

THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of SOUTH CAROLINA



Courage, Conscience,
and Conformity —

South Carolina Jews
and the
Civil Rights Movement

Register now
for spring meeting
in
Charleston, SC
April 16-17

Spring 2016

Volume XXI
Number 1



THE
JEWISH
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

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The JHSSC newsletter is
published twice a year.

Current and back issues
can be found at
jhssc.org

On the cover: Senator Isadore Lourie speaks at the 1986 dedication of the Columbia freeway (also known as Highway 277) named for his good friend Isaiah DeQuincey Newman (1911–1985), pictured in the banner. Elected to the South Carolina Senate in 1983, Newman was the first African American to serve in that legislative body since Reconstruction. Isadore E. Lourie Papers, South Carolina Political Collections, University of South Carolina.

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Letter from the President

Since moving from South Carolina to Washington, D.C., in 1976, I would never have guessed I'd be writing to you as the new president of JHSSC. How that happened is a tribute to the richness

of the experience available to those who become active in the Society. Several years ago I started writing articles for the magazine about various branches of my family in South Carolina, dating as far back as 1842. I had not had a history class since high school, so it was a little daunting, but the enthusiasm and resources offered by Dale Rosengarten, Rachel Barnett, Marty Perlmutter, Alyssa Neely, Ann Meddin Hellman, and others gave me the courage to reconnect with relatives and embark on family research projects.

As co-VP of Archives and Historical Sites this past year, I worked with Society officers and fellow board member Rhett Mendelsohn on the Orangeburg portion of the fall 2015 conference. While researching Jewish life in small towns similar to Eutawville, where I grew up, I met some fascinating people, such as 90-year-old Bernie Rubenstein of Elloree, Orangeburg County historian Gene Atkinson, and Becky Ulmer from St. Matthews, a founder of the Elloree Heritage Museum and Cultural Center.

The fall meeting, "A Tale of Two Cities," featured terrific programs and speakers. Historic Columbia co-sponsored the Columbia presentations, which covered the capital's early Jewish history and 20th-century merchants. In the old commercial district of Orangeburg, we unveiled an historical marker commemorating the city's Jewish merchants and notable residents, followed by a panel discussion at Temple Sinai, where a tiny congregation is holding on despite declining membership.

Our upcoming meeting on April 16–17 in Charleston tackles the complex relationship between southern Jews and the Civil Rights Movement. Most of us are aware of the active involvement of Jews in the desegregation struggles of the 1960s, from Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel marching with Dr. Martin Luther King in Selma to the disproportionate number of Jewish Freedom Riders. While the majority of activists came from the North, Jewish progressives in the South also took risks and became involved. That said, most southern Jews, a small minority throughout the

region, went along with the white, gentile majority and supported the status quo in race relations. It goes without saying now that no-change meant many of our neighbors would continue to suffer their inferior status with all its disadvantages. I wish I could say it went without saying then, but it did not.

We plan to explore all sides of the issues confronting the region and the nation in this explosive period. Jews in the South felt conflicted in their identity: their forebears in Europe had experienced centuries of antisemitism and outright violence, yet as southerners they were very much accepted in white society. This acceptance, however, came at a price, particularly for people in isolated rural communities. White skin privilege came with the expectation of political conformity on race issues. For Jewish families there was legitimate fear for their safety and economic well-being if they antagonized the mainstream community; the memory of Leo Frank's lynching resonated with some, and synagogue bombings were not a hypothetical concern. Northern Jews who clamored for social justice for blacks brought unwanted attention to southern Jews, whose racial views were shaped by the mores of the

Jim Crow system.

Examining the thoughts and actions of South Carolina Jews during the civil rights era of the mid-twentieth century, we expect to find much to be proud of, but we also are determined to investigate aspects of the subject that make us uncomfortable.

In this issue of the Society's magazine and at our April meeting, we will take a look at the integration of Rivers High School in Charleston and the role particular Jewish political leaders played in pushing for change. JHSSC is excited to welcome

USC history professor Bobby J. Donaldson as our keynote speaker on Saturday, and to have the College of Charleston's African American Studies Program as our co-sponsor. With the outpouring of grief and outrage over the horrific murders at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston in June 2015, I am gratified that the Society is tackling this thorny subject that just won't go away, and has designed a thought-provoking spring program.

Hope to see you in April.

Ernest L. Marcus



Left to right: Carol Aronson Kelly, Rhett Aronson Mendelsohn, Faye Becker Glancz, and Martin Becker at the dedication of the new historical marker in downtown Orangeburg, November 8, 2015. Photo: Dale Rosengarten.

Entering Rivers

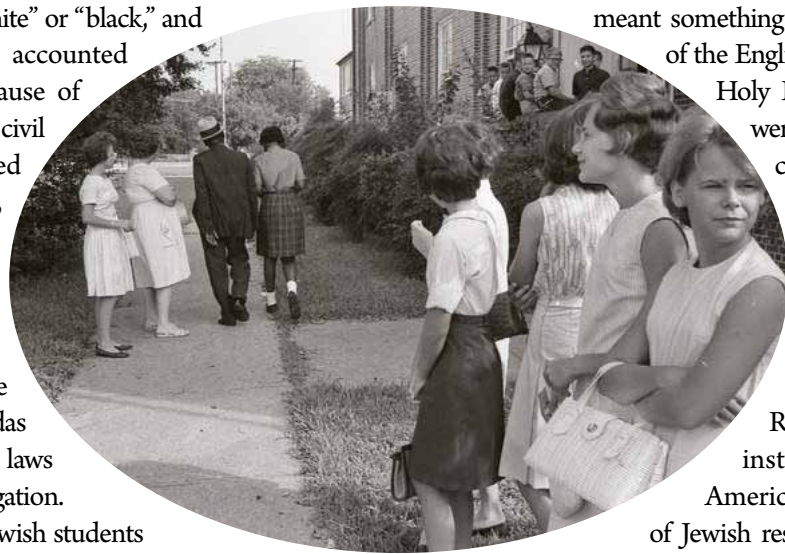
by Millicent E. Brown, Ph.D.

