

TODAY IS TOMORROW'S HISTORY
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Ann Loeb Sikora

Her Texas Roots Run Deep – Her Jewish Roots Run Deeper

by Leslie Wagner

Ann Loeb Sikora, who was born in 1937 in the West Texas town of Sweetwater to Irving & Fannie Levy Loeb, maintained a flair for fashion throughout her life. She appeared the lady in a news article in 1953 as she posed with her competitors for Rodeo Queen, wearing cowboy boots and the only skirt among many blue jeans. Even though she considered herself the “country hick,” she later used her fashion taste and artistic talent to hatch an enterprise over the kitchen table for which she created fashion accessories sold through Dallas boutiques.

She learned retailing from the family business which began in Ballinger, Texas in the early 1900s as Rosenwasser & Levy, Clothiers. The Rosenwassers and the Levys were Ann’s maternal grandparents. In 1928, the family business expanded into Sweetwater where they built a new store on the courthouse square. The new enterprise, Levy Brothers, evolved into Levy’s Department Store over the years.

In 1910, Irving Loeb lived with his family in Austin, Texas. Irving Loeb had trained as an engineer and worked for the electric company. However, he joined the family business soon after marrying Fannie Levy. They had three children: Ann, an older brother who died at the age of nine from measles, and Ann’s younger sister, Betty. The Loeb children attended public schools in Sweetwater. Sweetwater’s Jewish community was simply



Ann Loeb once competed for the title of rodeo queen, 1953

too small to establish its own synagogue even though Ann’s father had acquired its Torah. The family traveled instead to Abilene, the nearest community capable of supporting a Jewish congregation. Services were held in a meeting room of the Hilton Hotel until construction of Temple Mizpah was completed in 1942. Irving Loeb’s Torah found a new home at Temple Mizpah.

While in her third year at The University of Texas at Austin, Ann Loeb suffered a debilitating injury in a diving accident. Following her recuperation, she worked in the family store along with her sister Betty. Betty preferred the accounting aspect of the business, while Ann handled the merchandising. Ann carried this experience to Dallas, where she joined Neiman Marcus in the early 1960s. On a blind date in 1964, she met Dr. David Sikora, a general practitioner

who had established his practice in Dallas in 1958. The two married just one year later, in 1965.

No longer the single career girl, the new Mrs. Sikora soon traded in her retailing career for that of “professional volunteer.” She also added motherhood to her list of accomplishments, being blessed with two sons, Danny and Sam. Personal tragedy again touched her life when Sam died from meningitis at the age of 25. In the late 1960s, one early volunteer effort stemmed directly from her retailing experience, that of serving on

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Message from the Executive Director by Debbie Tobias

It is almost a year into my tenure as the Executive Director of the Dallas Jewish Historical Society and my time here has been tremendously rewarding. I came on board appreciating how far my predecessor, Josie Hertz Ackerman, brought the agency, and excited to meet the opportunities facing us head on. My educational background and work experience in Jewish Communal Work, most recently as assistant director of the Planning & Allocations department of the Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas, have prepared me for my role within this viable and dynamic organization. I am excited to be here, and look forward to rising to the many challenges that lie ahead.

My short-term goals for the Dallas Jewish Historical Society have included the continuation of the tremendous efforts that have been accomplished this past year, and in addition, increasing visibility of the Society in the community resulting in greater growth overall. With the wonderful partnership I share with the leadership, current president Roz Benjet and immediate past president Ruth Andres, together with numerous dedicated volunteers, we have our job cut out for us!

With the launch of our successful fundraiser, the first Ann Loeb Sikora Humanitarian Award in November, we not only raised dollars, but substantially raised our image in the community. Thanks to the generosity of the Sikora family and the graciousness of our honorees: Harold Kleinman, Simon Sargon, and Andrea Weinstein, we more than exceeded our goals. I also owe a great deal of thanks to the incredible co-chairs, Ruth Andres and Sarah Yarrin, and a wonderful committee. These two ladies and their team demonstrated the passion, commitment and volunteerism that made us shine that day. The Dallas Jewish Historical Society is no longer one of the best kept secrets in town! People are still talking about us!

I feel fortunate to work with such a dedicated and professional staff. Our archivist, Leslie Wagner, doesn't know how to say no, and manages to accomplish more work in a given day than most people do. Her organizational and people skills, combined with a great knowledge and respect for history make her a tremendous asset to our organization. The voice on the other end of the phone is our new Administrative Assistant, Lois Cortney. No job is ever too big for her! With a smile and a great attitude, Lois does a magnificent job of running the office smoothly. Without these two, I would be hard pressed to get my job done as director!

