

Tickets are $25 for general tickets, $20 for seniors and $15 for students.

The top 14 Jewish newsmakers of 5776

According to an article from JTA’s Ben Sales, 14 Jews made the biggest headlines and the biggest news during the past 12 months.

Bernie Sanders
Citizens in the United States felt the “Bern” this election from Bernie Sanders. He is the first Jewish candidate to win a presidential primary from one of the two U.S. political parties. Young voters seemed extremely supportive and attended huge rallies for this very left politician from Vermont.

Ivanka Trump
Senior family advisor and definitely Daddy’s favorite “surrogate,” Donald Trump’s daughter is a converted modern Orthodox Jew. She maintains a kosher home and is raising her three children Jewish. Ivanka is married to Jared Kushner was is also a chief confidant to his father-in-law.

Anat Hoffman
Hoffman has led the “Women of the Wall” campaign to fight for women to host prayers at the Western Wall. She is frequently arrested and an irritation to the ultra-Orthodox community. Finally this year Israel’s Cabinet approved a plan to expand and upgrade the site’s non-Orthodox prayer section. Implementation has been stalled for months.

Aly Raisman
Four years ago we lost our hearts to a flawless gymnast who completed her floor exercise to a beloved Jewish melody. At 22, she became captain of the gold medal team and individually she earned individual silver medals in the all-around and floor exercises.

Jonathan Pollard
After 30 years in a federal prison for spying for Israel, Pollard was finally released. He is not allowed to move to Israel as he planned.

Elor Azaria
A 19-year-old soldier who killed an injured Palestinian assailant. Azaria’s case has divided Israel. Some feel he crossed the line, while others defend his actions.

Sheldon Silver
The former New York speaker of the state assembly, Silver is now in jail for the next 12 years for fraud, extortion and money laundering.

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
The current congresswoman from southern Florida and was the former chair of the DNC, but was forced to resign because of leaked emails showing her favoritism to Hilary Clinton.

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein
Lookstein was the former rabbi of the Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun Orthodox synagogue on Manhattan’s Upper East Side. The 80-plus rabbi’s supervised conversion was declared invalid by Israel’s Chief Rabbinical Court. He is the same rabbi who oversaw Ivanka Trump’s conversion.

Yisrael Kristal
In March this Holocaust survivor was certified the oldest man in the world by Guinness World Records. He was 113 years. After surviving Auschwitz, he remarried and moved to Israel.

Merrick Garland
The Justice nominee that was ignored by the Republicans. He remains an acting chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

Jill Stein
Yes, Jill Stein was a presidential nominee, however for the Green party. She received very little of the popular vote.

Abbi Jacobson and Ilana Glazer
Two members of the cast of “Broad City.” They just completed their third season. In this year’s season finally, they left for Israel.
Le Marais chef, owner duo to appear here tonight

By ALAN SMASON, Exclusive to the CCJN

ew Orleanians have long loved their association with classic French cuisine, but iconic restaurants like Antoine’s, Galatoire’s and Tujague’s have cared not a whit to incorporate kosher observance into their kitchens. There simply are not enough observant Jews to warrant it.

Conversely, in New York with its huge Jewish population, kosher kitchens have enjoyed a celebrated and accessible status. While most Jewish fare consists of obligatory hot helpings of matzo ball soup, cold or hot sliced meats piled high on rye bread and generous offerings of pickles, some restaurants have opted to approach traditional food offerings while maintaining kashrut.

The finest example of such a new tradition can be found at Le Marais, a superb French brasserie that serves steaks, chicken and other gastronomic wonders in the style and manner of haute cuisine. It also just happens to be kosher.

The extraordinary restaurant is located at 150 West 46th Street, in the heart of the Theater District. It is but a stone’s throw from the Richard Rodgers Theatre, where “Hamilton: An American Musical” is the hottest ticket on Broadway.

Inside the restaurant, festooned with tables exquisitely fitted with starched white tablecloths, there is a brick and finished wood-paneled dining room. Strategically placed mirrors at eye height along the right side give the room an expanded appearance.

But room amenities aside, it is the fine food that brings patrons to the establishment and for that they need only thank wonder José Meirelles and his executive chef of 12 years, Mark Hennessy.

Meirelles had previously enjoyed fame as the proprietor of Les Halles, another wildly successful French brasserie in New York, whose executive chef Anthony Bourdain has since become a recognized celebrity and TV star.

Hennessey had been working as the chef at another New York kosher eatery when Meirelles offered him the opportunity to open the kitchen at Le Marais. The rest is the stuff of culinary legend.

It is this story of how two non-Jews – one, a Portuguese immigrant and the other an Irish New Yorker – got together to make Le Marais the crown jewel of kosher eateries that has led to their authorship of a book “Le Marais: A Rare Steakhouse…Well Done” just released by Gefen Publishing House.

Both Meirelles and Hennessey sat down for an exclusive interview in their New York establishment prior to their arrival in New Orleans for a cooking demonstration and tastings at the Besh Chabad House tonight at 7 p.m. The cover for the event is $25 per person or $36 per couple.

A private event for students next door at the Rohr Chabad Student Center at Tulane tomorrow night will follow Shabbat services.

“They are coming to New Orleans because they are looking to promote the restaurant and the new cookbook in Jewish communities outside New York,” explained Rabbi Yochanan Rivkin, who helped set up the unusual cooking demonstrations. “They love New Orleans and they know how important the food culture is in New Orleans, so they thought it would be a great place to promote.”

Hennessey, a bearish figure clad in a white chef’s coat, gave further reason for the publication of the book. “The book is something that José actually wanted to do for a long time,” he said. “It was only a matter of three years ago we really had serious discussions between each other as how we were going to do this, (even) if we going to do this.”

Hennessey, a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America and a former executive chef at Lavana, another kosher restaurant of renown, recalls beginning the process, shuffling himself away in his New York office and placing the first of the book’s characters onto the waiting computer screen. Over the course of six months of weekends he wrote about mother sauces, the need to work in concert with a kosher butcher, provided recipes culled from his own menu items and documented the success of Le Marais in a frank and funny matter.

Guided by Meirelles through the editing process, Hennessey included recipes for treasured French classics like veal sweetbreads with mushrooms, roast prime rib of beef and cassoulet, a creamy, duck-laden meal that requires three days of preparation, but which he calls “the perfect Shabbos dish.”

The paperback book is punctuated with beautiful black and white and color photos by Meirelles’ son Martim, which refine and complement the work.

“When we first opened the restaurant, we got a lot of flack, because people would say ‘How can it be that you have a kosher restaurant and you don’t have Jewish food?’,” Meirelles noted. “‘You don’t have chicken soup. You don’t have gefilte fish. You don’t have matzo balls.’”

He countered, “No, we are a French restaurant CONTINUED ON PAGE 59
that happens to keep kosher.” After a while, people began to understand.

In setting up the kitchen, both the chef and the restaurant owner understood the need to work closely with a kosher butcher. Their butcher, Dominique, is spotlighted before the first of the salads, soups or other dishes are explored and expanded.

They dry age their beef for 28 days in house. The process results in an approximate 30 per cent loss of the meat due to shrinkage, but the flavoring is worth the cost, both Meirelles and Hennessey agree.

“Le Marais: A Rare Steakhouse…Well Done” features an introduction by Hadassah and Senator Joe Lieberman, who are longtime customers. The book retails for $29.95 and will be on sale throughout the night.

Both Meirelles and Hennessey struggled for a decade before the restaurant began to turn the corner, according to the book. Today, though, it enjoys legendary status as dozens of observant Jews have become faithful customers.

This is, after all, New York, the most populous Jewish city in America. Yet, there is a glaring reminder of the larger New York world in which it is situated when leaving the kosher establishment. That would be the name of the adjacent restaurant: Pig ‘N Whistle. Oy veh.

JCC Pop the Cork Was A Big Success

The JCC annual Center Celebration, Pop The Cork, was held on Sunday, October 30 at the Audubon Tea Room. Committee members were Nikki Berger, Mara Force, Kathy Rabin, Cheryl Slane, Carol Newman, Sheryl Title, and Sharon Jacobs. The Center Celebration was chaired by Cheryl Slane and Mara Force.

Reuben Friedman receives Tulane Spirit Award

Reuben Friedman, a graduate of the Tulane School of Law Class of 1971 and an alumnus of the College of Arts and Sciences prior to that, was presented with the Spirit Award last Saturday by Tulane president Michael Fitts during halftime ceremonies at Tulane’s football game against SMU.

Friedman has been a member of numerous boards and councils, including the Tulane Associates Board, the Tulane Athletics Advisory Council, and several Dean’s Advisory Councils. He currently serves as a member of the School of Liberal Arts Dean’s Advisory Council.

The Spirit Award was established in honor of Bobby Boudreau, a student from Lake Charles who attended Tulane during the late 1940s and early 1950s and graduated with degrees in business and law. Boudreau was among the most enthusiastic supporters of the university. Following his passing, the Spirit Award was established a few years ago to honor individuals who give Tulane the same sort of spirited support that he gave to his alma mater.

 Supreme Court opens first Monday in Oct. without 3 Jewish Justices

Two things happened this year on the first Monday in October. The Supreme Court opened its new session without its three Jewish justices. It happened to coincide with the celebration of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. Absent were Jewish Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen Breyer and Elena Kagan. The session lasted only about five minutes.

The U.S. Supreme Court shown in a photo taken in 2010. Justice Antonin Scalia, second from left on bottom, died suddenly last year.
NOVEMBER 2016

Kupperman recipient of the Judah Touro Society Award

The Touro Infirmary Foundation held its annual gala on Saturday night November 5 to a packed house at Mardi Gras World. Stephen Kupperman, local attorney and past board chairman was honored as the recipient of the Judah Touro Society Award.

Kupperman is a founding partner in the law firm of Barrasso Usdin Kupperman Freeman & Sarver. He served as the hospital’s board chairman during the time that Hurricane Katrina ripped through our town. He personally coordinated efforts to evacuate all the hospital’s patients prior to the storm and helped to quickly reopen the hospital after the storm. Touro housed the only functioning New Orleans hospital with an emergency room for more than a year after Katrina. Kupperman is also credited for the creation of the Touro Infirmary Imaging Center.

The Touro Infirmary Foundation was created 25 years ago. Anyone can become a Touro Foundation benefactor by making a minimum annual donation of $1,500 to this foundation.

From ADL to ZOA: Two events showcase diverging Jewish rhetoric under Trump

By BEN SALES

NEW YORK (JTA) — Thirty years ago, it would have been safe to say the American Jewish community agreed on the need to fight for Israel and against anti-Semitism.

It may still be true that most American Jews support those causes. But now, apparently, some people aren’t so sure what either of those things mean. One Jew’s support of Israel is another’s attack on the Jewish state. And as we’ve seen this week, one Jew’s condemnation of an alleged promoter of anti-Semitism is another’s smear on a purported defender of the Jews.

Nowhere did this emerge more clearly than at an Anti-Defamation League conference and subsequent Zionist Organization of America dinner. They were held days apart from each other, on the same floor of the same posh hotel in Manhattan. Both organizations claimed to fight for the same things: opposing Jew-hatred and supporting the Jewish homeland.

But their rhetoric could hardly have been more different.

The ADL, which strives to be nonpartisan in fighting anti-Semitism and bigotry (and as a result has been criticized from the right and the left), called out anti-Semitism on both ends of the political spectrum at its conference Thursday. CEO Jonathan Greenblatt aimed his strongest fire on the anti-Semitism and Islamophobia heard among some supporters of President-elect Donald Trump’s campaign, and instances in which the campaign itself sent messages that echoed anti-Semitic themes. He pledged to sign up as a Muslim if, as Trump hinted during the campaign, a Muslim “database” were to be created. But the panel immediately after him focused on anti-Israel activism on the left.

“The harassment and hate that bubbled up around the campaign was unlike anything we’ve seen in recent history,” Greenblatt said. “The American Jewish community, our community, has not seen this level of anti-Semitism in mainstream political and public discourse since the 1930s.”

The ADL was among the first of several mainstream Jewish organizations to condemn the hiring of senior Trump adviser Stephen Bannon, who used to run Breitbart News, a website accused of publishing anti-Semitic, misogynist and racist articles. The Conservative and Reform movements, which together represent most affiliated American Jews, soon followed.

These were the same organizations that, three very long months ago, criticized the Black Lives Matter movement for accusing Israel of genocide. There was broad consensus, at least among American Jewish organizations, in condemning the BLM statement. In addition to the ADL and all three major denominations, groups ranging from right to left on Israel slammed the “genocide” claim, as did the Jewish Federations of North America and the American Jewish Committee.

No similar consensus on Bannon has coalesced among the American Jewish alphabet soup: JFNA and AJC, as well as major Orthodox groups, have stayed silent on Bannon. And at the ZOA’s dinner Sunday night, an entirely different Jewish narrative emerged.

In the same room where Greenblatt had adroin—

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ished the Trump campaign on Thursday, ZOA President Morton Klein on Sunday welcomed the president-elect. In his speech, Klein joked that he would have preferred a lower IQ and more girlfriends in high school, then quipped, “Donald Trump told me to say that. It’s guy talk.” Minutes later, to raucous cheers, he praised Trump for being tough on Iran. “Thank God we have Donald Trump,” Klein said.

In an invocation earlier in the night, Dr. Alan Mazurek, a ZOA officer from Long Island, said Trump’s election was “divinely driven” and that “once again the United States will be blessed.” When honorée Bernie Marcus, a co-founder of The Home Depot and a Trump supporter, mentioned the New York Times, the audience boooed. Marcus said he was “one of the happiest people in the world to see some sense come into this White House.”

Harvard Law professor Alan Dershowitz, a self-described enthusiastic Hillary Clinton supporter who was honored later that night, drew boos when he pointed out that Clinton won the popular vote.

Far from criticizing Bannon, ZOA had advertised that he would attend the dinner, headlining at least one email with that news. In the end, he didn’t show up. But that didn’t stop attendees from praising him.

“I like the appointment of Steve Bannon a lot,” said Justin Bender, 23, a consultant from Philadelphia. “I think he’s not afraid to say what he likes. Whether you agree or disagree with Breitbart, he ran it very well. You don’t have to agree with everything, and the content on the website, to have a great environment with everyone running it.”

Bender, like several others at the dinner, dismissed critics who say Breitbart News has published anti-Semitic articles, or that Bannon has tapped into anti-Semitic tropes in criticizing “globalists” and “international bankers.” Some said the content wasn’t anti-Semitic at all. Some adopted Klein’s position that Bannon himself — who employs Jews and is pro-Israel, and under whom Breitbart News published lavish anti-pro-Israel articles out of its Jerusalem bureau — certainly isn’t an anti-Semite.

“I think Bannon is a friend of traditional American values, and he’s a friend of traditional American allies, including Israel,” said Steve Crane of Philadelphia, who co-founded a site to monitor media coverage of Israel. “He has hired Muslims, he has hired Jews, he has hired traditional Americans, he has hired gays, gay Jews, all the types of diversity people pay homage to, but don’t do.”

More than one person explained that featuring anti-Semitic content was just part of Breitbart’s goal of including a multiplicity of perspectives in the media. If outlets could present the liberal perspective, said Philadelphiaan Edward Mackouse, 73, white supremacists could have a say, too.

“I think you need someone strong to balance with the leftist media,” said Mackouse, who was wearing a red “Make America Great Again” hat adorned with pins. “I think the stuff we see on the left about only Black Lives Matter, with Clinton, needs to be balanced. The threats of what this does in America, starting only Black Lives Matter, gives support to the Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan in saying only white lives matter.”

The prospect of Bannon attending the dinner drew several hundred Jewish protestors to the hotel, chanting things like, “Donald Trump, it’s your fault; Stephen Bannon, oy gevalt!” The protest was organized by It’s Not Now, a Jewish group that opposes the Israeli occupation.

Rabbi Jill Jacobs, who heads the left-leaning rabbinic human rights group Tr’uah, said she hoped the protest leads to a robust, sustained Jewish activist movement against any bigoted action by Trump.

“That lack of respect will galvanize more of the Jewish resistance to what comes next,” she said. “That resistance isn’t going to just come from the left wing of the Jewish community. It’s going to come from the mainstream.”

American Jews splintered over the Jewish state long ago. Are settlements pro-Israel or anti-Israel? What about the Iran deal? Or peace negotiations?

Now, it appears, the same cracks are showing in how they perceive threats to the Jews. The ADL, while emphasizing that it is “not aware of any anti-Semitic statements made by Bannon himself,” is nonetheless troubled that Breitbart has “served as a platform for a wide range of bigotry” aimed at Muslims, women and occasionally Jews. Such bigotry, it insists, cannot be ignored or forgiven because the site is also pro-Israel.

The ADL worries that if intolerance is allowed to go mainstream once again, Jews will eventually pay the price. Its statement opposing Bannon called for presidential appointees who are “committed to the well-being of all our country’s people and who exemplify the values of pluralism and tolerance that makes our country great.”