Before entering Rivers High School in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1963, I am sure I had almost no knowledge of what it meant to be Jewish. In my narrowly constructed southern world, people were either “white” or “black,” and physical presentation alone accounted for the separation. But because of my parents’ involvement in civil rights struggles that allowed intermittent, although brief, views of human interactions beyond the simplicity of my hometown, I had traveled to gatherings that brought people of good conscience and progressive social agendas together, in spite of pervasive laws and notions insisting on segregation.

Therefore, when I met Jewish students at Rivers, I knew the words to and could convincingly sing “Hava Nagila.” I could enthusiastically dance the “hora,” and was amused to find that my closest and most enduring ally, Barbara Solomon, claimed an inability to do either! I had learned these small insights into Judaism in safe places where being Jewish had meant solidarity with black struggle. These were not typical “whites,” but a subset of social activists who dared be seen with black people, advocate for our constitutional rights, and confront dangerous situations on our behalf. The Jewish students at Rivers were not nearly as noble as my lofty images. But the fact is, of the first eight

people to say hello to me that September 1963 day at school, sit next to me in class without pushing their chairs away in disgust, stand next to me in the lunchroom, seven were Jewish. That has always meant something to me. And the “coincidence” of the English teacher waiting until a High Holy Day when no Jewish students were present to have an impromptu classroom discussion about the existence of a “superior race” meant even more.

It would be years after my 1966 graduation before I fully appreciated the demographic circumstances that made Rivers so unique an educational institution in a typical, bigoted American city. Substantial numbers of Jewish residents relegated to “that” side of town created a sizeable enough percentage of such students attending one specific public school. Whether understood, respected, liked or not, they could be marginalized, but not oppressed as were blacks because of the historic differences between the two groups. At 15 years of age, I was far from able to deconstruct the realities of ancient, global ethnic and religious legacies. It was enough to know that another group’s experiences were buffering me in subtle ways from the antagonism I would surely have met had I attended a more homogeneous, all-white school with Christian locals a few blocks away.



The author was a plaintiff in *Millicent Brown, et al. vs. Charleston School District 20* (1963). Founding director of “Somebody Had to Do It” Oral History Project, she is principal consultant of Lightbright, LLC Consulting Services.

Top: Jacqueline Ford is escorted by her father into Rivers High School for 8th grade orientation, August 1963, as a consequence of the first successful desegregation case in the state. **Bottom:** A bomb threat was called in to Rivers on the first day of classes, September 3, 1963. Photos courtesy of The Post and Courier. **Middle:** Millicent Brown’s class photo, Rivers High School yearbook, 1965, courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston.

Across the Big Water of Lake Marion: The dismantling of the segregated school system

by Ernest L. Marcus

Considering that we met only a few years ago, Rachel Gordin Barnett and I have a lot in common. She’s married to my cousin Henry; she’s great friends with my sister-in-law Amy; and we were both born in 1956 and grew up in the sole Jewish family in our respective small towns, about 15 miles apart on opposite sides of Lake Marion, connected by the Santee bridge. As such, we experienced, at the same time, the disintegration of the whites-only public schools. Summerton and Eutawville were majority black townships with separate public schools for whites and blacks. When the 1964 Civil Rights Act was passed, schools were forced to dismantle the dual system. “Segregation academies” sprang up rapidly in South Carolina, from 16 prior to integration to over 200 by 1975. In rural areas some 90 percent of the white children in public schools ended up in the private school system.

As you will read below, the decision by Rachel’s family and mine to abandon the public school system and send each of us to an “independent” school was complicated. For all white families there was concern over inattention to and lack of funding for the black schools. The general belief was that the black schools were not of the same quality as the white schools, so there was fear among families that merging the schools all at once would result in a precipitous drop in the quality of their children’s education. While uncomfortable to admit, I think white resistance to integration was motivated by other factors as well. Racism certainly was one. Also, the independent schools must have been attractive to white parents because of the perception that other students (white or black) would be from families that were better off, financially. For Jewish families, mindful of their people’s own history of exclusion and persecution, the decision was especially complex.



Groundbreaking for Holly Hill Academy, 1969. Photo from 1971 Holly Hill Academy yearbook, courtesy of Ernest L. Marcus.

The Closing of Eutawville Elementary

by Ernest L. Marcus

Eutawville is a small town in the South Carolina Lowcountry where my peddler grandfather met my grandmother and opened a dry goods store at the turn of the 20th century. My father, Harry Marcus, was mayor of the town from 1948 to 1971. In the 1950s, with the federal government moving incrementally to address civil rights issues, in particular the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision, my older siblings recall that Dad joined the local Citizens’ Council—for a few months anyway, as the Eutawville organization didn’t last long. During the early years these Citizens’ Councils in the South (sometimes called “White Citizens’ Councils”) included community leaders but, over time, took on fringe elements. I know nothing further about how my father felt concerning the social changes

going on around him in the ’50s and ’60s. Nearly all of his clientele in the store were black and he seemed immersed in their community, knowing generations of families as friends, constituents (after the 1965 Voting Rights Act), and customers. To advertise his business, he purchased air time on the local gospel station.

