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On the cover:

At the Young Judean
Convention, June 12–17,
1951, Camp Blue Star,
Hendersonville, NC.
Left to right, front
row: Sonia Sokol
(Chas.), Sandra Lee
Kahn (Chas.), Rachiel
Alhadeff (Atlanta);
back row: Carol Wearb
(Chas.), Elizabeth
Kominers (Chas.),
Louise Clein (Atlanta),
and Judy Spielberger
(Columbus). Gift of
Sandra Garfinkel
Shapiro. Special
Collections, College of
Charleston.

In this issue

“God First, You Second, Me Third”: An Exploration of “Quiet Jewishness” at Southern Jewish Summer Camp ~ Marcie Cohen Ferris ~ In the early 20th century, Jewish summer camps served as retreats from city life and as sites of Americanization for children of recent immigrants. Camps with political agendas sprouted in the 1930s, followed by non-denominational Jewish camps after World War II. Designed to provide children with a safe, supportive environment, these “cultural islands” continue to offer total immersion in southern-style Judaism. 4

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Letter from the President



My daughter just returned from Blue Star where she spent the summer as a Junior Girls’ counselor. Like generations of Jewish teens before her, Emily and her cohort took part in camp rituals that closely resemble the experiences recalled in the memoirs that make up this newsletter. L’dor v’dor!

For me, summers in the early 1970s in a small southern town meant hanging out with friends, sleepovers, parties at the lake, working in my family’s stores – all the usual ways for a kid to enjoy the teenage years. But many Jewish parents in small-town South Carolina looked to summer camps to alleviate the isolation their children felt as a tiny tributary in a Christian sea (in Summerton, in fact, we were the only Jewish family), and to instill in their kids a Jewish identity.

Even in middle-size towns like Walterboro and cities like Charleston and Columbia, Jewish teens often felt “different” and saw themselves as outsiders (though not outcasts) from mainstream society. This goes a long way toward explaining the profound impact summer camps had on Jewish campers, who suddenly experienced what it was like to be in the majority, instead of the minority, and to be immersed in Jewish culture in all its forms—song, dance, spirituality, etc.—described so vividly by our authors.

With all this in mind, we chose for the theme of our upcoming fall meeting, “A Summer to Remember: Jewish Summer Camps in the American South.” Beyond summer camps, we also want to consider what Jewish youth organizations have brought to the table. Whether you participated in Color Wars at Blue Star, sang “Leaving on a Jet Plane” at a SEFTY event, enjoyed a “lock-in” at the Charleston JCC or Sumter’s Temple Sinai, or attended a Sweetheart Dance at a BBYO Dixie Council weekend, these activities filled a void, made us feel “the same,” and helped us find friends and even partners for life.

I hope you will join us November 9–10 in Columbia for a wonderful program. Meeting on the beautiful campus of the University of South Carolina, we will listen to an introductory talk by Professor Marcie Cohen Ferris and participate in a panel discussion involving former campers and camp directors. We are especially happy to welcome Eli N. Evans and Rodger and Candy Popkin, who will be on hand to share their memories and insights. At Saturday evening’s reception, sponsored by the Nelson Mullins law firm, we will meet and greet friends in USC’s beautifully restored Spigner House. Sunday morning, Macy B. Hart, longtime director of the Henry S. Jacobs Camp in Utica, Mississippi, and Eric Singer, founding director of Camp Ramah Darom in the north Georgia mountains, will describe the origins and ethos of their respective institutions.

I want to thank Stan Dubinsky and the Jewish Studies program at USC for support and help with arrangements. I am deeply grateful to those who provided stories and photos for the newsletter, and to Gail Lieb, who has worked diligently to make this a memorable weekend. The full schedule and registration information is included in this publication and available online at www.jhssc.org.

The upcoming board meeting marks the end of my tenure as JHSSC president. I have truly enjoyed serving the Society over the past two years and, in turn, have been well served by Marty Perlmutter, Dale Rosengarten, Enid Idelsohn, and members of the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors.

Thank you for the commitment and time

you put forth for the organization. I encourage those of you who have an interest to get involved. The nominating committee has proposed a strong slate of officers, but an active, engaged membership is essential to our continued success.

With warm regards,

Rachel Gordin Barnett

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SLATE OF OFFICERS FOR 2013–2015

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“God First, You Second, Me Third”: An Exploration of “Quiet Jewishness” at Southern Jewish Summer Camp

by Marcie Cohen Ferris



Marcie Cohen (3rd row from the front, far left) and fellow campers at Camp Sabra, St. Louis, MO, 1970. Courtesy of Marcie Cohen Ferris.

My childhood camping experience began in the late 1960s at Camp Wah-Kon-Dah in Rocky Mount, Missouri, on the Lake of the Ozarks—a camp for Jewish youth, but not a *Jewish* camp. Camp Wah-Kon-Dah was “quietly Jewish.” To an unsuspecting visitor, Wah-Kon-Dah looked and sounded like any other *American* summer camp, except for all the Jewish campers. This was Ben Kessler’s intent when he opened a private summer camp for boys in 1939. A native of St. Louis, Ben Kessler began Camp Wah-Kon-Dah in an era of wartime fear and disruption. This was an anxious time for American Jews, stung by the anti-Semitic quotas and discrimination of the interwar years and the growing horror regarding the fate of European Jewry as the Holocaust came to light in the 1940s.

Camp Wah-Kon-Dah was part of a summer camp craze in America that was shaped by the “cult of the strenuous life” (an anti-modernist ideology that sought to repair and strengthen American society through contact with the “great outdoors”), social reform movements of the Progressive Era, and “back-to-nature” work projects of the New Deal.¹ Gary Zola describes Jewish camping as a “genuine hybrid of organized camping in

America.”² Jewish organizations founded the first summer camps in the early 1900s to serve both as a pastoral refuge for needy Jewish children in the urban Northeast, and as sites of Americanization for children of recent Jewish immigrants. During the 1930s, Jewish summer camps and retreat centers with political agendas sponsored by communist, socialist, Zionist, and Yiddish organizations grew in popularity. The majority of these institutions were located near the large Jewish population centers along the East Coast. A smaller, but important number of Jewish boarding houses, camps, kosher inns, and the summer location of the North Carolina

B’nai B’rith Institute, Wildacres, were situated in the southern mountains.³ For the mid-South, Camp Wah-Kon-Dah represented a different model of private Jewish camping guided by religious pluralism rather than a specific political or denominational expression of Judaism.⁴

Non-denominational, private Jewish camps grew during the prosperous years after World War II and today dominate Jewish camping, North and South.⁵ From

Left to right: Stephen Rich, Harry, Adele, and Jerry Blumenthal, and Larry Zaglin, Camp Wah-Kon-Dah, Rocky Mount, MO, 1950. Courtesy of Stephen Rich.



the 1940s to the 1970s, a new grassroots activism reinforced American Jewish communities, including those in the South, through regional summer camps and year-round adult education. As a “cultural island” in an isolated setting separated from home and parents, summer camp was the perfect place for a total immersion in southern-style Judaism.⁶ The combination of education, food, music, physical activity, spirituality, tradition, and Judaism brought campers back year after year to experience the camp’s temporary, but powerful recurring community.

