



PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO MEMBERS

Daniel M. Kristol

I am pleased to report on the Jewish Historical Society of Delaware's recent activities.

Joe Labovsky, through a bequest, made the largest gift to our knowledge to the JHSD – a sum close to \$6,000. Joe was a Wall of Fame graduate of Wilmington High School, who by chance, good fortune, hard work and intelligence became part of Dr. Carothers' team developing nylon at DuPont. Joe, as a supervisor and consultant, travelled the world. The JHSD is forever indebted to Joe's daughter, Mickie Edelson, and her husband, Dr. Lanny Edelson, for their support.

At our annual meeting in April 2014, we launched our published book, *A Tribute to my Teacher Rabbi Simon Krinsky – His Poetry until 1936*, as translated and produced by Rabbi Edward Zerlin. Rabbi Peter Grumbacher introduced the book at the annual meeting and selected poems were read in English and Yiddish. The JHSD was honored to have the opportunity to have its archivist, Gail Pietrzyk, participate in this project with Rabbi Zerlin, who was a bar mitzvah student of Rabbi Krinsky. Rabbi Zerlin paid a video visit to us at the meeting from his home in California.

Through generous grants in recent years from the Jewish Federation of Delaware and the Kutz Foundation, we have significantly upgraded our storage facilities at the Delaware Historical Society and have undertaken a program of digitizing many of our images and records for efficient preservation.

The Center for Jewish History and the American Jewish Historical Society recently invited us to participate in the project, *Portal to American Jewish History*. The project intends to unite records from several major institutions to give web visitors access to archival collections reflecting American Jewish life. We are honored to be included in this undertaking and appropriate agreements have been signed.

Our oral history program is on-going, memorializing for future generations life in the Delaware Jewish community. We were honored that Dorothy Finger was our most recent contributor to that effort.

Last November, in partnership with the Delaware Historical Society, we presented an interpretation of the only rabbi to see service in the Civil War as a battlefield chaplain. Thanks to President Lincoln, who by executive order removed the mandate that all chaplains for the military must be Christian, Rabbi Ferdinand Leopold Sarner saw service on the battlefield at Gettysburg and was wounded. Rabbi Sarner's story and the details of his life and service were portrayed in full service uniform with appropriate props

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

JOSEPH LABOVSKY - THE STORY OF AN IMMIGRANT

Hon. Charles K. Keil

A Nation of Immigrants was the title of John F. Kennedy's short but excellent story of the American heritage. It tells a fine story, but we have on the local scene one of our own as well. Joseph Labovsky's history is one that typifies the Jewish American experience in many ways, but with unique aspects not experienced by others.

Like many of our forefathers, it starts in Eastern Europe — Russia. Joe was born in Kiev, Ukraine, in 1912. These were troubled times and Joe's father could see the writing on the wall. He would be drafted into the Army; it was only a question of time. He was a skilled tailor and, if drafted, would be in the Army as long as the government wanted him, without leave to return to his home. So in 1914, he bribed the right official, bought a steamship ticket and left for America. His plan was to seek out his uncle in Philadelphia, but he hit a snag – his uncle had changed his name to "LaBove" and had moved to New York. With some luck, he finally located his uncle. Now that was the "good news." The "bad news" was that "The War to End All Wars" broke out. For nine very long years, Joe's father could not get his wife and three children to America – let alone know if they had survived the war and the subsequent pogroms that followed the disintegration of the Russian monarchy.

Having found his uncle, he decided that Philadelphia was the place to settle. He stayed a while in Philadelphia, but he heard that there was a need for a good tailor in some small city called Wilmington, Delaware. So, he went. For a while, he worked making "big money" (about three dollars a week). He finally decided to start his own shop in a building that still stands – Govatos, at 8th and Market Streets. Over time, the word got out. This guy was a good tailor, and before long, he had company executives as



Frejda Labovsky, seated, and her children Solomon, Rosa and Joseph, circa 1922

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

by Rabbi David Wucher. Rabbi Wucher was introduced to us by Rabbi Peter Grumbacher who was a friend from rabbinical school. Rabbi Wucher told me that Rabbi Sarner's life was so fascinating and engaging that he had devoted extensive hours to researching his story which he hopes will then lead to a book. Rabbi Sarner "broke the ice" to begin a long tradition of Jewish chaplains serving our nation's armed forces on the battlefield.

Our 2015 Annual Meeting took a look at The Sports Scene, Trotters & the Delaware Jewish Community. We heard from Gerry Barsha about many of the contributions Jewish Delawareans made to our local sports scene. Michael Wirtschafter highlighted the Jewish connection to Brandywine Raceway and the harness racing industry.