The ZOA, meanwhile, counts Bannon as friend, pointing out the ways he has defended Israel, opposed the Iran nuclear deal and criticized leftists who bash Israel. And it wants to know why the ADL and other groups haven’t criticized the pending appointment as Democratic National Committee chair of Rep. Keith Ellison (Minn.), whom ZOA regards as an “Israel-basher” with “ties to radical anti-Israel and anti-Semitic groups.” When it opposes a presidential appointment, as it did Monday in denouncing Gen. James Mattis as Trump’s reportedly leading candidate for secretary of defense, it focuses on the threat to what it sees as Israel’s interests.

Noting statements by Mattis in support of a two-state solution and critical of the settlements, the ZOA wrote that it is “remarkable” that “Matris expressed such a hostile attitude towards standing by our ally Israel.”

100 anti-Semitic incidents reported in US post-election, watchdog finds

(JTA) — One hundred anti-Semitic incidents occurred in the 10 days following the presidential election, representing about 12 percent of hate incidents in the U.S. recorded by a civil rights watchdog.

The report released Tuesday by the Southern Poverty Law Center looked at 867 hate incidents that occurred in the 10 days following the election of Donald Trump. The incidents targeted various minority groups, including Jews, immigrants re, African-Americans, Muslims and the LGBT community. Incidents counted had been submitted through the watchdog’s website or reported in the media.

Of the 100 incidents classified as anti-Semitic, 80 were “vandalism and graffiti incidents of swastikas, without specific references to Jews,” while others targeted Jews more overtly, such as the harassment of individuals or vandalism of a synagogue, the report said. Many of the vandalism incidents included references to Trump, the nonprofit said.

The report referred to an attack prior to the election on a historically black church in Mississippi as “a harbinger of what has become a national outbreak of hate, as white supremacists celebrate Donald Trump’s victory.”

JTA has reported on anti-Semitic incidents following the election, including acts of vandalism featuring swastikas and Trump-related themes left in public areas as well as on the homes of Jewish individuals.

Earlier this month, the head of the Anti-Defamation League, Jonathan Greenblatt, said anti-Jewish public and political discourse in America is worse than at any point since the 1930s.

The election season saw the rise of the “alt-right,” a loose far-right movement whose followers traffic variously in white nationalism, anti-immigration sentiment, anti-Semitism and a disdain for “political correctness.”

Many alt-right members, including prominent white nationalists, have been vocal in their support for Trump, who has called for a ban on Muslim immigration to the U.S. and likened Mexican immigrants to rapists.

The president-elect said last week that he did not want to “energize” white supremacists and denounced an alt-right conference in Washington, D.C., where speakers railed against Jews and several audience members did Hitler salutes.

The Southern Poverty Law Center report said that the 867 incidents “almost certainly represent a small fraction of the actual number of election-related hate incidents,” citing a Bureau of Justice Statistics estimate that two-thirds of hate crimes are not reported to the police.

The document also noted that 23 of the incidents reported were anti-Trump, including harassment of supporters of the president-elect.
The 41st annual conference of the Southern Jewish Historical Society was held in the beautiful and historic 300 year old city of Natchez, Mississippi. Prior to the arrival in Natchez most of the participants rode in a chartered bus along a 100 mile stretch beginning in Jackson. The bus traveled all day and made three stops.

The first stop was to Vicksburg, Mississippi where congregants greeted the SJHS members. The individuals in Vicksburg represented the few remaining families that are members of an almost extinct Jewish synagogue named Congregation Anshe Chesed. The members discussed how they made future arrangements for the perpetual care of their cemetery by applying and becoming a nationally registered historic location. Their sanctuary building and land is slated to be donated to the state of Mississippi.

The next stop was in the downtown section of Vicksburg where a once vibrant chapter of B’nai B’rith only has a beautiful building remaining. A luncheon reception was held for the conference members in the beautifully refurbished facility. The last stop was to visit the oldest standing synagogue in Mississippi which is located in Port Gibson. It was privately purchased and is now a messianic congregation.

The conference attendees arrived in Natchez late in the afternoon and after a dinner attended Friday night services in B’nai Israel which originally catered to the oldest Jewish community in the state. It is a beautiful sanctuary which is in dire needs to be refurbish. Eventually it is hoped that the sanctuary will become a Jewish museum.

There were many speakers on Saturday and Sunday and there were numerous topics, however the Crescent City Jewish News was primarily interested in hearing one speaker, Marlene Trestman. Ms. Trestman is an accomplished lawyer, researcher and author. She was born and raised in New Orleans. Her current research project is on the History of the New Orleans Jewish Orphans Home that existed from 1855-1946. The home was a refuge for up to 150 orphans and what was referred to as half orphans that were raised in the home. She noted that she is trying to research the children that were helped by the home.

Ms.Trestman has a website (www.marlenetrestman.com) and she would encourage anyone who had family members or actually lived in the home to please contact her. The home was located at the same location as the present uptown Jewish Community Center.
Trump secures win for presidency; Clinton concedes

By ALAN SMASON

In an unprecedented and unexpected voter backlash on Election Day, Donald Trump secured his place as the 45th President of the United States winning a stunning victory in the Electoral College with a 278 to 216 edge over Democratic Party candidate Hillary Clinton. Clinton, who may have won the popular vote, called him to concede the election shortly before he left his hotel to speak to a determined crowd of supporters at his election headquarters in New York.

“Sorry to keep you waiting. Complicated business. Complicated,” the President-Elect said as he spoke at 1:50 a.m. Central Time.

“I just received a call from Secretary Clinton. She congratulated us,” he continued as the crowd reacted wildly. “It’s about us – on my victory – and I congratulated her and her family on a very very hard fought campaign. She fought very hard.”

Trump went on to put his political rival in a far different light than he has in recent weeks from the start, never once referring to her as “Crooked Hillary.”

“Hillary has worked very long and very hard over a very long period of time and we owe her a very major debt for her service to our country,” he proclaimed.

Trump went on to say it was time “to bind the wounds of division” in the country.

“It is time for us to come together as one united people. It’s time,” he stated. “I will be President for all Americans and this so important to me.”

Trump went on to reach out to all Americans, claiming to be the leader of a “great movement made up of millions…(who) want a better and brighter future for themselves and their families.” He added that he will serve the people, improve the infrastructure of the nation and better remember veterans who have served the nation.

“It’s going to be a beautiful thing,” Trump promised his supporters.

Earlier, with his family around him, Vice President-elect Mike Pence had introduced Trump. “America has elected a new President and it’s almost hard for me to express the honor that I feel to serve as your Vice President of the United States. I come to this moment deeply humbled and grateful,” he said.
70 percent of Jewish voters favored Clinton over Trump, J Street poll asserts

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Seventy percent of Jewish voters favored Hillary Clinton in the presidential election, with 25% opting for Donald Trump, according to a poll.

The national survey, which was commissioned by J Street, the liberal Jewish Middle East policy group, again showed a community that trends more Democratic than the general population.

Clinton and Trump drew almost even in the popular vote in the balloting Tuesday – the former secretary of state edged her Republican rival slightly - but Trump scored a decisive victory in the electoral college vote.

“American Jews remain a bedrock Democratic constituency, with overwhelming disdain for Donald Trump,” J Street President Jeremy Ben Ami said in a conference call with reporters.

Jim Gerstein, the pollster, said Jews continued to remain unstinting in their support of the party.

“They voted for Clinton more than Hispanics did, more than any other religious group, including no religion,” Gerstein said.

Trump’s percentage was less than the 30% garnered in 2012 by Mitt Romney in his loss to incumbent President Barack Obama, but commensurate with the 24% won by President George W. Bush in 2004.

The economy led Jewish voters’ concerns in the poll, with 35% of respondents listing it as their first or second priority. Tied for second at 27% were health care and terrorism. Israel scored ninth, at 9%.

Those figures are typical when both candidates in an election are seen as basically supportive of Israel.

The numbers were similar in a Florida poll — 68% for Clinton and 28% for Trump — and voters there scored similar priorities. Trump narrowly won the state.

J Street conducted the Florida poll in part to see if last-minute pushes by presidential campaigns in the state in recent elections emphasizing hawkish pro-Israel credentials were justified by a community likely to rate Israel higher. But the results were virtually the same, with Israel rating ninth at 8%.

The group’s national results also comport with national exit polls carried out by a consortium of major media outlets showing Jews favoring Clinton over Trump 71-24%.

J Street’s poll was conducted by Gerstein Bocian Agne on Election Day and reached 731 self-identified Jews who volunteered from among 3 million Americans who belong to a web-based panel. It has a margin of error of 3.6 percentage points.

The Florida poll reached 500 self-identified Jews through cellphones and landlines, also on Election Day, and had a margin of error of 5.4 percentage points.

Jewish contingent in House grows from 19 to 22

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The Jewish contingent to the U.S. House of Representatives grew from 19 to 22 in Tuesday’s elections, doubling its Republican representation from one to two.

Five Jews overall were newly elected to the House, while one Jewish congressman in Florida and in New York are retiring. The Senate Jewish contingent dropped from nine to eight.

Three Democrats picked up seats from Republicans in an otherwise dismal night for their party, which saw the GOP sweep the White House and both chambers of Congress.

Picking up seats for the Democrats were:

* Josh Gottheimer, a former speech writer for President Bill Clinton and a Microsoft executive, who won a hard-fought battle in New Jersey’s 5th District against Scott Garrett, a longtime congressman who was exceptionally conservative for this northeastern district. The election was marred in its final days with the appearance of an unsigned anti-Semitic leaflet targeting Gottheimer.

* Brad Schneider, who regained the seat he lost in 2014 from Bob Dold in Illinois’s 10th district, encompassing Chicago’s northern suburbs. Dold first won the seat in 2010, then lost it to Schneider in 2012.

* Jacky Rosen, a software developer and synagogue president, who won in Nevada’s 3rd District, covering the Las Vegas suburbs. Joe Heck, the district’s incumbent Republican, lost in his bid to replace Democrat Harry Reid in the Senate.

* Jamie Raskin, a Maryland state senator, who won the battle to replace Chris Van Hollen in Maryland’s 8th District. The district includes the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C. Van Hollen, a Democrat, was elected to the Senate.

David Kustoff, a former U.S. attorney, who handily kept Tennessee’s 8th district Republican, replacing the retiring Stephen Fincher. Kustoff brings to two the Memphis Jewish delegation, joining Steve Cohen, a Democrat representing the 9th District, and the Republican Jewish delegation to Congress, joining Lee Zeldin, who was reelected in New York’s 9th District encompassing Long Island’s eastern reaches.

Another Jewish Republican scoring a victory on Tuesday was Eric Greitens, a former Navy SEAL who became the first Jewish governor of Missouri.

Leaving Congress is Steve Israel, representing a New York district in suburban Long Island, who is retiring, and Alan Grayson, who retired as a representative in Florida’s 9th District, in the south of the state, to run for the Democratic nomination to the Senate – he lost.

The Democratic contingent in the Senate will drop by one with the retirement of Barbara Boxer of California. Two Jewish Democrats in Missouri and Wisconsin failed in their bids to replace Republican incumbents.
Alessi is sensational as Fanny Brice in ‘Funny Girl’

By ALAN SMASON, WYES-TV Theatre Critic (“Steppin’ Out”)

When Barbra Streisand tackled the challenge of playing Fanny Brice in Funny Girl in 1964, she had been seen on the Broadway stage only once previously. Her role as Miss Marmelstein in I Can Get It For You Wholesale had garnered attention for her stage persona, but Funny Girl made her a legitimate star.

Locally, we have also seen Caleigh Alessi but once before in the Jefferson Performing Arts Society’s second production of The Light in the Piazza as Franca Naccarelli prior to her tackling the role of the singing sensation of the Vaudeville stage. And with this one production we have established another star.

While there is no doubt that the yiddishkeit in her performance could use a slight plumping up by a director with a more Jewish hand, Butch Caire does a superb job in shaping Alessi’s performance and that of her co-star Robert Facio. Facio, who plays a dark and dashing Nick Arnstein, is a solid choice in his casting. Other than sporting a bit more Yiddish expression in her acting and singing while portraying Brice, Alessi brings a deliberate and surprisingly accomplished manner to this staging.

Alessi’s brassy voice ends both acts with the literal show-stopper “Don’t Rain on My Parade,” but in between she playfully interprets “I’m the Greatest Star,” and songs intended to emulate Brice’s shtrick like “Sadie, Sadie” and “Rat-Tat-Tat-Tar.” She caresses her duet with Facio in “You Are Woman” and glides through her choreography in numbers like “I Want to Be Seen With You Tonight.”

Brice’s foremost quest to be a star showcasing her innate comedic skills drives the early portion of the original book penned by Isobel Lennart and largely revamped by the composer and lyricist team of Jule Styne and Bob Merrill. “I’m the Greatest Star” and “Cornet Man” showcase Alessi’s talented ability to take charge of a piece, even while a dozen other dancers and singers are hoofing and singing their hearts out.

That’s probably the reason Funny Girl is so rarely performed on stage. It’s extremely hard to find a headliner like Alessi who can hold the audience’s attention and who can expertly navigate through the demands of acting and difficult singing roles. Alessi makes it seem easy, but not effortless.

Fresh off his recent starring role in West Side Story, John Michael Haas portrays the Ziegfeld Tenor to great effect in “His Love Makes Me Beautiful.”

Tracey Collins also does a great job playing Fannie’s mother, Mrs. Brice, as does Kirk Gagnon, who portrays Brice’s friend and would-be suitor Eddie Ryan. He also contributes to the war ditty “Rat-Tat-Tat-Tar” prior to the star’s arrival.

Lori Flanders handles the choreography with skill and the large ensemble of mostly younger players pick up her direction very well.

Roger Magendie plays Broadway impresario Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr. with authority, while other noted players in smaller roles include Helen Blanke, Claire Conti and Jimmy Demontluizin.

Maestro Dennis Assaf again handles his job as conductor with great competence, assisted by Donna Clavijo, who serves as musical director.

Ben Katz J WV post holds joint service, talk at Shir Chadash

The recently renamed Ben Katz Post No. 580 of the Jewish War Veterans of America hosted a prayer service and a special program in honor of the area’s Jewish war veterans and servicemen and servicewomen.

Members of the Ben Katz Post No. 480 of the Jewish War Veterans (J WV) assembled for prayer services jointly sponsored by Orthodox Congregation Beth Israel and Shir Chadash Conservative Congregation in Metairie and later attended a breakfast gathering.

The prayer service with Rabbi Deborah Silver was held in the Chevra Thilim Chapel, beginning at 9:15 a.m.

Following the service, J WV members, most wearing hats or uniforms, enjoyed a breakfast hosted by Shir Chadash before settling in for a slide presentation and talk by Post Commander Judge Sol Gothard. Gothard’s talk was on Jewish war heroes throughout history, beginning with biblical times.

In addition Gothard revealed the new banner emblazoned with the J WV designation that the post has been renamed in honor of Katz, the former post commander of blessed memory who served in that capacity for 25 years.

J WV Ben Katz Post Commander Sol Gothard jokes about the biblical hero David during his talk. (Photo by Alan Smason)

U.S. Army Major Carol Berman, slated to address the crowd, did not attend the event, despite earlier advertisements that she would be there. She was unavailable for comment.
The Jewish Community Day School (JCDS) celebrated 21 “fabulous” years in a Las Vegas style gala fundraising affair at Congregation Gates of Prayer synagogue in Metairie on Sunday evening, November 13. More than 250 friends of Jewish Community Day School (JCDS) attended this event.

The evening was packed with food catered by Kosher Cajun, rat-pack themed music, prizes and ‘Poker Productions, Inc.’ inspired charitable gaming to carry out the Vegas Theme. There was an extensive silent auction rich in jewelry, children’s art, and trips spanning the world.

“The school’s 21st birthday is a link in the proud history of Jewish education in New Orleans. The stellar accomplishments of Jewish Community Day School are a reflection of this community’s history of Jewish educational excellence that harkens back to 1918,” said Sharon Pollin, Oscar J. Tolman Head of School. “We are thrilled to be known as a school that sets a high bar for individualized student learning, in an inclusive Jewish environment. Families appreciate our commitment to the outdoors, a healthy environment, and rich engagement with the process of learning.”

Lis and Hugo Kahn, instrumental leaders of JCDS since its inception, were honored. Both have served in a variety of leadership positions on the board. Lis was board president from 2014-2016, and both continue to serve as active board member. Hugo was instrumental in finding the property and funding the building of the New Orleans Jewish Day School (predecessor to JCDS) and the Goldring Woldenberg Jewish Community Campus. In paying tribute to the Kahns, Pollin stated that they are guided by the wisdom of our Torah, and by their own inner compasses. “Leading by example, the Kahn’s challenge all of us to enrich our world, our community, and our children. Their wisdom, generosity, and work have inspired all who have had the great fortune to work with them,” shared Ms. Pollin.