From 1961 to 1965 I attended Eutawville Elementary School, serving grades one through seven (six to eight pupils per grade, in my memory), with more than one grade sometimes combined in a single room. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 gave the federal government the means to enforce desegregation and defund schools that discriminated, and two years later local officials responded by closing our school, never to reopen it. Most of my classmates transferred to public school in





nearby Holly Hill. Several families, including ours, began sending their children more than 30 miles away to Wade Hampton Academy in Orangeburg. For me, it was the beginning of culture shock as I left my tiny school, a block from the rear of my dad's store. With nearly 600 students, WHA was one of the first and largest of the

Honor and Tradition . . . The Pulse of Our School
The first celebration of Wade Hampton's birthday evinces the honor and tradition so inherent in our school. Martha Robinson, leading a riderless horse, was followed by the drummers, Jimmy Rembert and Tom Porter. Ceremoniously the three flags were presented to the school from the Wade Hampton Legion and a twenty-one gun salute was fired.



Clockwise from top left: Wade Hampton Academy (WHA) students in black face, posing as the Supremes (1969 yearbook); the "survivor" pin (1967 yearbook) bestowed on WHA graduates; masthead of May 1969 WHA school newspaper; WHA students commemorate Wade Hampton's birthday (1967 yearbook). Previous page: the author's 1967 WHA 5th grade class photo. All images courtesy of Ernest L. Marcus.

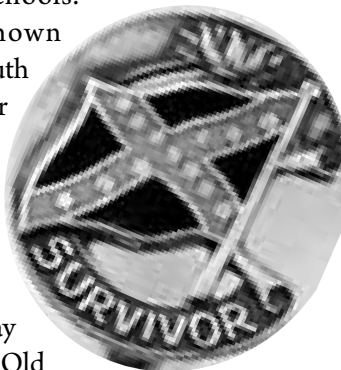
new "independent" schools, the white community's answer to what was perceived by some to be the federal government's forced mixing of the races in public schools.

Wade Hampton was a well-known Confederate general and governor of South Carolina. His Democratic nomination for governor was supported by the Red Shirts, a group that sought the removal of blacks from public office after Reconstruction. Certainly the choice of school name was intended to send a message. Known as the Rebels, the athletic teams wore gray and gold, not-so-subtle references to the Old South. On Wade Hampton's birthday, just for fun, the "Yankees" in the school were captured and held for ransom in the study hall. Graduating seniors received Confederate flag pins with "Survivor" emblazoned on them.

Church and state were not as separate as I might have hoped (my older sister and I were the only Jewish children in the school). Holy Roller preachers periodically came to the gym for an all-out "saving" of young souls. Luckily, as a veteran of the Royal Ambassadors for Christ summer camp (another story!), I knew how to stay away from the baptismal water.

I can't say I was unhappy at WHA, but I felt an underlying current of racism and danger in Orangeburg (we were there when the Orangeburg Massacre took place in February 1968) that I did not feel at Holly Hill Academy, which opened in 1970, in time for me to transfer for my freshman year. While the school sports teams were called the HHA Raiders, with obvious Confederate connotations, the administration and students did not exude the same feeling of outright racism, and it was a place where I found success and acceptance. I recently had a conversation with my former principal, Dr. R. J. Steeley, who confirmed that the school's founders believed the creation of the academy was entirely about the quality of the education rather than avoidance of racial mixing.

As someone who considers himself a typical Jewish liberal, it is easy to criticize the decisions of my parents. Attending two "segregation" academies is not something I feel good about. Still, I can see that it was a period of uncertainty and the Jewish community felt



stuck in the middle. The identification of Jews as white gave them a much higher social standing but, at the same time, their own history as victims of antisemitism made them more sensitive to the racism around them. Not surprisingly, particularly in small towns where African Americans made up the majority of the population, the path of least resistance was to go along with the rest of the white community and avoid being criticized and even ostracized.

Holly Hill Academy's senior officers, left to right: Vice President Ernie Marcus, President Billy Workman, Treasurer Rick Cummings, Reporter David Shingler, and Secretary Reg Munden, from the 1974 yearbook, courtesy of Ernest L. Marcus.



When the Saints Go Marching In

by Rachel Gordin Barnett

In the spring of 1970, I was in the eighth grade, looking forward to cheerleader tryouts for our beloved Summerton High School. I had been a JV cheerleader in junior high and it was time to move up to high school. I didn't know (nor care) about a fourth circuit ruling that demanded total desegregation of our public schools. You see, I grew up in Summerton, South Carolina, home of Briggs v. Elliott, which ultimately became part of the landmark Supreme Court case of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. Being 14 years old is very time consuming, and I was truly unaware of the historic significance of this issue. But on a spring evening, my father came home from his drugstore and handed my mother a stack of forms. "Go ahead and register them," he said. "We have no other option."

That meant my siblings and I were headed to Clarendon Hall, the private, all-white school, formed in 1965. Schools such as Clarendon Hall were established when desegregation began in the '60s. Baptist-supported, the all-white refuge was located on the outskirts of our small farming town.

I knew a few kids at Clarendon, but my friends had remained at the public school throughout the "choice" period. That is, every spring a form came home from the school district