Our Jewish history is being written today. We thank you for your support in preserving the story of the Delaware Jewish community and its efforts to improve the world through service to science, education, the law, medicine, sports, arts, business and politics. In this our 40th year, we seek to inspire future generations to serve to make the world a better place for everyone.

We hope to create a record of lives and achievement emanating from our small community that will be an inspiration to your grandchildren.

Lastly, we mourn the loss of our good friend, Stuart Young, who, with Toni, set an example of vision and dedication that will forever inspire us.

VOLUNTEERS WELCOME

The JHSD Oral History Project conducts interviews documenting the Jewish community in Delaware.

A training session was held in 2011, and we plan to schedule another if new volunteers are interested in learning to conduct or videotape oral history interviews. Interviewing a community leader, or chatting with a family member about their life and experiences can be a most rewarding and enjoyable way to get involved and explore the history of Delaware's Jewish community.

Please contact the JHSD to learn more about the oral history project and other ways you can share in preserving the history of the our Delaware Jewish community.

WHAT WE ARE

The JHSD was founded in 1974 and incorporated in 1975 for the purpose of acquiring, preserving and sharing materials pertaining to the history of Jewish settlement and Jewish life in the State of Delaware.

WHAT WE DO

The Jewish Historical Society of Delaware seeks out, collects and preserves written, spoken and photographic records; publishes a newsletter, mounts displays and exhibits and provides access to archival collections to genealogists, researchers, students and other interested persons.

customers. The war was over in 1918, and the tailor shop was doing well. By 1923 he had sufficient funds so he could arrange for agents to seek out his family in the Ukraine. He wanted to see if they survived, and, if so, he needed to get them to America.

Survive they did. Joe's mother was a wise and skillful person as was his father. She, too, could sew dresses for women and tailored clothing for men. Through a series of agents, with some connections, his wife and three children made it to America.

It is often said that one needs three things to succeed: ability, willingness, and luck – mazel. Ability, you have it or you don't. Willingness is your mind-set. Luck – more on this later. Joe Labovsky had been blessed for the most part with all three.

Having last seen his father when he was two years old and with speaking only Ukrainian, some Russian and Yiddish, a little Polish, and being illiterate, save for some knowledge of Hebrew, at age 12, his intelligence put him on a fast track. He was what we would now call "a quick learner." His ability placed him in good stead. Moreover, he had motivation, a willingness to excel, and excel he did, especially in high school math, chemistry, and physics.

He graduated Wilmington High School in 1930 (behind his photo appearing in this article, is Wilmington High School's "Wall of Fame," where his photo is likewise placed). It was the Depression – no jobs, and no money for further education. Mazel appears once again (the first time involved his escape from Europe). Joe's father spoke with a DuPont company executive, a customer of his, about the prospects of a job for his son. Lo and behold, Joe lands a summer job as a chemist's helper. Whose helper is he? Dr. Wallace H. Carothers, the person to soon discover Nylon.

Carothers takes a liking to young Labovsky as both had interests in Russian literature and music. Dr. Carothers asked Joe if he planned to go to college, to which Joe replied that he would like to but couldn't afford it. Carothers suggested that Joe write a letter to Lamont duPont, then president of DuPont, to be considered as an applicant for scholarship funds. He gets \$1,000. Because of his aptitude in electricity his high school instructor asks him to consider a trade, and he applied to Bliss Electrical College in Tacoma Park, MD. He was accepted but during that first year, he realizes that he should have gone for an engineering education. Joe writes to Mr. duPont, explains the situation and his hope to attend Pratt Institute and become a chemical engineer. With another \$1,000 (this time as a loan), he applies to and is accepted at Pratt.

Time moves forward, four years have passed, and Joe is an industrial chemical engineer, but there are no jobs available because of the Depression and DuPont was not hiring. Nor was anybody else hiring for that matter. Nonetheless, for four or five weeks Joe, accompanied with

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



Joe Labovsky

his lunch bag, would hang out at DuPont's Experimental Station hoping for a job that might open. Again, mazel! One day, a two-week job digging ditches on the site comes up as there was a "no show" that day. Joe willingly goes for it. Yes, it is not a job for

a chemical engineer, but it is a job. Mazel, again. One day Carothers walks by and spots Joe in the ditch and asks why he is there. Joe explains why, and Carothers continues to walk to his destination. The next day, Joe's supervisor tells him to get out of the ditch and follow him. Joe figures that he is going to get the ax. The supervisor takes him to Carothers' office and they talk. Joe is offered a job working in Carothers' unit. Joe says, "It is better to work inside than outside when it is cold!" And work he did, for the next 42 years.

