

# JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY *of* METROWEST

*Archival documents from 1751 to the present \* Memories from our past create visions for our future*

Volume 12, Number 2

Fall, 2002

## William S. Weiss Gives Talk on Jewish Gangsters

The editors prepared this report using an advance version, provided by Mr. Weiss, of his November 4 talk.

**William S. Weiss**, a new board member, delivered a Jewish Historical Society sponsored talk on Jewish organized crime figures like Monk Eastman, Kid Twist, Lepke Buchalter (the only big-time American mob boss ever executed), Little Augie, Meyer Lansky, Bugsy Siegel and Newark's own Longie Zwillman at the Jewish Community Center in Whippany on November 4. "Parade leader's refusal to allow New York's (Jewish) mayor Michael Bloomberg to march in a recent Italian-American celebration proves that ethnic factors still bulk large in American consciousness," said Professor **Edward Shapiro**, Chairman of the JHS program committee, about the Weiss thesis.

"Except for some historically savvy Jews, not many people are aware that Jewish gangs were actually bigger and more influential than the Mafia, particularly during Prohibition," Weiss said. "But, due to bigotry and other factors, Italian-Americans got most of the blame for organized crime, while Jewish gangsters ultimately became respectable."

For example, he noted, Jewish mobsters controlled the Prohibition-era booze trade in nearly all major American cities.

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## Klein Foundation Supports Newsletter

The Samuel and Mildred Klein Supporting Foundation is supporting this issue of The Jewish Historical Society Newsletter with a generous \$500 grant. ♦♦

## Jewish Historical Society Elects Robert Max Its Third President

**Robert Max**, who joined its Board last year, has succeeded Warren Grover to become the third president of the Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest. A decorated hero and escaped war prisoner of World War II, Max brings to his new post the skills and experience he garnered over a long and distinguished career in business and in community service. Bob organized and managed consulting firms that honed the communications skills of executives of Fortune 2000 companies.

His devotion to public service has been as impressive as his wartime dedication to his country. He is a past president of the New Jersey State

Association of Jewish Federations and member of the New Jersey Israel Commission. He has been the secretary

and vice-president of the United Jewish Federation of MetroWest and Chair of itsUJA Presidential Division. He was associate general chairman of the State of Israel Bond campaign of MetroWest and



**Robert Max**

the president of Temple Sinai in Summit. Later, he helped found and then became president of Beth Hatikvah, a Reconstructionist congregation in Chatham, a once anti-Semitic community. "Now," he says, "we play an integral role in the interfaith council, the schools are closed for Jewish religious holidays, and the town newspaper lists 'Religious' not 'Church' services."

In recognition of their debt to their alma mater, Ohio University, where Bob met his wife, Shirley, they set up the Max Foundation to "promote understanding through interfaith programs and activities."

Bob and his partner/wife, Shirley, have two children, Wendy and Douglas,

and five grandsons. If community work, historical preservation and keeping up with the younger generation aren't enough to keep him busy, Bob can always pick up his saxophone or clarinet and knock out a tune from the Bat Masterson album, which he wrote. He's a member of ASCAP, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, and chairs the Senior Legislative Issues Coalition of Union County and the Advisory Council on Aging. ♦♦

## Calendar

**November 4, 2002\*-- 8 pm**  
"The Rise and Rise of The Jewish Gangster in America"-- by William Weiss

**Oct. 21 to Nov. 29, 2002\***  
Exhibit: "The Jews of Morris and Sussex" (In the Weill Atrium)

**April, 2003 (date TBA)\***  
Panel Discussion on "Real-life" stories of Morris/Sussex County Jews

**May, 2000 (date TBA)\***  
Annual Lasting Impressions Gala honoring Steve and Lori Klinghoffer

\*All events at the Alex Aidekman Family Jewish Community Campus  
901 Route 10, Whippany, NJ

# Notes From the Archives

By Bob Max

It's strange how we Jews become victims of our own achievements. As a people moved by the principles of *tikun olam*, *tzedakah*, and *k'lal Yisrael*\*, we devote more of ourselves and our resources to humanitarian efforts than perhaps any other people on this earth.

And yet, we're treated with scorn. We're different, leading to mistrust, envy, fear, hatred. What is it that we do that makes us unique, admired, yet hated? Is it because, with dedication, we care and provide for our own (and for others)? Within the archives of our Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest, we have accumulated massive documentary evidence of the efforts of a community and its organizations to provide life saving and life enriching services to many. While we continue to retrieve and preserve precious historical material, it behooves us, I believe, to expose some of the treasures to Jews and gentiles alike. There are lessons to be learned, for example, as we saunter through the late 70's, 80's and beyond as an outpouring of Soviet émigrés reached our shores and our communities.

