

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of METROWEST

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

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Lester Bornstein to Speak on April 19th

World War II hero Lester Bornstein, winner of two Bronze Stars for valor, will discuss his combat experiences and the incredible events that led to a recent reunion with a Battle of the Bulge enemy, in a Jewish Historical Society sponsored program, at the June Bleiwise Conference Center on the Whippany Campus at 4 o'clock on April 19. Chuck Scarborough of WNBC TV captured much of this "truth is stranger than fiction" drama for a half-hour video program. You wouldn't have wanted to be in the foxhole with Les and his buddy, Sgt. Jim Hill, on that terrible day in December, 1944 but you can travel with Les and Chuck by video to see it. **(For further details, see "Enemies No More" on Page 2).** That foxhole on the road to St. Vith that the buddies from Massachusetts carved out sixty years ago is still there.

Michael Oren, son of Les and Marilyn Bornstein and author of the award winning *Six Days of War*, has written a fictionalized account of his father's story, called, aptly enough, *Reunion*. Copies of the Oren books and the Scarborough video will be available for purchase on April 19th and afterwards at the Jewish Historical Society headquarters. ♦♦

Calendar

April 19, 2004*
"Enemies No More"

May 16, 2004*
Lasting Impressions Gala

May 17, 2004*
Civil Rights Colloquium

June, 2004*
Annual Membership Meeting

September 9, 2004*
"Who's Minding The Store?" Exhibit

*All events at the Aidekman Campus
901 Route 10 E. Whippany, N.J.

Warren Grover Will Be Honored In 10th Lasting Impressions Gala

For its tenth annual Gala Awards ceremony, the Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest has chosen its immediate past president, **Warren Grover**, to be the sole honoree. **Max Kleinman**, executive vice president of the United

Jewish Communities of MetroWest, Warren's longtime coworker in philanthropic affairs will present the award and make the principal speech at the May 16th event, which will take place at the Aidekman Campus. Fee for the dinner and ceremony will be \$100. "I have known Warren for over twenty years, gone on missions to Israel and the Ukraine with him, appreciated his devotion to community service, and admired his skills as a historian that recently culminated in publication of his skillfully researched book, *Nazis in Newark*, Kleinman said recently.

A funny thing happened to Warren Grover on the way to becoming the pre-eminent historian of Jewish Newark. He made a thirty-year detour. In 1966, Warren was a graduate of the Washington Heights campus of New York University in Russian history, heeding the call of his muse, Clio, by teaching at the Newark College of Engineering (now NJIT, the New Jersey Institute of Technology). His wife, Andrea, was pregnant with their first child. Adding up his options, Warren reluctantly concluded he couldn't raise a family on the meager salary he was gaining as a professional historian.

An Opportunity Presents Itself

Happily, an alternative emerged and he went into the direct mail business with his father-in-law, the late Louis Peck. Seven years later, when Mr. Peck retired, Warren took over a business with thirty employees. By the time he sold it, in 1996, the firm had 200 employees and had increased its annual business more than thirty times. "I enjoyed



Warren Grover

building up the company," Warren recalls, "but not the industry itself."

Warren didn't retire quietly to an easy chair to watch TV. Almost immediately, Clio, the muse of history, called on him again. Warren responded promptly. His employees had given him a retirement party on April 22 and, three days later, he was buried in

the depths of the Newark Public Library busily doing historical research. He would go on to haunt the stacks of the libraries of Rutgers, Harvard, Columbia, Princeton, not to mention the Library of Congress and YIVO, the New York based Institute for Jewish Studies. He had begun gathering material for a book on the unique and glorious fight the Minutemen, a mixed band of Jewish hoodlums from Longie Zwillman's mob, boxers, and college boys, waged in Newark against local Nazis.

The Society Beckons

Warren couldn't devote himself exclusively to this new project. Clio made other demands upon him. In May of 1996, she seduced him into taking over the presidency of the Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest from founding president, Ruth Fien. Warren served in that post with unusual distinction for six years, heightening the professionalism of the society by bringing academic historians like Ed Shapiro and Barbara Mitnick to the board and launching a variety of public programs on Jewish history. And, as a valedictory salute to his incumbency, he solicited \$150,000 toward a JHS endowment fund in honor of Arthur Brody.

Continued on page 3

JHS Exhibitions Scheduled for September 9th

By Bob Max

Do you remember what Newark was like when 65,000 Jews called it home? Many recall Newark as a great city with an influential Jewish population that spawned the development of business, professions, science, institutions, arts and culture in territory extending through Essex, Morris, Sussex and Union counties.