Promoting Jewish education, community, cultural life, and most important, continuity—raising Jewish children committed to their faith and its long-term survival—was the life work of southern Jewish camp directors, such as the Camp Blue Star in Hendersonville, North Carolina (1948), and Macy Hart at Camp Henry S. Jacobs in Utica, Mississippi (1970), a project affiliated with the Reform Movement in Judaism. During a regional fundraising campaign to secure property for Camp Jacobs in the 1960s, the project was touted as “The Key to a Living Judaism” and promised to send forth “young Jews proud of their faith and heritage, ready to go to college as committed Jewish Youth.”⁷

The concept of a vital “living” Judaism remains at the philosophical core of southern Jewish camps today. Camp Blue Star’s contemporary “Living Judaism” program “integrates Jewish values, culture, and traditions” that “teach as well as uplift.”⁸ Southern Jewish denominational camps with similar educational missions include Camp Judaea in Hendersonville, North Carolina (1960), a program of

Hadassah, the Women’s Zionist Organization of America, and Camp Ramah Darom (Ramah of the South) in north Georgia (1997), affiliated with the Conservative Movement in Judaism.⁹ Ramah’s Center for Southern Jewry provides adult and family programs throughout the year for local Jewish families. Camp Darom in Wildersville, Tennessee, is a modern Orthodox Zionist camp supported by Baron Hirsch Congregation in Memphis, and described as “the only Orthodox sleep away camp in the entire south.”¹⁰

Camp Blue Star, the “oldest, family-owned, private, kosher Jewish camp in the southern United States,” was founded in 1948 on 740 acres in the western mountains of North Carolina, the same year as the founding of the state of Israel.¹¹ Jonathan Sarna describes this era as a “crucial decade in Jewish camping,” in which Jewish education was both

an expression of “cultural resistance” after the Holocaust and an American promise to build and uphold the Jewish people.¹² Brothers Herman, Harry, and Ben Popkin were leaders in Atlanta-based Zionist and B’nai B’rith youth organizations who hoped to build a private Jewish summer camp in the South when they returned from World War II. While conducting research for their business venture, Herman and Ben Popkin consulted with owners of non-Jewish camps in north Georgia. Jane McConnell of Camp Cherokee was “honest and straightforward” and gave the Popkins this advice: “You boys ought to do it. There’s a need for a camp like the one you propose, especially for older children. Most private camps down south won’t accept Jewish children, and those that do, do so on a strict quota basis.”¹³ As Eli Evans, a former Blue Star camper, described in *The*



Adele Blumenthal, Evelyn Zaglin, Renie Rich and her son Stephen, Camp Wah-Kon-Dah. Courtesy of Stephen Rich.



Campers and staff from the first summer of the Henry S. Jacobs Camp, Utica, MS, 1970. Back row: Camp Director Rabbi Sol Kaplan (second from left) was the regional rabbi for UAHC; Assistant Director Macy Hart stands third from the right. Institute of Southern Jewish Life.



Archery class at Camp Wah-Kon-Dah, Rocky Mount, MO, 1950. Courtesy of Stephen Rich.

Provincials, his classic memoir of the Jewish South, “Herman and Harry Popkin . . . built a veritable camping empire in the postwar era.”¹⁴ It was a southern Jewish mountain paradise for young boys like Evans—a magical world of bonfires, hiking, Israeli folk dancing taught by *actual* Israelis, Jewish girls, and deep discussions about God and Jewish identity. “For the rest of our days, it seemed,” wrote Evans, “one sure way that Jewish kids all over the South could start a long conversation was by asking, ‘What years were you at Blue Star?’”¹⁵

Although their Jewish educational methodologies differed—Camp Blue Star’s commitment to Jewish education was front and center in their daily programming, while Camp Wah-Kon-Dah’s Jewish ideology was expressed in “values,” rather than overt curriculum—the two camps are joined by their founders’ commitment to providing the highest quality, private camping experience for Jewish children. Ben Kessler was in the business of building strong Jewish youth. But Kessler did not focus on Jewish identity. At Wah-Kon-Dah—an Indian name that referred to “the Great Spirit” of the Omaha tribes—the focus was less on Judaism and more on the American frontier.

Early leaders in Jewish camping adopted the same American Indian folklore and heritage that so deeply influenced American camping at the turn of the 20th century.¹⁶ Founders of Jewish camps frequently adopted the names of local Indian tribes for their institutions, or used initials or

even a Hebrew word, to create an Indian-sounding name with a Jewish back-story.¹⁷ Folklorist Rayna Green argues, “One of the oldest and most pervasive forms of American cultural expression is the ‘performance of ‘playing Indian.’”¹⁸ It began with Pocahontas rescuing Captain John Smith, the first Thanksgiving, and Squanto saving the Pilgrims. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s *Hiawatha* (1855) helped to solidify the image of the Indian in the American imagination. Victorian-era societies like the Elks, the Lions, and the Kiwanis introduced the idea of “playing Indian” to the white middle-class. The Boy Scouts, founded in 1908, was yet another expression of “playing Indian.” Indians represented the scouting ideal of manly independence. These

themes were perpetuated in summer camps, and Jewish camps embraced this celebration of Native American culture.

Ben Kessler, a child of immigrant parents, veteran of World War II, and witness to the tragic losses of the Holocaust, created a summer world where Jewish children learned confidence, team work, and respect for God. No one ever forgot Ben Kessler’s motto that hung from a cross beam in the dining lodge: “God first—you second—me third.” There were no Friday evening Sabbath services at Wah-Kon-Dah. Instead campers gathered at “Inspiration Point” each Sunday morning, dressed in starched “whites” for a sermon from Uncle Benny, who was a master storyteller. He wove Indian tales with lessons about team spirit, loyalty, kindness, and respect for nature. Sunday services were followed by a noon-time meal of southern fried chicken, mashed potatoes, peas, and red Jell-O. George Buckner, an African-American chef, ran the kitchen at Wah-Kon-Dah for more than 30 years.

The Jewish Community Center of St. Louis acquired Wah-Kon-Dah in 1969 after a group of Jewish benefactors purchased the facility, re-named it Camp Sabra, and donated the camp to their community in 1970. Cabin names changed from Osage and Kickapoo to Habonim and Golan. Israeli youth led dance workshops and song sessions. Shabbat replaced Sunday. Gone were the lunchtime pizza burgers—a startling introduction to the kosher dietary laws in which meat and milk never came together on a bun.

Jewish youth, staff, and parents alike experienced a profound sense of belonging at Jewish camps across the South, whether for two weeks or two months. An intricate network of southern Jewish relationships created in the summer influenced college decisions, future careers, religious involvement, romance, and the next generation of Jewish youth. Many campers and counselors grew into future leaders of the Jewish South’s local and regional organizations, historical societies, museums, programs for youth, and synagogues. Campers took their summer experiences of Jewishness back home and revitalized the Jewish worlds from which they came.