My door is always open for a chat, for suggestions, or interest in volunteer activities. Please stop by. With your help, we can make sure that the Dallas Jewish Historical Society continues to grow by leaps and bounds!



Debbie Tobias

President's Message by Rosalind Benjet

As we begin a new year, I want to thank all our devoted volunteers and our wonderful staff who have helped make the past year such a success. With your help, we were able to serve many people in the Dallas Jewish community. This past spring we had our most successful Harold E. Pollman lecture ever, as Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman spoke about why the Dallas Jewish community has thrived over the last century. In March, Mitch Rasansky told us about Jews in politics; at our annual meeting in May, Cantor Don Croll spoke about the history of Jewish music in Dallas; and in July, Rose Biderman spoke about her new book, *They Came to Stay*. In November, Ariel Hurwitz, brother of Elya Naxon our Program chair, gave a talk, "How Jewish Youth Movements changed the Course of History: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising," co-sponsored with the Dallas Holocaust Memorial Center. In addition, we continue to be a resource center for scholars and for other agencies requesting historical information and photographs.

On November 24, the Dallas Jewish Historical Society made history itself with the inaugural of the Ann Loeb Sikora Humanitarian Award. At High Tea, Andrea Weinstein, Harold Kleinman, and Simon Sargon received the first Ann Loeb Sikora Humanitarian Award. This was the first time that the DJHS has hosted an event of such magnitude, and we thank all our friends for making it such a resounding success.

As our membership increases, we must also increase our visibility in the community.

During the coming year, we plan to have a new web site up and running to help let everyone know who we are, what we do, and what our holdings are. In addition, we are working on other educational and outreach programs which will educate the entire community about Dallas Jewish history.



Rosalind Benjet



Elya Naxon looks on as Ariel Hurwitz responds to a question from the audience at the November Harold A. Pollman lecture.

A Friend Reflects on Fanny Schaenen

by Debbie Tobias

We lost a wonderful friend recently. Fannie Schaenen, "Lioness of Judah," passed away at the age of 92 on September 6, 2002. Her friend for many years, Walter Levy, agreed to talk to us about her legacy. Much about her life has been covered well. Walter wanted to touch on the aspects of Fannie's life that were not well known. Walter's relationship with Fannie began during his tenure as assistant executive director of the Federation from 1956-1960 and later upon his return to the Federation as executive director from 1968-1975. He portrayed her as a woman of intense passion for her causes, a cultured woman who loved to play bridge, and who was devoted to her remarkable family. Fannie had a wonderful sense of humor and loved to be entertained by her husband, Bernard Schaenen, a terrific joke teller. She never lost sight of the cause and had a great understanding of and appreciation for community relations.

One could assume that Fannie dealt only with the big picture. This was, in fact, not the case. She concerned herself with the salaries of clerical workers at the Federation and the nitty-gritty of agency operations.

She was an accomplished violinist. Born in Fort Worth, she attended the Manhattan School of Music to study violin. While in New York, she met her husband who she credited with teaching her to play the piano. As a teenager and young adult, she played with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. Music and Israel were always her passion.

While Israel remained uppermost in her mind, Fannie was very involved in her synagogue, Congregation



Fannie Schaenen, Jack Benny, and Ruth Kahn, ca. 1950.

Shearith Israel, and the United Jewish Appeal. Fannie was also heavily involved in non-Jewish causes. She was a solicitor for the annual United Way campaign and took part in its planning arm, the Community Council.

Some have wondered why Fannie Schaenen never became president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas. It amounted simply to the fact that timing was not right. She served as an Officer of the Board - Treasurer, Secretary, and Vice President - and was in line to be president. A conflict

arose with her involvement with UJA. She served three years as national chairman of the United Jewish Appeal's Women's Division. Once she assumed this role she spent an enormous amount of time traveling and making speeches. She would have been the ideal person to assume the role as first president of the Jewish Federation, but instead she paved the way for Ann Loeb Sikora.

Fannie's good works broke new ground as she became the first woman to assume the role of Campaign Chairperson of the Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas. In 1971, hundreds of people turned out to honor her for raising \$60 million in three years for Jewish refugees, charities, and Israeli projects. The rescue of Jews from countries in danger was a priority for most people but Fannie gave it leadership and voiced the need. Her family, including her brother Jake Feldman, was proud of her efforts and encouraged her in her work. While Jake was a quiet man who set the standard for giving in this community, Fannie was in the forefront proclaiming his exceptional deeds.