A year in the planning, the Jewish Historical Society's Traveling Exhibitions, capturing the spirit and history of people, places and events in 20th century MetroWest, are rapidly taking shape. Twelve great exhibitions will find their way to local and regionally located synagogues, day schools, libraries and museums. Among the earliest are "Lasting Impressions, Greater Newark's Jewish Legacy: A Retrospective;" "Born at the Beth: Newark's Beth Israel Hospital" (where many MetroWest residents first saw the light of day and where Beth doctors discovered the RH factor and nuclear-powered pacemakers); "A Passionate Plea for Life" (Holocaust era letters between local citizens and family members living in Prague and Vienna revealing desperate attempts to escape Nazi terror and the offers of help from American relatives.)

Who's Minding the Store?

Leading off the series on September 9 will be an inspiring exposition of memorabilia, artifacts, documents and photos demonstrating the entrepreneurial success of the founders of Kings, ShopRite-Wakefern and Pathmark. Entitled "Who's Minding the Store?" the displays will trace the evolution from Mom and Pop stores to supermarket giants, as well recount the early histories of merchants who established businesses in Newark, Essex County suburbs, and Morris and Sussex counties.

Linda Forgosh, Bob Max, Charles Hirsh, Howard Kiesel, Gail Hirsch and Marvin Slatkin lead the JHS team of planners, researchers and designers that has created the exhibits. Linda reports that it is not too late to improve the quality of the presentations. If you possess any photographs of 19th and early 20th century family enterprises in the MetroWest area, please call her at (973-929-2994; or e-mail her at lforgosh@jhsnw.org) so that she can copy them for "Who's Minding The Store?" ♦♦

"Enemies No More" Debuts on WNBC-TV

Anyone who can watch Chuck Scarborough's "Enemies No More," a half hour television presentation that tells much of the incredible story of Lester Bornstein's heroism during World War II, without feeling an unexpected tear slipping silently down his cheek either knows nothing about World War II, cares little about the Holocaust, or has something gravely wrong with his lachrymal glands.

On December 17th, 1944, Lester and his comrade, Sgt. Jim Hill, were two lone 19 year-olds, who were recently converted from combat engineers into infantrymen because of a surprise Nazi onslaught, crouched in a fox hole in the Ardennes Forest. As a column of Panzer tanks advancing along a narrow macadam road loomed in front of them, Private Bornstein, his fingers shaking from fear and cold, failed twice to connect the bazooka projectile wires. Finally, he succeeded in priming the missile, whispering, "Don't miss, Jim." The lead tank was scarcely 25 yards away.

The orders for the German *blitzkrieg* in that sector were to take St. Vith, a nearby crucial crossroads town, "within 24 hours at all costs." Jim didn't miss. They knocked out the lead tank. The others were trapped behind the burning Panzer hulk, unable to budge. Accompanying infantrymen moved out, heading toward the camouflaged fox-hole, looking for their assailants. Les had pulled the pin from his hand grenade, preparing, with Jim, to sell his life as dearly as possible. They didn't know yet that their action would win time for their battalion to set up defensive positions and hold off the capture of St. Vith for five days in what was very likely one of the decisive engagements of the Battle of the Bulge.

It Pays To Know Yiddish

Before he could hurl his grenade, Lester heard the enemy commander bark out an order. A son of Yiddish-speaking immigrants, Lester could understand him perfectly. He said to his Wasp buddy, "I think we're saved. He said, 'Kum tzirik' (Come Back)." The two slipped away into the surrounding forest to join their newly dug-in comrades.

Two hundred and forty-four members of their unit, the 168th Combat Engineers, were killed, wounded, or captured in the bitter fighting. Nineteen thousand Americans would die in that Ardennes Forest campaign, the biggest land battle the American Army ever fought. After five days of fierce fighting, Jim was captured. Les rejoined a reconstituted 168th battalion, participating in numerous actions as they penetrated deep into Germany.

When his unit received orders to launch a surprise assault crossing of the Rhine River, Les commanded a wooden boat carrying 12 infantrymen, all rowing for their lives,

through intense enemy fire to the opposite shore. "I had studied the arcs made by the incoming fire and figured we were actually safer in the water than on the bank," Lester remembers. He made three trips that night, the last at daybreak, winning his first Bronze Star for valor.

