President’s Report
By Robert G. Rose

I write nearly three months after the passing of my friend and mentor, Howie Kiesel. The pain and loss of this wonderful person is still palpable as I am reminded of his life-long support of our community, and especially his dedication to the Jewish Historical Society. Howie worked tirelessly as president of the Society and set a high bar for both dedication and achievement.

Succeeding him as president was a challenge, but he was always there for me with words of encouragement, guidance, and fresh ideas. Moreover, he remained hands on, co-chairing our Lasting Impressions Gala this past May, little more than a week before his passing.

The Society has established a memorial fund in his honor. Please consider a donation in his memory in recognition for all that he accomplished in support of Jewish identity and continuity and the cause of civil rights for all Americans.

This issue of our Newsletter provides a glimpse of the Society’s many programs and activities by which the Society brings our rich communal

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Howard Kiesel, jazz aficionado, leader of Jewish Historical Society

By Robert Wiener, NJJN

Howard Kiesel, a pillar of the Greater Metro-West Jewish community who led several of its major organizations, died of cancer June 11 at his home in Short Hills. He was 89.

Born at what was then Newark Beth Israel Hospital, Kiesel was raised in Hillside. He attended Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and graduated from Newark School of Fine and Industrial Arts as a commercial artist.

Kiesel, an art director and advertising executive by profession, became a leader in the Jewish community in 1965, when he served as president (through 1968) of Temple Sha’arey Shalom in Springfield, which he helped organize, and as co-chair of both its United Jewish Appeal and Israel Bonds campaigns. He was a member of the Community Relations Committee of the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest and a board member of Newark Beth Israel Medical Center and the NJ Healthcare Foundation. He was also vice president of the Hebrew Free Loan Association.

Kiesel was actively involved in the Jewish Historical Society of NJ (JHS) since the mid-1990s, moving up its leadership ranks from secretary in 2000 to its president in 2008. Seven years later he received its Lasting Impressions Award for outstanding leadership in the Jewish community. It was a central part of his life, even after his term expired in 2012.

To Linda Forgosh, executive director of JHS, Kiesel was more than the society’s past president. “He was our heart and soul,” she said. She added, “He was a mentor and a friend. He was clear-headed and clear thinking and best of all, he was a problem solver.”

One of his nine grandchildren, Shira Sky, a Manhattan resident, considered Kiesel and his wife, Audree, as a second set of parents. “My zayda was the rock of so many people’s lives. If anything bad happened he was my first call because he could

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Howard Kiesel
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always make me feel better. I will
always have his voice in my head,”
she told NJN.

Because his father passed away
when Kiesel was just 12 years old,
“he thought he was going to die
very young,” said Sky. “So he
retired at the age of 50 and
devoted himself to being the most
hands-on person he could be.”

She said that Kiesel had a plan
in case he got sick. “If I ever get
cancer, I want to eat pastrami
sandwiches, smoke a cigar, and sit
in the sun. I do not want chemo,”
he told his family, according to Sky.
“He just wanted to live the most
meaningful, best life he could, and
at the very end he fought to stay
alive.”

Parts of his personality were
distinctly unorthodox. His long
curly hair and the diamond stud in
his left earlobe, coupled with his
love of jazz and playing the saxo-
phone, gave Kiesel the appearance
of a proud, aging hipster.

His granddaughter said that tone
of respectful irreverence colored
his attitude toward Judaism. “He
told me you could have the most
religious man who would pray five
times a day but wouldn’t think
twice about screwing you in a
business deal,” she said.

“More than religion, he believed
in Judaism 100 percent,” and often
attended Friday night services at
Sha’arey Shalom. It was there that
he became friendly with its rabbi,
Israel “Sy” Dresner, a civil rights
activist and friend of Dr. Martin
Luther King Jr.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S
REPORT  By Linda Forgosh

One Good Turns Deserves Another

In 2015, I was
contacted by Metro-
West resident, Joel
Glassman, with an
unusual request to
help him find a
plaque that had
hung in Young Israel,
a synagogue that at one time was
located on Weequahic and Maple
Avenues in Newark.

He told me that he had made numer-
ous calls in his attempt to locate this
plaque but was not successful with his
search. His reason for wanting to locate
it was that it had the names of his
grandparents and parents on it.
In the course of our conversation, I
learned that it was his intention to put
this plaque on the wall of his current
synagogue, Bridgewater’s Temple
Shalom, so he could be surrounded by
thoughts and memories of his family.