Nylon helped make DuPont and Joe was an integral part of the Carothers' team. Today, he is the only surviving member of the team. From 1934 through WWII, he saw Nylon develop from a series of small lab experiments to a major industry. As a result of these efforts, Nylon was used in the manufacturing of multiple products including parachutes, tires, ropes, and clothing that were essential to the war effort. For his efforts he received a War Production Award. In a later decade, he wrote the first manual for Tyvek, a "wrap-around product" used to insulate buildings. As recently as April of this year, Joe, along with inventor Stephanie Kwolek, and former Governor Russell W. Peterson, were honored at a Delaware Academy of Chemical Sciences luncheon titled "The Delaware Legends."

For many years, he spoke at the Delaware Historical Society's "Dr. Carothers' Day" – a program that was attended by youngsters and adults alike. Joe was 96 years young [when I interviewed him], and although he has sight problems and resides in the Forwood Manor Retirement Community, he remains mentally alert. Because of his friendship with the Carothers family, upon the demise of Dr. Carothers, he was the person to whom the family turned to for the distribution of Carothers' artifacts and papers. Through the years, Joe arranged for the placement of articles, papers and Dr. Carothers' personal research notebooks with the Chemical Heritage

Foundation of Philadelphia, The Delaware Academy of Chemical Sciences, the Delaware Historical Society, as well as other chemical and historical organizations.

From a summer chemist's helper, to ditch digger (mercifully, for a short time only), to laboratory technical assistant to Dr. Carothers, foreman, shift supervisor, process control supervisor for Nylon, Joe went on to become a training supervisor and consultant in Italy, Ireland, France and Israel.

In addition to all of the foregoing, he was active in a myriad of DuPont innovations beyond the mere listing of job services. He was practical and had a penchant to be a saver of various articles about his work. One example speaks legends. It is what I call "The Spinneret Story." Spinnerets are used for spinning Nylon and are critical to the manufacturing of the product. Stainless steel cylinders, screening and sand were items used. But it was the stainless steel spinnerets that were critical for speedy production. After World War II, Nylon was much in demand for peacetime uses. Production was great. The company would reject any spinneret that had even a little bit of damage. It would be replaced with a new one and the old ones were disposed. Joe was concerned about throwing out the slightly damaged spinnerets and showed the engineering personnel how these could be repaired. There was no interest in repairing them. Nylon was selling and money to buy new spinnerets was available. Joe, a saver and a practical person, asked if he might, on his own time, repair them as he thought that the time might come when they were needed. Permission was granted although his supervisors thought he was nuts. They called it "junk," and DuPont was not interested in dealing with junk. Nevertheless for two years each Sunday he collected the damaged spinnerets, saving thousands of the 3" diameter non-magnetic stainless steel ones. The clock never stops. It is 1950, the Korean War, and stainless steel was necessary for the war effort. Nylon no longer had the priority that it had in WWII. The rainy day had come and out came Joe's reconditioned spinnerets – for plants in Seaford, Martinsville, and Chattanooga. Because of his efforts, Joe received a promotion, a bonus, and a commendation.

With this incident, I close this story. JFK was right; we are A Nation of Immigrants. But what a nation of immigrants! America was built on them and Joseph Labovsky is one exemplary example of success. As the comedian Yakov Smirnoff would say, "AMERICA, WHAT A COUNTRY!"

This biography was originally published in *The Jewish Voice*, December 2008. Reprinted with the author's permission.

A PREMIER PERFORMANCE

LIEDER FUN A KABTSN: SONGS OF A BEGGAR, A SONG CYCLE



Composer,
Dr. Michael Isaacson

A song cycle composed by Dr. Michael Isaacson and based on poems written by Wilmington Rabbi Simon Krinsky was performed for the first time on April 12, 2015.

The poems of Rabbi Krinsky were originally published in Yiddish in 1936 in Wilmington. In 2014 the JHSD proudly published Rabbi Edward Zerin's English translations as *A Tribute to my Teacher, Rabbi Simon Krinsky: His Poetry until 1936*.

Composer Dr. Michael Isaacson set several poems to music and Cantor Roslyn Barak performed with pianist Ronny Michael Greenberg at the April Premier. The event was hosted by Temple Emanu-El, in San Francisco.