Committee members were Sarah Allison, Jessica Bach, Michelle Bassham, Caroline Brickman, Vivian Cahn, Gail Chalew, Tiffany Cotlar, Cindy Denn, Jackie Gothard, Susan Green, Jack Gross, Bill Hess, Anne Kiefer, Robert Liniado, Karen W. Remer, Madilyn Samuels, Jennifer Schneider, Eric Stillman, Lauren Ungar, Miriam Wältzer and Liz Yager.

Jewish Community Day School, located at 3747 West Esplanade in Metairie, welcomes babies 3 to 15 months, and students in grades Pre-K to 5. At JCDS, passionate teachers enable young learners to achieve their highest potential. Jewish values are at the core of our academics and our play. For more information about JCDS or to schedule a tour, visit www.jcdsnola.org or call Lauren Ungar at 504.887.4091.

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Rabbi Reimer installed at Temple Sinai

By JOSH AXELROD, Special to the CCJN

Founded in 1870 as Louisiana’s first Reform synagogue, Temple Sinai has only had nine senior rabbis throughout its historic existence. So the inauguration of a new rabbi is always cause for celebration. With an homage to its past and a vision to its future, the congregation witnessed the installation of Rabbi Matthew A. Reimer last Friday, November 18, in the synagogue’s main sanctuary. It was an event he described as “both humbling and daunting.”

Joining on the bimah with Emeritus Rabbi Ed Paul Cohn and Cantor Joel Olman, Reimer was ebullient. “I hope tonight’s festivities can be viewed not as any kind of personal achievement but as a communal celebration for a congregation which is in the midst of its own transition,” Reimer said.

Along with his wife Leah and four daughters, Reimer moved from his most recent position with The Shul of New York. Reimer was ordained in 2007 from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and studied music at Vassar College prior to his ordination.

His former colleague, Adam Feder, The Shul Band leader and development director from The Shul of New York also joined in the festivities. Reimer led a lively Kabbalat Shabbat service, before the installation honors began. Together with an ensemble of piano, bass, violin, clarinet and guitar, Reimer and Feder demonstrated their impressive musical chops, harmonizing and bouncing across the bimah.

Rabbi Jonathan A. Stein, who served as Reimer’s mentor when they first met in 2001, was called upon to reflect on the night. Stein congratulated the rabbinic search committee on a job well done and offered suggestions to Reimer on how he might serve as both an effective and an influential rabbi.

Feder spoke next, detailing the ten things he’ll miss most about Reimer. The list included seeing Phish concerts, dreaming up plans, making music on Shabbat and his wonderful family.

“Rabbi Matthew Reimer is a soulful man,” Feder said. “You have, in this new rabbi, a totally competent and creative person, a natural leader. He is confident, thoughtful, caring and hardworking.”

Cohn ushered up Mark Heller and Julian B. Feibelman Jr. to symbolically pass the sefer Torah scroll to him. The two temple members are the respective descendants of Rabbi Max Heller and Rabbi Julian B. Feibelman, two of the past Temple Sinai rabbis and instrumental figures in the New Orleans Jewish community.

Cohn congratulated Reimer on the significant milestone and wished him luck. “It happens once in a generation,” Cohn said. “We are honored to witness Temple Sinai’s ninth senior rabbi…a new link is added to our congregation’s proud and faithful 146-year chain of tradition.”

Reimer finished the evening with a humble speech about why he decided to become a rabbi and how he hopes to positively affect his new community. The New Jersey-born rabbi recounted a story about a conversation he had with his father about the importance of doing something good instead of doing something big.

“I am honored and exhilarated for a central role in this process of giving and receiving, of building and being built, and of partnering with each of you, helping all of us to live up to our fullest potentials and hopefully to do something good,” Reimer concluded.

Following the installation, an Oneg Shabbat was held in the social hall.
While not busy serving as the executive director of the Israel Religious Activist Center (IRAC), or leading the Women of the Wall movement she founded, Anat Hoffman has been touring American synagogues and sharing her feminist call to action. Named the fifth most influential Jew by the Jerusalem Post, Hoffman came to Congregation Gates of Prayer in Metairie this past Thursday night, December 1, to share her message of empowerment.

Appropriately, the singing of both the American and Israeli national anthems kicked off the event, after which Senior Rabbi Robert Loewy introduced Hoffman. Loewy termed the event a “unique evening for our New Orleans Jewish Community.”

Hoffman’s talk titled “Cracks in the City of Stone: Struggling for Pluralism in Modern Jerusalem” began with an anecdote about her submissions to the Academy of Hebrew Letters for a lexicon of appropriate civil rights words in the Hebrew language. She reported the academy accepted her suggested entries for Hebrew words that correspond to “integrity” and “accountability.” However, she rapped, “pluralism” is still under review.

“What does it mean that we’re 68 years old, integrity is 4 years old, accountability is 9 months old and unpronounceable, and pluralism is yet to be written,” Hoffman quipped.

Hoffman dove into her four-decades-long career in which she fought sexism in the Jewish state. Describing her activism with Women of the Wall, Hoffman talked about the mistreatment of women who want to pray or sing at the Kotel (Western Wall), amidst Orthodox Jews.

She detailed several accounts of communities where women can be put in jail for six months for praying, Orthodox men who can refuse to sit next to women on buses and planes, and misogynistic signs instructing women to wait for their husbands out of sight. Hoffman explained her greatest triumph was securing a female section of the Kotel for worship.

“It isn’t time that you came to the wall and felt welcome?” Hoffman asked, after polling the audience to see who had visited the Kotel and been made to feel uncomfortable.

Despite the gravity of the topic, Hoffman was funny and relaxed. One of the evening’s most entertaining moments was when Hoffman asked Rabbi Alexis Berk of Touro Synagogue to model the shawl – what Hoffman termed as a shemata (rag) – which would be placed on a woman’s shoulders if her arms or shoulders were exposed. Berk walked the bimah into a catwalk much to the amusement of the audience.

Hoffman also talked about the importance of unity between Arabs and Jews. She highlighted how Arabs save more lives in Israeli hospitals than commit acts of terror, and yet a quarter of the population are still treated as second-class citizens.

“We can’t engage in the sport of hating Islam… It’s time we learn to protect our minority,” Hoffman said.

Following her talk, Hoffman answered questions from the congregation. Regarding a question about overcoming adversity, including a recent law introduced in Israel that would potentially ban all non-Orthodox worship,
Viva le difference? For Israelis and Americans, a Great Divide

By ALAN SMASON, SPECIAL TO THE CCJN

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu began his press briefing from the Foreign Ministry building by acknowledging the issue of pluralism at the Kotel or Western Wall for the mostly European and American journalists gathered there.

But for most Israelis, the issue of whether women have an equal-sized prayer area or whether an egalitarian area for men and women to pray together at Robinson’s Arch exists, is really more of a non-issue. “The average secular Israeli just doesn’t care what goes on at the Kotel,” explained Channel 2 Israeli TV personality and panel moderator Efrat Shapira Rosenberg at a session for the recently concluded Jewish Media Summit this past week. “It’s just not relevant.”

“If you happen to fall upon a religious Israeli, religious being haredi or national religious,” Rosenberg continued, “you will hear what they think about it and they will be against any arrangement or any changing of the status quo.”

So, how can this be? How can an issue be so galvanizing and important throughout American synagogues and up for discussion at Shabbat tables when it hardly registers comment among the citizens in whose very land the holy structure stands? Is it that Israelis don’t believe in equality for women? The numbers of teenage women carrying loaded arms in the streets and serving their country as Knesset Members (MKs) would seem to dispute that.

Or is it that there is a great divide between Americans and Israelis when it comes to politics and religion?

In America the mostly liberal Jewish agenda has been to fight against discrimination wheresoever perceived. Jews were notably at the forefront in the battle for civil rights for blacks, for example. Jews not only formed the Anti-Defamation League to protect themselves from threats from the right, but also were fundamental in the founding of the Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist branches have all staunchly advocated for feminist and gay rights in recent years. To allow women equal access to the Kotel would seem to be a no-brainer for most American Jews.

While it is true that the Orthodox and ultra-religious factions in the U.S. have not been as supportive, there are cracks in the facade of opposition, most notably in Modern Orthodox congregations and yeshivas like Yeshivat Chevevei Torah founded by Rabbi Avi Weiss and Yeshiva Maharat co-founded by him and Rabbah Sara Hurwitz. Equality for women to worship like men and to act as spiritual leaders has been fully embraced by Reconstructionist and Reform Jewish congregations and seminaries beginning four decades ago and Conservative Judaism followed suit.

According to the most recent Pew Research report, 35% of American Jews identify as Reform and 18% identify as Conservative. Only 10% constitute the Orthodox movement, which includes traditional synagogues and the outreaching Chabad-Lubavitch and other ultra-religious groups.

But in Israel the Conservative and the Reform movements account for a mere 5% of the total Jewish makeup. The largest faction of Israeli Jews identify as Orthodox at 50% with 41% not affiliated with any of the movements. Hiloni Jews are truly secular Jews who, according to the research, rarely or never attend religious services and who consider religion as largely not important in their lives.

With such apathy towards religious affiliation, it is no wonder that the Orthodox, through its large numbers should hold sway over politics. But even there the haredi movement is largely fractured, according to Daniel Goldblum, the chairman of Gesher Israel. “It’s important to stop ignoring what goes on inside the haredi world and to assume that they act as one or that there is one representative haredi,” he said. “There are 250 different styles or what we call in Gesher…250 shades of black.”

So if egalitarian worship, equal opportunities for women and men and equal access to prayer are not at the top of items for consideration in Israel, why are these hot button issues in America, some 6,000 miles away? Is it a simple case of attempting to impose our own American ideals on our Israeli Jewish siblings? Or are we Americans just out of touch with what is important to Israelis?

Rabbi Na’ama Kelman, the dean of Hebrew Union College in Israel, is
one of the Reform Judaism leaders who feels strongly about advocating for change at the Kotel. A resident of Israel for the past 40 years, she understands what she terms as the North American model in which congregations gather together and lobby for or against change. She compares it to the Protestant Church, a decentralized structure with power that is largely spread across the system. That model is not embraced in Israel, she claimed. Indeed, she compares the religious model in Israel to be closely allied with the Catholic Church, a centralized structure with a Chief Rabbinate and with power emanating from the top down.

More than two years ago, Naftali Bennett, acting on his own authority, built an egalitarian area for worship at Robinson’s Arch, which is used today, but which created tremendous pushback in the haredi community for him politically. In recent years, Natan Sharansky, head of The Jewish Agency for Israel, oversaw a commission in which a compromise was achieved, but has yet to be implemented. The deadline for its implementation has failed because of politics.

Kelman acknowledged that the problem with acceptance of Reform Judaism and equal prayer opportunities for women goes back to the formation of the Jewish State. She regrets that the compromise plan Sharansky helped iron out is still in limbo. “It’s an outrage that it hasn’t been implemented,” she blurted before the other panel members.

Yair Sheleg, a columnist for Makor Rishon, who also works at the Israel Democracy Institute, believes it comes down to Jewish identity and how the nation state was founded. Because the Orthodox were unchallenged at the beginning of its formation, the state failed to reign in their political sway.

MK Aliza Lavie, a member of the Yesh Atid Party with a large secular base, believes it will be resolved in time, although she was unable to give insights as to how long the issue will continue to be played out at the Kotel.

In the end American Jews should think of Israeli Jews in the way George Bernard Shaw famously commented about that which divides the United States and Great Britain (“a common language”). Jews in America are a people divided by their politics with religious overtones, while Jews in Israel are a people divided by their religion with political overtones. And never the twain shall meet.

Netanyahu trumpets world’s courtship of Israel at summit

By ALAN SMASON, Exclusive to the CCJN

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that the Jewish state is actively being courted by the other nations of the world because of its impressive record against terror, its technological edge as a super power and its overtures to peace in the Middle East.

Netanyahu spoke to more than 50 international Jewish journalists last night at the Foreign Ministry Building. The journalists had gathered at the invitation of the state to be part of the second Jewish Media Summit that concluded today.

In his remarks Netanyahu referred to the three points of terror, technology and peace as “T.T.P”

“For these reasons Israel’s place in the world is changing at a dazzling pace,” he pronounced, jokingly apologizing for being the bearer of such good news about Israel.

“You can see the changes just in the last year,” he continued pointing to a map of the world colored in blue to acknowledge those countries that have full fledged diplomatic recognition and economic partnerships with Israel.

“Of course with the United States we have an incredible relationship,” Netanyahu acknowledged. He praised the recent $38 billion memo of understanding the two countries recently signed.
Issacson, Suggs honored with Torch of Liberty Awards

By DEAN M. SHAPIRO, SPECIAL TO THE CCJN

Surrounded by family, friends, past honorees, distinguished guests and more than 800 other attendees, two distinguished New Orleansians were honored earlier this week with the 2016 A.I. Botnick Torch of Liberty Award at the annual Anti-Defamation League (ADL) gala and dinner.

Renowned journalist and bestselling author Walter Isaacson and retired CEO of one of the world’s largest provider of helicopter services, Carroll W. Suggs, were presented with their awards on December 6 at the Sheraton Hotel in downtown New Orleans. Before delivering their acceptance speeches, the award recipients and their accomplishments were lauded by local and regional ADL officials and other colleagues and friends and their speeches were greeted by standing ovations.

Isaacson, an Isidore Newman School and Harvard University graduate whose early journalism career included a stint at the Times-Picayune, went on to become Time magazine’s executive editor and CEO of Cable News Network (CNN). In 2003 he was named president and CEO of the Aspen Institute, a widely respected organization that describes itself as “a nonpartisan forum for values-based leadership and the exchange of ideas.” He has authored or co-authored seven nonfiction books with Simon & Schuster on influential Americans throughout history, including a 2011 New York Times bestseller on Apple, Inc. CEO Steve Jobs who died that same year.

In the month following the devastation by Hurricane Katrina, Isaacson returned to New Orleans to assist in the city’s rebuilding efforts. Then-governor Kathleen Blanco named him vice chairman of the Louisiana Recovery Authority and, in subsequent years, he was appointed to prestigious positions by former president George W. Bush and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Suggs served as CEO of the Lafayette-based Petroleum Helicopters, Inc. (PHI) from 1990-2001, following the death of her husband Robert L. “Bob” Suggs who founded the company in 1949. Under his stewardship PHI grew from three helicopters to a fleet of more than 250, making it one of the world’s largest provider of private helicopter services. During her term as CEO, Carroll Suggs expanded the company’s range of services and took on leadership roles in a wide range of community-based service organizations. Following her retirement she continued her activism, serving on many boards and committees and becoming an outspoken advocate for educational and workplace diversity.

Both Isaacson and Suggs are upper level sponsors of the South Central Region ADL chapter headquartered in New Orleans.

Prior to the awardees’ speeches they were lavishly praised by a series of speakers, some of whom had been personally acquainted with them for many years. These included regional director Allison Padilla-Goodman, regional board chair and 2106 Torch of Liberty Committee member Jonathan Lake and regional director for Colorado Scott Levin.

Suggs was introduced by longtime friend and 2015 co-award winner Phyllis Taylor and Odom Heebe. Isaacson was introduced by two longtime friends, Allan Bissinger and Tim Francis, son of recently retired Xavier University president Norman Francis.

In her remarks, Suggs lauded ADL as “a marvelous organization. ADL has helped so many to understand and respect all people and I thank you all for your support of it.

“As I look around the room tonight and see so many of you here, I want to say that receiving the Torch of Liberty Award is a privilege and an honor to be included among those others selected,” Suggs continued.

“Over the years I have learned that, in order to be successful, you must believe in yourself, work hard and you earn the respect of your peers. With success comes the responsibility to support your community. I’m grateful for the opportunity to serve and support so many organizations in which I’ve met such exciting people. From institutions such as ADL I’ve learned that, in order to achieve respect it must be earned. It is not a given.”

In his introduction to Isaacson, Francis cited Isaacson’s definition of the word “genius. As he explained, “They have a passion for perfection. They love simplicity. They make other people do what they never thought was possible. They challenge other geniuses and they appreciate diversity. That is true of Steve Jobs, Albert Einstein, Ben Franklin (each of whom Isaacson has written books about), my father Norman Francis and certainly it’s true of Walter Isaacson.

“In a world where what we say and how we say it matters, Walter has, for his entire career, used his...
words in a purposeful and constructive manner,” Francis added. “He has not wavered in his writing. He has brought to life innovators and others who have changed the world. While leading from the back, he inspires others to think that they’re in front.”

Isaacson began his brief acceptance speech by praising two past recipients of the award who were present, Francis (in 1977) and former New Orleans Mayor Moon Landrieu (in 1975). “I am proud to be following in their footsteps,” he said, adding words of praise for Bissinger, a friend from childhood from whom he learned that, “In life, you got to be something larger than yourself.”

Continuing his praise, he cited his father, Irwin Isaacson, as “the kindest person I have ever met. Kindness is all about the notion of kinship, of kindred spirits, of being all one family. Not only was he kind, he instilled this in the people around him.

“That is the underpinning of what we’ve talked about in terms of respect, diversity and in loving a whole community,” Isaacson added. “We’re all in this together. We’re all kindred and we all have to be kind. I know that seems kind of cliche and simplistic but this year has been a good year to learn that lesson.”