And since his own daughters were also
members of the Bridgewater syna-
gogue, Glassman hoped that the
plaque would serve to remind them of
how each of them was connected to
their own heritage, but also connected
through the tradition of L’Dor Va Dor,
whereby each of us transmits our herit-
age to that of succeeding generations.

This is what the Jewish Historical
Society’s does when it preserves and
promotes the history of Jewish life in
Greater MetroWest.

Long story short, I contacted Livingston
resident, Harold Kravis, who has made
it his mission to find plaques from syn-
agogues that have closed their doors or
were part of mergers. Harold has been
remarkably successful with his efforts.
He was the one who located the Glass-
man plaque. It had been moved to
Kushner Hebrew Academy now located
in Livingston.

The person to authorize the transfer
from Kushner to Bridgewater was
Rabbi Eliezer Rubin. After the Rabbi’s
received authorization from the Acade-
my’s board, Joel Glassman got his wish.
His plaque is now on the wall thus mak-
ing it possible for him to be surrounded
by his family’s history whereas we, the
Jewish Historical Society, can take satis-
faction in a job well done. ♦

Sarah Segal, Joel Glassman, and
Linda holding the sign from the
Plainfield shul.

Tributes to
Howard Kiesel

Robert Daniel
Jane Eisenstat
Barbara Fruitman
Alan Gallinson
Riva Geldzahler
Warren Grover
Lisa Jacobs
Janice Kriegman
Carol Marcus
Kelly Marx
Bob Max
Jean Rich
Robert Rose
Mali Schwartz
Bob Singer
Jim Shrager
Steven Solomon
Marvin Slatkin

New Member
Heddy Berman

Donations
Livingston Hadassah
Contributions toward
Synagogues of Newark
Exhibit
Kelly Marx – donor
of funds for the World
War I exhibit
By Jill Hershorin, JHSNJ Archivist

The Jewish Historical Society continues to amaze me! Visitors come through the doors of the Society and want to ask Linda a question or just want to see if we have anything coming up in the future and these folks inevitably lead to asking “Do you have information about ___” or “I went to ____ and wonder if you have anything from them in the archive?”

For me, this leads to an ongoing education about the community – its past and what happens within it today.

Collections

Since our spring newsletter, we have had three contributions to already existing collections: Judith Pilchik Zucker added materials to Rabbi Pilchik’s collection; Ruth Mendelson Bernstein added documents to the Gedaliah Mendelsohn collection, and Warren Grover added new materials to his growing collection.

Judith Pilchik Zucker was kind enough to donate several items to add to her father’s (Rabbi Ely Pilchik) collection. These one of a kind primary source materials include personal letters and photos from President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Justice Benjamin Cardozo and Justice Felix Frankfurter as well as five new additions were made to the “sermons” category within the collection.

Ruth Mendelson Bernstein brought over a few items to add to the family collection. She gave us her mother’s scrapbook which contains original and copies of various B’nai Brith programs from the 1950s as well as letters and telegrams from or to the B’nai B’rith chapter of the Montclair Ladies’ Auxiliary.

Warren Grover has added materials to his collection from his time as the chair of the West Orange Democratic Committee. Items include correspondence; officers list of the Clinton Hill Neighborhood Council; a newsletter (April, 1973); memos to the public; sample ballots and registration directions.

New materials also include: Josh Hammerman donated flyers, programs and items from Temple Shalom of Scotch Plains (formerly of N. Plainfield) and Temple B’nai Israel of Elizabeth; Evelyn Chait kindly donated two sterling silver Kiddush cups presented to Jennie and Jacob Witkowski on their 30th Anniversary – 1901-1931 and Charlotte Nad donated one Ronson Lighter; a photo from Oheb Shalom Confirmation Class of 1969; and a copy of Rabbi Levitsky 1960 collection of writings called “Our Centennial Year.”

Thank you to all of our donors!

Research and Visitors

We receive calls from genealogists who are working on their family history. The Society will do our best to help folks find what they are looking for or send them information on where to further their research.

In March we received a request to send photos of Newark to a publication called “City Journal.” They were writing an article about Philip Roth and life in Newark during his time there. We were happy to send them dozens of photographs and work with them on getting the right photos for the story!

Also in March a professor from the University of Nottingham, England was looking for information of “shochetim” and any criminal charges against Rabbis in the 1930s - he was looking at a particular case in Atlantic City. We provided information on how to contact the Atlantic County Historical Society who proved to be able to help.

In April, members of the JCC Anniversary Committee visited the archive knowing that they’d be able to find the right materials to be used in their 140th Anniversary event. The Society also hosted two visitors who were performing research on Oheb Shalom’s Miriam Sisterhood’s history with the Women’s League for Conservative Judaism.