It is wonderful to recognize how the achievements of members of the Delaware Jewish community have inspired and enriched the lives of people across the continent. And we are happy that the resources of the internet have made it possible for Delawareans to watch and hear the performances of this event. Visit the JHSD website at www.jhsdelaware.org for a link to the YouTube video production

Dr. Micheal Isaacson has published more than 600 sacred and secular works, produced over 50 CDs and albums, pioneered the National Federation of Temple Youth's American folk music style, and is the Founding Music Director of the Israel Pops Orchestra and the Milken Archive of American Jewish Music. He was honored by the Hebrew Union College and the Jewish Theological Seminary as one of the ten most distinguished Jewish sacred music composers in America.

Cantor Roslyn Barak since 1987 has brought a high level of musicianship with her conservatory trained voice to her post as Cantor of Temple Emanu-El. She has performed with the Israeli National Opera and the Israeli Philharmonic Symphony and in Germany. But she is not all coloratura all the time, loving pop and jazz, and frequently singing in both styles. As Cantor she looks back with great pride to the many personal relationships she has formed with her Bar, Bat and Anshei Mitzvah students.

Ronny Michael Greenberg is a first-year San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow and graduate of the 2014 San Francisco Merola Opera Program, where he coached *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Don Giovanni*. He participated in The Song Continues Master Class series with Marilyn Horne, Jessye Norman, and Dalton Baldwin in 2013, made soloist appearances with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and performed with the Music Academy of the West.

Rabbi Edward Zerin served as a congregational Rabbi for 28 years

and for 30 years practiced as a Psychotherapist. He has published ten books, the most recent are *Jewish San Francisco: From the Gold Rush to Today* and *A Tribute to my Teacher*. He was a faculty member at Drake University, Grinnell College and Boston University. In his retirement he moved to San Francisco where he is married to the painter Judith (Jill) Kneeter and is a member of Temple Emanu-El.

The video of *An Afternoon of Yiddish Music and Poetry* is made available as a gift to lovers of Yiddish and Jewish Music through the generosity of Dr. Patricia Gibbs, a member of Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco. Her purpose is to bring the beauty and vitality, both past and present, to those who still remember and the those who now want to recall great moments in Jewish culture.

The entire production on *An Afternoon of Yiddish Song and Poetry* is dedicated as a tribute to my teacher Rabbi Simon Raphael Krinsky.

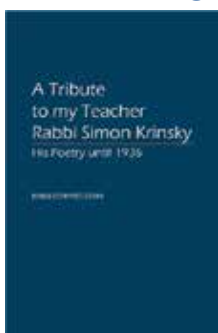
Dr. Michael Isaacson is applauded for his splendid composition of the music to the Song Cycle *Lieder Fun a Kabtsn*.

Double musical notes of appreciation go to the Cantor Roslyn Barak whose golden voice so richly endows the performance and to Ronny Michael Greenberg whose delicate touch embraces the Cantor's gifted talent.

And to those listeners who may hear an occasional slip into an Ashkeshardic pronunciation, I beg your forbearance so that you may enjoy.

Rabbi Edward Zerin

A TRIBUTE TO MY TEACHER RABBI SIMON KRINSKY: HIS POETRY UNTIL 1936



TRADE PAPERBACK \$9.95
194 PAGES
STANDARD SHIPPING \$3.50

Rabbi Simon Raphael Krinsky was born in Poland and ordained in Palestine. In 1931 he came to Wilmington, Delaware with his growing family to begin his career—twelve years as Principal of the Adas Kodesh Hebrew School, followed by twenty years at Temple Beth Emeth as Principal of its Hebrew Department. In all, Rabbi Krinsky served every Jewish congregation in the State of Delaware, filling in for the local rabbis when they

were on vacation, teaching the Bar/Bat Mitzvah students for the congregation in Dover and upon his retirement as the rabbi of Temple Beth El in Newark, Delaware.

Rabbi Krinsky was beloved by his congregation and by his students. When he retired, Temple Beth Emeth named him Scholar for Life.

The Jewish Historical Society of Delaware is pleased to publish this volume of Rabbi Krinsky's poems in a dual-language edition. Originally published in Yiddish, these moving poems have been sensitively translated by Rabbi Edward Zerin.

ARCHIVIST'S REPORT

This past summer the Jewish Historical Society of Delaware welcomed a summer intern, Paul Binder, who worked on scanning some of our collection of 35mm slides. Paul is a high school senior at the Avon Grove Charter School in Pennsylvania and he hopes to study engineering in college. His understanding of computers, video and digital technology meant he stepped right up to the scanning task and quickly mastered the techniques to get the job done. Paul enjoys building robots and his work with a prize-winning robotics team has given him some exceptional skills that he brought to his work at the JHSD. After a couple of days scanning the slides, Paul was able to develop some time-saving techniques to help him be more productive and get more accomplished each day. At the end of the summer, Paul was clearly one of the most proficient and knowledgeable people working with the scanning equipment.