NOTES

- Jonathan D. Sarna, “The Crucial Decade in Jewish Camping,” 29–30, and Gary P. Zola, “Jewish Camping and Its Relationship to the Organized Camping Movement in America,” 2, in *A Place of Our Own: The Rise of Reform Jewish Camping*, eds. Michael M. Lorge and Gary P. Zola, (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2006); Nancy Mykoff, “Summer Camping,” *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, eds. Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1359–64; Amy L. Sales and Leonard Saxe, *How Goodly Are Thy Tents: Summer Camps as Jewish Socializing Experiences* (University Press of New England, 2004), 142–3.
- Zola, “Jewish Camping,” 19.
- In the early 1930s, I. D. Blumenthal, a successful Jewish businessman from Charlotte, bought Wildacres from Thomas Dixon, who had purchased the property with film royalties from D. W. Griffith’s controversial Hollywood epic, *Birth of a Nation* (1915), based on Dixon’s novel, *The Clansman*. Dixon invested heavily in the property and after losing a great deal of money when the stock market crashed in 1929, was forced to sell the 1,400 acres at a much-reduced price. In his essay on the history of American Jewish camping, Jonathan Sarna notes that the availability of affordable land and real estate in this era allowed many Jewish institutions and individuals to purchase affordable land for camps and retreats. Sarna, “Crucial Decade in Jewish Camping,” 37; Wildacres Retreat, “The History of Wildacres,” <http://wildacres.org/about/history.html>.
- Sarna, “Crucial Decade in Jewish Camping,” 28–31; Sales and Saxe, *How Goodly Are Thy Tents*, 26.
- Sales and Saxe, *How Goodly Are Thy Tents*, 26.
- Ibid., 46.
- Stuart Rockoff, “Henry S. Jacobs Camp, Utica, Mississippi,” *Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities*, <http://www.isjl.org/history/archive/ms/utica.htm>.
- “Camp Blue Star,” “Southern Jewish Summer Camp: Camps in the Region,” *Deep South Jewish Voice*, January 2010, 28.
- Jewish summer camps in the South include Camp Barney Medintz, a residential summer camp for the Marcus Jewish Community Center in Atlanta, founded in the 1960s and located in north GA; Camp Blue Star, Hendersonville, NC (1948); Camp Coleman, a program of the

Union of Reform Judaism, Cleveland, Georgia (1964); Camp Darom, a project of the Baron Hirsch Congregation, Wildersville, TN (1981); Camp Henry S. Jacobs, a program of the Union of Reform Judaism, Utica, MS (1970); Camp Judaea, a program of Hadassah, the Women’s Zionist Organization of America, Hendersonville, NC (1960); Camp Ramah Darom (Ramah of the South), GA (1997); and Camp Sabra, a project of the St. Louis Jewish Community Center, Rocky Mount, MO (1970).

10. Camp Darom website: <http://www.campdarom.com/index.html>.

11. Lee J. Green, “Cold Outside But Time to Plan for Summer Camp,” *Deep South Jewish Voice*, January 2008, 26. Today, over 750 campers and 300 staff attend Blue Star’s six camps each summer. To read more about Camp Blue Star and other Jewish camps’ influence on southern Jewish life, see Leonard Rogoff’s important history of Jewish life in North Carolina, *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010) 279–81.

12. Sarna, “Crucial Decade in Jewish Camping,” 36.

13. Herman M. Popkin, *Once Upon a Summer: Blue Star Camps—Fifty Years of Memories* (Fort Lauderdale: Venture Press, 1997), 185.

14. Eli N. Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973/2005), 148.

15. Ibid., 150.

16. For an excellent discussion of the American camping movement’s association with Native American folklore, and its expression in Jewish camping, see Gary Zola’s analysis of Progressive Era educators/writers/camping enthusiasts, Ernest Thompson Seton and Luther and Charlotte Gulick, in “Jewish Camping,” 9–14.

17. Zola, “Jewish Camping,” 13–16. Zola gives examples of “American Jewish camps [that] took Native American-sounding monikers: Cayuga, Dalmaqua, Jekoce, Kennebec, Kawaga, Ramapo, Seneca, Tamarack, Wakitan, Wehaha, Winadu, and others.” Consider Camp CEJWIN, Port Jervis, NY—founded in 1919 by the Central Jewish Institute, and Camp Modin, founded in Belgrade, ME, in 1922 by Jewish educators Isaac and Libbie Berkson and Alexander and Julia Dushkin. Modin, located between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, is associated with the story of Hanukkah and the great heroism of the Maccabees.

18. Rayna Green, “Poor Lo and Dusky Ramona: Scenes from an Album of Indian America” in *Folk Roots, New Roots: Folklore in American Life*, eds. Jane S. Becker and Barbara Franco (Lexington, MA: Museum of Our National Heritage, 1988) 79, 80, 82, 83, 93.



Marcie Cohen's Camp Wah-Kon-Dah diploma awarded for completing “a course in the art of Square Dancing,” and showing “the Spirit of Fun, Friendliness and Good Fellowship.” Courtesy of Marcie Cohen Ferris.

Many thanks to members of the Kessler family—Thom Lobe and Mike Kessler—who generously shared their family history and memories about Camp Wah-Kon-Dah with me. Thank you also to former Wah-Kon-Dah campers for their stories, including my sister, Jamie Cohen, and to Stephen Rich, for lending his camp photographs.

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Do I Really Have to Go?

by Lisa Collis Cohen

Growing up in the small Jewish community of Kingstree, South Carolina, my parents sent me to Jewish summer camps early and often. In summer 1965, I went to Charleston to live with my spinster aunt so I could attend Camp Baker at the JCC. I was not yet seven and terribly homesick. My camp day began with a bus trip from Dunneman Avenue to West Ashley. After the dreaded Instructional Swim, the day improved, but my homesickness did not. Auntie quickly tired of my pitiful sobs and sent me home mid-session.



Swimming lessons, Camp Baker, 1965. Photo, badges, and banners, gift of the Jewish Community Center. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Summer 1966 brought a two-week stay at Camp Blue Star where my

counselor Paula Grossman spent part of free time each day wiping away my tears. I still remember her

kindness and compassion 47 years later. Blue Star introduced me to hayrides, Biltmore Dairy's ice cream, salami and peanut butter sandwiches, the formidable, freezing Sliding Rock—which I have yet to conquer—and Maccabiah. My parents

deemed the short session a success and sent me back to Blue Star the following summer for a month.

I really did not want to return to camp, but my parents insisted.