Referencing quotes from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. made earlier in the evening during the invocation by Temple Sinai Senior Rabbi, Matthew Reimer, Isaacson concluded by saying, “Dr. King had a way with words but all that [he was] really saying is that it’s all about kindness. So I want to thank you all for instilling that spirit of kindness, knowing that that’s the underpinnings of tolerance. And it’s not just about a tolerance of diversity, but what we in New Orleans can do . . . and we do it right and best . . . which is show a love of diversity.”

Earlier in the evening, those gathered for the ceremony also heard remarks from Jeff Sallet, Special Agent-in-Charge for the New Orleans FBI office. Sallet, who has worked on such high-profile cases as the shooting deaths of three Baton Rouge police officers in July of this year, praised the ADL with whom he attended classes that focused on hate crimes. “This was one of the best classes I ever took,” he said.

Also honored that evening were two young New Orleans lawyers, Aaron Ahlquist and Peter Sperling, who were presented with Barney Mintz Leadership Awards. The award is named after the late Bernard D. “Barney” Mintz, a fifty-year member of the regional ADL office and the first recipient of the Torch of Liberty Award in 1967. Lake made those presentations.

The Torch of Liberty Award, which will be celebrating its 50th anniversary next year, was renamed after Adolph Ira (A.I.) Botnick, a longtime ADL leader from the New Orleans area who passed away in 1995. The award has been presented to 88 individuals and organizations representing some of the most prominent citizens of New Orleans and elsewhere in Louisiana among whom were governors, mayors, other elected officials and high-profile community leaders.

The awards are presented annually every December. Nominations are received by a special Torch of Liberty Committee and one to three recipients are selected from those nominations.

Six13 entertains at JCC Community Chanukah celebration

Six13, a New York-based male a cappella group that entertained at the White House’s Chanukah party last week, performed for an hour as the centerpiece of the JCC’s Community Chanukah Celebration. The event, held in the Uptown JCC, 5342 St. Charles Avenue, occurred over a very rainy and chilly Sunday Dec. 18 afternoon, in contrast to the warm and festive feeling inside the Mintz Auditorium.

A group of more than 200 people attended the event. Prior to the performance, hot dogs and latkes by Kosher Cajun Delicatessen and New York Grocery were served. The entire supply of latkes was exhausted by show time.

Six13 encouraged the youngsters, many of whom were assembled in front of the seated audience and just below the stage, to dance and sing along. Members of the troupe encouraged a young girl to come up and create beat box sounds made popular by hip hop singers.

One of the more joyful Jewish holiday renditions offered up by Six13 was their “Hamilton” remix in which the name “Judah Maccabee” was substituted for “Alexander Hamilton.” A number of other popular pieces from the Broadway hip hop musical “Hamilton” like “My Shot” were altered to express meaning about celebrating freedom from Antiochus and the Hasmonean dynasty.

Following the concert, Six13 members sold compact discs and black yarmulkas emblazoned with their logo. Representatives from Jewish Children’s Regional Center also were on hand to help sign up children for their P.J.Library programs.
Tel Aviv museum hosts impressive Bob Dylan exhibit

By ALAN SMASON, Special to the CCJN

When it was announced several weeks ago that Bob Dylan had received the 2016 Nobel Prize for Literature, there were shock waves felt around the world, resonating within the literati, many of whom could not fathom that his song lyrics and music could be considered as legitimate heirs to the luxuriant prose of William Faulkner, Saul Bellow and John Steinbeck or the lyric poetry of Pablo Neruda and William Butler Yeats.

In the speech read at the ceremonies last Saturday for him by the U.S. ambassador to Sweden, Dylan, who apologized for his absence before the Swedish Academy, seemed to echo those sentiments himself. “If someone had ever told me that I had the slightest chance of winning the Nobel Prize, I would have to think that I’d have about the same odds as standing on the moon,” he wrote. “I recognize that I am in very rare company, to say the least.”

Self-effacing like his hero and mentor Woody Guthrie and with his simple, commonplace, but forthright lyrics, Dylan has proven to be a man of the people. We in unconventional New Orleans, a city with unique architecture, music and a stubborn streak about doing things our own way, are proud to call Dylan, the iconoclast and rebel, as a fellow resident.”There are a lot of places I like, but I like New Orleans better,” he has been famously quoted.

Born in Duluth, Minnesota to a small, but close Jewish family in 1941, Robert Allen Zimmerman spent much of his formative years in nearby Hibbing prior to transforming himself into a beloved American pop icon. Barely seven years old when Israel announced its independence in 1948, the American pop icon bearing the Hebrew name Shabtai Zisl ben Avraham has found a temporary home to be admired and studied from afar for the next year in a land 6,000 miles away where Hebrew is the language of the people and music is deeply appreciated. And it’s all in time for his 75th birthday.

Beit Hatfutsot, the Museum of the Jewish People (formerly the Museum of the Diaspora), located on the campus of Tel Aviv University, has unveiled “Forever Young,” a very accessible and well-researched multimedia exhibit on the life and works of the enigmatic figure.

It all began more than two years ago. Following a successful exhibit at the London Jewish Museum on the work of tragic Jewish singer Amy Winehouse, Beit Hatfutsot purchased and arranged for its transfer to their third floor exhibit area. The exhibit opened to great fanfare in October of 2014 and indicated to the museum staff that there was a base of support for similar exhibits on musical heroes.

Curator Amitai Achiman began to think about mounting his own original exhibit on a major Jewish musical figure for the museum timed to help launch its new wing slated to open in 2018.

“If you are doing an exhibition about musicians, Bob Dylan should be the first one,” Achiman mused. When he learned the songwriter was about to turn 75, the concept of a Dylan exhibit seemed to be beshert (destined), to use an appropriate Yiddish term.

Immediately, Achiman set his sights on finding appropriate photos of Dylan that would tell his story to Israelis. He didn’t especially want studio session portraits or images shot live in concert under the garish glare of theatrical lighting. He craved intimate pictures of the artist.

There was just one problem.
Dylan was a secretive man who rarely allowed photographers into his sanctum santorum. In recent years no one fit that bill, but early in his career – during the late 1960s – Elliot Landy, the photographer who captured Dylan’s image for the famous “Nashville Skyline” photo, was allowed inside that select circle of friends and family.

Achiman contacted Landy and secured 31 photos to adorn the walls, which became the backbone of the Beit Hatfutsot exhibit. Shot around the time of the pivotal Woodstock Folk Festival at Dylan’s home in upstate New York, Landy captured images of a very young Dylan with his wife Sara Lownds, the inspiration for his song “Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands” on his best-selling “Blonde on Blonde” album. There are also simple photos of a restive Dylan playing father to his three young children or more whimsical pictures like one in black and white in which he executes a perfect headstand on a verdant knoll. To these he would add other historical images, videos, album covers and short articles to more fully tell Dylan’s story.

But the Landy photographs were critical in Achiman’s estimation. These would afford very personal glimpses into Dylan’s world that few were ever privileged to see.

Achiman admits he is drawn to Dylan first because of the poetic quality of his writing. “But what also makes him great, to my opinion, is his performance,” Achiman explains in his thick Israeli accent. “When you hear him one night you won’t hear the same thing at another concert. His concerts are (heard) one time. They are unique.”

Around the same time Dylan’s music was starting to sweep the folk music and popular charts in the United States, a small record company was established in 1964 in Israel by Columbia Music (CBS) named NMC. That company grew as part of what became known as the CBS family of companies worldwide with Dylan and other CBS artists distributed in Israel exclusively by NMC. Shortly after the $2 billion buyout by Sony Music in 1987, NMC became independent, but it maintained its stable of artists and repertoire. “They are the representation of Sony in Israel,” the curator stated.

The museum aggressively sought permission from NMC for the performance rights of Dylan’s work. NMC and Beit Hatfutsot entered into an arrangement in which NMC would offer video performances and the rights to display Dylan’s work.

“It was very important to show the representation of Columbia Records in Israel,” Achiman continued. The collaboration brought about the bulk of the materials on display at the museum.
JCRS’s ‘Latkes with a Twist’ termed a success

Last year the Washington Post celebrated Jewish Children’s Regional Service’s (JCRS) annual Chanukah community celebration – “Latkes with a Twist” – as one of the nation’s ten best Chanukah parties. JCRS stepped up its game last night with the reboot of the party at the newly renovated Dryades Street Market.

Located on Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard in the heart of what once was the heart of the Jewish business district known as the Dryades Street corridor, the Dryades Street Market allowed two floors of access for supporters of JCRS and their many worthy programs.

The event was a great evening with executive chef David Slater of Emeril’s cooking up latkes,” reported Mark Rubin, the event coordinator. Along with Daniel Esses, the culinary team came up with four different versions of latkes: latkes with Louisiana caviar, latkes with air-cured beef, latkes with smoked salmon and creme fresh and latkes with roasted beet and horseradish.

Rubin estimated the crowd at 200 people and said he believe it was slightly larger than either of two previous events, which had been held at the former Belloq Bar in the Hotel Modern beginning in 2014.

In addition to food, Republic Distributors and the Sazerac Company provided special holiday themed libations at the bar downstairs including a Sofganyut Sazerac, prepared with blueberry syrup in addition to the traditional bitters and Sazerac Rye Whisky.

Also documented are his concert tours to Israel, beginning in 1987, which the exhibit describes as “far from his best performance.” Despite his initial missteps, Dylan was warmly received and critically acclaimed in later appearances, the exhibit notes, in 1993 and 2011.

Several displays allow visitors to listen over headphones to Dylan music or to sit in easy chairs and view videos. One area has every Rolling Stone interview conducted with Dylan assembled in one book for easy access. A children’s book Dylan penned is also on display.

Achiman regretted not being able to secure Dylan’s first guitar for the exhibit. “It was just too expensive,” he noted.

“This exhibit speaks about one of the most important Jews in the 20th century,” Achiman boasted. “You can see how this Jew was flourishing in the culture of the 20th century and not just the Jewish culture. That’s interesting.”

If the exhibit fails to cover one item, it would be Dylan’s public flirtation with Christianity, although the curator doesn’t seem to have a problem with that. “It think it makes it more interesting,” he said. “You know, he had to find his own way and he needed to explore things. He wanted to try to be Christian, but it’s okay. He came back. One year after that he made a bar mitzvah for his son at the Western Wall.”

“Bob Dylan: Forever Young” continues at Beit Hatfutsot, the Museum of the Jewish People, on the campus of Tel Aviv University from now through 2017. Parking costs 25 NIS and admission is 45NIS for adults.
Chabad’s Chanukah at Riverwalk a warm, bright affair

By ALAN SMASON

Blame it on the lateness of the holiday this season or perhaps it was just the luck of the draw, but the annual Chanukah at the Riverwalk event put on by Chabad Lubavitch of Louisiana was not only bright, but downright balmy for the first time in a long time.

In addition rain showers did not put a damper on the event, which was held Tuesday evening, Dec. 27, at the Spanish Plaza through the cooperation of the Outlet Collection at Riverwalk Mall.

Approximately 500 people showed for the event that began at 5:00 p.m. with music supplied by Ooh La La Entertainment and the centerpiece of which featured the lighting of Louisiana’s largest Chanukiah. Built by Holocaust survivor Isak Borenstein of blessed memory, a gifted carpenter, the wooden structure stands at over 11 feet tall.

Gene Gekker of Carriage Cab of New Orleans, one of several sponsors of the event, climbed atop a ladder and kindled five lights with four lights representing the fourth night of Chanukah and the other being the shamash (or guardian light). While Gekker had the honor of lighting the structure, assistant U.S. Attorney Gerson Schreiber davened the blessings over lighting the Chanukah lights.

Earlier, Rabbi Zelig Rivkin, the head of Chabad Lubavitch of Louisiana, addressed the crowd and explained the two parts of the holiday that are celebrated, which are the victory of the Jews (Maccabees) over the Assyrian Greeks and the miracle of the oil. Focusing on the miracle of the oil, Rivkin elaborated: “Instead of engaging darkness, we should just increase light,” he said. “The strength that we get to be able to illuminate this darkness comes from the essence of our soul. It’s not logical. It has nothing to do with our decisions on (an) intellectual level. It comes from a deep strength of who we are and what we represent.”

Rivkin encouraged Jewish attendees to celebrate Chanukah not just with the kindling of lights, but to illuminate “our own personal candle and do it with the strength that we’re able to.”

Morris Bart, another sponsor of the event, expressed thanks for Chabad’s involvement in Chanukah. “Cathy and I are proud to sponsor this every year because we believe it is a beautiful event,” he said. He also encouraged prayers be said for a speedy healing for David Kaufmann, previously the director of the event, who was unable to attend due to illness.

State Senator J. P. Morrell complimented the size of the crowd and brought greetings on behalf of the State of Louisiana. Referring back to the presidential campaign and all of its divisiveness, Morrell said one thing everyone can learn from Chanukah is that one light can stand against the darkness. “The lesson of Chanukah is that if you are that light in the darkness, if you are that person who is doing the right thing, you can make a difference, Morrell said. “I challenge you to be that light.”

Speaking on behalf of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans, president Dr. Eddie Soll extended his greetings to the attendees. “For all you, these lights that we’re going to light tonight, tomorrow night and the next night until we’re at the eighth night, they should be a blessing for all of us to look to the future with good health, with prosperity and with peace,” he said.

Kosher Cajun offered a number of food opportunities, while latkes were served – while they lasted – by Bluma Rivkin, one of the two schluchim (emissaries) sent to Louisiana by the last Chabad Rabbi almost 40 years ago. Other booths involved games for kids and face painting.

Ooh La La also provided a laser light show with several new Chanukah images projected onto the Outlet building next to the Spanish Plaza.

Rivkie Chesney, the co-director of Torah Academy, served as the emcee for the event.
Chabad celebrates ‘Chasidius New Year’
with references to Dr. Seuss

By ALAN SMASON

Theodor Geisel, the popular illustrator and author known affectionately as Dr. Seuss, was never Jewish, but several of his works were recently used to explain the concept of living with faith as practiced by the three major strains of chasidism.

The talk by Rabbi Mendel Rubin given at a fabrengen (joyous gathering) at the Btesh Family Chabad House on Sunday evening, Dec. 18, the date which corresponded to 19 Kislev. That date on the Hebrew calendar recognizes the liberation from prison of Rabbi Shneur Zalman, known today as the Alter Rebbe. Zalman was critical in establishing chasidism and the date of his liberation is considered pivotal and promoted as the “New Year of Chasidius.”

At the gathering of about 40 men, women and children, Rubin spoke about the Alte Rebbe and two others, Rabbis Shlomo Karliner, an early chasid leader, and Yisrael Salanter, the founder of the Mussar movement.

Rubin likened the three strains of chasidism to the three figures, Karliner to the general chasidic movement, Salanter to the Mussar movement and the Alte Rebbe (Zalman) to the Chabad-Lubavitch movement.

Rubin used the three examples of “The Lorax,” “The King’s Stilts” and McElligot’s Pool” – all books by Dr. Seuss – as further examples of how the righteous live with faith.

As the character of the Lorax notes when the forest is depleted, there are consequences to actions that are found in reward and punishment. This is Salanter’s connection. When King Bitram recognizes in “The King’s Stilts” he must not neglect the protection afforded by the dike trees, it recalls faith in and a connection to tzadikim emblematic of Karliner, Rubin said.

Finally, a connection and closeness to G-d is revealed through the study of Dr. Seuss’ “McElligot’s Pool” in which the optimistic Marco fishes in a pool, exclaiming it to be connected to a brook, fed by a stream, enlarged by a river, all of which flow into the ocean. That is Zalman’s connection and closeness to G-d, Rubin said.

The fabrengen was punctuated at times by the singing of nigunim and a light meal was served for the occasion.

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Private rites for Clothing manufacturer Arnold ‘Jim’ Bennett

ARNOLD JEROME BENNETT, 97, a clothing manufacturer, who was credited with sparking and maintaining the fashion trend of bell-bottom blue jeans in the 1960s and 1970s, died on Monday, January 11, while in hospice care.

Known as ‘Jim’ to his friends and family, Bennett was employed throughout his lifetime in his family business, B. Bennett Company, a Central Business District manufacturer of casual wear and work clothing.

Following his 1937 graduation from the Tulane University School of Business, he married Teal Freedman, the oldest sister of the famous New Orleans “Freedman triplets” born at Touro Infirmary in 1930. Entering his service as a commissioned officer in World War II, he rose to the rank of captain while serving as an ammunition supply officer in the 20th Army Air Force in the Pacific theater of conflict. He saw action on the islands of Guam and Saipan, where he was stationed until the Japanese surrender. For his service, Bennett received the Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal along with several other fund-raising events in the past such as Instruments A’Comin for the Tipitina’s Foundation.

Glickman, was an active member of Touro Synagogue.

He is survived by his two former wives Patricia and Simone and his children Jonathan and Nicole. He is also survived by his parents Bonnie and Mickey Glickman of Chicago and two brothers Michael of Chicago and Dr. Steven Glickman, who lives outside of Denver.