Mrs. Miriam B. Gordin
History & Speech

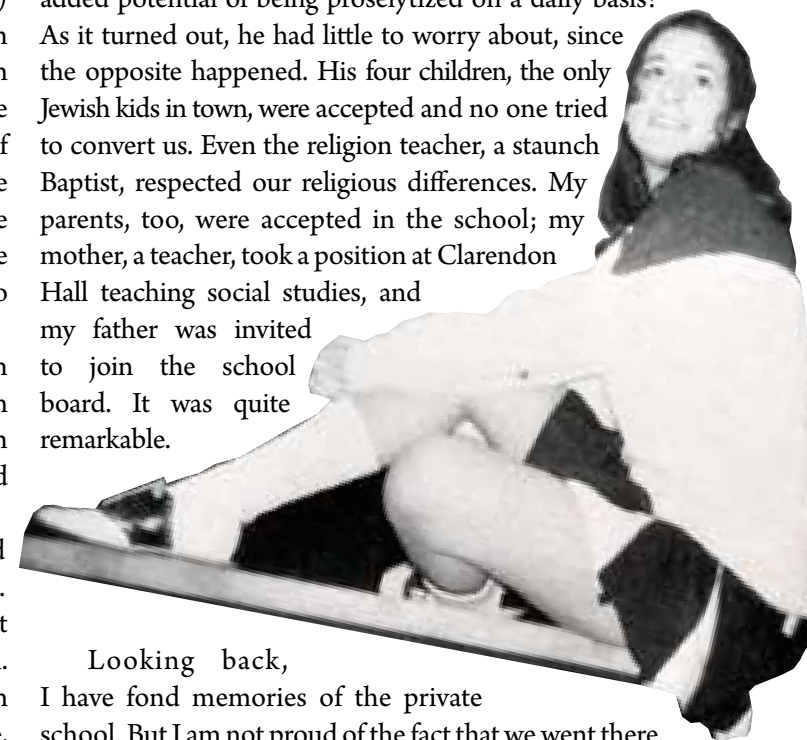
and you would select your school. We had a few African-American students in our school and, to me, this was not a big issue. We all got along—though, looking back as an adult, I wonder how those few black students felt.

I had to trust my parents. I have no doubt that Clarendon Hall was not their choice. Indeed, when the school was first formed, I vaguely recall some of the founders visiting

my parents to encourage them to send us to CH. At that time, my father had no interest. This was a Baptist-supported institution and it was tough enough to be Jewish in a small town without the added potential of being proselytized on a daily basis! As it turned out, he had little to worry about, since the opposite happened. His four children, the only Jewish kids in town, were accepted and no one tried to convert us. Even the religion teacher, a staunch Baptist, respected our religious differences. My parents, too, were accepted in the school; my mother, a teacher, took a position at Clarendon Hall teaching social studies, and my father was invited to join the school board. It was quite remarkable.

Looking back, I have fond memories of the private school. But I am not proud of the fact that we went there. A white-flight school really didn't reflect the values that my parents instilled in us. I suppose it was more about the place and the times. Mom and Dad were fairly liberal, with a social conscience—at least for South Carolina at the time. When it came to their kids' education, however, they just wouldn't risk it. This was a new educational landscape, and as the white

Above: The author, Clarendon Hall's head cheerleader in 1974, her senior year, from the 1974 Clarendon Hall yearbook, courtesy of Rachel Gordin Barnett.

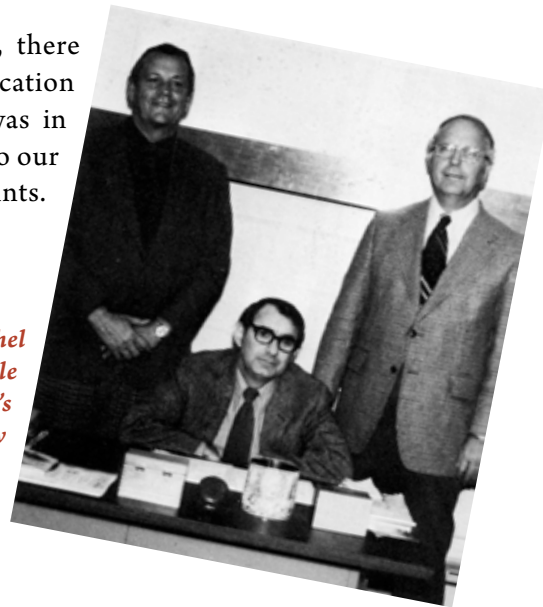




community pulled out of the public schools, there was great uncertainty as to what type of an education would remain. So they did what they felt was in their children's best interest and off we went to our new school, Clarendon Hall, home of the Saints.

*Oh, when the Saints
Go marching in!*

Left: Sporting a halo and wings, senior Rachel Gordin demonstrates why she was voted female with the most school spirit. Right: The author's father, David Gordin (seated) with fellow Clarendon Hall board members Henry Rickenbaker and Leslie Tindal. Photos from 1974 Clarendon Hall yearbook, courtesy of Rachel Gordin Barnett.



A Southern Jewish Girl's Very Personal Civil Rights Story

by Judy Kurtz Goldman

My father, like many southern Jews, owned a women's clothing store. In the 1950s he hired Thelma, a black woman, to be The Smart Shop's maid. She was so bright and engaging, my father soon promoted her to saleswoman. She continued mopping and dusting, but she also waited on customers. This made her, by many years, the first non-white salesperson on Rock Hill's Main Street.

Now here's where the story gets complicated. There was only one bathroom in the store.

Late one evening, our doorbell at home rang. It was the husband of one of the women who worked in the store, and he was falling-down drunk. When my sister and I (maybe 10 and 13) heard the tumult at the front door, we rushed from our beds to the upstairs landing, so that we could peek through the banisters. Mr. Wingate was bellowing in my father's face, "The ladies don't want no nigger using the bathroom!"

I saw my father stand up straighter, businesslike, a posture I was very familiar with. He took a step toward Mr. Wingate, not away. Of course, everyone who knew my father knew he was fearless. And deeply principled. From my upstairs perch, I watched him gently ease Mr. Wingate back down the front steps onto the grass, toward the driveway and his idling car. As the two men slowly moved together, my father was saying in his soft, southern voice:

"Here's the situation. We have one bathroom. And everyone who works in the store is welcome to use it. Maybe you'd better head on home now."

The next evening, I overheard my father telling Mother the talk on Main Street was that Mr. Wingate had brought a gun to our front door. Why he didn't use it, no one knew.

A decade later, in the early 1960s, Thelma (by then, strictly a saleswoman, no longer a maid) was recognized for her warm personality in a citywide vote. *The Evening Herald* ran a story under the headline: "Furniture Salesman, Maid in Ladies Wear Store Win Acclaim as Rock Hill's Friendliest Employees."