So, at the tender age of eight, I boarded the charter bus in Charleston for the trip to Hendersonville. And here is my WORST camp story that I have never shared. My mother—

who was older than the moms of most of my friends—insisted that I wear a navy and white dress and fishnet stockings on the bus to camp! How awful was that? To this day, I am painfully conscious of what I wear to a significant event. I'm sure the "cool" campers thought I was

a hoot as well as a hick! My cabin was in Pioneer Village. I spent my birthday (August 3) in the camp infirmary. Hilda Ney was the head nurse—her

daughter Terri was one of my friends. My New York aunts sent me a birthday package from FAO Schwartz that my counselors consumed. Thankfully, I did not return home on the bus. Since I had been sick, Daddy picked me up and I did not have to "dress" for the ride back. Finally, my days at Camp Blue Star were over!

My teen years brought TYG (Temple Youth Group) and SEFTY (Southeastern Federation of Temple Youth) Leadership Camp. By this time, I had reconnected with many of my Blue Star friends and we had a blast at camp—the first year at Camp Barney Medintz and the following years at Camp Coleman.

Although very different, all the camps were similar in Shabbat observance, kashrut, and prayer. The Hamotzi and Birkat Hamazon were sung at every meal and Shabbat was special at each camp. The chapels at Blue Star and Camp Coleman remain tranquil, spiritual spaces. I am often reminded of the special times and friends I made during the summers—our bonds of friendship rooted in Jewish camping. As for my kids, they have attended Jewish and Jew-ish camps, connecting at college with friends from both. It's a small, small camping world!



The 1973 Southeast Federation of Temple Youth meeting in Cleveland, GA, at Camp Coleman, run by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, now the Union for Reform Judaism. Courtesy of Lisa Collis Cohen.

Magical Camp Blue Star

by Gale Siegel Messerman

Imagine this. It is the early 1950s. An eight- or nine-year-old Jewish girl from the small town of Walterboro, South Carolina, is driving with her grandfather and her mother up a long dirt road. She spots a huge freshwater lake on her right, a small white wooden building straight ahead, and several smiling adults dressed in white shorts and blue



Teenage Village, Camp Blue Star, 1954. The author is in the middle row, second from the right. Courtesy of Gale Siegel Messerman.

and white tee shirts waving the car in. This was her introduction to the magical Camp Blue Star, her first overnight "home away from home." We drove to my cabin in Pioneer Village, unloaded my "gear," snared a top bunk, met my counselors and then, all of a sudden, I was surrounded by 12 girls who were to become bunkmates and, hopefully, friends for the summer. How to condense my memories, experiences and feelings into a few paragraphs? Not sure, but here goes.

My first strong Blue Star memory was shock upon realizing that every girl in the cabin was Jewish. I remember going around the cabin asking the same question of each girl: "Are you Jewish?" As the only Jewish girl of my age in Walterboro, this was quite an eye-opener to say the least! But this was only the beginning of my many-year love affair with Camp Blue Star as a camper, a CIT (Counselor-in-Training), and a counselor.

Blue Star introduced me to the spiritual, religious, and ritualistic aspects of Judaism. I learned to love the daily singing of the Hamotzi before and the Birkat Hamazon after each "kosher" meal, the special preparations for and celebration of services in the beautiful and ethereal outdoor chapel, the Shabbat meal with the singing of Jewish songs, the Friday night Jewish folk dancing, the special day of Sabbath observance, the walk to the lake for the Havdalah service to bid farewell to Shabbat, and then, last but not least, the Saturday night social and boys, boys, boys!! (But that is another story.)

The typical camp day began with attention to our cabin duties, including



Sliding Rock, near Brevard, NC, 1967. Courtesy of Lisa Collis Cohen.

waking up on time, making up our bunks, attending to our respective clean-up chores, and getting to breakfast on time. The day was packed with activities: swimming, canoeing, boating, team sports, arts and crafts, target shooting, archery, "free time," etc. I remember how helpful the counselors and instructors were and how professional the infirmary doctor and nurses were if

a camper was injured or became ill. Evenings were filled with campfires, movies, dancing, hayrides, and singing.

Nature was all around us. We studied it and we explored it with daily hikes around the camp and overnight camping adventures into the surrounding mountains where we cooked over campfires, sang songs, and slept under the stars. There were canoe trips, slides down Sliding Rock, tours of the Biltmore Estate, square dancing in Hendersonville, and memorable visits to the Cherokee Indian Reservation to learn about Indian culture and to see the wonderful outdoor pageant, "Unto These Hills."

Of course, I liked the activities and the natural beauty of the setting, but my camp summers meant so much more to me. The people I met and learned to love are still in my heart. It was the first time I had ever been surrounded by Jewish people. At Blue Star I was not an "outsider." I did not feel "different." I was comfortable with everyone I met and made lasting friends, several of whom invited me to visit them in their home cities

across the South. As a direct result of these contacts, I was invited to bar mitzvahs and introduced to Jewish organizations. I met and dated Jewish boys, one of whom I eventually married.

The Camp Blue Star experiences gave meaning to my life as a Jewish girl and helped me to understand, for the first time, where I came from, where I belonged in the universe, and why I can never forget. I NEVER WILL.

A Summer to Remember: Jewish Summer Camps in the American South

November 9 – 10, 2013

University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina



Marcie Cohen Ferris is an associate professor in the Department of American Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill. Her research and teaching interests include the American Jewish experience and southern foodways and culture. From 2006 to 2008, Ferris served as president of the board of directors of the Southern Foodways Alliance. Her first book, *Matzoh*

Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South (2005), was nominated for a 2006 James Beard Foundation Award. She is co-editor of *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil* (2006). Her forthcoming work, *The Edible South: Food and History in an American Region*, examines the expressive power of food from the plantation era to the renaissance of local food economies in the contemporary South.



Rodger and Candy Niman met while students at Boston University and began their careers as directors of Camp Blue Star in 1971, after their marriage in the Elmore Solomon Chapel. They are both members of the American Camp Association's (ACA) Acorn Society and Pioneers

of Camping Club. Son of Blue Star founder Herman Popkin, Rodger served ten years on ACA's national board, including a three-year term as its national president. He coordinated the association's campaign against year-round schools, led ACA's anti-bullying March on Washington in summer 1990, and worked with his and Candy's friend Peter Yarrow (of Peter, Paul, and Mary) to launch the international "Don't Laugh at Me" anti-bullying campaign. Rodger currently serves on the board of the Foundation for Jewish Camp. Blue Star is now owned and directed by Rodger and Candy's daughter Lauren, and her husband, Seth Herschthal, who, like Rodger and Candy, were married in Solomon Chapel.

Macy B. Hart is president and founder of the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL), which provides rabbinic services and educational and cultural programs in communities where Jewish resources are limited. Beginning in 1970, Macy served for 30 years as director of the Henry S. Jacobs Camp in Utica, Mississippi. In 1986 he founded

the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience, which, in 2000, became the ISJL. From 2004 to 2008 he chaired the Council of American Jewish Museums. Macy received an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Hebrew Union College, a Covenant Award for Outstanding Jewish Educators, a Jewish Cultural Achievement Award, and, in 2013, an award from the Mississippi Religious Leadership Conference.