A memorial service was held Sunday, January 17 at 1:00 p.m. at Touro Synagogue, His interment was in Chicago.

Dr. Sidney Antin, internist dies at 91

SIDNEY H. ANTIN, M.D., a retired internist who had a successful medical practice for over 50 years, died on Thursday January 14, after a lengthy illness. He was 91.

A New Orleans native, he graduated from Louisiana State University Medical School in 1946, following his service with the U. S. armed forces. Dr. Antin was associated with Methodist Hospital during his career and was remembered for making house calls when it was common practice. He also served as the store doctor for the Canal Street Krauss Department Store.

As a child, Dr. Antin grew up a member of Congregation Beth Israel. However as an adult he affiliated with Temple Sinai and, later, Congregation Gates of Prayer.

Dr. Antin was predeceased by his wife, Janice Loeb Antin of blessed memory. He was survived by his daughter Judy Antin (Irwin Lachoff), and sons Robert Antin (Robin) and Jonathan Antin (Suzan), a sister, Doris Esko, and five grandchildren.

A graveside Service was held on Sunday, January 17, 2016 at Hebrew Rest Cemetery No. 3 with Rabbi Robert Loewy officiating with the assistance from Rabbi Gabriel Greenberg.

Judy Cohen, wife and mother, passes away at 72

JUDITH CLARE COHEN, a wife and mother, died Friday, January 15, 2016, at the age of 72.

Cohen was a graduate of Fortier High School and matriculated to Louisiana State University at New Orleans, where she received a bachelor’s degree in sociology.

She is survived by her husband, Dr. Gerald Cohen, children Jane Cohen Alexander (Chuck) and Jeffrey Brandt Cohen (Izzi) and four grandchildren.

A graveside service was held at 3:30 p.m. at Metairie Cemetery on Sunday, January 17. Rabbi Alexis Berk officiated.

Robert Yuspeh, Sr., businessman succumbs at 79

ROBERT LOUIS YUSPEH, SR., a successful businessman, peacefully passed surrounded by family members on Sunday, January 17, 2016. He was 79.

He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Carolyn Steinberg Yuspeh, daughters Staci Yuspeh Ferber (Doug), Jodi Yuspeh and Mindi Yuspeh, his sister Georgia Yuspeh Reiss (Leon) and two grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his son, Robert Louis Yuspeh, Jr.

Although born in Tyler, TX, Yuspeh was raised and referred to New Orleans as his hometown. A graduate of Fortier High School, he attended The University of Alabama before serving in the United States Coast Guard. Yuspeh worked at Wembley Tie Company for a quarter of a century before embarking on a second career as a commercial sales and leases realtor.
Mary Elaine Sallee graveside service conducted
MARY ELAINE SALLEE, a member of the New Orleans community, died on January 21. She was 69.
Sallee was buried on Monday, January 25, at Jewish Burial Rites Cemetery, 4321 Frenchmen Street, at 2:00 p.m.

Jewish Family Services helped make arrangements for the graveside service, which was conducted by Shir Chadash Conservative Congregation’s Rabbi Ethan Linden.

Frances Kahn Insler buried in her native Morgan City
FRANCES KAHN INSLER, who helped run the Kahn Department Store in Morgan City, died on Thursday, January 21, 2016 in Pearl River. She was 80.
A native of Morgan City, she worked for many years at the department store owned by her surviving brother Leon Kahn.
Beside her brother, she is survived by her three children, Cheryl I. Ross (Roland) of Mandeville, Marilyn Insler of Hammond and Stephen Norman Insler of Lafayette and two grandchildren.

Funeral services were conducted by Congregation Gates of Prayer Rabbi Robert Loewy at 11:00 a.m. on Monday, January 25, 2016 at Twin City Funeral Home in Morgan City. Interment followed in the Morgan City Cemetery.

Marvin Smith buried in Florida
MARVIN HERBERT SMITH, a native and former resident of New Orleans, died in a Tampa assisted-living facility after a battle with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) on Monday, February 15. He was 73.
He attended Tulane University and the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss), and primarily worked in retail management.
Smith was predeceased by his wife of 36 years, Leah Ball Smith, in 1999. He is survived by his two sons Hal Smith (Dina), Sam Smith (Dr. Amanda) and four grandchildren, all of Tampa, and a sister Scynthia Donehue (David) of Dallas.
Graveside services were held on Friday, February 19 at Temple Beth Shalom Cemetery, 901 Circus Blvd, Sarasota, FL.

Memorial service held for Florence Lohrmann Braun
FLORENCE LOHRMANN BRAUN, a housewife and mother, passed away on Saturday morning, Feb. 20, while surrounded by her family and loved ones. She was 104.
Braun, a native of Omaha, NE, was preceded in death by her husband of 40 years, William Bernard Braun. She had been a recipient of care at St. Anna's at Lambert House, a nursing facility.
She is survived by her children Brenda Braun Moffitt (Michael) and William Jeffrey Braun (Tricia) of Palm Harbor, FL., two grandchildren and a sister, Jeanne Hecht of Madison, WI.
A private memorial service was held on Tuesday, Feb. 23, in the chapel of Temple Sinai.

Loan specialist Jerome Foreman laid to rest
JEROME FOREMAN, a specialist in commercial loans in Metairie, did not survive a multiple-car accident in Baton Rouge on Sunday evening. He was struck and killed as a pedestrian on Sunday evening, February 21. He was 88.
A native of Brooklyn, Foreman had been a New Orleans resident for the past 53 years. He was a World War II veteran who, after landing at Normandy, proudly served in the Third Army commanded by General George S. Patton. Foreman was also a member of the military assigned to work with the Allies at the Nuremberg Trials following the end of hostilities.
Foreman was a member of Congregation Gates of Prayer in Metairie.
He was predeceased by his wife of many years, Catherine Clemente Foreman, in 2014. He is survived by his children Randall K. Foreman (Elizabeth), Sandra F. Katz (Geoffrey), Cassandra M. Foreman, and Jacqueline A. F. Pottinger (Austin) and 13 grandchildren.
Rabbi Edward Paul Cohn officiated at internment at Hebrew Rest Cemetery 3.

Former First National Bank CEO lan Arnof dies in CA
IAN ARNOF; the former president and CEO of First National Bank of Commerce, died in Carmel, CA, the community to which he had retired, on February 27, 2016. He was 76.
Arnof was a longtime resident of New Orleans and previously lived in is hometown of McCrory, AR. He graduated from Vanderbilt University and Harvard Business School. He began his banking career at First Tennessee Bank and was recruited to First National Bank of Commerce in New Orleans (First NBC) which he ran as chairman, president & CEO before it was sold to Bank One/Chase Bank. At the time of its sale, the estimated worth of the holding company was listed as $9.3 billion.
While associated with First NBC, Arnof was very active socially and philanthropically on the local scene, having served on several community boards. He was especially concerned with improving economic development in the region as well as expanding educational opportunities through organizations like New Schools for New Orleans and Teach America.
Following his retirement, Arnof moved to Carmel and joined the Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula (CHOMP) board and the Big Sur Land Trust. He was involved with a number of economic agencies associated with colleges such as the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research (SIEPR) and the Panetta Institute associated with Dominican University in Marin, CA. He was also a member of the board of directors of Bank of the Ozarks in Little Rock, AR. and was a member of the Visiting Board of Xavier University.
Arnof was a member of Temple Sinai and served on several local boards including Chairman of the Jewish Endowment Fund.
He is survived by his three children Paige Arnof-Fenn of Cambridge, MA; Ian Arnof of Somerville, MA and Lindy Kearns of Washington, D.C.; a sister, Ann Fishman of New York, and four grandchildren.
Retired businessman Abraham Kupperman dead at 96

ABRAHAM BERNARD KUPPERMAN, a small business owner and leader in the Jewish community, passed away on Monday, March 21, 2016 at the age of 96, only two days before his birthday.

A native New Orleanian and first generation American, Kupperman was born on South Rampart Street near Perdido Street, the fabled area considered one of the birthplaces of jazz music. After his father died when he was only six, he was raised by his mother and an older sister.

Kupperman was the valedictorian at all three of his graduating classes at Fortier High School, Tulane University’s undergraduate class, and, at the age of 21, his Tulane School of Law class.

He then served in the U.S. Army Air Corps as second in command of an airbase in Freckleton, England.

He returned to Louisiana at the end of the war to help out in his family’s small furniture business, becoming president of the business in 1948. The business eventually grew to include Levitan’s, Joy’s, Great Southern Wholesale Co., Best Way, United Liquidators, and Joy’s of Baton Rouge. He sold the business in 1984 and for a brief time went back to practicing law with the Baldwin & Haspel firm. He became adept at investing and became a Certified Financial Planner.

He was a former member of many boards, including the Anti-Defamation League, Touro Infirmary, and Pelican Homestead, and served as president of both the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans and the Jewish Community Center.

Kupperman is survived by his wife of 66 years, Jo-Ellyn Levy Kupperman; his sons Jeff (Nancy) of Santa Barbara, California and Stephen (Mara) of New Orleans; six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

On March 22 Temple Sinai’s Rabbi Edward P. Cohn officiated graveside services at Hebrew Rest No. 3 cemetery.

Retired tailor Joseph Sher dies at 100

JOSEPH SHER, a retired tailor and the oldest Holocaust survivor living in New Orleans, died early March 24 at Lambeth House. He was 100 years old.

Sher, who was born in Krzepice, Poland, described many close calls both before and after the Nazis invaded his homeland in which he narrowly escaped death. Like his father, Sher was a tailor, whose skills made him a valued tradesman to both the Nazis and, later, the Soviet Red Army soldier who captured him at war’s end.

Married in 1941 to his wife Rachel Israelowicz, both Shers were separated during the Holocaust, but miraculously found each other after the war ended. Sher’s three sisters and both parents were killed at Treblinka death camp, but his two brothers miraculously survived. After living for a time in a displaced person’s camp, the Shers were able to participate in a resettlement program instituted by the United States. Using a cousin, Leopold (“Lez”) Shtal of blessed memory as a sponsor, the Shers were able to emigrate by ship from Europe along with their toddler son Martin in 1949.

When Sher landed in New Orleans that fateful day, he had a place to live and a job set up for him at Harry Hyman Tailors. It was there he plied his craft and eventually became manager of the tailor shop that employed dozens of workers manning Singer sewing machines.

Sher’s excellent work made him a favorite of local and nationally renowned performers such as Fats Domino, Chubby Checker, Al Hirt, Chris Owens and Elvis Presley. When Harry Hyman Tailors was purchased by Murphy Rosenzweig, it became Murphy the Tailor and Sher continued his work as manager.

He was a founding member of the New Americans Social Club and a longtime leader of the community of survivors who chose to live and raise their families in New Orleans. He was the last of the New Orleans area male Holocaust survivors.

Sher was a member of Theodore Roosevelt Masonic Lodge #415 and a leader of Congregation Anshe Sfard synagogue. He was also quite involved with the Holocaust Memorial Committee that annually presents the Community-Wide Yom Hashoah program at the JCC.

Until 2015, Sher would present the Memorial Prayer (El Mole Rachamin) and help with the reading of the names of the New Orleans survivors who had passed away by reciting the Kaddish prayer in their memory and for the six million souls who perished during the Holocaust.

Sher was married for 56 years before his wife passed away in 1997. He is survived by his two sons, Martin Sher (Donna) of Plano, Texas and Leopold “Lee” Sher (Karen) and three grandchildren.

Despite the hardships and unspeakable horrors he witnessed, Sher was an irrepresible spirit who worked hard, but enjoyed life and counseled all who met him to “stay young!” He was fluent in Polish and Yiddish and especially loved leading prayers and participating in Hebrew worship at Anshe Sfard.

Known as “Zaydie” to his family and later to other community members, he was a patriotic naturalized American citizen who praised the United States for the opportunity it brought him and whose favorite motto was “God bless America!”

Sher addressed students of all ages for many decades about his Holocaust experiences. He continually repeated the final admonition given him by his mother: “You should tell the world what happened to us so that no one will ever forget.”

A funeral was held in the sanctuary of Anshe Sfard, Friday, March 25. At the service, Sher’s voice was heard reciting the memorial prayer he recorded for the HolocaustSurvivors.org site, where his and other New Orleans survivors’ stories can be found.

Burial followed immediately at Anshe Sfard Cemetery with Rabbi David Polsky officiating at the memorial and graveside services.

Janet Lawent Blum dies in Milwaukee

JANET LAWENT BLUM, a housewife and mother, died on April 3, 2016 in Milwaukee, WI.

She was survived by Laurie (Gary Margolis) Blum. Graveside services were held on Wednesday, April 6 at 10 a.m. at the Old Beth Israel Cemetery on Frenchmen Street with Rabbi Gabriel Greenberg conducting the service.

Tax preparer, cancer survivor Joseph Balfour passes away

JOSEPH HANNON BALFOUR, a registered tax preparer, passed away on Sunday, April 3, 2016.

Balfour, who had a tax preparation service in Metairie, was registered through the Internal Revenue Service.

Remarkably, Balfour suffered with a rare form of pancreatic cancer and survived for 16 years with this disease. He was actively involved with the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network, the Lustgarden Foundation, and Cancer Survivors of Baton Rouge. As a member of these survivor networks, he counseled victims stricken with pancreatic cancer and worked with other survivors from across the country to answer questions about pancreatic cancer survival. The disease has one of the highest mortality rates among cancers. Balfour hoped to help as many other survivors as he could, so they would not have to go through the recovery period alone.

Balfour was a member of Congregation Gates of Prayer. He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Myra (née Strug) Balfour, a son, Bruce Balfour (Nan) of San Antonio; a daughter, Wendy Balfour Lopes (Kevin) of Mystic, Connecticut; a sister-in-law, Roberta Shurman (late Gary) and three grandchildren.

Graveside services were conducted by Rabbi Robert Loewy at Gates of Prayer Cemetery on Joseph Street, on Thursday, April 7, 2016.

Former River Oaks CEO Darryl Sue Morais White succumbs to cancer

DARRYL SUE MORAIS WHITE, a New Orleans native and the former CEO and director of nursing at River Oaks Psychiatric Hospital, passed away on April 5, 2016, after an eight-year battle with cancer. She was 71.

White was described by all who knew her as a tireless worker and a woman who enjoyed many varied shared activities such as Mah Jongg, libations with friends, traveling, but cherished the time she spent with her family and specifically with her grandchildren. She was marked by a positive spirit, a sharp wit and an invisible capacity to live life to its fullest.

A graduate of Isidore Newman School, White attended Washington University in St. Louis, where she met art student Leonard Louis White on a blind date. After a brief courtship, the two were married in New Orleans in September of 1965 in a candlelight ceremony necessitated by a lack of power following the passage and destruction of Hurricane Betsy.

After 18 years as director of nursing, she became CEO at River Oaks Hospital before she retired in 2004. After Hurricane Katrina her family moved to Covington, where she enjoyed her retirement to the fullest, hosting river-view front porch gatherings with neighbors. She became an active member in the Northshore Northshore Jewish Congregation.

White’s struggle to fight cancer was one she ultimately shared with her daughter, Ashley Morais White-Samuels. The Whites purchased a second home in Savannah to be near their daughter and spent a considerable time there while their daughter waged her own battle with ovarian cancer. White gave her daughter the inspirational message to never allow her illness to get in the way of enjoying life.

Preceded in death by her daughter in 2013, White is survived by her husband of 50 years, Leonard Louis White; her son Jason Aaron White (Christine), her son-in-law Scott Samuels; her brother Lee Morais (Nancy) and three grandchildren.

Graveside services were held on Friday, April 8 at...
Realtor, clothier Evelyn G. Cohn is laid to rest

EVELYN GORDON COHN, a realtor and former clothing retailer, passed away Thursday evening, April 14, at her New Orleans home with her children by her side. She was 83.

Cohn was born into a family with an established New Orleans clothing business called The Tall Shop. From that initial store she opened a chain of stores specializing in women's clothing called Evelyn's Talls & Stouts. The stores later became known simply as Evelyn's. With the success of her retail establishments assured, Cohn earned a realty license in 1969 and became associated with Gardner Realtors where she established sales as a "Million Dollar Club Realtor."

An avid and voracious reader, she loved her Book Club and being involved with her many friends. A seasoned traveler, Cohn loved to travel both domestically and internationally.

A native of Bruce, Mississippi, she grew up in Baton Rouge, the daughter of retail clothing merchants. Prior to assuming her duties with the family store, she attended Sophie Newcomb College. Cohn was a member of Congregation Gates of Prayer.

She is survived by her children Stephen Lloyd Cohn (Tsipora), Donna Cohn Horowitz (Dr. Peter), David Mark Cohn (Ann) and Lisa Gayle Cohn; step-children Tova H. Buller and Tessa H. Powers; five grandchildren, and a great granddaughter.

Funeral services were held Sunday afternoon, April 17 at Gates of Prayer Synagogue, followed by a graveside service at Gates of Prayer Cemetery. (Joseph Street). Rabbi Robert Loewy officiated.