Whose decision was it to call her a maid? I'm sure it was probably still risky to broadcast her sales status. Were the editors protecting her? Protecting themselves? After all, what small-town southern newspaper wanted to rile its customer base? Or did the editors automatically call a black female worker a

maid, regardless of the job she was paid for? Was it the customers who assumed, because of the color of her skin, that she was a maid, even though, every day, all day, she was right there in the front of the store, greeting them by name, ringing up their purchases? Was my father, growing more cautious with age, avoiding putting Thelma in harm's way? Avoiding putting himself in harm's way?



Ben Kurtz, the author's father, circa 1932. Courtesy of Judy Kurtz Goldman.

Meanwhile, in 1961, while I was away at college, eight men from Rock Hill's black Friendship Junior College (along with one outside activist) sat down at McCrory's lunch counter and ordered sandwiches. They were immediately arrested for trespassing and, because money in the Civil Rights Movement was scarce, they refused bail and were sentenced to 30 days' hard labor at the York County Prison Camp. ("Jail, no bail" soon became the strategy that re-energized the nonviolent Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.) The presiding judge was Billy Hayes, a longtime friend of my parents. In an odd personal twist, Billy Hayes and his wife—two years later—bought our family home. He was a lovely man, but he was on the wrong side of history.

In 2015 the Friendship Nine were invited to a ceremony in Rock Hill in which their convictions were overturned. The presiding judge did not expunge their records; he wanted them preserved in the court docket so that future generations would know of the young men's courage. His statement: "We cannot rewrite history, but we can right history." The judge: John C. Hayes III, Billy Hayes's nephew.

After college, in the fall of 1963, I signed on to teach at the first all-white high school in Georgia ordered to admit blacks. Roosevelt High was the largest high school in Atlanta and located in one of its poorest neighborhoods. The situation was so volatile, police were stationed every day on all three floors of the building. My first morning, as part of the lesson, I asked my students to name a famous person they'd like to meet. A white boy's hand shot up. "I wish I could meet President Kennedy," he said, glancing around, making sure all eyes were fastened on him. "I'd tell him to get these niggers out of our school!"

Weeks later, during homeroom, I heard a scuffle in the coatroom and rushed in to find two boys fighting—one white, one black. They were small, so I wedged myself in and pulled them apart. It wasn't until I looked down and saw blood on my

loafers, then looked up to see the black boy's bloody cheek, that I realized the white boy had a knife.

On a warm afternoon in November—still my first year—the principal made an announcement over the loudspeaker. It was 2:30, last period of the day, journalism class. We were assigning articles for the school newspaper. The principal's words: "Our president has been shot." You could hear white students cheering up and down the halls.

It was impossible to grow up in the South in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s, and not feel the rattling effects of segregation. From the side-by-side water fountains in Friedheim's Department Store to the separate waiting rooms in our family doctor's office to the whites-only swimming pool at the YMCA, prejudice was everywhere. But I learned strong lessons that night I leaned through the upstairs banisters. Those lessons were clear. Indelible. They remain as well defined for me as if they were set down in black and white.



Above: Ad for The Smart Shop in The Evening Herald, Rock Hill, SC, February 1936. Below: Main Street, Rock Hill, SC, early 1950s; The Smart Shop is on the left in the foreground. Courtesy of Judy Kurtz Goldman.



Courage, Conscience, and Conformity: South Carolina Jews and the Civil Rights Movement

April 16–17, 2016 ~ Charleston, South Carolina

Spring meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina,
co-sponsored by the College of Charleston's African-American Studies Program

Saturday, April 16

- 11:30 A.M.** Registration
- Noon** Lunch
- 12:45 – 1:45 P.M.** **Let Us Break Bread Together: African Americans, Jews, and South Carolina's Civil Rights Struggle** – Bobby Donaldson, Associate Professor of History, University of South Carolina
- 1:45 – 3:15** Panel Discussion – **Rising to the Challenge: Jewish Politicians in an Age of Change**
Moderator: The Honorable Jean Toal, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of South Carolina (2000–2015)
Panelists: Billy Keyserling, Marvin Lare, Joel Lourie, Jack Swerling
- 3:15 – 3:30** Break
- 3:30 – 5:00** Panel Discussion – **Revisiting Rivers: Reflections on School Desegregation**
Moderator: Jon Hale, Assistant Professor, Department of Teacher Education, College of Charleston
Panelists: Charlie Brown, Millicent Brown, Oveta Glover, Missy Cohen Gold, Robert Rosen, Blanche Weintraub Wine
- 5:30 – 6:45** **Cocktail reception**, Albert and Robin Mercer's residence, 110 Ashley Avenue (corner of Bull Street and Ashley)
Dinner on your own

Sunday, April 17

- 8:30 A.M.** Breakfast
- 9:00** Open JHSSC Board Meeting
- 10:00 – 12:00** Panel discussion – **Against the Tide: Risks and Rewards of Rejecting the Status Quo**
Moderator: Cleveland Sellers, Jr., President, Voorhees College
Participants: Jack Bass, Dan T. Carter, Bill Saunders, Rabbi Robert Seigel
Respondent: Patricia A. Sullivan, Professor of History, University of South Carolina

Hotel reservations

Francis Marion Hotel
387 King Street
Charleston, SC 29403
(843) 722-0600 or
(877) 756-2121

Red Roof Inn
301 Johnnie Dodds Boulevard
Mount Pleasant, SC
(843) 884-1411 or
(800) 733-7663

OR

Special rate:
\$309 per night plus tax

Special rate:
\$114.74 per night plus tax
with group number B242JHSSC1

To get the special rates you must make your reservations before midnight on March 15, 2016, and mention you are with the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina.