## JHS Stores Vital Community Resources

The archives reveal the combined efforts of Federation, Jewish Family Service, Jewish Vocational Service, Daughters of Israel Geriatric Center, the Jewish Community Centers, Beth Israel Medical Center, local synagogues, National Council of Jewish Women, Hadassah, and many others. Thousands of volunteer and professional personnel, and the United Jewish Appeal, provided the services and the funds needed to transport, acculturate, educate, feed, house, and employ the newly arrived immigrants. It's a story of compassion, ingenuity and dedication rarely matched in the history of human endeavor.

It's a story that must be told, one that will become a valuable resource to students and researchers seeking to understand the vitality of the organized Jewish community. Telling that story will become part of the Society's agenda for this year and for as long as it takes to carry it out.

# Warren Grover Ends Presidency, Awaits Publication of New Book

Joseph accomplished his Biblical wonders in seven-year cycles. His remote descendant, **Warren Grover**, fashions his achievements a little more quickly. It took him just six years to do the research and writing for his book *Nazis in Newark*, scheduled for publication by Transaction Publishers of Rutgers

University Press in May. Succeeding one of the organization's founders, the charismatic **Ruth Fien**, Warren also devoted six years to the Jewish Historical Society as its second president.

Some of the achievements that highlight Warren's tenure are :

- The New Jersey State Historical Society's award of \$20,000 for each of the last three years to help fund Linda Forgash's post as JHS Morris-Sussex Outreach Director. This was instrumental in the development of the soon-to-be-published Source Guide for Morris-Sussex Jewish History.

- Scholarly conferences, open to the public, usually two per year. One, the Tenth Anniversary Series covered twenty-five year segments of Twentieth Century Jewish history.

- Presentations by leading speakers at every Board meeting.

- Raising of \$150,000 for the Society's endowment.

Warren, who was born in his beloved Newark in 1938, graduated from Weeqhuatic High School and New York University where he earned an MA in Russian history. He had completed all the course work but hadn't taken the exams nor written the dissertation required for his PhD and had been teaching general history at Newark College of Engineering for five years when he left to join a family business in direct mail advertising. After toiling for 30 years in commerce, Warren sold his business and returned to the service of the muse Clio\*. In addition to nursing his book to completion and shepherding the JHS, he taught at Solomon Schechter for two years.

## Still Serving Clio

Now he is embarking on another project for Clio; together with Charles Cumming, the official historian of Newark and the Associate Director of the Newark Public

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\**tikun olam*: We Jews are to be active participants in the process of seeking to perfect the world

*tzedakah*: We Jews are obligated to pursue righteousness and justly share our resources with our fellow human beings

*k'lal Yisrael*: We Jews are one people, responsible for one another ◆◆

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Library and Tim Crist, a former Yale archivist and now a Prudential executive, he has launched the **Newark Historical Society** which held its inaugural meeting on October 28.

Warren has worked actively for Federation in many capacities for over 30 years and served on the Democratic State Committee for four years and as chairman of the West Orange Democratic Party, also for his standard six-year cycle.

His wife, Andrea, an Italian scholar, teaches at NYU. She has translated an Ugo Betti play and Anna Foa's book, *The Jews of Europe after the Black Death*. (See review of this book on page 6.)

Warren and Andrea's son, Owen, and his wife Erin, recently presented them with their first grandchild, Devon.

*\*Greek Mythology. The Muse of history. Oddly enough, the world he left, or one of its branches, radio and television, annually awards a statuette for outstanding achievement and calls it Clios (plural of Clio) ◆◆*

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## Gangsters— continued from page 1

Chicago was the only metropolis in which an Italian gang-(Al Capone's)-played a major role. "But Capone was such a publicity hound, and the booze business so violent, that Italian-Americans have been tarred with Capone's brush ever since."

Weiss pointed out that most people who followed the Kefauver Crime Committee's hearings in 1950-51 probably associate them with Frank Costello, whose raspy voice and manicured nails were featured on the then-new medium of television. "But at the conclusion of the hearings, Kefauver identified Longie Zwillman as America's top gangster. Zwillman was not only the biggest rum-runner on the East Coast and founder of a regional booze cartel, he also owned a steel company, was a major shareholder in the Hudson and Manhattan railroad, and owned a General Motors truck dealership, among other legitimate interests. He was also a political powerhouse in the New Jersey/New York area." He was a man, another writer has

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# Society Elects 3 Board Members

At its June membership meeting, the Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest elected **Sam Convissor**, **Gary Platt** and **William Weiss** to its Board of Trustees, each to serve for a one year term.

## Samuel M. Convissor

**Samuel M. Convissor**, who was an original Jewish Historical Society Board member has rejoined the group's governing body and will succeed **Joseph Horowitz** as membership chairman. Mr. Horowitz is assuming the post of Associate Treasurer.



Samuel M Convissor

Born in Newark, Mr. Convissor, has been active in community and professional organizations, having served on the Board of the Newark YMHA; as a member of the Community Relations Council of MetroWest; as Vice President of the Board of Trustees of the Children's Aid Society of New York City, one of the nation's largest child care organizations; as President of the Partnership Against Illiteracy in Newark, and, most recently, as a Vice President with the National Executive Service Corps whose members provide consulting assistance to non-profit groups.