Fifty-Four Years Later

The story resumes 54 years later when Les and his wife, Marilyn, took part in a reunion at St. Vith. They met Joseph Knaupf, a townsman who, as a ten-year old boy peering from a cellar window in a nearby farmhouse, had witnessed the entire action. His testimony was enough for the 168th commanding officer to recommend that Jim be awarded his first, and Les, his second Bronze Star for their heroism. After they received their belated recognition in a 1998 Washington ceremony, Hans Genz, who had been a gunner in the third stalled Nazi tank, somehow heard about it. He began a correspondence with Jim.

When the three former enemies assembled for their improbable reunion in St. Vith this January, Chuck Scarborough and his camera crew were right there to record the whole thing. Lester's daughter, Karin Angrist, and his handsome, very proud 14-year old grandson, Jonathon Rudnitsky, were witnesses, too, as the pair of aging but still robust World War II GIs from Massachusetts, saluted a monument to a long-ago battle in Belgium. Beside them, not so erect, leaning on a cane, was another, much shorter veteran. (All German tank crewmen were short, Hill explained to Scarborough.) It was Genz, the former Hitler Youth, the former Sergeant in the Sturmgeschutz Brigade, now a retired beekeeper from Bavaria, but once their sworn enemy. "You are the only comrades of the Battle of the Bulge who are left. Once we tried to kill each other," Genz said.

"And now," said a reflective Lester Bornstein, not quite believing what was happening, "We are calling each other by our first names."

Jim then left to accompany his new friend, Hans, to a joyous celebration in Bavaria. Lester, the Yiddish-speaking Jewish kid from Chelsea, couldn't quite persuade himself to make that trip into Germany. He had been there once before, dodging bullets. Maybe next time. ♦♦

Gail Hirsch Joins Board of the JHS

Gail Hirsch, the newest Jewish Historical Society board member, grew up in Manhattan, and attended the elite Bronx High School of Science. She earned a Bachelor's degree in psychology at George Washington University in the nation's capitol where she met Robert Hirsch whom she married immediately after graduation. She then worked for a year for the Chubb and Son Insurance Company but soon settled down to raise a family.

"When the kids were old enough," Gail says, "I joined the American Association of University Women. We put together an entity we called GATEWAYS (Gifted and talented education ways) a corporation that offered Saturday courses to elementary school students in chemistry and rocket science and many other areas, programs no school district, no matter how enlightened, could possibly offer within the limits of a municipal

budget. We hired instructors to present these enhanced, enriched courses."

Gail Joins AT&T

"When the kids were in junior high school," Gail says, "I was able to go back to school earning a Master's degree in personnel psychology from Fairleigh Dickinson." She then got a job with the American Telephone and Telegraph Company's division of consumer marketing. In her last post, she was assigned to Marketing Communications specializing in direct mail and advertising. So Gail brings a variety of unique skills that she is already utilizing effectively with the Jewish Historical Society.

Husband, Bob, worked for American Telephone and Telegraph's Bell Labs, one of the world's preeminent industrial research facilities whose scientists had won six Nobel prizes and nine U.S. Medals of Science. After his retirement, Robert joined Lucent Technologies, a successor organization to the AT&T conglomerate, as a technical manager. The couple has lived in nearby Whippany for 32 years.

They have two grown children, a son, Alec and a daughter, Robin. ♦♦

Askin, Convissor and Dresner To Speak May 17th On Civil Rights

Edward Shapiro, Professor of History Emeritus at Seton Hall University and Jewish Historical Society Board member, will moderate a JHS sponsored colloquium commemorating the 50th anniversary of Supreme Court Decision of Brown vs. Board of Education on May 17th on the Aidekman campus in Whippany. Frank Askin, a professor of Law at Rutgers University and General Council of the American Civil Liberties Union, Samuel Convissor, a JHS board member and former executive in both Newark corporations and municipal government, and Rabbi Israel Dresner, Rabbi Emeritus of Wayne Temple

Beth Tikvah, will discuss their experiences in the civil rights crises that followed that monumental decision of half a century ago.