Unless otherwise noted, all events will take place in the
Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik Jewish Studies Center,
96 Wentworth Street, College of Charleston

Meeting registration

Online at:
jhssc.org/events/upcoming
with Visa, MasterCard,
Discover, or American Express

By check, payable to JHSSC c/o
Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies
Program – 96 Wentworth Street,
Charleston, SC 29424

Meeting fee: \$50 per person

Questions: Enid Idelsohn, idelsohn@cofc.edu
Phone: (843) 953-3918 ~ fax: (843) 953-7624

“I don’t run from nobody!” *by Hyman Rubin III*

I recall my grandfather, Hyman Rubin, Sr., saying more than once, always with an uncharacteristic double negative for emphasis, “My father had to run from the Cossacks—I don’t have to run from nobody!” Even as a child I took from that statement two powerful ideas: on the one hand, it showed his love and appreciation for the United States of America, a place where the son of poor immigrants could become a state senator, and a place where a prominent Jew had no need to fear persecution. On the other hand, it showed why he felt called to public service and to the fight for racial equality. Fear of pogroms might have forced his ancestors to keep their heads down, but he was free to challenge injustice, and he felt compelled to do so.

Even though he lived in a time when anti-Jewish prejudice was more widespread and acceptable than today, he would never acknowledge it as anything other than “a pinprick of an irritant.” He never excused antisemitism, but he saw its American incarnation as fundamentally different from and less threatening than the form it took in other parts of the world. It might prevent him from playing golf with other legislators at their country club, but it couldn’t stop him from becoming successful in business, winning offices of public trust, and openly challenging his community’s laws and traditions when necessary.

But if the United States was a safe and tolerant place for Jews, South Carolina in the 1950s and 1960s offered no such security for its black citizens. For my grandfather, the racial policies and attitudes of the country (and especially the South) were America’s great moral failing. He never doubted what would cause those policies and attitudes to change: leadership. He was only an amateur historian, but he had an instinctive grasp of the importance of leadership in history. When I was in graduate school the historiographical trend was to emphasize the role that social structures, economic forces, and culture played in determining historical outcomes. Since then I have noticed the scholarly pendulum swinging back towards the importance of individual decisions, and particularly toward the importance of

leadership, in changing the course of events. As a historian my grandfather was ahead of his time.

Understanding that race relations and racial justice were the key issues of his era, and believing that only strong, morally driven, and fearless leadership would win the day, he did all he could to put his beliefs into action. He often told the story of his father, Joseph Rubin, knocking out the “town bully” who had attacked him. I’m quite sure that memory was a formative one for my grandfather, and his work as a private citizen and later as a legislator showed a lifelong commitment to confronting the powerful and defending the powerless. The causes to which he devoted the most energy



Hyman Rubin, Sr., speaking at the Tree of Life Congregation Centennial Kick-off Ceremony, Columbia City Hall, Friday, January 12, 1996, as part of a weekend meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. Photo by Dale Rosengarten.

all fill that bill: protecting the Congaree Swamp from logging, amending the state’s strict no-exceptions ban on abortion, urging state support for blind and elderly citizens. But of all these, he took the greatest pride in his fight for civil rights.

In the early 1960s he publicly advocated desegregation, as well as working behind the scenes to ensure that it occurred peacefully. One of his key contributions was his co-founding, along with University of South Carolina President Tom Jones, of an interracial Luncheon Club—the first of its kind in Columbia, and possibly in South Carolina—to bring white and black leaders together. Recognizing that these leaders were usually brought together by crisis, and had not had the chance to get to know each other before they had to resolve problems, the two believed the Luncheon Club would remedy that. My grandfather also worked closely with downtown business owners, and especially lunch counter operators, to assure them that if they began serving black customers, white patrons would still come. Meanwhile, he encouraged white Columbians to eat at the lunch counters, sometimes providing the lunch money himself!

The same forces that threatened to boycott integrated lunchrooms also tried to take control of Columbia’s city council in 1963, advocating a “segregation ticket” to roll back the changes that had been made. (Lunch counters were desegregated in 1962, but the “white” and “colored” signs were not removed until later

in 1963.) My grandfather was on the opposing “integration ticket,” whose victory led to the end of legal segregation in the city. In these efforts and in his many public speeches opposing discrimination and advocating goodwill, Hyman Rubin, Sr., showed he was not afraid to take unpopular stands in defense of freedom and equality. He received plenty of hate mail (including death threats, as I later learned), but to him that only proved he was on the morally right side. If those who opposed him were motivated by hate, it only showed the weakness of their cause. He was completely dismissive of their threats.

I learned many lessons from my grandfather, some historical, some philosophical, some practical, and some moral. He often said he was too proud to lie or steal: lying and stealing are sneaky, and a proud man does not sneak. I found it humorous, but also insightful: a person who knows himself well can use one flaw (pride) to guard against others (dishonesty, pettiness, greed). More than anything else, though, I remember two things about him: the love and gratitude he felt for this country, and the obligation he felt to make it better. In fulfilling that obligation, he never ran from anybody.

Isadore E. Lourie: Advocate for the Underprivileged

by Jack Swerling

Some years ago the Alabama Bar Association dedicated a memorial in Monroeville to the ideals personified by Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. To mark the ceremony, author Harper Lee wrote a letter to the bar association, which in pertinent part said, “Your profession has always had some real life heroes—lawyers of great courage and uncompromising integrity who did what was right when right was an unpopular and sometimes dangerous thing to do.” Such a man was Isadore E. Lourie, my mentor and hero, whom I had the privilege of working with in his law practice from 1973 to 1983.

A large percentage of our practice involved representing African Americans and other minorities from the Midlands of South Carolina. Our clients trusted Senator Lourie to be a zealous advocate for their cause. They knew by his words, actions, and deeds that he had a sense of compassion for the less fortunate and less privileged members of society. He cherished the trust that people put in him and his goal was to give a voice to those who had no voice. Senator Lourie wanted to improve the quality of life of the people he served in his law practice and in the legislature. Our firm was an oasis for minorities facing legal problems.