### A Corporate Officer

In his professional life, Mr. Convissor was Vice President of Corporate Affairs for the RCA Corporation for 25 years, and, after a merger, in a similar capacity for General Electric. He completed his career as Vice President for Governmental Affairs for the Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company of Newark.

During the Korean War, Sam served as a First Lieutenant in the Marine Corps, Second Marine Air Wing.

Sam is a member of Congregation Beth El of South Orange and Maplewood. He has two daughters, Rena Milchberg of Potomac, Maryland; Sarah Greenberg of Bethesda, Maryland; and a son, Daniel of Brooklyn; and five grandchildren. Sam's wife, Carole, passed away two years ago.



## Gary R. Platt

**Gary R. Platt**, a former Union County Assistant Prosecutor is now a partner in the law firm of Ullman, Furhman, Broe-

man & Platt where he specializes in real estate and zoning law. Platt is a graduate of Lafayette College and the Law School of the University of Maryland. He continues his interest in college affairs, serving on the Lafayette College Leadership Council. He is also a trustee of Temple Shalom, Succasunna and a member of the Cherkassy Committee of MetroWest. Platt and his wife, Leslie, live in Morristown.



Gary R. Platt



## William S. Weiss

**William S. Weiss** is president of Weiss Communications. His company provides public relations and communications planning, consulting, writing, speech support, media relations, media training, marketing and employee information support, and creative brainstorming services for clients.



William S Weiss

Weiss retired from AT&T in 1997 after more than 25 years' service in a variety of AT&T business units and divisions. He joined AT&T's Bell Laboratories in 1971, and headed efforts in employee communications, strategic planning, research and measurements, media relations, speech writing, executive communications, and customer seminars.

In 1984, Weiss transferred to AT&T Network Systems, the manufacturing and marketing unit that provided telecommunications equipment to domestic and overseas carriers, where he was in charge of speech writing, executive communications and marketing support. In 1988, he moved to AT&T's corporate headquarters, where he served as public relations and marketing support team leader for the units providing large business voice and data communications equipment; business telecommunica-

tions services; consumer services; wireless services, visual communications, multimedia products and services; and consulting, systems integration and outsourcing. His last position was as Public Relations Vice President - Business Markets Division, a \$25 billion unit serving AT&T's small, medium, large and global business customers.

### Veteran Editor and Writer

Prior to joining AT&T, Weiss spent 11 years in journalism, as a writer and editor for the Wall Street Journal, American Banker, New York Times and Electronics Magazine.

Weiss holds BA and MA degrees in English and American History, respectively, from the City University of New York. He teaches public relations techniques, and contributes articles on public relations issues to industry media. He is the author of many papers, essays and speeches on science and technology, as well as on themes in American and Jewish history. Among the latter are: *"The Borscht Belt and the Evolution of the Jewish Middle Class"*; *"The Rise, and Rise, of the Jewish Gangster in America"*; *"The Rosenbergs: Still Innocent After All these Years"*; and *"Jews and the Atomic Bomb."* ♦♦

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### Gangsters— continued from page 2

commented, who transformed bribing of officials from the corner cop to prosecutors and judges into a fine art.

### Jewish Mobsters Start with a Bang

Weiss explained how all this happened. The rise of Jewish gangsters in the early Twentieth Century, he said, can be explained in the same way as the rise of the Irish gangs before them, the Italian gangs immediately after them, and today's Russian, Asian, South American and West Indian gangs. The opportunities to exploit vice were waiting for enterprising, ruthless people whose lack of education and acceptance in society distanced them from legitimate opportunities in commerce, the professions and the arts. Glamour and status often attended success in crime: as Mickey Cohen, a West Coast thug and associate of Bugsy Siegel, put it, "How else could a guy without an education get to hang out with celebrities?" But these factors do not explain the durability of Jewish gangsters, or their legitimization or near-legitimization

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vis-à-vis other mobs. One word provides insight: assimilation.

Jews have always wanted to assimilate in America, a privilege largely denied them in Europe and elsewhere. Victims of vicious pogroms and discrimination, and often segregated from the general population, Jews leaped at the opportunity to fit into the mainstream of the American *Goldener Medina*. And most Jews settled in cities at a time when the agrarian domination of American commercial and political life was rapidly giving way to urbanization and industrialization. But assimilation meant more than simply learning to speak English without an accent, or obtaining a naturalization certificate. It also meant shedding the values and behaviors of the Old Country in favor of those that led to success in American culture and commerce. In big business, the operative ethic has never strayed far from Might Makes Right; and Jewish racketeers, like others, quickly absorbed that quintessentially American commercial proposition. The Jewish gangster is a product not of yiddishkeit, but of American culture.