MEMBERSHIP NOTES

Congratulations to **Sharan and Lynn Goldstein** on receiving the 2002 Milton I. Tobian Community Relations Award from the American Jewish Congress.

Congratulations to **Jack Altman**, recipient of B'nai Zion America/Israel Friendship Award on November 16, 2002.

We mourn the loss of our members **Robert Goldstein, Ben W. Kuhn, Arthur Rubin, and Fannie Schaenen**, and of our volunteer, **Willie Cohn**.

We particularly mourn the passing of our member and *Journal* co-editor, **Ruth Oscherwitz**. Although Ruth was a native of Oklahoma, she came to Dallas upon retirement in 1984. She



Ruth Oscherwitz

quickly involved herself in the Dallas Jewish community and worked alongside Ruth Brodsky since 1986 to produce the *Journal*. We shall miss her.

We offer condolences to our members on the passing of:

Marge Levy, mother of Joan Goetz
Louis Rubin, husband of Devora Rubin
Irwin Helfand, father of Marcy Helfand
Rosabelle Friedman, sister of Louise Gartner
Gay Geller Golman, wife of Larry Golman
Dora Goldstein, mother of Robert Goldstein
Leo Hoffman, husband of Martha Hoffman
Sol Prengler, son of Abe Prengler
Louis Oxman, brother of Tillie Prengler
Lola Byers, mother of Diane Byers Glick
Sylvia Goidl Rubel, sister-in-law of Marcia Goidl
I. B. Beren, brother of Sara Feldman
Isaac Bock, father of Harry Bock



The **Ann Loeb Sikora Humanitarian Award** event couldn't have been more perfect.

- It was the honorees: **Harold Kleinman, Simon Sargon, Andrea Weinstein.**
- It was the videotaped montage written and narrated by **Harriet Gross**, accompanied by the music of Simon Sargon.
- It was the commentary of **Mark Kleinman, Bonnie Glasgow, and Janice Sweet.** It was the responses of the honorees. Andrea Weinstein said, "To my dear Ann, you were, and through this award remain, the symbol of the ultimate humanitarian."
- It was the presentation by **Dr. David and Danny Sikora** of the magnificent bronze statue of clasping hands, *L'Dor V'Dor*, crafted by **Annie Davis.**
- It was the delicious and beautifully displayed refreshments for the High Tea at the **Columbian Club.**
- It was the artistic flower arrangements donated by the florists, Danny Sikora and Tanya Huffaker's ***M Bountiful.***
- Congratulations to the DJHS and the committees who made it happen.
- Thanks to co-chairs **Ruth Andres** and **Sarah Yarrin**, DJHS staff, President **Rosalind Benjet**, and the 250 attendees.
- Thanks to those who donated time and money but could not attend.

The DJHS is proud to have made history, November 24, 2002. It is our memories that make our history. It couldn't have been more perfect.



Dallas Jewish Artists

by Ruth Brodsky

Last year, the Dallas Jewish Historical Society sponsored a talk, "Is There Jewish Art?" by June Davidow. As we look closer in our own community, we find many fine examples of how artists express the soul of Judaism in their work.

The Memorial Room of the Dallas Holocaust Memorial Center holds a large granite gravestone commemorating those who perished, surrounded by twelve marble pillars, each bearing the name of a concentration camp in which Dallas survivors were incarcerated. At the head of the gravestone is a bronze sculpture by **Ruth Litwin** titled "Grasping for Life," wherein a hand reaches forth amid flames. Another of Ruth's sculptures, "Light Everlasting," hangs from the ceiling as one enters the Memorial Room.

Aliza Smith is represented at the Dallas Holocaust Memorial Center by a highly imaginative sculpture in which a man is blowing into a *shofar* from which the sound is transformed into a menorah. She has had a complete showing of her works at the Biblical Arts Center, a video of which is available.

At Solomon Schechter Academy we see **Veronique Jonas's** nine-foot bronze which represents Jewish learning as the crowning glory of the Tree of Life.

The Tree's branches are stacks of books and a menorah. Surrounded by torahs, its roots are inscribed with the names of patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as Sarah, Rebecca and Leah. (Mike and Ginger Jacobs supplied the Hebrew letters inscribed thereon.)

Veronique creates paintings, and *ketubot* as well.

Elsewhere, **Michel**

Schwartz has a huge, magnificent painting, which at first appears to be a fire. One begins to see that the flame forms the names of the infamous concentration camps. Closer inspection reveals the entire canvas from top to bottom is covered with Hebrew letters which form both prayers and the names of the dead.