Miriam Katz is buried at 93

MIRIAM BARBER KATZ a former retailer, died on April 16, 2016. She was 93.

She was a resident of New Orleans since 1960 and a member of Congregation Beth Israel.

She was married for 67 years to the late Benjamin R. Katz. He died in 2013. She is survived by sons Michael E. Katz (Jane Olsd) and Allan M. Katz (Terry) of Boca Raton, FL and daughter Roberta Katz Sollender; brother Saul Barber, sister-in-law Esther Barber Rosenberg; four grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Graveside services were held on Sunday, April 17, 2016 at Anshe Sfard Cemetery, with Rabbi Gabriel Greenberg officiating the service.

Health advocate Cheryl Klein dies; funeral Sunday, May 1

CHERYL FRAME KLEIN, an advocate for Tobacco Free Living (TFL) and a compassionate campaigner for healthy living, passed away peacefully on Tuesday, April 26. She was 65.

Klein was the Region 9 manager of the Louisiana Public Health Institute and worked primarily with the Louisiana Campaign for TFL. She was involved with many boards and committees including the Florida Parishes Human Services Authority, the St. Tammany West Habitat for Humanity and many other coalitions and organizations intent on raising awareness for healthy living.

Prior to her employment with TFL, she worked as a regional prevention coordinator for the Office of Addictive Disorders and was an education coordinator for Pride of St. Tammany.

She also was involved with professional development and was a member of the Tangipahoa Professional Women, St. Tammany Commission on Families, St. Tammany Alumni Foundation, St. Tammany Chapter of the Alliance for Good Government and the Professional Women of St. Tammany.

Born in Takoma Park, MD., she spent her high school years in Puerto Rico. She studied music at Stevens College before graduating from Loyola University in 1972 with a degree in Music Therapy. She met her husband and moved to River Ridge in 1976 for 10 years before moving to Mandeville.

Passionate about her work, Klein is remembered as an involved member of her local community and a tireless campaigner for the rights of others. She was an inspiration to others and encouraged others to commit to causes to benefit humanity.

Klein served on the board for the Northshore Jewish Congregation and frequently played piano for services.

Klein is survived by her husband of 40 years, Dr. A. James Klein, her siblings Dr. William A Frame (Lorie) of Forsyth, IL. and Teresa Anne Frame of Silver Spring, MD.; her children, Jessica Anne Klein Sintes (Steve) and Adam Douglas Klein, and two grandchildren.

Funeral services were held at Lake Lawn Metairie Funeral Home, on Sunday, May 1, 2016. Rabbi Robert Loewy of Congregation Gates of Prayer officiated. Interment followed immediately in Metairie Cemetery.
**Obituaries**

**Marcus Usprich dies unexpectedly**

MARCUS D. USPRICH, a salesman, died unexpectedly on Tuesday, April 26, 2016 at Tulane Medical Center. He was 50 years old.

Known as “Corky,” he was a longtime salesman for Zales Jewelry, known for his wonderful sense of humor and an impish appreciation for rock music. In recent years he specialized in the sale of vintage toys. A native of New Orleans, Usprich was a graduate of Belfaire Jewish Children’s Bureau (JCB) in Shaker Heights, Ohio, located just outside of Cleveland.

He is survived by his wife, Debra Huber Usprich; fraternal twins Julia and Edwin Usprich; his brother Jonathan Hal Usprich of St. Louis, MO. and Naomi Usprich Kirby of Melbourne, Australia.

Graveside services were held on Thursday, April 28 at Jewish Burial Rites Cemetery with Rabbi Yossi Usprich Kirby of Melbourne, Australia.

**Founder of L.A.S. Enterprises, Leon Szyller, expires at 88**

LEON ABRAHAM (AV) SZYLLER, the founder of L.A.S. Enterprises, one of the region’s largest manufacturers of vinyl and aluminum siding, insulated windows and decorative shutters, and who later became a successful psychotherapist, died Wednesday, April 27 in Covington, LA. He was 88.

A Holocaust survivor, Szyller was born in Bedzin, Poland and grew up with his family in Paris. He and his three siblings were scattered and separated before the onslaught of the Nazi invasion. After narrowly evading death at the hands of the Gestapo as a teenager, Szyller escaped and was sent to America during World War II when he was just 16 years old. He initially settled in Philadelphia, taking up studies at Temple University before enlisting in the U.S. Army.

Following his military service, he moved to New Orleans with his first wife Emma Campbell Szyller and eventually graduated from Tulane University. In 1957 Szyller and his wife founded the company that bore his initials, L.A.S. Enterprises. He was known for unusual advertising campaigns to get his message across. At first he began to offer free gifts, such as kitchen cookware sets, to families that would arrange for estimates.

In 1972 Szyller unveiled his famous TV advertising campaigns with slogans. “Put This Man to Work” and “Fight the Ugliest.” Telemarketing techniques worked so well that L.A.S. Enterprises was recognized as the largest home improvement company in the South. Following the Louisiana oil bust in the 1980s, Szyller chose to sell the company. He returned to school to earn a Ph.D. in psychotherapy at age 64 and soon set up his own private practice, New Horizons Institute. Szyller often treated clients addicted to alcohol and drugs both as a therapist and a practitioner of body-based therapy. He advocated several relaxation and meditation techniques in his practice.

Szyller was an active member of the Northshore Jewish Congregation and served as its president. In 2013, he was named Peoples Health Champion in recognition of his numerous talks about his experience as a Holocaust survivor. He loved to travel the world, was a marathon runner and an avid reader. Szyller was an advocate of holistic living, organic gardening, and country living.

In recent years he became a prominent speaker on the Holocaust, often speaking to children’s groups to inform them of the experiences he kept locked up in his memory.

He is survived by his wife Bobette Rothenberg Szyller; his children Aran Shad, Marcel (Jane) and Rene Szyller (Mabel); his stepchildren Robin Graubart, Jonathan Graubart, and Heidi Vixelberg (Igor); and seven grandchildren.

Funeral services were held on Thursday, April 28, 2016, at Fielding Funeral Home, in Covington and was officiated by Rabbi Robert Loewy.

**Retired Capt. Robert Goldman dies in Tennessee**

ROBERT MORRIS GOLDSTEIN, a retired captain in the United States Navy and the U.S. Naval Reserve, passed away on April 28, 2016 in Hendersonville, TN. at a health facility there. He was 79.

A New Orleans native, Goldstein had only recently become a resident of Tennessee. He had attended Vanderbilt University, where he received a degree in mechanical engineering prior to his accepting his commission. He rose to be a captain and held that rank after retiring from active duty. Goldstein sailed throughout the Middle East, Scandinavia and other exotic ports of call.

During his naval stint, he was invited twice to become a member of the crew of the U.S. Coast Guard tall ship Eagle which is considered one of the most coveted of honors for training. He also received commendations for marksmanship while he was in the service.

Goldstein met his future wife at a Vanderbilt Homecoming weekend and the two moved to New Orleans after their marriage in January of 1966. They were members of Touro Synagogue and the Southern Yacht Club.

Goldstein was a noted lover of animals and was an exceptional builder of military models. One of his models, a submarine, is on display at the St. Mary’s Submarine Museum in St. Mary’s, GA.

He is survived by his wife of 30 years, Claudia Derrick Goldstein, his step-daughter Lisa (Jackie) Ezell, his sister-in-law Nancy Goldstein, two grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Graveside Services were on May 3, 2016 at Hebrew Rest Cemetery with Cantor David Mintz officiating services.

**Albert Pukof has a graveside service**

ALBERT E. PUKOE, a retail manager and New Orleans native passed away on May 6, 2016.

Pukoe is survived by his wife Charlene Dullitz Pukof; his daughters Donna Fury (Andrew) and Rhonda Guttuso (Frank); and three grandchildren. He was also the brother-in-law of Harris and Rosalie Dullitz, Dr. Lester and Diane Dullitz and Fred Hirsch.

A graveside service was held on Sunday, May 8, 2016 at Chevra Thilim Cemetery, 4824 Canal Street. Rabbi Ethan Linden officiated.

**Saul Berman, 57, dies unexpectedly**

SAUL CAMERON BERMAN, the business owner of Jack’s Metal Arts, a firm known for its hand crafting of metal works of art and in particular for its specialization of gas lanterns popular throughout the French Quarter and elsewhere, died unexpectedly on Thursday, June 2, 2016. He was 57.

Berman collapsed on a streetcar late that evening and was rushed to Touro Infirmary. At the time of his arrival, he could not be revived.

Berman took over his family business in 2001, following the death of his father of blessed memory, Jack Berman. A Holocaust survivor, the elder Berman arrived in New Orleans in 1949, having been trained in the European method of working with metals. “Most of what I know about working metal I learned from my father,” Berman stated on his company website. “I also learned how other people worked metal by repairing lighting and other metal items that were brought in by customers. I, like my father, believe that to make a higher quality lantern than the competition you have to use better material and employ a higher level of craftsmanship. I, also, enjoy working iron as much as I do copper. That is why I do not use outsourced iron brackets on our lanterns the way almost all of our competition does.”

He is survived by his wife Dorothy Chan Berman and twin brothers Benjamin Berman (Ingrid Carol) and Bernard Berman (Dolores) of Alachua, Florida.

Graveside services were held on Sunday, June 5, 2016 at 3:00 p.m. at the Anshe Sfard Cemetery, 4400 Elysian Fields Avenue. Rabbi Yossie Nemes officiated.

**Oldest living pharmacist in LA., Ralph Moskowitz, dies**

RALPH MOSKOWITZ, a retired pharmacist, who was the oldest living registered pharmacist in the state, died of cancer at his home on June 3. He was 95.

A native New Orleanian, Moskowitz resided in both New Orleans and Metairie. He was a practicing, registered pharmacist for over 50 years and a member of several pharmaceutical organizations. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in Pharmacy and a doctorate degree in Pharmacy from Loyola University and was a gold certificate holder from the Louisiana Board of Pharmacy.

A veteran of World War II, he served in the United States Army as a pharmacist. He worked as a pharmacist with the Veterans Administration for 25 years prior to his retirement.

Moskowitz was a member for 67 years in Linn Wood – Ionic Masonic Lodge # 167, having been initiated an Entered Apprentice Mason, passed to the degree of Fellowcraft and raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason all within a month period from April to May, 1949. Moskowitz received a gold certificate in May of 1999 from the Grand Lodge of the State of Louisiana, which entitled him to lifetime membership.

Survivors include his nephew Leon Cecil Morvay (Gail) of Dallas, several great nephews, great nieces and several great-great nephews.

Relatives and friends of the family attended the graveside services, officiated by Rabbi Gabriel Greenberg, at Anshe Sfard Cemetery, 4400 Elysian Fields Avenue, on Mon., June 6, at 10:00 a.m. A Masonic funeral service and a military service were incorporated into the religious service.

**Retired businessman Ivan Leopold’s rites on Friday**

IVAN R. LEOPOLD, a retired New Orleans businessman, died at Canon Hospice on Wednesday, June 8, 2016. He was 85.

A native of New Orleans, Leopold was a graduate of...
Businessman Bert Stolier, WW2 vet, dies at 97

BERT WILLIAM STOLIER, a retired businessman and one of the oldest remaining Jewish veterans of the World War II era, died Monday morning, June 13, at St. John Carpenter’s Hospice in Harahan. He was 97.

Stolier, a New Orleans native, enlisted in the U.S. Marines in 1940 and was on a transport headed for Pearl Harbor when the Japanese attacked the American fleet headquartered there on December 7, 1941. Stolier arrived the day when the United States declared war on the empire of Japan.

Stolier, who saw action in the Pacific theater, received eight battle stars, among them the particularly bloody battles at Guadalcanal, Tarawa and Iwo Jima. A warrant officer, he was aboard two different vessels sunk in battle. One of them, the heavy cruiser U.S.S. Northampton, was torpedoed on November 30, 1942 and sank the next day, December 1, during the Battle of Tassafaronga. He was plucked from the sea by a U.S. vessel after swimming and managing to say aloft for three days and three nights. According to his son Kim, this offered him an outlet to recount his stories to school groups and to community groups. A divorcé, he is survived by his daughter Sara Kaufman and his son Andrew N. Kaufman of Chicago, IL.

Retired nurse Rosemary Davis Katz Fortmayer funeral set for Friday

ROSEMARY DAVIS KATZ FORTMAYER, a registered nurse and mother, passed away on Wednesday, June 15, 2016. She was 77 years.

She is survived by “The Katz Boys”: Barry, Jeff (Jane), Mark (Tricia), and Bruce Katz (Karen); her sister Marlene Sherman (Al) and two grandchildren.

A memorial service at Temple Sinai was held on Friday, June 17, at 11:30 a.m. Rabbi Ed Paul Cohn officiated. Interment was private.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations are requested in her name to Jewish Family Service of Greater New Orleans, 3300 W. Esplanade Ave., No. 603, Metairie, LA. 70002

Funeral held for retired respiratory therapist Harry ‘Skippy’ Kaufman III

HARRY SIMON “SKIPPY” KAUFMAN III, died at his New Orleans residence on Tuesday, June 21, 2016. He was 74.

A native of New Orleans, Kaufman graduated from the University of Southwestern Louisiana with training as a certified respiratory therapist. He was associated with the Tulane University Medical Center for many years.

A divorcé, he is survived by his daughter Sara Kaufman and his son Andrew N. Kaufman of Chicago, IL.

A graveside service was held on Monday, June 27, 2016 at 9:30 a.m. in Hebrew Rest Cemetery No. II, Pelopidas at Frenchmen Street. Rabbi Alexis Berk officiated.

In lieu of flowers, memorials to the charity of your choice are preferred. Tharp-Sontheimer-Tharp Funeral Home of Metairie is in charge of arrangements. For more information, call 504-835-2341.
Cultural icon Sharon Litwin dies in Chicago at 75

By DOMINIC MASSA, Courtesy of WWL-TV.com

SHARON LITWIN, a longtime local cultural advocate, journalist and civic booster whose leadership roles included serving the New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA) and the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO), died Friday, June 24, 2016. She was 75.

Her death was first reported by John Pope at NOLA.com/The Times-Picayune, which reported that Litwin died of complications from pancreatic cancer.

A native of Blackpool, England, Litwin came to New Orleans in 1966. Longtime friends said she did more to enhance and promote local culture and the arts than many natives ever could, however.

“I can’t think of someone who added so much to the cultural scene in so many ways,” said WYES-TV senior producer and host Peggy Scott Laborde. The two worked at WYES-TV in the 1970s when Litwin was a producer at the public TV station.

“From her involvement with the Arts Council of New Orleans and the New Orleans Museum of Art, to the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra and then the Crescent City Farmers Market, she had boundless energy,” Former WWL-TV anchor Angela Hill agreed that the list of local institutions which benefitted from Litwin’s leadership is almost too long to recite.

“Sharon was one of the most creative thinkers in New Orleans. Devoted to the arts, she led the way for today’s exuberant arts community whether it be in music, fine arts or the written word. How lucky we were to have her leadership,” Hill said.

Most recently, Litwin had co-founded NolaVie, a non-profit website chronicling local arts and culture.

She also produced features for WWNO-FM.

She retired from the LPO in 2011. Friends and colleagues credit her with setting and reaching tremendous fundraising goals for both cultural institutions. At NOMA alone, she was responsible for raising more than $26 million to build out three new wings and upgrade the original historic building in City Park.

Litwin also served a variety of cultural and civic groups as a volunteer and board member. In recognition of her leadership over the years, she received the Mayor’s Arts Award and was named a role model by the Young Leadership Council.

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She is survived by her two daughters Anna-Marie Jene of San Francisco and Dr. Rebecca Litwin Newman of Glenview, IL; her sister Carol Street of London, England and two grandchildren.

Ad executive Peter Mayer dies

PETER ARNO MAYER, considered one of the most well-known and respected advertising executives in New Orleans died on July 14. He was 86.

Mayer’s clients were among the most coveted in New Orleans and he built his multi-million dollar advertising agency Peter B. Mayer Company into one of the largest in the region. Among his national clients were Hospital Corporation of America, Global Star, Sanderson Farms, Kennedy Space Center Visitors Center, G.E. Capital, Marucci and local powerhouses The Sazerac Company, Ruth’s Chris Steak House and Zatarain’s Foods.


Regionally, he also represented Community Coffee and Luzianne Brands, the Delta Queen Steamboat Company, Hancock Bank/Whitney Bank, the Florida Emerald Coast, the Louisiana Economic Development Company and Mississippi Power and Light.

Mayer was born in 1929 in Neustadt an der Weinstraße, Germany, and settled in New Orleans as a six-year-old refugee in 1935. When he fled Nazi Germany, he was not able to speak a word of English, yet he adapted and made his life the very definition of the American dream come true.

Following an education in the New Orleans Public School system, Mayer later attended classes at the University of Missouri’s School of Journalism. It was there that he earned the nickname “Junior” as the youngest member of the Alpha Epsilon Phi fraternity and was also in charge of their gym mascot.