### ***Mobsters Aim for Assimilation***

Long before Jews were accepted in corporate boardrooms, Jewish gangsters were assimilating the objectives and tactics of American businesses, especially those of the robber baron era. Arnold Rothstein, with his harmonious use of capital to seed new business opportunities, and his interlocking network of protégés, was closer in spirit and practice to J.P. Morgan than to Salvatore Maranzano. Longy Zwillman understood that the key to unlocking the value of whiskey during Prohibition was to organize and dominate its transportation and distribution—just as John D. Rockefeller earlier built the Standard Oil trust by dominating transportation and distribution of petroleum. The seamless, vertically and horizontally integrated conglomerate that Louis (Lepke) Buchalter created in the apparel industries could have been modeled on Theodore Vail's perfectly integrated telephone conglomerate called the Bell System.

Walter Lippmann, Herbert Croly and Theodore Roosevelt, the godfathers of the New Nationalism and constant critics of the evils of competition vs. the efficiency of big business and cartels, might have approved of Lepke's business model, though they probably would not have endorsed his methods. But did Lepke operate any differ-

ently than the capitalists whom the New Nationalists saw as rescuing industrial America from the clutches of “rural Toryism”? Probably more working people were killed or maimed by militia and private armies of detectives organized by the robber barons in the Homestead strike, the Ludlow massacre and the River Rouge disturbances, then by all of Lepke's schlam-mers. Lepke grasped, as did the robber barons and later, Mao Zedong, that power grows out of the barrel of a gun; or, as Balzac put it earlier, “behind every great fortune there is a crime.” But Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller and Henry Ford understood that one of the most powerful uses of ill-gotten gains is to wash away sins: they went on to found great philanthropic enterprises that legitimized their wealth and blurred the memory of how it was made. That lesson was lost on Lepke, who died in the electric chair.

### ***Booze and Gambling Grow Respectable***

But the Bronfmans and the Annenbergs learned the lesson well, and bought respectability and honor with their bootleg booze and gambling profits. In Las Vegas, the postwar *Goldener Medina*, Moe Dalitz's giving, and his prominence as a captain of Nevada's leading industry, kept him out of the Black Book, the compendium of shady characters who could be barred from even entering a casino, much less owning or operating one. The religious school at Ner Tamid, the city's oldest Reform synagogue, is named after Dalitz, who was its principal contributor. Moe Sedway, Bugsy Siegel's successor as boss of the Flamingo Hotel, was chief fund-raiser for the Nevada United Jewish Appeal. Like the robber barons, the Jewish gangsters understood that charity imparts a halo to the giver.

The other lesson they assimilated was that, if giving is to work its magic on reputations, it must be done publicly. Michael Milken's spiritual ancestor might have been Jay Cooke, whose financial machinations triggered the Panic of 1873. But the former “junk bond king” did not seek obscurity following his disgrace. After his release from prison on securities fraud charges, Milken insisted on leading a very public life: he is now a media star through his health food cookbook and his prostate cancer research institute. In contemporary Las Vegas, Steve Wynn generated headlines by putting his art collection on public display at his Bellagio Hotel, and by building a dolphin

habitat at his Mirage Hotel. He golfed with President Clinton. He also contributed to political candidates of both parties who supported his expansion plans—just as did Meyer Lansky, Longy Zwillman, Moe Dalitz, and legions of other businessmen, legitimate or otherwise.

But assimilation is the last thing Mafiosi desire. The Mafia is, by nature, a secret society. Like Jewish racketeers, Italian gangsters are a product of their culture and experiences. In southern Italy, where most Italian-Americans trace their ancestry, centuries of brutal foreign domination created a culture in which the individual's first loyalty was to the immediate family, then the extended family, then the town, with everything else falling far behind. Another attribute of southern Italian culture was an extreme suspicion of outsiders and outside influences, including government, politics and education. Higher education was a source of poisonous, alien ideas. The Mafia continues as a closed, furtive organization. Mafiosi distinguish themselves from other common criminals through their secret rituals, such as the pricking of fingers and burning of saints' cards, and swearing of loyalty. The most valued attribute of a Mafioso is *omerta*, the vow of silence. But the Mafia's problem is that it is an underground organization in an open society. It runs head-on into America's deep suspicion of, dislike for, and all-abiding fascination with, secret societies and conspiracy theories. Throughout the early days of the Republic, Freemasons fed America's need to fear insidious, furtive conspirators, despite the fact that many of the Founding Fathers were active Masons or sympathizers. In the post-World War II era, another secret society obsessed America: the Communist Party USA. The postwar CPUSA may have had fewer card-carrying members than the Mafia at its peak, but the FBI devoted its resources to the Party, not the Mafia, which it did not even acknowledge until the Sixties. Meanwhile, fear of a Red under every bed haunted millions of Americans through the late Forties and Fifties, until the Kennedy assassination provided new and more exciting conspiracies and speculations.