Isadore Lourie was born in 1932 in St. George. He entered the University of South Carolina in 1951, and was admitted to the South Carolina Bar in 1956. He married Susan Reiner in 1959, and they had three sons—Lance, Joel, and Neil. Senator Lourie took his skills as a legal advocate and leader and combined them with his talents as a politician to

influence the path of legislation from 1962 to 1992. Susan was his partner in his political quests, as well as in life.

That Isadore Lourie would enter politics and become a successful legislator would surprise no one who knew him. He was president of his senior class in high school, president of the student body at the University of South Carolina, chairman of the USC Young Democrats, president of the South Carolina Young Democrats, co-chairman of Young Democrats for Kennedy, and president of the South Carolina Jaycees. He served as a page in the legislature, was administrative assistant to the House Ways and Means Committee, and later, majority leader of the South Carolina Senate for three years.

In the legislature Senator Lourie was a member of the group known as the Young Turks, who broke from the “old guard” and committed themselves, in his words, to “the cause of social and economic justice for all our citizens . . . this was the anchor of our entire legislative program.” The Young Turks fought for and succeeded in passing legislation that would assist education, teachers, public kindergarten, consumer affairs, minorities, the handicapped, senior citizens, transportation, housing, and workers’ compensation. From their efforts came the Workers’ Compensation Commission, the Consumer Protection Agency, the Public Kindergarten Program, the South Carolina Council on Aging, the South Carolina Commission on Race Relations, and a host of other state programs.

One of Senator Lourie’s most lasting contributions is in the area of race



Isadore Lourie in the South Carolina Senate chamber with Bishop Fred James (l) and Bishop A. C. Jackson on the occasion of the swearing-in of Bishop Jackson's son Darrell Jackson in December 1992. Senator Jackson, who succeeded Senator Lourie, is standing behind the desk with his campaign manager, Joel Lourie. Isadore E. Lourie Papers, South Carolina Political Collections, University of South Carolina.

relations. Early in his career he befriended two of the great African-American civil rights leaders in Richland County—Reverend C. J. Whitaker and Reverend I. DeQuincey Newman. They both recognized the commitment, force, and energy of Isadore Lourie and, together as a team, they began to change the racial landscape. With Senator Lourie’s help, African Americans were appointed to boards and commissions from which they were formerly excluded. They obtained employment in state and county offices, and they began to have a more significant role in politics. In 1972 these men helped elect two of the first African Americans to the South Carolina House of Representatives—I. S. Leevy Johnson and Jim Felder.

Praise for the senator has come from friends in high places. Alex Sanders, Isadore Lourie’s desk mate in the senate, and

former president of the College of Charleston and chief judge of the South Carolina Court of Appeals, reported: “During the tumultuous time of the ’60s, Isadore was one of the most meaningful voices that connected black and white people.”

Governor Dick Riley, who served in the state senate and as secretary of education under President Bill Clinton, described his friend’s impact on South Carolina: “Much of the major legislative accomplishments of the past quarter century are due to the leadership and caring of Isadore Lourie. He’s been there with his colleagues when vision and strength were needed.”

And Fritz Hollings, governor and United States senator, succinctly summed up Senator Lourie’s career: “He was the most progressive lawmaker our state has ever known.”

The Keyserling Family Compass

by Billy Keyserling

When my mother Harriet Keyserling passed away in 2010, I took the liberty of calling her close friend Marty Perlmutter to ask how I should deal with her “Jewish” identity when making arrangements for her burial and what I knew was going to be a huge celebration of her life.

Mother rarely went to Friday night services, did as little as she could get away with for the Women’s Auxiliary, and did not have a lot of patience with the rabbi in Beaufort. At the same time she was devoted to Israel, contributed liberally to Jewish causes, and whenever a smart new family moved to Beaufort from New York, she would ask, “Do you think they are Jewish?”

Fortunately, Marty gave me a way out when he said, “Don’t worry about Harriet and Judaism; she is a prophetic Jew.” While the characterization was new to me, it sounded and felt good, and I have used the phrase to characterize not only my mother, but also my father, his brother, my grandfather, and everyone else in the close family.

When speaking about civil rights it would therefore be short-sighted to speak only about Harriet Keyserling, as my grandfather William, who arrived here in 1888 as a young man running from Tsarist Russia, had such a strong influence on the magnet in our moral compass.

William and his business partner were the first local board members of Penn School on St. Helena Island, a school for freed slaves founded in 1862—the first of its kind in South Carolina. After the Storm of 1893, which devastated Beaufort County and drowned thousands of people on St. Helena, William Keyserling is



Above: the author and his grandfather William Keyserling, 1949. Below: Dr. Herbert Keyserling. Keyserling Family Papers, Special Collections, College of Charleston.



said to have defied the town fathers and taken Clara Barton and the Red Cross, in the dark of the night, out to the islands to help the African-American families who held on. William helped found Beth Israel Congregation, though he rarely attended services. He died from a massive heart attack while presenting the keynote address at an international UJA conference in New York. His last words were, “It is time for the young people to take over.”

William’s eldest son, Leon, followed that same compass. After graduating from Columbia University and Harvard Law School, he became one of the young architects of the New Deal. As legislative assistant to U.S. Senator Robert Wagner, he helped draft the National Industry Recovery Act of 1934, the National Housing Act of 1935, the Wagner National Labor Relations Act of 1935, portions of the Social Security Act of 1935, and the U.S. Housing Act of 1937. He wrote an essay upon which the Full Employment Act of 1946 was based and served as a member and then chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors under President Truman.