Eric Singer was born in Columbus to a family with deep south-Georgia roots. The Singers moved to Atlanta during his teen years. Eric earned his B.A. in Religious Studies at Washington University in St. Louis and an M.S. in Decision Science from Georgia State University. He was an instructor at the National Outdoor Leadership School, a wilderness guide

in Alaska, and an executive in the wholesale distribution industry. He served as senior vice president of real estate for Pull-A-Part, Inc., in Atlanta, and is currently a partner and senior vice president at OA Development. Eric has held leadership positions in several local and national non-profits. His proudest role, however, is as founding president of Camp Ramah Darom. In 1996, together with other volunteers from the region, he helped create a new type of institution—envisioned by his father, Sol Singer, some 40 years earlier—to provide year-round Jewish experiences for youth and adults, families and congregations from across the South and beyond.



Saturday, November 9, 2013

11:30 AM–12:45 PM Registration and box lunch in the Colloquium Café at USC

All afternoon events take place in Sloan College, room 112

1:00 Opening remarks: Frederica K. Clementi, Assistant Professor, English Department, University of South Carolina, and Martin Perlmutter, JHSSC Executive Director

1:15 Marcie Cohen Ferris – “God First, You Second, Me Third”: An Exploration of “Quiet Jewishness” at Southern Jewish Summer Camp

2:45 Summers to Remember: Recollections of Blue Star, Camp Coleman, and Camp Judaea

Moderator: Eli N. Evans

Panelists: Lisa Collis Cohen, Maxine Solomon McLarnan, Gale Siegel Messerman, Candy Niman Popkin, Rodger Popkin, Lauren Rovak, Brett Serbin, Rabbi Daniel Sherman, and Robert Steinberg

5:30–6:30 Reception at the Spigner House, sponsored by Nelson Mullins

Nelson Mullins
Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP

Dinner on your own

Sunday, November 10

All morning sessions take place in the Carolina Room, The Inn at USC

9:00 AM Open board meeting in the Carolina Room, The Inn at USC (everyone is invited to attend!)

10:00 Macy B. Hart – B'Sheret and the Wonderful Accident That Changed My Life

11:15 Eric Singer – Re-imagining the Role of Jewish Camp in the Lives of Southern Jews

12:30 PM Adjourn

Hotel reservations

The Inn at USC, now a Wyndham Hotel
1619 Pendleton Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Reservations must be made by Wednesday, October 23, 2013.
For reservations, call (803) 779-7779 and mention JHSSC.
Special rate is \$120 per night plus tax.

The conference packet will include a map of the USC campus.

Register online at www.jhssc.org/events

Visa, Mastercard, or by check payable to JHSSC
Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Center
College of Charleston, Charleston, SC 29424

Conference fee: \$75 per person

Questions: Enid Idelsohn

Phone: 843.953.3918 ~ fax: 843.953.7624

Email: IdelsohnE@cofc.edu

Blue Star: A Family Affair *by Maxine Solomon McLarnan*



Blue Star's 1958 staff and CITs. Rosalie Popkin is at the left end of the 2nd row; Herman is behind her with a hand on her shoulder. Mona Popkin is at the right end of the 2nd row, with her husband, Harry, behind her. Courtesy of Gale Siegel Messerman.

I have so many memories of Camp Blue Star I could write a book. It's been difficult to narrow them down! First of all, those summers—stretching 8 to 15 years, depending on which Solomon you're talking about—were a family affair. Not only did my brother, Robert, and sister, Nancy, attend camp, but also Mama (Aunt Elsie) ran Senior Girls and Daddy (Uncle Elmore) volunteered to help anywhere he was needed—transportation, organizing luggage, and taking trips into town.

I remember several years when we had 12 first cousins with us. Of course, many of their children and grandchildren have also loved Blue Star, as did my daughter, Stephanie, who spent five years there making her own memories.

The Popkins are like family to us. Our relationship goes back to the 1930s when Mama and Daddy met Uncle Harry and Uncle Herman through the YMHA (Young Men's Hebrew Association) and AZA (Aleph Zadik Aleph) in Augusta and

Charleston. Along with their brother Ben, Harry and Herman founded Blue Star in 1948.

My first memories are of “helping” Daddy pack our trunks in a U-Haul, then the nostalgic ride to Hendersonville on a two-lane highway. We always pulled off the road near Honea Path, South Carolina, and ate lunch at the Blue Star Café—our last civilian meal. As a special treat for Robert, Dad stopped in North Carolina to buy sparklers and little fireworks—illegal in Georgia!

Nancy and I went crazy with excitement as we spotted and turned off on the White Horse Road exit, drove one hour into Flat Rock, then a couple of miles to Kanuga Road. Fifteen long minutes later Daddy turned left and drove slowly up the drive into camp as we sang “Welcome You to Camp Blue Star!” I felt my heart would pop out with pure joy. To this day, when visiting and attending alumni reunions, we relive the same

emotions, and as we leave camp, we still shed tears. Here are a few of my most outstanding experiences:

- Sharing life and making the best friends, most of whom remain my closest friends today
- Raiding the dining hall at midnight for peanut butter and jelly and a container of “bug juice”
- Our United Nations Project in which each cabin was a different country and, using the correct protocol, we discussed problems of the day and tried solving them. I loved using the library for background information and I loved seeing my friends acting serious and really having to think. It was a school setting, rather than camp, for a few days.
- Maccabiah Games (Color Wars) where the entire camp was divided into two teams that competed in all sports in age appropriate groups, and played games of strategy and creativity. The big closing ceremony was much like the Olympics; all the participants gathered together in friendship to salute the winners and remember a wonderful day of competition.
- Real lox and bagels on Saturday mornings after services!
- Making fires with no matches
- Three-day, two-night co-ed camping trips
- Zimreah—more friendly competition throughout the whole camp. Each cabin had to write its own camp song and choreograph a dance. Watching the boys try to be coordinated and sing without their voices cracking was such fun.

• Out-of-camp trip to the Cherokee Reservation, where the story of this brave Indian group was performed in a show called “Unto These Hills.” Over the years, I know Mama saw it at least 15 times. We had to wear camp uniforms; I could not stand the beanies because they messed up one's hair. It was so cozy riding the bus back to camp, in the dark, sitting next to your boyfriend.

• Sliding Rock—we took a trip to these huge rocks you would slide down into breathtaking, freezing water. Believe me, we were carefully supervised with counselors standing on the rocks every couple of feet holding poles, which made the whole adventure even scarier, but also made you so proud of yourself. Everyone was “showing off”—I know I was.

- Uncle Harry and Uncle Herman's psychology lectures, especially Harry's talks on “the Birds and the Bees”
- I loved Shabbat—cleaning up and decorating our cabins, dressing in white, praying with your friends.

- Israeli folk dancing!