Today's Mafia or “Cosa Nostra” is in the same tradition. The organization has the dubious distinction of being a secret society that isn't secret. In fact, if “Mafia” were a brand, it would enjoy a recognition factor as high as that of Coca-Cola, McDonald's

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# A Visit With the Bornsteins

*Six Days of War – June, 1967, and the Making of the Modern Middle East*

Michael B. Oren,  
Oxford University Press, New York, 2002

**By Jay Weiss**

Michael Oren, the Israeli author of what Newsweek, has called “the best account yet of the most momentous event in the modern Middle East,” the best selling *Six Days of War: June 1967*, grew up in West Orange. The son of Jewish Historical Society Board member **Lester Bornstein** and his wife, **Marilyn**, Michael remembered where he came from when he gave a talk, in a local stop on his international book tour, before a packed house at the 92nd Street YMHA in New York the other day. Michael, a lean and extraordinarily fit ex-Israel Defense Force (IDF) paratrooper, strode to the podium. He looked around and said, “I see a great number of relatives and friends in the audience. Would anyone who wasn’t at my bar mitzvah please raise his hand?”

President George W. Bush was one of the non-attendees, at both the talk and the bar mitzvah. But he has read *Six Days of War* carefully. Howard Fineman reported in Newsweek on October 9 that, “last summer, on his Texas ranch... Bush read Michael B. Oren’s *Six Days of War*,” an account of Israel’s stunningly successful (at least militarily) pre-emptive attack in 1967 against neighboring Arab states that had been poised to destroy it...the president sees in Israel’s military history and unblinking determination to survive an instructive analogy for America: be strong, act first when you see a mortal threat brewing. As he said in his speech in Cincinnati: ‘We refuse to live in fear.’ The line got the only standing ovation of the night.”

Preparing a note for this newsletter on Michael’s book I called my friend Lester, the other day, to ask how long his son’s work had been on the New York Times best-seller list. “I’m not sure,” Lester said. “I think 12 weeks, but he’s here now. Why don’t you come over and ask him.”

I quickly reached for my copy of *Six Days of War* and replied, “I’ll be right there. I want to get my book autographed.”

As I walked through the Bornstein door some minutes later, I was formulating a few

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*On April 25, 1917, two men from Dover, Dr. Guy Otis Brewster and Emil Heller, invited representatives from the U.S. War Department to a demonstration of the Brewster-Heller Armor Protector. They failed in their attempts to sell the patent rights for \$600,000. The original prototype, along with a life-size photo-*

*graph of Dr. Brewster wearing the armor, is on display in the Weill Atrium of the Federation in Whippany, as part of the JHSMW exhibition, “The Jews of Morris and Sussex: Early Settlers and Synagogues Before WW II”*

*Photo Courtesy of Frank Hannoch*

## Forgosh Mounts New Exhibit on JHS Morris & Sussex County Jews

**Linda Forgosh**, Jewish Historical Society Outreach Director for Morris and Sussex counties, has prepared an exhibition, on view in the Weill Atrium of the Whippany Campus of MetroWest from October 21 to November 29, of selected treasures from the bounteous collection she has accumulated as she scours the back ways of north-west New Jersey.

The result of two years of research, the 24-foot long display includes more than 100 photographs with accompanying explanatory notes and four showcases of synagogue memorabilia; ledgers of minutes, some in Yiddish, some more than 100 years old. “It focuses primarily on Dover, Franklin, Morristown, Mt. Freedom and Newton, and Pine Brook,” Forgosh says, adding, “Although Jews settled in other Morris and Sussex towns early on, these were the first to establish synagogues and congregational cemeteries.”

One striking feature, she says, is the prototype of an armor protector invented by Dr. Guy Otis Brewster and Emil Heller, both from Dover, which was featured in Popular Science magazine and other publications of the day but rejected by the US War Department in 1917.

Viewers will also be able to inspect records of the Chatham Colony Association, an agrarian experiment settled by Russian immigrants, headed by idealistic Socialist Bernard Sommers and others, on 100 acres in Chatham Township, until then a largely upper class community. Settlers, who had left New York, hoping to provide their children with better education, incorporated in 1922 and continued as a group until 1969. They raised poultry and started small businesses.

All of the material will return to the JHS permanent collection when the exhibit closes. But Forgosh isn’t waiting for that. She is already hard at work gathering material and preparing for her next exhibit in 2003 that she thinks she’ll entitle “Building on History: Jewish Lake Communities and Synagogues in Sussex and Morris Counties after World War II.” ◆◆

### **Barney Ross**

In the days when there were so many boxers from the lower East Side that a lot of young Jewish pugilists couldn’t get any bouts using their real names, Barney Ross, the great Jewish champion was pummeling the bejeezus out of Irish Bernie Kelly. Kelly finally managed to get ross into a clinch and whispered in his ear, “*Hob rachmonus\**, I’m really Irving Levine.”