Among the creations of Dallas Jewish artists, few are more original than those of **Bobbie Nehman**.

Outstanding are her individually designed *ketubot*. Their originality and beauty thrill couples who have commissioned these marriage certificates. Each tells a story lettered in Hebrew and English. In one, two interlocking gold rings enclose the figures of a dancing bride and groom. Above one floats the words from the Song of Songs, "You are beautiful, my king, and gentle," and in reply, above the other: "And you, my beloved, how beautiful you are." In the background, water colors depict

the golden dome and other reminiscences of Jerusalem. In the foreground, a tree of life is approached by a modern boy and girl bearing brightly colored balloons. On another *ketubah* are innumerable other images, subject to various interpretations. We see rich purple wineglasses and grape clusters against a background of night sky, pastel hills, and a tree of life which evolves into a seven branch lighted menorah. In a departure, Bobbie has the sleeping child Jacob dreaming of Jacob's ladder. But this ladder is a stylized skeleton with the angels climbing up and down the rungs of the soul.

Monica Ribald is an artist whose work is entirely devoted to Jewish subject matter. Monica's watercolors bear such titles as "Ship to Nowhere," portraying forlorn Jewish refugees; and "Faces behind a Wire," both now displayed at the Dallas Holocaust Memorial Center. They, like 80% of her other works, are devoted to social statements on Jews and Judaism. You may see much of her work in private homes as well. Those described above were purchased by individuals who gave them as gifts to the Center. She is presently an art teacher at Wise Academy, the Reform Jewish Day School, and has also taught Jewish subjects for eighteen years at Akiba Academy and elsewhere.

And finally, there is **Ron Gruen**. Although a tool and dye maker by trade, he has sculpted two very fine Eternal Lights, both for Congregation Beth Torah. One is in the main sanctuary, the other in the school.



Bobbie Nehman



Veronique Jonas

Coming Soon!

Our

New Website

www.djhs.com

Archivist's Corner by Leslie Wagner

The work goes on in the archives. Before I came in October 2000, the archives had been accumulating – since 1995 – a considerable volume of historically significant materials to add to its holdings. However, much of the material was simply tucked away to await further processing. This is frequently the case at most archival facilities, and only the most important acquisitions receive immediate attention.

While we struggle with our current space crunch, we continue to look forward. We have done our best to plan our new facilities to meet not only current but future needs and have allowed for considerable growth of the collections.

We also contemplate the future. I have begun working with the **Dallas Memorial Holocaust Center**, reviewing their holdings and archival practices, and making recommendations on how best to preserve their holdings. Upon completion of our new facilities, we anticipate their limited archival holdings will also be housed in our new vault space and we will supervise researcher access to the materials. As their focus is on Holocaust survivors who came to Dallas, it will be an appropriate move to make.

We are also pleased to announce the Sikora family has donated the personal papers of **Ann Loeb Sikora** to the Society's archives. The bulk of the papers document her role in the Dallas Jewish community, and particularly her work with the Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas. This significant addition to the archives will be available to researchers once processing has been completed. The Sikora family has granted permission to use images from their family photographs depicting Ann and her family as far back as 1910. Many appear in our exhibit on her life, *L'Dor V'Dor*, displayed in our window at the Aaron Family JCC.



From Archivist to Author: Rose Biderman by Leslie Wagner

The news is out about Rose Biderman's book, *They Came to Stay*, her take on the history of the Dallas Jewish community from 1870-1997, which features many images from the Society's holdings.

Rose was born in 1928 to Morris and Annie Breie Gruber and grew up in Dallas. She graduated from Forest Avenue High School in 1946 and then attended SMU. She later completed her bachelor's degree in history from The University of Texas-Dallas in 1987. In 1950, she married Sam Biderman, Jr. Their three daughters Debra Epstein, Susan Taplin, and Rebecca Goetz still reside in the Dallas area. Sam died in November 1988.

In 1979, Rose began working as a volunteer one hour a week at the Dallas Jewish Archives. She recalls being hired as assistant archivist in 1983, working with the librarian to organize the Archives further under a JCC grant. From 1986, when the Dallas Jewish Archives became the Dallas Jewish Historical Society, until 1995, she served as the Society's archivist and director. She has also served on the Society's Board of Directors.