Following a brief service in the U.S. Air Force, he started his advertising career in the Circulation Department of The Times-Picayune. He later joined the Fitzgerald Advertising company and then the Walker Sausssy Advertising agency. With the help of Dorothea “Dot” Cahn, he started Peter Mayer Advertising in 1967. His talent, wit, charm, unbridled optimism and strong ethics helped his agency grow to one of the largest in the state, and later, the Gulf South.

He is survived by his wife Linda Bailey Mayer and his previous spouse Tamara Bernstein Mayer, his sons Mark, Eric and Josh Mayer and daughters-in-law Mindy Mayer, Isabelle Mayer and Jill Dupre, his sister, Ann Levin of Los Angeles and eight grandchildren.

Peter always found time to give encouragement and energy to worthy causes: WYES-TV, The Vieux Carré Commission, LSU Manuscript School of Mass Communication, The United Way, the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans and The Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, to name but a few. He served as Adjunct Professor of Advertising at Loyola University.

He always took time to meet with and encourage young people trying to launch a career in marketing.

For many years, he held court on the sidewalk of Camp Street smoking a cigar after lunch in a director’s chair. He had conversations with all who passed by and always saw the best in people and situations. It was said that he didn’t have a bad day in his life. On weekends, he was often found at his cabin on the pond in Lumberton, Mississippi, feeding birds, catching fish and cursing beavers.

A raconteur, Mayer frequently regaled friends and strangers with exaggerated stories of exotic foods, foreign travel, fishing conquests and the newest jokes. His special gift was always finding the humor in any situation. He considered himself lucky to have been given such a blessed and charmed life. He loved bowling, World War II history, reading and eating. He was notably fond of unusual food items like sushi, spumoni and chicken feet. He loved discussing politics, particularly in the company of his family and many friends. Mayer loved celebrating the Jewish Holidays, especially when they featured various food items.

To say that food was important to his life would be an understatement. He looked forward to three things every day: where to have lunch, whom to have lunch with and what to order. He was a member of the International Wine and Food Society, The Societe des Escargots de Orleans, an exclusive men’s culinary club, and the long-standing Friday Lunch group. He was also a regular for breakfast for 40 years at the Commerce Restaurant. He delighted in being the first to try a new restaurant.

He had a thing for unusual hats.

In 1982, he was awarded the New Orleans Ad Club’s Silver Medal Award. In 1994, he was inducted into the Louisiana Broadcasters Hall of Fame. He was honored as a YLC Role Model in 1996. He was co-chairman of the United Way annual fund drive in 1999. He was featured in the 2009 book How They Did It: Profiles of New Orleans Entrepreneurs.

Services were conducted on Monday, July 18 at Touro Synagogue with Cantor David Mintz officiating. Interment followed immediately at Hebrew Rest Cemetery No. 3.

Rose Fay Yuspeh graveside service

ROSE FAY YUSPEH, a homemaker, died on Tuesday, July 26. A graveside service was held on July 28 at 3:00 p.m. at the Old Beth Israel Cemetery on Frenchmen Street.

Yuspeh was predeceased by her husband of many years, Michael Yuspeh.

William Smolkin rites set

WILLIAM R. SMOLKIN, a nationally-renowned consultant for the home building industry, passed away peacefully on July 27. He was 93.

Smolkin and his wife founded W R. Smolkin & Associates, highly-regarded consultancy that dealt with marketing and providing feasibility analyses for the homebuilders.

A graduate of Tulane University, Smolkin served his country as a Marine Corps captain during both World War II and the Korean War. He worked as a reporter for the New Orleans Times-Picayune, and later became a public relations officer for Mayor DeLesseps “Chep” Morrison. Smolkin and his wife founded W R. Smolkin & Associates, highly-regarded consultancy that dealt with marketing and providing feasibility analyses for the homebuilders.

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the National Association of Homebuilders, including being elected to its Hall of Fame. He was named one of the 20th century’s 100 most influential people in the homebuilding industry by Builder Magazine. A man who upheld the highest ethical standards, he was a trusted advisor and mentor, constantly sought after and admired for his deep expertise and wisdom.

Smolkin is survived by his wife of 71 years and childhood sweetheart Mollye Plotka Smolkin, his children Shelley Hebert, Bradley and Stuart Smolkin; their spouses John Hebert, Melinda and Jeanne Smolkin; as well as grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Services were held on Sunday, July 31st in the Feibelman Chapel at Temple Sinai and the burial followed at Hebrew Rest Cemetery No. 3.

Private funeral for Herbert Stone, retired trade exec

HERBERT STONE, the first executive director of the Southern U. S. Trade Association, a non-profit firm headquartered in New Orleans that specialized in agricultural export trade development, died on July 20, 2016 at the age of 94.

Stone was a resident of New Orleans for the past 43 years. Born in Brooklyn, NY., he later lived in Baltimore, MD, before moving to New Orleans. He retired from his work as an agricultural trader in 1968.

He served his country honorably during World War II, where he participated in the European Theater of Operations for thirteen months, including seven months in active combat. He was awarded a Purple Heart and Bronze Star with oak leaf cluster for his meritorious achievement in the Battle of the Bulge.

Preceded in death by his loving wife of 63 years, Jeanette, and his large extended family of children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Private graveside services were held on Monday, July 25.

BARBARA R. LINCOVE a wife and mother passes

BARBARA LINCOVE passed away on June 25. She was 93.

Born in San Francisco, she grew up in Denver. She graduated with an art degree from Brandeis University. Lincove met her future husband, Dan Lincove of blessed memory when he was on a buying trip. The two were married in February, 1962 and lived in Houston before moving to New Orleans in 1964. Lincove integrated well with the Jewish community and became a longtime member of Touro Synagogue. She was principal of the Touro Synagogue Religious School.

Lincove also served as the chair of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans’ annual campaign in the 1970s. She also was the National President of the Brandeis Women’s Group and past president of the local Red Cross board. She also served as a co-chair of the WYES Art Auction.

In her final years Lincove was a member of Congregation Gates of Prayer.

A memorial service was held on Sunday, July 17 at Congregation Gates of Prayer.

She was predeceased by her two husbands and is survived by her sons, Bill Kling, Bud Kling (Cheryl); her step-children Miriam Latter, David Lincove (Merry Lynne); 15 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Margery Kirschman passes away in California

MARGERY ALAYNICK KIRSCHMAN, a homemaker who called New Orleans home for most of her lifetime died in her adopted city of Rancho Mirage, CA. home on Thursday, July 7. She was 87.

Born in Milwaukee, Kirschman spent the majority of her life in New Orleans but re-located to California after Hurricane Katrina pommeced the city. She was preceded in death in 2009 by her husband of 61 years, Victor Floyd Kirschman, and her son Kenneth Alan Kirschman.

She was an outstanding wife, mother, grandmother and great grandmother and had the magic touch of making everyone feel special. Her contagious laugh, her beautiful smile, her strength and determination and her love of life will be sorely missed.

She is survived by her two sons Arnold Kirschman (Rachel van Voorhies) and Richard Kirschman (Patricia), five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Kirschman’s family held a private burial service in Hebrew Rest No. 3, on Wednesday, July 13 with both Rabbi Edward Paul Cohn and Rabbi Matthew A. Reimer officiating.

Jean Feran, Holocaust survivor lived to rest here

JEAN Z. FERAN, a former resident of New Orleans who lived in La Crosse, Wisconsin since Hurricane Katrina, died on July 9. She was 94.

A Holocaust survivor, she was born Jirina Zelezna in Novy Bydlozv, near present-day Prague in Czechoslovakia. Prior to the outbreak of World War II, when her homeland was invaded by the Germans in 1939, she was given permission to continue her studies. She had hoped to become a medical doctor, but her plans at university were put on hold when her mother and stepfather were taken to Terezin transit camp in 1942 with 2,000 other Jews. Told they were being sent to a labor camp, they were never heard from again.

Their daughter was never able to discern their fate.

Their names and the dates of their transport are recorded on the wall of the Pinkas Synagogue in Prague along with 77, 296 other Jewish victims from Bohemia and Moravia. Most in that ghetto/labor camp were killed in Auschwitz and Treblinka. Over 80 of her relatives died in concentration camps during the Holocaust.

Initially permitted to stay in Czechoslovakia, she began her studies at Charles University. However, she was not allowed to attend medical school because of her religion, and eventually was prohibited by Nazi laws from continuing at the university.

Scheduled to report to a concentration camp in 1945 herself, she was spared when her country was liberated by the Allies.

After the war, she worked as a secretary for the Ministry of Industry before obtaining a visa to Sao Paulo, Brazil to visit an aunt who had fled Europe shortly before the outbreak of war. It was there that she met her husband, Fred Feran (Alfred Feuermann), a Slovakian refugee who was living in Brazil after having lost most of his own family during the Shoah.

Married in 1947, the couple immigrated to the United States and established a residence and a clock restoration and repair business in New Orleans.

Feran was active in her book club and many Jewish organizations, serving as president of the New Orleans chapter and vice president of the Southern Region of Hadassah, was a member of the Temple Sinai Sisterhood belonged to the New Orleans Section of the National Council of Jewish Women.

She possessed an intense love of classical music and attended many concerts and maintained a number of music subscriptions. Feran was a gracious hostess, inviting many of her friends and extended Pulitzer family members to dine at frequent dinner parties at her home. She frequently traveled to Europe to travel and to decorate her homes on Fontainebleau Boulevard, and later, on Napoleon Avenue. Among her favorite destinations were Paris, Florence and Prague.

A story on her life was featured in the Times-Picayune in connection with the Precious Legacy traveling exhibit at the New Orleans Museum of Art in 1985. The collection of Judaica treasures from Czechoslovakia consisted of items the Nazis stole from Jews in that country.

When the floodwaters associated with Hurricane Katrina destroyed their residence in 2005, the Ferans evacuated to Texas and then moved to La Crosse to be closer to their daughter’s family.

Feran was predeceased by her husband Fred and son Russell in early 2010, who both perished within one week. She is survived by her daughter, Maureen Freedland (Dr. Robert); four grandchildren, her daughter-in-law Phyllis Feran and three great-grandchildren.

Graveside services were conducted on Friday, July 15 at Hebrew Rest Cemetery No. 3 with Rabbi Ed Paul Cohn officiating.
Entrepreneur Jack Sands dies
JACK M. SANDS, an entrepreneur whose businesses included an insurance firm, Good Luckin’ Ice Cream, Park Place Properties and the Tavern on the Park Restaurant died Saturday, July 10, at his Metairie home. He was 85.

Sands was a lifetime resident of New Orleans. He joined the United State Marine Corps after graduation from Alcee Fortier High School. He was a Korean War veteran and served as an MP and as aide to General-of-the-Army Omar Bradley. He was a founder of the New Orleans Marine Support Group and through his tireless efforts the Marine Support Group became one of the largest support groups in the United States.

Under his stewardship, the Tavern on the Park Restaurant was awarded placement on both the National and Louisiana State list of Historic Places. He later sold the establishment to Ralph Brennan, who now operates the restaurant as Ralph’s at the Park.

Sands was a founding member of the Louisiana Wildlife Carvers Guild, a 50-year member of Jefferson Lodge, EA&m as well as a member of the New Orleans Valley of the Scottish Rite.

He was very active in many civic and social organizations including the New Orleans Police and Justice Foundation and was an avid bicyclist.

He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Martha Rosen Sands and three sons Alan, Marc (EllenAnn) and Lee (Jennifer) Sands and four grandchildren.

Graveside services were held on Monday, July 11 in Jewish Burial Rites Cemetery, on Frenchmen Street. Rabbi Yossie Nemes officiated.

JEAN DRESNER SPIZER dies peacefully
JEAN SPIZER was a housewife and mother passed away peacefully at her home on August 1, 2016. She was 93 years old.

A lifelong resident of New Orleans. Spizer attended Newcomb College and graduated from the Loyola University College of Music with a bachelor’s degree in Music Education.

During World War II, she worked in a daycare center supervising the children of women working in the war effort. A longtime member of Temple Sinai, she served as a member of the board of the New Orleans section of the National Council of Jewish Women, the Brandeis University Women’s Auxiliary, the Hotel Dieu Hospital Women’s Auxiliary, the Women’s Auxiliary of the Orleans Parish Medical Society and the Lake Vista Garden Club.

Spizer was preceded in death in 2006 by her husband, David Spizer. She is survived by her two children, Alan, Marc (EllenAnn) and Lee (Jennifer) Sands and four grandchildren.

Community volunteer Grace Zelman laid to rest
GRACE MARCUSE ZELMAN, a wife and mother who worked as a volunteer for many Jewish community causes died on September 3. Zelman was born in Colon, Panama, but lived the majority of her life in New Orleans. She was a member of the Greater New Orleans Chapter of Hadassah and the New Orleans Section of the National Council of Jewish Women. She was a volunteer who helped to raise funds for the Wil- low Wood Home for the Aged, which is today part of the Woldenberg Village.

She was married for 55 years to her husband, Solomon Zelman, whom she met while they were students at Brandeis University. They had two children, Mark Allen Jaffe of New Orleans, and his gracious hospitality was widely recognized.

An altruist, she always cared more for others than herself and gave freely and generously to those in need. Her warmth, humor and vivacity was never lost on new or old friends, who were regularly embraced with her big smile, her quick-witted sense of humor, and the strong spirit of caring and kindness she had for all those around her.

In addition to her husband, Bernard M. Jaffe, MD, survivors include her two children, Mark Allen Jaffe of Boston and Debra Lynn Hanzen (Erik) of Edmonton, Alberta in Canada; her sister Sondra Rapp and three grandchildren.

Services were held on Sunday September 11 at Touro Synagogue.

Royal Antiques owner Lester Shapiro succumbs
LESTER BENJAMIN SHAPIRO, the owner and operator of Royal Antiques in the French Quarter, passed away peacefully on September 6, 2016, surrounded by loving family members. He was 94.

Shapiro’s family-owned business was established in 1899 and was considered one of the finer antiques establishments along Royal Street. Shapiro and his wife and business partner Nanette made many friends on buying trips to Europe, especially those to England. Shapiro had a lifetime love of tennis and he frequently competed as a member of the prestigious Queen’s Club in its annual grass court championships. Only when illness prevented it did he eventually put away his racquet. The Shapiros attended the Wimbledon Championships and were even invited to sit in the Royal Box. Shapiro recalled his competition in the Senior Wimbledon tournament as the highlight of his tennis career.

Born a twin in Rochester, NY, Shapiro’s love for tennis was cultivated there, where he learned to play
the game on the Rochester Public Courts. Those that played with him knew that they would be hard pressed to find anyone who loved the game more. Despite his never having had formal lessons, he became a member of the United States Tennis Association (USTA) and the International Cup (IC). Locally, he played tennis religiously at the New Orleans Lawn Tennis Club (NOLTC) for 66 years until he hung up his racquet at the age of 90. In his later years, he enjoyed playing for the United States against senior players from other countries. Shapiro treasured his tennis buddies at NOLTC and spent many afternoons there cultivating friendships and sometimes vigorously arguing the game.

Shapiro received a Bronze Star serving in the 5307th Composite Unit in the Army in World War II and was a member of Merrill’s Marauders in the Burma Campaign. Merrill’s Marauders was a long penetration special operations unit, which fought in the South-East Asian theatre of the war. The unit was awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation.

He was a longtime member of the Krewe of Hermes and reigned as King Hermes in 1994.

He is survived by his beloved wife Nanette Keil Shapiro; daughters Gene (Bill Murray) and Leslee Shapiro; son Neil Shapiro (Lauren), a granddaughter; two step-grandchildren and sisters-in-law Andree Moss and Jean Grossman (Sid).

Relatives and friends of the family attended funeral services at Touro Synagogue, on Friday, September 9. Interment immediately followed at Hebrew Rest Cemetery #3.

Leona Finkelstein lifelong New Orleanian

LEONA LASSEN FINKELSTEIN, a lifelong resident of New Orleans, passed away on September 16, 2016, after a short illness. She was 87 years old.

She graduated from McMain High School in New Orleans and also attended Loyola University in New Orleans where she majored in music with a specialization in piano, voice and violin. She was married for 66 years to her husband Harry, who died in February, 2015.

She is survived by her only child, son Bobby and two grandsons.

Graveside services were held at Beth Israel Cemetery (Frenchman Street) on September 19, 2016. Rabbi Gabriel Greenberg officiated the service.

Leone Maas Goldsmith, 102, dies in Florida

LEONE MAAS GOLDSMITH, a native New Orleanian, died October 5, 2016 in Boca Raton, FL, where she had retired. She was 102 years old.

Goldsmith was a graduate of Isidore Newman School in 1930 and she matriculated from Newcomb College in 1934 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry.

Goldsmith was a life member of Touro Synagogue and an active member of the Touro Sisterhood, serving as its president in 1947. She was also president of the Louisiana Federation of Temple Sisterhoods in 1950 and chaired the Interfaith Movement of Jews, Catholics and Protestants. Goldsmith was a board member of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods from 1952 to 1958.