We are pleased to display some of the highlights of the images scanned during Paul's summer internship. You can visit a gallery of selected images at the JHSD website, www.jhsdelaware.org

Our work of preserving the records that document the history of Jewish life in Delaware often has many diverse challenges. In some cases, the records are not in English, or are in a difficult to read handwritten script. One

recent inquiry from a family history researcher, brought me to a collection of letters, mostly in Yiddish, from a relative living in Ukraine and writing to a family in Wilmington. Some of the early letters in the group date back to the 1930s and must record some exceptional history. I hope that we will one day have these documents translated and accessible to more researchers. It's great to have the letters, but even better to be able to know the stories that they contain.

And it is also great to have a substantial collection of 35mm slides, but better still to have these images available at our fingertips and preserved in a more accessible format for the 21st century. Our preservation work is on-going and changes as new technologies become available or as those with needed skills are able to open previously locked doors.

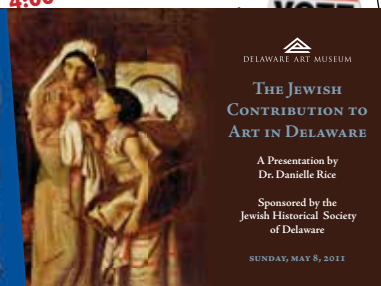
Your support of the work of the Jewish Historical Society of Delaware makes so much of this possible. Our goal is to make these remarkable and fascinating documents and images ever more easily accessible to researchers and to the Jewish community which created them.

SEE WHAT YOU MISSED

Many of the annual meetings of the Jewish Historical Society of Delaware have been interesting and lively events. In recent years the topics have included Music, Politics, Sports, Art, Yiddish Poetry and Lincoln and the Jews. We often enjoy a good turnout for these programs and many members look forward to them each year. But if you were not able to attend, don't despair. The Jewish Historical Society of Delaware has videotaped all these recent presentations and you may purchase a copy for your own collection.

Perhaps your group or organization is looking for an interesting and informative program for your members. A video recording of one of the JHSD Annual meeting events might be an excellent choice.

Contact our archivist, Gail Pietrzyk, at (302) 655-6232 to discuss how we might help you see what you missed.



LEND US YOUR SUPPORT! If you have not already made an annual membership contribution, or if you want to lend your financial support to this vibrant, active organization, please return this coupon with your check to: Jewish Historical Society of Delaware, 505 North Market Street, Wilmington, DE 19801

<input type="checkbox"/> Student	\$15.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor	\$100.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior (over 65)	\$15.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Patron	\$250.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$30.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor	\$500.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Family/Household	\$35.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> Institutional	\$75.00		

Please make your check payable to the Jewish Historical Society of Delaware. Your contribution is fully tax-deductible under applicable IRS guidelines.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Telephone _____

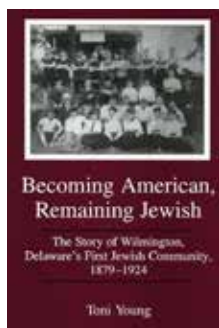
E-mail _____

☐ Please do not publish my name as a member.



JHSD
JEWISH HISTORICAL
SOCIETY OF DELAWARE
505 N. MARKET STREET
WILMINGTON, DE 19801

Save the Date



May is Jewish American Heritage Month and we think there's no better way to celebrate than to pay a special tribute to the woman who 'wrote the book' on Delaware Jewish history. Join us as we recognize the contributions of Toni Young at the Jewish Historical Society of Delaware's annual meeting event on Sunday, May 1, 2016. We know you'll want to join us for this special event so be sure to Save

the program and taking reservations soon. For now we can tell you that the festivities will be hosted at the Delaware History Museum, 504 North Market Street, Wilmington, Delaware 19801. You'll get to see the beautifully renovated exhibit and meeting space of the Delaware Historical Society. Come and be part of this memorable event.



**JEWISH
AMERICAN
HERITAGE MONTH**
MAY 2016



MAY is Jewish American Heritage Month.

CELEBRATE THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF JEWISH AMERICANS WHO HAVE HELPED WEAVE THE FABRIC OF AMERICAN HISTORY, CULTURE AND SOCIETY



Check out our website at www.jahm.us, for:

- ★ Events and programs in your community
- ★ *Speaking of American Jewish Heritage*, a national speakers' bureau
- ★ Educational resources
- ★ Profiles of noted Jewish Americans
- ★ Email updates
- ★ Historical Timeline