• Of course, Saturday night socials were the best!! Borrowing someone else's cute clothes and dancing to “Summer Night Love,” Johnny Mathis, “Sealed with a Kiss,” “In the Still of the Night,” and “Stand by Me.” Sometimes the adorable cooks from the kitchen sang for us; those young men became The Tams, a very successful recording group on the college and concert circuits. They sang Doo-Wop and early Motown.

• What can I say about the waiters? All smart, cute, talented, cool—adorable!!!

• My CIT year was a dream come true—four cabins of girls and four of boys learning outdoor skills and the philosophy and psychology of becoming a good counselor made for a meaningful and fun summer.

• When our co-ed CIT Israeli folk dance group entertained in Hendersonville, Asheville, and at Little Switzerland, I was so proud to be Jewish; Judaism took on a much deeper and richer meaning for me.

• Falling in love on Day One (CIT year), lasting throughout the summer and beyond. On the last day, as the buses pulled out, your heart really hurt—part of it was on the bus.

In February 1961 Daddy unexpectedly passed away. He was only 42. I felt I could never go back to camp—not without him. It seems I saw a lot of Harry and Herman that year. They wrote inspirational letters and we had many

comforting conversations. To this day I don't know how they collected all the condolence letters and cards and had them beautifully bound in two very large monogrammed blue books. It took a while, but now we love reading them and sharing them with our children, and in a few years with Daddy's great-grands.

The Popkins talked with Mama about the honor of dedicating the new chapel in Daddy's memory: the Elmore

Solomon Chapel. Can you imagine? Never in a million years can we express the gratitude we feel. After that it was never sad returning to camp. Daddy was there.

As I remember the rain hitting the tin roofs and the wonderful storms and the rustling of the wind through the trees and the sound of the doors in the dining hall slightly slamming and George leading us in songs and Alan's bullwhip and his Sermon on the Mount and on and on, *I think my mind lives at Camp Blue Star—I know my heart does.*



The Elmore Solomon Chapel, Camp Blue Star, 1967. Courtesy of Lisa Collis Cohen.

Coming of Age

by Paul N. Siegel

I went to Camp Blue Star for at least five years. It was my coming of age experience and provided my first positive Jewish memory. I almost hate to admit it because Mother and Daddy and the rather amazing Walterboro Jewish community tried valiantly to do the job, but the truth is, I was walking the cultural ledge without a zipline.

I started in cabin P-12 after the train ride from Yemassee. The train stopped for about five minutes to pick up Robbie Novit and me. If I am not mistaken, Sandra Altman (now Poliakoff) was already on board with the Charleston contingent. I recall a white bag lunch and we were away!

My saga began that day in June. A month later I returned home to the relative solitude of my rambling old home in Walterboro, a different person. For the first time, being a Jew made sense outside the confines of Temple Mt. Sinai and the conflicted emotions of an apprehensive preadolescent boy. Hey, being a kibbutznik with comrades had its rewards! Being Jewish could mean being strong.

I must say that the subsequent summers spent in the Blue Ridge gave me the boost I needed toward becoming a man. Heck, among those city slickin' Jewish boys, I could excel at swimming, shooting, softball, canoeing, and most importantly, leadership. I recall being shocked when my mother showed me my written camper evaluations. Was I really that exceptional? Might I merit a "superlative"? I began to believe. Camp Blue Star did that for me in an era of post-Holocaust haze.

Let me temper these comments by acknowledging that my predecessors were not meek. They were dreamers, community builders, and, when called for, had the toughest fists in town. But my summers at Blue Star were right out of Hollywood. Once the Pioneers were feted at a CBS breakfast show with realistic life-size cutout television cameras. Not until later did I realize that the acronym did not stand for Columbia Broadcasting System, but Camp Blue Star. That place was the center of the universe while I was there and I became a "player," no longer an insecure bystander.



Paul Siegel (middle row, left) and his T-2 cabinmates at Camp Blue Star, ca. 1960. Courtesy of Paul Siegel.

Fond Memories

by Ann Meddin Hellman

I went to Blue Star for about six summers, starting when I was five and a half. This may seem a little young by today's standards, but my mother felt that since my older sister, Eve, was there, it would be okay. Eve wasn't the only person she knew would be looking out for me. Mama's best friend from her childhood days in Augusta, Georgia, was Elsie Tunkle Solomon, and Elsie was in charge of Blue Star—or so Mama thought.

Among my fondest memories were swimming in the lake, canoeing, archery, and horseback riding. Canoeing on the lake was great. Before you were allowed to take a canoe out by yourself, you had to pass a test which included swamping the boat and getting it back to the shore. I am proud to say I passed and was authorized to take a canoe out by myself.

The thing that was the most difficult for me at camp was changing divisions

every other year. Because I started school early, my friends were a year older than I was. Blue Star changed divisions by age, not grade. I was with a different group every other year, causing difficulty in making lifelong friends.

It was my Jewish experiences at Blue Star that are truly etched in my mind. Camp was the only place I ever studied Hebrew. Shabbats were heartwarming and were carefully choreographed to set the day apart from the rest of the week. We wore all-white shorts and shirts, or blue shorts and white shirts—everything was different. Havdalah was the prettiest service ever.

More than 60 years since my first experience at camp, my granddaughter, Mia Hellman, attended Blue Star this year for her first time. No, she isn't five and a half, but she is looking forward to going back next year. As Mia says, "Camp was awesome!"



The author practicing Hebrew at Camp Blue Star. Courtesy of Ann Meddin Hellman.

Choosing a Summer Camp

by Janette Rosen Krupsaw

In the 1930s I went to Rabbi Wrobel's camp near Hendersonville, North Carolina. I was very young and stayed in the rabbi's family unit at first. I was sent because my parents, Jacob and Bessie Rosen—who had immigrated to Asheville from Poland with my sister and oldest brother in 1920—supplied the camp with food from their grocery store. They wanted me to be with other Jewish children and not just with "the maid" all summer. I have few other memories about it.

My next experience was as a counselor at Blue Star—also near Hendersonville—soon after it opened. There was a polio epidemic in the area and my brother was a young doctor, so he became a volunteer at the clinic. The family did not want me to be in the house for fear of contagion. I had known Blue Star's director Herman Popkin from my days as president of the state BBYO (B'nai B'rith Youth Organization). I contacted him and he hired me.

To minimize the chance of contracting polio, we were not allowed to leave camp grounds on our days off. Katya Delakova (1914–1991) and Fred Berk (1911–1980) were the dance instructors. I learned the tune to sing the blessing after meals, rather than mumbling as my father had taught me. I went only the one year; the following year my mother had a heart attack and I was needed at home.

In the 1960s my three children went to Camp Judaea near Hendersonville. My mother and sister selected the camp because they were Hadassah supporters and, living in Asheville, they wanted the children to be nearby for the summer. (We were living in Worcester, Massachusetts, at the time.) Mom got to see them the weekend before and the weekend after camp, and my sister and brother-in-law visited on visitors' day. Since my kids, who are now in their 50s, attended several other Jewish camps and day schools as well, their only special memories of Camp Judaea were that they were near Bubbe and Aunt Ida.