*\*Be compassionate*

questions. Lester, in his unique, loving style, propelled me to the kitchen table where Michael and Marilyn were seated, began force-feeding me bagels and cream cheese, and introduced me to his son. Swallowing a bit of bagel, I got out my first question.

“What made you want to make *aliyah*?”

“I was imbued with Jewish culture very early,” Michael said. “I knew I wanted to make *aliyah* when I was ten. And, at 15, I spent a summer on a kibbutz where I learned Hebrew. I never had to study at an *Ulpan*?”

“Are you optimistic about the future of Israel with its struggle between secular and religious forces?”

### **Gentler Relationship with Ultra-Orthodox**

“I am,” he said. “I think we are moving toward a gentler relationship. Our ultra-orthodox cannot remain isolated from the forces of modernity indefinitely.”

“How about Israel’s relationship with the Muslim world?”

“I’m not so optimistic about that,” Michael said.

“Their values are different from ours. Chief among them are respect for Islam and family values. I’m not certain whether I like them better than some of ours or not. But Arabs have to make profound changes. They have to liberate women, for example.”

“They have never gone through the Enlightenment that Voltaire, Diderot, Locke and others provided for the West,” I said, wondering whom I had left out.

“That’s right,” Michael said, “and a Reformation. I don’t see that happening soon.”

“Somebody has to tack some theses on a Mosque Wall,” Lester said.

“Moslems want to preserve tradition.” Michael continued. “I can think of only one country that has managed a transformation to modern life without abandoning tradition. What country is that?” Michael, the professional historian asked his father, the amateur. (Far worse than an amateur, I was completely stumped.)

“Japan,” Lester answered with only a brief hesitation.

“That’s right,” Michael said, with what I thought was a touch of pride in the old man. “Real peace will require the kind of transformation Japan has undergone and an Islamic Enlightenment.” Michael said.

### **Flow of Information Must Change**

“Today, the flow of Islamic information goes from the fundamentalist East to the

West through cassettes and other means. There are reformist Islamic theologians in the West. Until information flows from them, in the reverse direction, there can be no peace with Israel.”

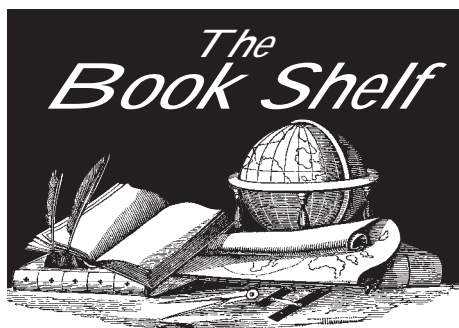
Michael Oren acquired the professional historical qualifications that he uses to test his father, first at Mountain High School in West Orange, at Columbia College in New York, and at Princeton, where he earned a PhD. He now lives, with his wife and three children, in Israel, where he is a scholar at the Shalem Research Center in Jerusalem. Like his father and his grandfather, Michael’s oldest son is serving in his country’s army. He is an IDF paratrooper. Lester forged an incredible family standard. He won two Bronze Stars for valor in combat in World War II. Michael continued the tradition when he served with Israeli paratroopers in combat in Lebanon.

I wanted to be sure to preserve a record of this meeting with a family of warriors. So I passed my pen and my copy of his book to Michael, asking him to sign it. “*To Jay, with best wishes and respect from one history lover to another—Michael Oren,*” he wrote.

I finished my bagel, carefully pocketed my pen, and said it was time for me to leave. But I knew one day I’d have an excuse to invite myself over again. Michael is working, he told me, on two more books with the tentative titles of *America, 200 Years of Involvement in the Middle East* and *A History of the Yom Kippur War*. I wonder how he’ll sign them.

1: *The immigration of Jews into Israel.*

2: *A Hebrew study center* ◆◆



### **The Jews of Europe after the Black Death**

—Anna Foa

*Translated from the Italian by Andrea Grover  
University of California Press, Los Angeles, 2000.*

In her impressively comprehensive history of *The Jews of Europe after the Black Death*, expertly translated from the Italian by **Andrea Grover**, **Anna Foa** gives an account of a history that is as impressive as

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# Archivist's Status Report

By **Joseph Settanni**

We are currently processing the **Rev. Dr. Lucius H. Garner** Collection for future exchange with NJ Historical Society for their **Rabbi Solomon Foster Collection**. Work continues on the General Reference File, Oral History Collection, and Biographical Files.

### **Accessions:**

**Warren Grover**, has contributed his presidential files from the 1990s; **Mrs. Ruth C. Toplansky** donated December 5, 1927 photograph of White Way Celebration Committee, Springfield Avenue Merchants Association, Newark, NJ; oral history transcripts (copies) of MetroWest people donated by **Old Randolph Historical Society**; Holocaust Oral History Collection, including 35 VHS videotapes and 5 audiotapes from Federation's Holocaust Education and Remembrance Committee; booklets regarding Temple Shalom of Sussex County, information on Congregation of the Sons of Israel, and related data on Jewish community in Franklin, donated by the **Franklin Historical Society**.