Askin, who has worked in civil rights for over 30 years, ran for Congress twice. Convissor has had intimate experience with the ethnic interactions that swept Newark after the decision as neighborhoods were changing rapidly and Rabbi Dresner, who says he became "the most arrested rabbi in America" because of his participation in civil rights demonstrations, was a close associate of the Nobel Prize winning Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. ♦♦

Grover Honored...continued from page 1

During his years as a library rat, he read nine years of the *Newark Evening News* and the *Newark Sunday Call*. Simultaneously, he conducted over eighty interviews with the survivors of the turbulent events of the pre-World War II years in Newark and with their friends and relatives, racing from Newark to Florida to California and back in pursuit of elderly witnesses to history. After three years

of this prodigious research, Warren began to write about the fruits of his labors, and a coherent picture of the reaction of some militant Jews in Newark to the threat of native and German Nazis in the 1930s. He wasn't sure what to call it, toying with a scholarly phrase like "Responses to Nazism in Newark New Jersey, 1933-1941" when he realized what the perfect title had to be. *Nazis in*

Continued on page 4

New Members

JHS's Membership Committee reports that these 20 new members have joined since the last date of publication:

Isabell Adler	Louis Nurlin
Alan Coen	Arnold & Dorothy Rosenthal
Sandy Engel	Martin R. Roth
Etta Fidlow	Bernard H. Salinger
Bob & Alice Fried	Marylin Schneider
Sam Gordon Travel	Lorraine S. Seidel
Lenore Halper	Geoffrey D. Silverstein
Irving Halper	E. B. Sussman
Michael A. Katz	Gertrude & Henry Yam
Sidney Kruger	
Lester S. Max	



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Carol Marcus	Newsletter Editor
Adele Lebersfeld	Howard Kiesel
Howard Levine	Associate Editor
Alan Lowenstein	Marv Slatkin
Dr. Barbara Mitnick	Art Director

Over \$3,000 Contributed In Memory of Jerome Fien

Many individuals and groups responded to the family's request for donations to the Jewish Historical Society in loving memory of founding member, Jerome Fien. Those contributors, to date, include:

Gary and Susan Aidekman, Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, Jerald D. Baranoff, Fran and Gary Beinhaker, Dorothy and Sy Brecher, Doris C. Chodoroff, Judy and Larry Churgin, Donald and Ellen Cohen, Gerald A. Cohen, Leona E. Cohen, Community Associations Institute, Michael and Christina Cook, Diane Denburg, Barbara and Dan Drench, Bruce and Wendy Dunn, Josephine Goldstein, Rhoda and Morris Goodman, Larry J. Gonzer, Paula and Jerry Gottesman, Barbara Gottesman, Ellen Garber, Robin Gottesman, Alice P. Gould, Jane G. Grad, Priscilla R. Gross, Kathleen Grotticelli, Gruzen Samton Architects, David, Karen, Isaac and Jonah Helfman, Joel and Julia Helfman, William B. Helmreich, Isidor S. Hirschhorn, Ruth Israelow, Esther and Oscar Kettler, Wendy and Jerry Krassner, Arlene and Martin Kessehaut, Ellen Lebedow, Bernice Lieberman, Judith and Lester Lieberman, Barry Mandelbaum, Robert and Shirley Max, Betty R. Newman, NJ Dental Association, Jay Nussbaum, Doris and Jerry Okin, Ruth and Benjamin Perlmutter, Stanley Rand and Rhoda Koslowsky, Genie Reichman, Susan and Kenneth Ruiz, Patricia and Burton Sebold, Willie and Bob Segal, Irene Seman, Sister Claire Testa, Villa Victoria Academy, Melvin J. Wallerstein, Woodlands at West Orange.

Grover—continued from page 3

Newark received rave reviews when Rutgers University's Transaction Press published it in 2003.

A Documentary Forthcoming

And the project isn't finished yet. The writer, producer, and director, Wayne Chesler is preparing a documentary movie on the content of *Nazis in Newark* that is scheduled for release next year.

Since publication, Warren has given over fifteen talks on his specialty and responded one more time to Clio when she inspired him to found the Newark History Society with Charles Cummings, Newark's official historian, and Dr. Timothy Crist, of the Prudential Insurance Company, as un-indicted co-conspirators.

The future historian was born in Newark in 1938, attended Weequahic High School and, as we have seen went on to NYU where he earned a Bachelors degree, a Masters in Russian history, and did all the course work for a planned PhD.

Warren's wife, Andrea, grew up in South Orange and graduated from Newark, Rutgers. Like her husband, Andrea, who is an Italian language and literature scholar, earned an MA from NYU. Now an Adjunct Associate Professor at the NYU School of Continuing Education, from which she has received the distinguished teaching award, Andrea has led numerous tours to various regions of Italy, so successfully that she was emboldened to take Warren along as a participant on the last trip.



JHS Membership Application

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