The kids went to camps all over the Northeast until they were 13, when they went on bar and bat mitzvah pilgrimages to Israel with the Jewish Agency—my eldest son in 1967, my daughter in 1970, and the youngest son in 1972. They attended day schools in St. Louis, Syracuse, Worcester, Staten Island, and Elizabeth, New Jersey. We selected camps by locations

and costs, depending on where we were living, and we chose schools for the same reasons.

At age 14 my eldest informed us that the world was not made up totally of Jews and he needed to enter public school. The other two also entered public school at that age. We moved frequently because of my husband Mike's employment.

With the kids in public school, we did not have to worry about day school locations.

The children got a great deal of Jewish education from the day schools, but I do not recall anything of a religious nature from the camps. In fact, my son stopped putting on tefillin because no one else in his bunk did. I asked the children what they remember today of camp and they recall nothing religious. It was possibly our choices. Yet I do believe in Jewish summer camps. They have great value for young people from small communities who might not otherwise meet other Jewish youngsters. In most instances they learn a lot and live a positive Jewish experience, and take home a new and positive outlook on things Jewish.



Katya Delakova and Fred Berk, ca. 1948. Photo by Gerda Peterich. Syracuse University Archives. Between 1950 and 1979, Delakova and Berk—first together, and then just Berk—taught dance at Camp Blue Star. Born in Vienna, both dancers performed with celebrated modern dancer Gertrud Kraus. In 1939 Katya fled Europe and immigrated to the United States; Fred came to America in 1941.

BBYO

by Rachel Lourie

My experiences at B'nai B'rith Youth Organization (BBYO) summer programs enhanced my identity as a Jew, a leader, and a member of a greater community. During my first summer at a BBYO program, I learned skills and acquired resources that would help me lead my fellow Jewish teens in the greater Columbia region. I also met Jews from around the world, and was able to understand why my culture and heritage are links to something bigger than myself. I learned new leadership tactics, made new friends, heard new prayers, and came into contact with more types of Jewish people than I thought possible. It was an incredible experience.

My second summer at BBYO, as a program coordinator for 50 younger teens from across the country, I was able to put all I'd learned to the test. I was presented with an amazing opportunity to inspire these teens and help them come to terms with the importance of Judaism in their lives. My experiences at these Jewish summer camps helped shape me into the person I am today, and I could not be more thankful.

Judaeans Through and Through

by Josh Lieb

I spent almost every summer after the age of eight at camp, but only the first two at Jewish camps—unless you count the time me and Eric Jablon, Brian Milman, Kyle Reeves, and others took over a cabin at a YMCA camp in Spartanburg.

I was a member of the Ofarim and Sofim—the first and second year campers—at Camp Judaea in Hendersonville, North Carolina. This would have been in the summers of 1983 and 1984, thereabout. CJ is an old-fashioned, hard-core, religious, Zionist camp, overseen by Hadassah. We sang “The Star Spangled Banner” and “HaTikvah” every morning at the flagpoles. My sister, Dana, had already been attending for several years when I first started. I think she might have gone to Tel Yehudah afterwards—the camp that CJ kids “graduated” to—which was up in New Jersey somewhere. I know my cousin Rachel Cohen, granddaughter of Carl and Helen Proser of Greenville (they owned Cancellation Shoe Mart), went to TY after CJ. There’s now a “Denny Cohen Memorial Darkroom,” named after Rachel’s photographer father, at CJ.

Camp Judaea was fat with campers when I attended. I know because, while I was there, they had to add a new “class” of campers, the Chalutzim, whose age was between the Sofim and the older Keshers. The campers came mostly from the Southeast. The Tennessee kids seemed a lot like us South Carolinians. The Puerto Ricans seemed more sophisticated (Josh Gold taught me how to swear in Spanish). The Floridians were softer and more spoiled than those of us from South Carolina, except for Marc Braun, whose father, I

was told, owned a nightclub. Marc was tough and loud. I was always a little scared of him, until one day I found out it was important to him that I like him. He was a nice kid. After that I wasn’t scared of Marc Braun.

There was a fat kid from Florida who was pretty intolerable—he’ll go nameless. Mouthy, spoiled. Even worse was the skinny kid from Florida who did nothing but whine. Again, I won’t name him (but I do remember), because he probably grew out of it. I don’t remember any of the Florida kids having southern accents.

One year there was even this weird, absurdly skinny kid from New York. Big mop of black hair, big nose. He looked like a Jewish scarecrow. He had one of those Queens accents you don’t hear anymore. He used the word “freakin’” as an adjective, probably five times a sentence. We were all pretty scandalized.

Our big joke was to ask the counselor if he wanted a lollipop, then pull down our pants and show him our putzim. This is exactly the kind of memory that should be preserved by the historical society. Honestly, I can’t imagine a job more thankless than trying to wrangle a cabin full of smart-ass Jewish eight-year-old boys. We were horrible, horrible people. We were exactly why Jewish parents sent their boys to camp.

CJ kept a strictly kosher kitchen. They tried to keep kids from smuggling in candy from outside, but my mom was on the board (she was a macher in Hadassah), so I pretty much got away with murder. The camp was (and I’m sure still is) Shomer Shabbes. The cabins were dark all Shabbat, with the light left on in the bathrooms. Most of us weren’t so strict in our observance at home, so it took getting used to.



Randy Feinberg and Eli “Sonny” Evans at the Young Judaea Convention, Camp Blue Star, June 10–15, 1952. “Two crazies! Two of the funniest boys I know!! & I mean funny.” Gift of Sandra Garfinkel Shapiro. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

We benched after every meal—it was like a big, wild, fun sing-along. I’d never benched before, really, and I remember having absolutely no clue what the hell everyone else was singing. But I caught on pretty quickly. It’s amazing what sheer repetition can do. That was definitely a useful thing I took away from camp.

The Israeli folk dancing we did every afternoon was less useful, but pretty fun. Maybe we didn’t do it every afternoon. It sure feels that way.

The camp is situated in the hills of Western North Carolina. It’s green and wooded, all that stuff. Beautiful, I’m sure, but of course all that beauty was wasted on us. It was hot as the devil. Lots of bugs. But I think that’s what summer camp is supposed to be like.

When it rained, one of the hills turned to pure mud. We would slide down it like it was a water park. We’d strip off and

rinse clean before we came into the cabin, but our muddy clothes were generally kicked under the bunks to mildew. That smelled nice.

Maybe as a result of this kind of fun, I caught walking pneumonia at the end of my second summer at CJ. I was burning up, and this kid named Lance from Georgia felt my forehead and told me I should see the camp doctor. Man, was I sick. They pumped me full of some brutal antibiotics, and I spent about two full days puking into a bucket. My parents came to pick me up a day early. I could’ve gone to the final dinner—I’d asked this beautiful girl named Naomi to be my date—but by that time I felt so separate from the rest of camp, I just decided to go home.