**Herbert H. Hirschhorn** gave copies of documents about his life and family; **Gary R. Platt** gave information on the Domb family of Dover and Morristown, NJ; **Milton Fischgrund** participated in an oral history interview; **Cyrene Aksman** donated photographs of Pine Brook, NJ, plus information and copies of documents about her family; **Sidney Barth** gave an oversized graduation class photograph, January 1934, for Cleveland High School, Newark, NJ, and his graduation autograph book, January 1933; **Hedy R. Bernard** gave copies of memorabilia, including photocopy of a photograph of Rabbi Isaac Bernard.

**Irving Kintish** donated a booklet entitled: “The Jewish Seniors Program, Remembering with Tears and Laughter” pertaining to White Meadow Temple congregation; **Blanche Blumenfeld** gave Chatham Colony materials regarding this once experimental socioeconomic grouping and records concerning Beth Hatikvah, a Reconstructionist congregation in Chatham, NJ; **Harold N. Krauss** gave records pertaining to Morristown Jewish Center; **Robert R. Max** added to his col-

Continued on page 7

lection by donating records of the Beth Hatikvah congregation he helped found; **Norman Salsitz** parted with a photograph album covering such matters as the American Red Magen David for Israel and many MetroWest personalities seen at numerous events.

**Diane Loeb** gave copies of newspaper clippings, a speech, and photographs concerning the merger of Dover Jewish Center and Temple Shalom of Boonton and the dedication of Adath Shalom; **Dr. Charles & Dr. Gloria Steiner** donated materials pertaining to biographical data and copies of newspaper clippings about their family and the Philip Lindeman family. **James Youngelson** gave a photographic collection regarding the founders of Adath Israel, (Dover Jewish Center), congregational members, and related family pictures. **Ann & Fred Seplov** donated correspondence, photographs and newspaper clippings on the Newton Jewish community.

**Shirley Kapner Rodin** gave photographs, newspaper clippings, and other materials on the Mt. Freedom Jewish community. **Muriel Grossman Pivovar Zirkon** donated photographs and other items pertaining to the Franklin Jewish community; **Edward Alan Cohen** turned over photographs pertaining to his career interests and farm in Randolph, NJ.

### Volunteers

Work continues with acid-free photocopying on processed records. Volunteer time spent on archival processing exceeded 450 hours so far this year. The total volunteer effort this year has exceeded 1,400 hours including Oral History Collection.

### Statistics

Historical records processed and classified now fill 662 acid-free archival boxes totaling 256 cu. ft. in the Archives Room. ♦♦

### Gangsters— continued from page 4

and AT&T. Thanks to “*The Godfather*” and “*The Sopranos*,” Cosa Nostra terms and phrases such as “omerta,” “Don,” “capo,” and “goumad,” are as much a part of the American lexicon as “chutzpah,” “mayven” and “schmaltz.” “I’ll make him an offer he can’t refuse,” has replaced “I can get it for you wholesale” on millions of American lips.

### Talking Isn’t Healthy in the Mafia

But, despite the public recognition of the Mafia, the “Honored Society” still closes ranks against members who try to go public. Mobsters who attempted some of the same assimilationist tactics as Jewish gangsters came to bad ends. Joe Columbo, successor to the Profaci dynasty, formed the Italian-American Civil Rights League, picketed the FBI and the New York Times, appeared on the David Frost Show and held huge rallies in Columbus Circle. He was gunned down and left for dead on the orders of the other Dons, who found his penchant for publicity an unforgivable affront to hallowed traditions. And Crazy Joe Gallo, a renegade who blabbed Mafia lore to every reporter with a tape recorder, followed Columbo a few years later. The lesson they personified was that going public is harmful to a Mafia guy’s health.

The Silver Screen provides an excellent barometer of how Americans think of Italian and Jewish gangsters. At least a dozen movies have been made about Al Capone, or Capone-like characters such as Tony Camonte (in the original *Scarface*) and Caesar Enrico Bandello (*Little Caesar*). Frequently, Capone or Capone-like characters were played by Jewish actors, such as Paul Muni and Edward G. Robinson in the aforementioned films. The most popular cable television show in history is “*The Sopranos*,” whose Italian-American creator and writer has made it a cultural phenomenon by piling on every conceivable stereotype of Italian-American life. In “*The Sopranos*,” there’s no dividing line between Mafia life and family life—it’s all in the Family.