Looking for items in anticipation of the Theresa Grotta’s 100th anniversary, the Society hosted several members from the Grotta Fund for Senior Care.

A visitor from the Jewish Heritage Museum of Monmouth County (JHMOMC) came to us not only to see the Society’s organizational structure, but also to see if we had anything related to Jewish farming. We were able to share some materials of Jewish poultry farms located in NJ.

Ricky Rainey, with father Matt and Jill, came to work on his bar-mitzvah project.

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President’s Report
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history to life. I am again reminded of the words of Dov Ben-Shimon, our Federation’s chief executive officer: “We need to do more showing, more story-telling, more events and more touching, tasting and smelling.” That is what we do! I invite you to participate this fall in our many events and programs.

Finally, a word about our incredible executive director, Linda Forgosh. Her biography of Louis Bamberger, “Louis Bamberger: Department Store Innovator and Philanthropist,” published by Brandeis University Press, has achieved critical recognition and acclaim, including the forthcoming presentation of the Newark Preservation and Landmark Committee’s 2017 Charles F. Cummings Award, named in memory of New Jersey’s leading historian.

Howard Kiesel
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In a 2007 interview with NJJN, Kiesel recalled meeting King at a fundraiser for King’s group, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

“If you ask me what I spoke to Dr. King about I could never tell you,” said Kiesel. “Just the experience was so exciting that I can’t remember what we spoke about.”

Forgosh described Kiesel as “a genuine mensch” and added, “I will miss him.”

He is survived by two daughters, Pamela Friedman and Linda Zabludovsky; one son, Paul; nine grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

Kiesel’s funeral was held on June 14 at Temple Sha’arey Shalom, with burial at Mt. Lebanon Cemetery in Iselin.

Copies of “The Long March Home,” written by JHS past-President, Robert R. Max, are available at the JHS office.

Florian Schantz Jazz combo will play popular WW1 songs the evening of Oct. 3, 7-9 pm, at the opening of the Society’s WW1 exhibit “The Road to Victory.”

Howard Kiesel
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The Jewish News began publishing on January 3, 1947. For nearly 70 years, until September 22, 2016, it was published in-house by the Greater MetroWest Federation and its predecessors. It was, and still remains, the newspaper of record for our Jewish community.

Its pages have chronicled the social, personal, and business life cycle of the community, from birth announcements, to Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, engagements and weddings, promotions, anniversaries, milestone events and finally, to obituaries.

Chances are that you, a relative or a friend, were featured on its pages, which is why The Jewish News was not just a newspaper. It served to connect its readers to the events and people responsible for growing our greater Jewish community.

Yet, this incredible history is not easily accessible. The Jewish News is today maintained and preserved in the archives of the Jewish Historical Society of New Jersey in Whippany. Some issues of the paper are in hard copy and others on microfilm. To ensure the survival of this great body of work requires a 21st Century approach to its preservation.

The answer is the electronic digitization of the paper in a format that would create a word searchable database, and then post it on the Society’s website (www.jhs-nj.org) where it will instantly be available to the world.

To make this happen, the Society needs your financial support. Please consider making a tax deductible donation directed to this project. Naming opportunities are available. For further information, contact Linda Forgosh at (973) 929-2994 or email at lforgosh@jfedgmw.org.

Preservation of Newark’s Jewish roots

August 9, 2017

Johanna Ginsberg’s Reporter’s Notebook “Newark’s Jewish roots becoming history” (Aug. 3) suggested that there is no effort being made to keep Newark’s Jewish history relevant to those who once lived, worked, and called Newark home. Nothing could be further from the truth.

She completely dismissed the efforts of the Jewish Historical Society (JHS), whose traveling exhibits “Born at the Beth,” “One More Night at Elving’s Metropolitan Yiddish Theater,” “Weequahic Memoirs: Celebrating Newark’s Jewish Neighborhood,” and the recent “Meet me under the Bamberger Clock” - now on loan to the New Jersey Historical Society in Newark - have been seen not only by thousands of MetroWest residents, but also by Newark’s public school students as part of the city’s 350th anniversary.

These are only a few of JHS’s traveling exhibits that promote the history of Jewish life in Newark. And let’s not forget the exhibit “Synagogues of Newark” that was on view at the Alex Aidekman Jewish Community Campus in Whippany throughout the summer.

Our archives have been built by former Newark residents. Individuals whose roots are in Newark continue to send us their private family collections; 400 individuals from across the United States sent us their baby pictures for inclusion in “Born at the Beth.”