After his years in government service, Leon founded and funded the non-profit Council on Economic Progress, and conducted extensive studies for civil rights and labor organizations. In collaboration with his wife, Mary Dublin, he worked on the rights of women and minorities. Leon was one of the principal organizers of the labor/Jewish/African-American coalition that, throughout the 1960s, championed civil rights for all.

My father, Herbert, and Leon were separated in age by the Great Depression. Their dad had lost most of his wealth when he had to sell land to pay farm debt during the crisis and could afford tuition only at the College of Charleston. As a student my father sold his blood for spending money. Nevertheless, as early as his internship at the Medical University of South Carolina, Dad was in the field day and night helping those who otherwise would not have had medical care.

During World War II, Dad joined the navy and, on short notice with no combat training, was deployed to Guadalcanal with the first marine division. At a young age he learned that no matter how much he knew about medicine, there were those who could not be saved. A brutal experience drove him home to Beaufort where he practiced medicine 24/7, tending, primarily, the underserved, most of whom were poor and black. Dad was the second Keyserling on the Penn School Board—another exemplar of the family's moral compass.

Herbert chose as his life partner Harriet Hirschfeld, a well-educated "New York Jew," who for years failed to fit into our small southern town and struggled with her politics and her identity. She and my dad were forced by William to join the country club because they were invited years after William had been blackballed. As a community servant she worked to bring extraordinary performing artists to Beaufort but then faced the challenge of where they could perform. The schools were segregated and because she believed that culture was color blind, she felt compelled to find an integrated venue. Fortunately, the commanding officers of the military bases offered to host the events so that no one would be left out.

Following the Keyserling family compass, Harriet replaced my dad on the Penn School Board and became a close friend of

directors Elizabeth and Courtney Siceoff, who were ostracized in the Beaufort community because of their association with Penn and the Civil Rights Movement. As youngsters we played with black children at Penn, most of whom had been brought into the world by my dad at no charge other than gifts of food, cakes, and sometimes homemade crafts. At Penn, we sat in the front row at Dr. Martin Luther King's leadership retreats on St. Helena Island.

In 1972, when I ran the McGovern campaign, Harriet said she could not help me. But she and her housekeeper, my second mother, traversed the islands to register black voters and then organized some friends to help get the people to the polls on

election day. Subsequently, Harriet and her friends organized a League of Women Voters chapter with a focus on registering voters and seeking opportunities for women and minorities to run for public office.

In 1974 Mother became the first woman elected to serve on county council. There she championed the cause of creating a statue to honor Robert Smalls, former slave turned Union navy captain, then state senator and U.S. congressman. She won, but the county would not allow the statue to be erected on public property, so it was placed at Tabernacle Baptist Church on Craven Street, said to have been Smalls's home church. It is, to my knowledge, the only piece of publicly commissioned art in Beaufort County.

In 1976 Harriet was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives, the first woman from Beaufort to serve in the legislature. For 16 years she

fought for the rights of women and minorities, the arts, the natural environment, and public education. Though not necessarily hers by blood, she followed that same compass William carried with him as he ran from oppression in the Old Country and put to use giving back to those in need.



Above: Leon Keyserling (r) meets with Coretta Scott King, August 1976. Handwritten on back of photo: "Conferences in Atlanta on H H Bill . . . auspices Martin Luther King Center for Social Change."

Below: South Carolina Representative Harriet Keyserling talks with fellow politicians Richard Riley and Nick Theodore. Keyserling Family Papers, Special Collections, College of Charleston.



Milestones: 40 Pillars, 500 Members

by *Martin Perlmutter*

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina has had a tremendous impact in its relatively short history. Our accomplishments include the Jewish Heritage Collection at the Addlestone Library, which, in collaboration with McKissick Museum at the University of South Carolina, produced the landmark exhibit and book *A Portion of the People*; the recording of hundreds of oral histories; a statewide survey of Jewish burial sites; the erection of several historical markers; an informative and attractive website; the bi-annual publication of this remarkable magazine; and bi-annual meetings—all of which have created a vibrant JHSSC community.

The new Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture at the College of Charleston, with its emphasis on research, teaching, and community outreach, assures the College's long-term commitment to southern Jewish history and, by extension, to the activities of the JHSSC. The Society has helped put South Carolina's Jewish history on the map, and in so doing, has created a "buzz" across the nation and made the Jewish South a destination for scholars, journalists, genealogists, and just plain tourists.

College of Charleston faculty and JHSSC stalwarts Adam Mendelsohn, Dale Rosengarten, and Shari Rabin have helped create a new exhibition and book titled *By Dawn's Early Light: Jewish Contributions to American Culture from the Nation's Founding to the Civil War* that includes substantial material from the American South and features the work of Charleston-born artists Theodore Sidney Moise and Solomon Nunes Carvalho. The exhibit will be on display at the Princeton University Art Museum from February 13 through June 12, 2016, and is open to the public free of charge.

Closer to home, JHSSC recently received a \$5,000 grant from the Stanley Farbstein Endowment at the Coastal Community Foundation (CCF) to develop its Jewish cemetery records and to include the exemplary Beaufort burial records on its website. The late Mr. Farbstein cared deeply about South Carolina Jewish cemetery records, was instrumental in starting JHSSC's statewide survey of burials, and single-handedly compiled information on Beaufort's Jewish cemetery. It is fitting his generous bequest to CCF is funding work he himself initiated.

2016 is the year we hope to realize one of the goals our Past Presidents Council set in 2014. The council committed the Society to reaching 40 Pillar memberships—those who pledge \$1000 a year for five years—and 500 dues-paying memberships. We are close on both counts and need your help to make it happen this year. Renew your membership; give a gift membership; become a Pillar. Do it now!

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Register now for the **April 16–17 meeting in Charleston**
See page 10 for more information.