Her interests varied as she was also an avid fisherwoman and a Life Master Bridge player. She had a zest for life and enjoyed a very active and healthy lifestyle until the last three days of her life.

She was married to Bernard Goldsmith in 1935 and they celebrated 67 years together before he died in 2003. She was also predeceased by a son, Charles Goldsmith. She is survived by a son James B. Goldsmith (Robin), two grandchildren and one great-grandson.

Graveside services for Mrs. Goldsmith was held at Hebrew Rest Cemetery Mausoleum on Friday, October 14, 2016. Rabbi Matthew Reimer of Temple Sinai officiated.
Art dealer Kurt Schon dies at 94

KURT ERNST SCHON, an internationally renowned art dealer who had been a part of the French Quarter art scene for more than 50 years, died on Yom Kippur, Wednesday, October 12 at his Vieux Carré home. He was 94.

Together with his wife, Schon created the largest gallery of 19th century art in the South. Schon followed in the tradition of other famous art dealers like British collectors Ernest Gambart and Joseph Duveen, advocating for Americans to acquire “the best of the best” of 19th century European art. Many of his pieces were shown at some of the most prestigious museums in America including the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

More than anything else, Schon believed in the American dream. He felt that with hard work anyone can achieve anything in America. Born in Vienna, Austria on January 5, 1922, he attended the Theresianum Academy in Vienna before he immigrated with his family in 1941. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II and returned to his adopted home of New Orleans to live the rest of his life. Known by his signature Homberg hat, Schon claimed that “had he not found New Orleans, he would have returned to Austria”.

With a generosity in spirit, Schon embarked on a career that included his promotion of post-World War II, French, English, German and Austrian art. He was recognized for stirring a revival of 19th century art, philosophizing that one should “always buy what you love.” Schon was an indomitable figure, who worked solidly until less than a week before he died.

He along with his wife of 63 years created the Schon Foundation to support the many charities they believed in, including the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts (NOCCA). He insisted that “people were the torchbearers of the legacy of art which was meant to be loved, enjoyed and preserved for future generations.”

Schon was also a renowned advocate for historic renovation in the French Quarter and owned and maintained several properties there. Schon had several galleries he ran in the French Quarter, but his main store was located at 512 St. Louis Street.

A longtime member of Shir Chadash Conservative Synagogue, he was survived by his wife Anita (née Novak) Schon. While the couple did not have any children, Schon is survived by his daughter Sylvia from her marriage and settled in New Orleans.

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Betty Zerlin Zelman (Louis) and his sister-in-law, Helen Goldberg Zerlin Sperling.

Graveside services were held on Wednesday, October 19, 2016 at Gates of Prayer Cemetery. Rabbi Robert Loewy officiated.

Freda Lee Pollock Marsh longtime member of Gates of Prayer

FREDALEE POLLOCK MARSH passed away peacefully at her Metairie home on Wednesday, October 26, 2016. She was 87.

A native of New Orleans, Freda Lee loved her life as a mother, housewife and volunteer. She was a longtime member of Congregation Gates of Prayer and she enjoyed celebrating many lifecycle events with her family and community. She is survived by her husband of 63 years, Monroe “Micky” Marsh, whom she met on a blind date while he was a student at Tulane University in the late 1940s.

She is also survived by her three daughters – Sherryl Marsh of Buford, GA; Barri Marsh Bronstein of Metairie; and Donna Marsh Goldenberg (Eric) of Marietta, GA, and two great-grandchildren.

Funeral services were held Friday, October 28, 2016 at Congregation Gates of Prayer. The burial followed immediately at the Gates of Prayer cemetery on Joseph Street. Rabbi Robert Loewy officiated.

Developer, former owner of Halpern’s Fabrics, Theone Milman Halpern is dead

THEONE MILMAN HALPERN, the proprietress of Halpern’s Fabrics, a once successful chain of stores located throughout the Southeast and a real estate developer, died at her home on Saturday, October 29, 2016. She was 83.

Halpern was a model for Mademoiselle Magazine, where she was offered a full-time position. Instead, she took a chance and opened up her New Orleans-based business, Halpern’s Fabrics in 1957. At its peak, she oversaw 52 stores in 26 cities stretching from Pensacola to Atlanta up to Memphis and down to Houston.

She was born in Chicago in 1933 and moved to Houma when she was just a 3-year-old. Graduating in 1951 from Stephens College, Columbia, MO., she married and settled in New Orleans.

In addition to her keen business sense, Halpern always had an eye for real estate, and in the 1970’s, she invested in property in the Warehouse and the Lower Garden Districts, renovating historic buildings into several residential apartments and commercial properties.

She closed Halpern’s Fabrics to develop a new company, Halpern’s The Home Furnishings Store & Cafe. Her new company opened in July, 1977 with a prototype store for the Swedish Furniture company IKEA. From humble beginnings, this prototype store evolved into one of New Orleans’ premier furniture retailers, as well as a manufacturer of furniture.

After purchasing the former Coca-Cola Bottling plant on South Jefferson Davis Parkway in late 2000, she oversaw its extensive retrofitting and renovation, setting it up as a world class manufacturing line for furniture. The former executive offices were redesigned into The Offices 1050, an executive office suites and Conference Center.

After completing her last residential renovation in 2007, Halpern opened The Prytania Oaks for business. She and her husband had already opened The Prytania Park Hotel in 1982, a 62-room European Courtyard style hotel. During the early part of her business career she also taught fashion at Newcomb College. Halpern loved to travel and her businesses gave her the opportunity to frequently visit her fabric and furniture partners throughout Asia and on the European Continent.

Halpern was a longtime member of Touro Synagogue and most recently was a member of Congregation Gates of Prayer in Metairie.

She was predeceased by her husband and business partner Alvin K. Halpern, who died earlier this year in January. She is survived by her daughters Jennifer Halpern and Doriane Schulman (Jack) and her son Edward Halpern (Jeddie), five grandchildren and one great-grandson.

Funeral services were held at Gates of Prayer Synagogue on Wednesday, November 2, 2016. Rabbi Robert Loewy officiated both the service and the interment at the Gates of Prayer Cemetery on Joseph Street.

Gerda Oppenheim, Northshore member, died Oct. 8

GERD L. OPPENHEIM, died peacefully at his residence on Oct. 8. He was 83.

Gerd is survived by his wife of 58 years, Trudy H. Oppenheim; two children, Daniel A. Oppenheim (Patrice) and four grandchildren.

A celebration of life ceremony was conducted by Rabbi Deborah Zecher at the Northshore Jewish Congregation, 1403 N. Causeway Blvd. in Mandeville, on Nov. 6 at 12:30 p.m.

Accountant Dora Rutman rites held

DORA RUTMAN, an accountant and bookkeeper, passed away peacefully on Saturday, October 29, 2016. She was 94.

Predeceased by her husband Benjamin Rutman, she is survived by her daughters Eileen Aronvitch (Marvy) and Harriet Liebmann (Frank) and her son Earl Rutman (Sophie) and devoted mother and mother-in-law of Eileen and Marty Aronvitch, Earl and Sophie Rutman and Harriet and Frank Liebmann, five grandchildren and several great-grandchildren.

Interment was held on November 2, 2016 at Tikvat Shalom Cemetery in Jefferson Memorial Gardens, St. Rose, Louisiana.

Lillian Breen, 92, is laid to rest

LILLIAN NAHAUS BREEN, a wife and mother, died on Sunday, October 30, 2016. She was 92.

Although she was born in St. Paul, MN., since age four she lived in New Orleans.

A graduate of Sophie Newcomb College, she was a member of Phi Beta Kappa honor society. A longtime member of Shir Chadash Conservative Congregation, she enjoyed playing bridge and being a role model to all of her many family members.

She was predeceased by her husband of many years, Leopold Breen, in 2013.

She is survived by her daughters Linda Wiener (Sander), Janet Tast (Harold) and Carole Chackes (Ken), eight grandchildren and 20 great-grandchildren.
Charlotte Zerlin, 91, dies; funeral held Nov. 7

CHARLOTT OPATOWSKY ZERLIN died on Sunday morning, November 6, 2016. She was 91.

A lifelong member of Congregation Gates of Prayer, she was very involved as a member of Sisterhood. She was also a member of Hadassah.

Born a native of Zduzmin, Poland, she came to the U.S. when she was only aged 8. She resided with her family in Brooklyn, NY until her marriage in 1944, when she moved permanently to New Orleans.

She was predeceased by her husband Edward J. Zerlin last year after more than seven decades of marriage. She is survived by her son Michael S. Zerlin (Rachel Grossman and Marcia Lubel Wasserman (Carl), both of Dramo Senior, NY, and Lisa Amann (Cary), two brothers Blair (Cheryl Regenbogen) Blitz, in 2007 and is survived by his wife, Dr. Lisa P. Germain, his son Alex L. Koren, his daughter Rachel G. Koren, his brother Paul Koren (Gail) of West Bloomfield, MI, and his daughter (Barbara) of Greensboro, NC as well as three grandchildren.

Graveside services were held on Monday, November 7, 2016 at Gates of Prayer Cemetery (Joseph Street) with Rabbi Robert Loewy officiating.

Louise Feitel ‘Weezie’ Weiss passes away

LOUISE FEITEL WEISS, a native and lifelong resident of New Orleans, passed away peacefully at her home on Friday, November 11. She was 95.

She was affectionately known as “Baby” since her teenage years, but family members knew her as “Weezie.”

A graduate of Sophie B. Wright High School, she met her husband and was a homemaker. She was noted for her gracious and friendly nature.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Jack M. Weiss, noted golf enthusiast, who helped institute the New Orleans Golf Classic, today known as the Zurich New Orleans Golf Classic.

She was raised in North Carolina before becoming a resident of New Orleans in 1981 when she joined the McGlinchey-Stafford Law Firm.

Koren had more than 30 years of experience specializing in banking and various financial service instruments. He was a frequent speaker on banking regulation and compliance at local, national and international programs. Koren served on the Editorial Board of Business Law Today from 1996 to 1999.

He was a member of the American Bar Association, Business Law Section, Banking Law Committee, Consumer Financial Services Committee and Housing Finance Subcommittee. He was on the Consumer Bankers Association Lawyers Committee, Louisiana Bankers Association Bank Counsel and Mortgage Bankers Association.

In 2014 Koren was named the “Top Mortgage Compliance Lawyer” by Mortgage Compliance Magazine. He was named one of “The Best Lawyers in America (Banking and Finance Law, Litigation)” from 1995 to the present and was a Martindale-Hubbell AV Preeminent Peer Review Rated Lawyer. Koren was honored by Chambers USA/National Financial Services Regulation (Consumer Finance Compliance) and has been named a member of Louisiana Super Lawyers (Banking) since 2007 to the present. In addition Koren was selected in 2013 as a Top Lawyer in banking and financing by American Banker and Martindale-Hubbell and “Top Lawyer Banking and Finance Law” by New Orleans Magazine in both 2015 and 2016.

Among his other interests, he was an avid cyclist and enjoyed downhill skiing. He was also an oenophile, a connoisseur of fine wines.

He was a longtime member of Touro Synagogue.

He is survived by his wife, Dr. Lisa P. Germain, his son Alex L. Koren, his daughter Rachel G. Koren, his brother Paul Koren (Gail) of West Bloomfield, MI, and a sister-in-law, Amy S. Germain.

Funeral services were held on Tuesday, November 29, 2016 at Touro Synagogue, where Rabbi Alexis Berk officiated. Interment immediately followed at Hebrew Rest Cemetery 3.

Retired engineer Ralph Shepard dies

RALPH L. SHEPARD, a mechanical engineer who rose to the presidency of Taylor-Seednach, Inc., a successful local company specializing in insulation and a leading fabricator of heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) insulation for commercial and light industrial projects, passed away on Thursday, December 8. He was 94.

Shepard began his work at the company following his service in the U.S. Army during World War II as an Army Engineer captain in the Philippines. At the time of his retirement as president, he had two of his sons able to continue his direction for the business.

Born in Oakdale, Louisiana, he graduated from LSU with a degree in Mechanical Engineering prior to his commission in the service.

Shepard was a sports enthusiast and was a devoted fan to LSU football. He particularly loved listening to Tiger football games over the radio. He was also an avid tennis player, who played the sport regularly until his last decade.

Shepard served on the board of Touro Synagogue and had a term as president of the Touro Brotherhood.

In addition, he served as president of the Dad’s Club at Isidore Newman School.

He is survived by his wife of 67 years, Lois Shepard, and sons Robert, Louis (Dana) and Hal Shepard (Kathy) as well as six grandchildren.

Graveside services were held at Hebrew Rest Cemetery II on Sunday, December 11, 2016 with Rabbi Alexis Berk officiating.

Homemaker Elaine LubeL Van Der Linden is buried

ELaine LUBEI VAN DER LINDEN, a homemaker and community volunteer, died peacefully at her home on Wednesday, December 7.

Known affectionately as Lainey, Van de Linden grew up in many local organizations. She was a co-chairman of the WYES-TV auction and served on several local boards.

A member of Touro Synagogue, she is survived by her husband Bernard Van de Linden, her daughters Susan Van der Linden Reaves (Joseph) of Bellaire, TX and Lisa Amann (Cary), her sisters Roslyn LubeL Grossman and Maria LubeL Wasserman (Carl), both of Jacksonville, Fl and sister-in-law Jo Van de Linden (Barbara) of Greensboro, NC as well as three grandchildren. She was predeceased by her daughter Debra Van der Linden Sidelnik and her grandson Ryan David Reaves.

A private burial service was held on Friday morning, December 9 at Hebrew Rest Cemetery No. 3. Rabbi Alexis Berk officiated.

Michael Aaron Blitz rites

MICHAEL AARON BLITZ passed away on Wednesday, December 13, 2016. He was 22.

A 2012 graduate of Red River Academy in Lecompte, LA, Blitz was born in Charlotte, NC and was raised in North Carolina before becoming a resident of Louisiana.

He was predeceased by his mother, Sheri Fay (née Regenbogen) Blitz, in 2007 and is survived by his father, Randall Blitz, and two brothers Blair (Cheryl) and Stephen Blitz (Mery).

A graveside service was held on Friday, December 16, 2016 at Gates of Prayer Cemetery with Rabbi Robert Loewy officiating.

Temple Sutton rites announced for today

TEMPLE FLEMING SUTTON, a homemaker, passed away on Sunday, December 25, 2016.

Although she was born in Crandell, MS, Sutton lived most of her life in Metairie or New Orleans.

She is survived by her husband of many years, Joseph Sutton, her three daughters Cindy Zekaria, Stacey D’Angelo and Kendra Hodapp, her sister Linda Dufrechou, eight grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

A funeral service, officiated by Touro Synagogue Cantor David Mintz, was held at Lake Lawn Metairie Funeral Home on Tuesday, December 27, 2016 at 11:00 a.m. Interment followed immediately in Metairie Cemetery.
Russian war hero Mikhail Glotser dies at 95

MIKHAIL GLOTSER, a hero of the Battle of Stalingrad who later immigrated to the United States and became a naturalized citizen almost two decades ago died. He was 95.

Glotser was a mechanic in a shoe factory before coming to the United States.

He is survived by his wife Liza Glotser (formerly Tsipalea nee Solomonik) his children Zina Gutkovich (Felix) and Lev Glotser (Elena), four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

A funeral was conducted on Thursday, Dec. 29 at Thrarp-Sontheimer-Tharp Funeral Home, with Rabbi Robert Loewy officiating the services. The burial followed immediately at Hebrew Rest #3 Cemetery.

Retiree Ramond Yarfitz passes away here; funeral in Atlanta

RAYMOND HENRY YARFITZ, a retiree from Atlanta, who moved to Reserve, LA. to become a resident of the Southeast Louisiana War Veterans Home there, died on Friday, Dec. 30, 2016. He was 93.

Yarfitz was a resident of Atlanta for 60 years, where he was involved in a number of area businesses serving as a comptroller and accountant, most notably for Shirley Company and Sunbrand.

Born in the Bronx, Yarfitz graduated from DeWitt Clinton High School and Pace College in New York. He was an Army veteran, serving in the European Theater during World War II. Following his years of active service, he became associated for many years with Atlanta Post 112 of the Jewish War Veterans and served as the post Commander.

Yarfitz also volunteered at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Atlanta for more than 20 years, and assisted with numerous blood drives with the Atlanta chapter of the American Red Cross.

Following the war, he lived in New York City for a time before moving to the Atlanta area in 1952. He retired four decades later and was an active member of Ahavath Achim Synagogue in Atlanta. When he moved to Reserve, he became a member of Shir Chadash Conservative Congregation.

Preceded in death by his wife of 53 years, Marcia Bogart Yarfitz of Atlanta, he is survived by his daughters, Diane Schleifstein (Mark) and Renee Wholey of Thornton, CO.; four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Graveside services were held on Wednesday, January 4, 2017 at Greenwood Cemetery in Atlanta, GA. Rabbi Laurence Rosenthal officiated.
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