The response to our Weequahic exhibit was so overwhelming that the JHS created a separate “Greater Weequahic Collection” as we continue to receive items from the city’s former residents.

Among those who used our archives for their research was Rutgers Newark’s Dr. Clement Price and Newark Public Library’s Charles F. Cummings. Both were considered to be Newark’s premier historians.

They knew we would go to great lengths to locate the information they wanted and when we didn’t have what they needed, we knew who did.

Simply put, our community can be assured that if it is up to the JHS, the history of Jewish life in Newark will not be lost.

Linda Forgosh, Executive Director
Jewish Historical Society of NJ
COMING EVENTS

September 13, 2017: ANNUAL MEETING rescheduled. 2 to 4 p.m.; location is Alex Aidekman Family Jewish Community Center, 901 Route 10, Whippany. Speakers: Gabe Kahn, editor of the NJJN and Shira Vickar-Fox managing editor of the NJJN. Topic is “The New Face of the New Jersey Jewish News” Light Refreshments and Free Admission.

September 14, 2017: HONORING JHS PAST-PRESIDENT, ROBERT MAX, for his recent book “The Long March Home.” Time: 5:00 p.m., Place: Alex Aidekman Jewish Community Campus, Whippany.


October 26, 2017: JHS PROGRAM “NO ONE OWNS THE SKY” FEATURING CAROL SIMON LEVIN. Time: 2-4 p.m. Location: Alex Aidekman Family Jewish Community Campus, 901 Route 10, Whippany. Free Admission. Light Refreshments.

November 9, 2017: JHS PROGRAM FEATURING LES JENSEN, CURATOR OF WEST POINT MUSEUM SPEAKING ABOUT THE UNITED STATES’ ROLE IN WORLD WAR I. Time: 2-4 p.m. Location: Alex Aidekman Family Jewish Community Center, 901 Route 10, Whippany. Free admission and light refreshments. A patriotic afternoon includes a color guard salute and flag presentation by the New Jersey chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).

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Irene Segal, Administrator

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Notes From The Stacks
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While visiting “The Synagogues of Newark” exhibit in our atrium this summer (on loan from the Jewish Museum of New Jersey), we met Chief Librarian Aharon Bejell of Yeshivat Har Etzion in Alon Shvut, Israel. He shared with us that the Yeshiva’s building fund was aided by the members of Newark’s former congregation Kehilath Israel. Mr. Bejell tells us that there are some photographs of the building’s dedication ceremony from 1977 in his archive in Israel and he’ll be happy to share them with us!

We get excited when a young person wants to use the archive for research and this year we were able to host a young man who is creating a short film about the Synagogues of Newark’s past for his Mitzvoh project. This young man came to the Society with camera and notebook in hand and utilized our archival collections to create what we hope will be a fulfilling project.

The Society not only strives to maintain and care for hundreds of wonderful collections, but we also hope that we can help researchers in their quest to find materials.

The best part of working with the archives is seeing these materials being used. The JHS helps people understand their history and the role of particular organizations, individuals and movements that helped shape the past while continuing to create ways for the next generation.

Please visit our website
http://www.jhs-nj.org/tributes.html

and click on our new tribute page to make a donation to the JHS or a contribution in someone’s honor or remembrance.

Our archive houses fascinating collections from the community for the community!
“The New Face of the New Jersey Jewish News”

Speakers:

Gabe Kahn, editor

Gabe grew up in Boston and was a sports writer and editor at the Boston Globe before moving to New York where he earned his masters from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. He served as a reporter and editor for several publications in the tri-state area, including the Long Island Jewish World, the Manhattan Jewish Sentinel, the Jewish Press, and The New York Jewish Week, covering Israel and topics important to the local and national Jewish community. In 2016 Gabe was appointed editor of NJJN, where he oversees the newspaper and pens his column, Garden State of Mind.

Shira Vickar-Fox, managing editor

Shira grew up in St. Louis and has lived in New Jersey for the last 20 years. She’s a 1998 graduate of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, and has worked at New Jersey Monthly and freelanced for the Star Ledger and The New York Jewish Week. She recently stepped down as editor of Fresh Ink for Teens, the Jewish Week’s website written by high school students, to focus on her new position as managing editor of NJJN.

Be sure to stay for a brief tour of our newest exhibit, “The Road to Victory: MetroWest’s Jews and World War I.” The exhibit will run through Nov. 13, 2017.

Our thanks to the Fien family for providing the funding for the publication of the Jewish Historical Society of NJ’s newsletter.