But Meyer Lansky, or a Lansky-like character, has appeared in only three movies; and only one film mentions Lepke Buchalter and Murder, Inc. Thus far, Hollywood and cable TV have passed on exposing the lives and exploits of Monk Eastman, Dopey Benny Fein, Longy Zwillman, Jake Guzik, Moe Dalitz and most of their fellow Jewish gangsters, next to whose enterprises Tony Soprano’s would look like a lemonade stand. The moral: “Jew” and “gangster” just don’t equate even if they really did, and still do. ♦♦

**Attention Readers!**  
**the JHS Website is:**  
**www.jhsmw.org**

## New Members

Joseph Horowitz, Membership Chairman, reports that, as of publication timethere are 17 new memberships:

**Ann & Bob Bialos**  
**Elaine & Len Brown**  
**Iris & Ron Citron**  
**Doris & Stuart Cooper**  
**Sarah & Jack Doppelt**  
**Betty & Barry Ende**  
**Lois & Edward Grayson**  
**Eric L. Kozma**  
**Ruth & Bruce Pastor**  
**Geraldine Reckson**  
**Ruby & Neal Riemer**  
**Myron Sugarman**  
**Temple Sha’arey Shalom**  
**Claire E. Tannenbaum**  
**Ronnie Weinstein**  
**Florence & Dan Zager**  
**Frida & Stuart Zeckendorf**



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Howard Levine	<i>Associate Editor</i>
Alan Lowenstein	Marv Slatkin
Dr. Barbara Mitnick	<i>Art Director</i>

it is appalling, a record that is studded with horrors like these: "...In the first decade of the sixteenth {century} ...a campaign for expulsion spread, leading to the eviction of Jews from much of Germany and Switzerland: from Geneva in 1490, from Mecklenburg and Pomerania in 1492, from Halle and Magdeburg in 1493, from Lower Austria, Stryia, and Carinthia in 1496, from Wurttemberg and Salzburg in 1498, and from the free imperial cities of Nuremberg and Ulm in 1499. After serious uprisings in Berlin in 1500, Jews were driven from Brandenburg in 1510, from Colmar, Mulhouse and Obernai in 1512, and from Regensburg in 1519" Between 1648 and 1655, Cossack raiders wiped out 25% of the burgeoning Jewish population in Poland.

When one adds the mass expulsion of Jews from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492 to this sorry story, the question arises, how did Jews survive in Europe at all? One tactic was to continue as crypto-Jews, as Marranos. "A derogatory term—in Castilian it means pig, and the Arabic equivalent mahran means prohibited—{the term} was already in use in Spain at the end of the fourteenth century to designate conversos. Strictly speaking the word 'Marrano' signifies a Spanish or Portuguese Jew who had converted to Christianity but secretly continued to profess Judaism." So some of them stayed in place, waiting desperately for a chance to return to their faith, a chance that didn't arrive for many for almost 500 years. But they were able to hang on because rulers needed them for banking and commerce.

Others escaped to the Ottoman Empire. In 1478, "The {conquered} Greek city of

Salonika was not yet inhabited by Jews...by 1613 its Jewish population was ...68 per cent {of the city}."

### ***Cursed Faith and Opinions***

What caused this incredible animosity and hatred? Later, it stemmed from the discovery of proto-Indo-European, the linguistic ancestor of most modern European languages, and the accompanying crazed notion of an Aryan race that led to Nazism. But earlier, the source seems to have been purely religious. . "The Jews try," the Reyes católicos, {Ferdinand and Isabella} wrote, "by all possible means to draw faithful Christians away from our Holy Catholic Religion, to detach them, to deviate them and to attract them to ***their cursed faith and opinions*** (emphasis added). They instruct them in the rites and observances of their law, organize meetings where they teach them what they must believe and practice according to their law, circumcise them and their sons, give them prayer books, inform them of the fasts to respect, gather with them to read and teach them the history of their law, let them

## **VOLUNTEERS**

**Joe Settanni** indicates that **Cyrene Aksman, Ruth Bressler, Milton Frank** and **Shirley Max** have become volunteers for JHS. Watch for a future article reporting on their contributions.

know when Passover is coming and advise them of what they must do to observe this holiday, giving them, bringing it from home, matzah and kosher for Passover meat, warn them of the foods from which they must abstain and which they must eat in obedience to the law, and persuade them to observe and practice the law of Moses."

Anna Foa and her skilled translator, Andrea Grover, help us to understand how Jews survived 2000 years of ghastly persecution. The question that haunts this reviewer is "Why?" What gave them the strength to survive?

*An Italian scholar and Adjunct Associate Professor of Humanities at New York University, Andrea Grover is a member of the Jewish Historical Society. Her husband, Warren, is its immediate past president. ♦♦*

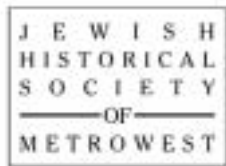
## **JHS Membership Application**

Please enroll me as a member.

- |   |       |                 |
|---|-------|-----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Member                                      | \$100 | NAME _____      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Charter Member   | \$50  | ADDRESS _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Member   | \$25  | CITY _____      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am interested in endowment / memorial opportunities. |       | STATE _____     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am interested in becoming a volunteer                |       | TELEPHONE _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have materials that may be of interest               |       |                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gift-and-Match eligible                                |       |                 |

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