Because of her knowledge of Dallas Jewish history, Rose has presented talks on Dallas Jewish history to such organizations as the Jewish War Veterans and the Dallas County Pioneer Association, and to many elementary and high school classes. In addition, she was featured in the KERA production, "Big D Back When" for which she also served as consultant, and assisted with the BBC production, "The Jewish Enigma."

Rose was our featured speaker for our July program. She saw in the Society's archives a story that had to be told. Rest assured, there are still many tales left to tell within the rich resources of the Society's holdings just waiting to be discovered.



Premiere Showing of Film "Many Facets: The Zale Legacy" January 16, 2003

Co-Sponsored by the Dallas Jewish Historical Society, Dallas Jewish Community Foundation and Abe Zale Foundation



Rabbi Gerald Klein,
Cynthia Mondell,
Donald Zale, Allen
Mondell, and Moderator,
Lenny Kraznow.



Donald Zale and Rabbi David Stern



Ann's grandmother, Annie Levy (with parasol), and mother, Fannie (in carriage front), at the county fair in Ballinger, 1911

the committee and as co-chairman of *Encore*, the annual fundraiser for the *Dallas Chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women*. *Encore* was a resale shop, specializing in boutique/couturier clothing and accessories, whose proceeds funded many *NCJW* community service projects. Ann was quickly recognized for her expertise in fundraising, and went on to chair many campaigns. She led the campaign efforts of the *Women's Division* and *Younger Set* of the *Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas*. She became the first woman to serve as president of the *Federation* from 1982 to 1983, having been a member of the board since 1973.



Levy Brothers store in Sweetwater, Texas, 1928.

Her devotion to the Dallas Jewish community was evident but she expanded her range nationally and internationally as well. She was a founding member of the *Dallas Coalition* and was the Dallas contact for *Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger*. She served on the board of the *American Jewish Committee* and on the *Council of Jewish Federations*. Locally, she served on the board of *Golden Acres* and co-chaired the effort to assist Soviet Jewry. Beyond the Jewish community, she served on the board of *United Way of Metropolitan Dallas*, the *Community Council of Greater Dallas*, and the *Greater Dallas Community Relations Commission*.



Rosenwasser-Levy home in Ballinger, Texas, ca. 1910

While we have touched only briefly on her long history of service, we hope that her example will inspire others to follow her lead. This year the Dallas Jewish Historical Society initiated the Ann Loeb Sikora Humanitarian Award to honor not only three distinguished members of the Dallas Jewish community, but also to honor the blessed memory of Ann Sikora, a woman who has served in so many capacities throughout the Jewish community and beyond. You'll find more information on this memorable event inside these pages!

L'DOR V'DOR EXHIBIT


Be sure to stop by our offices at the Aaron Family Jewish Community Center to see *L'Dor V'Dor*, our exhibit highlighting the life of **Ann Loeb Sikora**.

The Dallas Jewish Historical Society
is actively seeking

**records of businesses and
organizations, personal and
family papers, photographs,
and memorabilia of
continuing historical value**



**that document the contributions and growth
of the Jewish community in the greater
Dallas area. To discuss items you may have
that would be suitable for donation to the
DJHS Archives, call or come by to see our
archivist, Leslie Wagner. Need help with a
research project? Check with our archivist!
She is available on Monday, Wednesday,
and Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**

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Mark Your Calendars!

March 9, 2003	Pollman Lecture with Mark Bauman, "Southern Jewish Women & Social Service" 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm Zale Auditorium, Aaron Family JCC Free Admission	April 10, 2003	Co-sponsor documentary film "Desperate Hours". Directed and Produced by Victoria Barrett Dallas Museum of Art 7:00 pm \$10 (includes film and reception)
March 16, 2003	Lloyd de Witt Bockstruck, "Origins of Jewish Immigration in the Late 19th Century" 1:30 pm - 3:00 pm Senior Assembly, Aaron Family JCC Free Admission	April 25-27, 2003	Texas Jewish Historical Society Conference in Dallas (More information to follow)
April 2, 2003	Kyra Effren, "The History of Jewish Foods: How We Adapt Our Cuisine" 7:30 pm, Senior Assembly, Aaron Family JCC Free Admission	May 19, 2003	Dallas Jewish Historical Society's Annual Meeting - Guest Speaker is Jackie Waldman "The History of Jews & Volunteerism" 7:00 pm, Senior Assembly, Aaron Family JCC; Free Admission
		June 1, 2003	Pollman Lecture with Jonathan Shulman, "Minyan in Kaifeng" 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm Zale Auditorium, Aaron Family JCC Free Admission


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The next time you're at Tom Thumb, remember to link your Reward card to the DJHS number

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