In general, though, they’re all wonderful memories, and I’d gladly send my kids to such a place, when they’re old enough.

by Dana Lieb

I attended Camp Judaea in Hendersonville, North Carolina, for several years in the early 1980s. Thanks to my mom being an avid Hadassah leader and member of the Camp Committee, I was pretty much destined to attend CJ—and happy that I did. A Judaeans through and through, I started as a camper and eventually returned as a counselor and arts-and-crafts assistant. As a kid I naturally gravitated to the camping experience. I loved having my own bunk space, organizing my camp clothes—with name tags written with a Sharpie—and having a crew of friends completely separate from my life at home. That said, I will always recall with dread the nasty, mildewed showers, cabin chores, and swimming classes in CJ’s freezing, black water “swimming pool.”

Although as a youngster I had no interest in attending a semi-religious camp (this was an extra facet of Camp Judaea that I simply endured every summer), I now value the Jewishness of this experience. I still remember the after-dinner prayers, Hebrew songs and dances, and history lessons disguised in programs. I am not particularly observant, but I think having this knowledge helped me better identify with my religion. Camp Judaea was a bit different from other Jewish camps

in that it also had a strong Zionist component that found its way into almost all aspects of the camp. To this day I appreciate this unique facet of CJ and believe it has affected my personal and political beliefs as a proud, Zionist adult.

I am embarrassed to say, CJ was so long ago that I can’t recall too many particular stories or moments (almost makes me wish I had been better at keeping a journal, growing up). No matter—memories of my Camp Judaeans times will always evoke a smile.



Dancing by the campfire, Juniors, Young Judaea Conclave, December 2–4, 1966. Courtesy of Camp Judaea, Hendersonville, NC.

Southern Jews and Civil Rights

SJHS Meets in Birmingham, Alabama • November 1–3, 2013

For the first time in 25 years, the Southern Jewish Historical Society (SJHS) will meet in Alabama's "Magic City" this November. In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Birmingham Civil Rights Campaign of 1963, the conference will explore the relationship between Jews and African Americans in the struggle for justice and equality.

The conference begins Friday morning, November 1st, with a guided tour led by longtime leaders of Birmingham's Jewish community. After lunch at the 16th Street Baptist Church, conference-goers will walk across the street to tour the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, one of the nation's leading civil rights museums. In the afternoon, attendees return to the church, site of the infamous bombing in September 1963 that killed four young girls, for a roundtable discussion involving local people who lived through the events of the 1960s in Birmingham. After



SJHS conference-goers will visit the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. Birmingham Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Friday night services at Temple Emanu-El, scholar and activist Julian Bond will deliver a keynote address.

On Saturday, the conference shifts to the University of Alabama, with panels titled "Alabama's Jewish Communities," "Building Classical Reform Judaism in the South," "Jews and Southern Civil Rights," and a plenary session led by Mark K. Bauman, "Listening to the Quiet Voices: Allen Krause's Conversations with Southern Rabbis during the Civil Rights Era."

Of special interest to South Carolinians, on Sunday morning Scott M. Langston and Hollace Ava Weiner will explore "The Charleston Diaspora," focusing on families in Ohio and Texas with South Carolina connections. The conference concludes with a "Meet the Authors" session highlighting three new books on southern Jewish history. For more information, go to: <http://www.jewishsouth.org/upcoming-conference>.

Zola Joins Jewish Studies in Spring 2014

In the spring of 2014, Dr. Gary P. Zola will be in residence at the College of Charleston as the fifth Norman and Gerry Sue Arnold Distinguished Visiting Professor of Jewish Studies. He is executive director of The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (AJA) and a professor of the American Jewish Experience at Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in Cincinnati. Founded by Professor Zola's teacher and mentor, Rabbi Marcus, the AJA is the world's largest free-standing research center dedicated solely to the study of the American Jewish experience.

Zola is a historian of American Jewry who specializes in the development of American Reform Judaism. Among many publications, he authored the biography *Isaac Harby of Charleston, 1788–1828: Jewish Reformer and Intellectual* (1994), *The Americanization of the Jewish Prayer Book and the Liturgical*



Development of Congregation Ahawath Chesed (2008), and *"We Called Him Rabbi Abraham": Lincoln and American Jewry* (forthcoming). He edited *Women Rabbis: Exploration and Celebration* (1996) and *A Place of Our Own: the Rise of Reform Jewish Camping* (2006).

At the College of Charleston next spring, Zola will teach a full-credit course on southern Jewish history that will be available as a distance learning opportunity for HUC students in Cincinnati, Los Angeles, and New York. He will also present a Sunday morning lecture to the Charleston community.

Dr. Zola is preceded as an Arnold Visiting Professor by Gershom Gorenberg, Jeffrey Gurock, Allan Nadler, and Linda Gradstein. These individuals, each distinguished in his or her field, have had a powerful impact on College of Charleston students, on the community, and in broadening the Jewish Studies curriculum.

Good Works

by Martin Perlmutter

Next year marks the 20th anniversary of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. The Society has a terrific track record over its first two decades, exceeding even the vision and hopes of our founding president, Isadore Lourie, o.b.m. The newsletters and meetings we produce twice a year, the historical markers we have erected across the state, the cemetery records we have collected and made available on the Internet, and the website maintained by the incomparable Ann Meddin Hellman all are evidence of a vibrant society pursuing important and ambitious projects. The Jewish Heritage Collection at the Addlestone Library, under Dale Rosengarten's energetic leadership, has amassed a treasure trove of material that provides a foundation for historical research on southern Jewish life. And the College of Charleston's regular course offerings on southern Jewish history reflect the impact the Society has had on academia. South Carolina's Jewish history has become increasingly prominent on the national and international map, and the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina is a major reason for this newfound attention.

Among all the "good works" the Society has inspired, one of our most significant achievements may be at the personal level. JHSSC has encouraged scores of individuals to record their life histories, compose memoirs, and preserve family stories for future generations. Our newsletters provide constituents with an opportunity not only to write about their experiences, but to publish what they write. Some write out of a sense of duty; others are motivated by pride and nostalgia. By reflecting on the adversities and opportunities that shape who we are, we contribute to the permanent record of our time and place. We build a usable past and ease the burdens of history for our children and our children's children.

But we cannot do it alone. JHSSC needs your support. As a grassroots organization, the Society depends on your annual membership dues to underwrite its activities. Our Pillars, who commit to donate \$1,000 a year for five years, are our financial backbone. To continue and expand the work of the Society, we need to add to our list of staunch supporters. Please consider becoming a Pillar.

Yes, I/we want to become a Pillar of the JHSSC.

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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Check enclosed \$ _____ (includes annual membership)

Pillars

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Doris Baumgarten, Aiken, SC
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Harold Brody, Atlanta, GA
Barry and Ellen Draisen, Anderson, SC
David and Andrea Draisen, Anderson, SC
Lowell and Barbara Epstein, Charleston, SC
Harold I. Fox, Charleston, SC
Phillip and Patricia Greenberg, Florence, SC
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