

OIL GEVALT

**The History of the Baytown, Texas, Jewish Community
1928-2008**

Donald L. Teter

PREFACE

It was in 1990 that I first decided to write this history of the Jewish Community where I have lived the major portion of my life. I sent letters to all the people I could contact who grew up in the Tri-cities. The response was less than overwhelming, but I did receive some interesting letters from several people. The project lay dormant for many years, but I recently decided it must be completed in my lifetime. So I asked people who currently reside in Baytown to write something memorable. A few responded, and these, along with the older responses have been placed in the MEMORIES section.

Sources used in compiling names of Jewish families who ever lived in the area were old phone books and city directories found in Sterling Library. In addition I perused records of B'nai B'rith, Hadassah, and Congregation K'nesseth Israel which are stored at the CKI Community Building. I also contacted many of the descendants of the early residents for information.

I want to thank my wife, Gertrude, for her assistance. At present she has the distinction of having lived in the Baytown Jewish Community longer than anyone else and her recall of events that happened many years ago has been excellent.

I also am grateful to all those who provided "memories". Their stories and recollections provide the real-life events so necessary for an endeavor such as this.

My daughter, Joan Linares, suggested the title. It appealed to me because it combines a Yiddish phrase with the material that has caused Baytown to become a city.

I also thank Jean and Merv Rosenbaum for proof reading and adding some information.

I hope the reader will enjoy this little tome, and that it will bring back memories for former and current residents.

Donald Teter, January, 2008

OIL GEVALT

The History of the Baytown, Texas, Jewish Community 1928-2008

The history of Congregation K'nesseth Israel is closely entwined with the story of the Tri-cities. In 1917 there were no housing, running water, schools, churches or electricity in what we now call Baytown. There was a population of approximately 2000 persons who had come from all parts of the country seeking work and fortune in the boom which followed the discovery of oil in the Goose Creek field. There were people of all religious faiths, but there were only two Jewish families.

In 1916 Ross Sterling and others chartered the Humble Oil and Refining Co. and bought a large amount of land to build a refinery in an unincorporated area they named Baytown. Ross Sterling laid out the city of Goose Creek, and there was a third city named Pelly after the developer of the city, incorporated in 1920. At this time there were reported to be 12 Jewish families living in Goose Creek. They were probably all in the mercantile or grocery business, drawn to the area because of the large influx of people needed to build the refinery.

By 1920 there had been considerable growth. The Humble Oil and Refining Company had completed the Baytown Refinery on a large tract of undeveloped property. Dry goods, grocery, pharmacy and other stores had opened, and some of these were operated by Jewish merchants. A building was rented for a place of worship, and services were held on Friday nights and Saturday mornings—the latter being held quite early to allow the merchants to open their stores by 9:00. The first spiritual leader was Rabbi Ronlee Gray, who was followed by Rabbi Benjamin Wade.

In the fall of 1928, Congregation K'nesseth Israel was chartered by twenty Jewish residents as a corporation with a life of only fifty years. It is a tribute to all who support this congregation that in 1978 a charter amendment had to be obtained, extending the corporation's life in perpetuity.

About this time the congregation had a meeting to discuss the building of a synagogue. Some opposed the plan, feeling it was not the time for such a big step, but the majority voted to launch a building campaign, and \$5000 was immediately pledged. Leonard Gabert, a noted Houston architect, prepared blueprints, and bids were

sought. The proposed building cost was around \$18000 and again there was opposition on the basis that the population was not stable. It was pointed out that a railroad was being built from Dayton, that Humble Oil had built a refinery, both of which pointed to more economic stability. After much discussion it was decided to award a contract to C I Fortinberry. With the pledged \$5,000, a \$10,000 loan was obtained from the American National Insurance Company, and construction began on two lots purchased from Ross Sterling for \$1,420.

The building was completed late in 1930, and has withstood the effects of age and weather quite well. With the exception of many new roofs and paint jobs over the years, there have been no external changes, and very few internal alterations, the most significant being the replacement of the stairs on either side of the pulpit with center stairs. This was done mainly to facilitate bridal trains.

It is believed that the original Community Building, which was about one-third the present size, was a schoolhouse that was either on the property or was purchased and moved to the site., It may have been included in the \$18,000 cost, but it must have been available at the time the synagogue was completed, as everyone who remembers this building also recalls that there was always a Community Building. It was enlarged to its present size in 1948 when four additional lots were purchased.

In this discussion, the use of the word "Baytown" prior to 1948 refers to the separate unincorporated town abutting the Humble refinery. Goose Creek and Pelly were separate incorporated towns a couple miles east of Baytown. These three were known as the Tri-Cities, which were all incorporated as Baytown in 1948.

PEOPLE

Most important in telling the history of a community are the people who reside and resided in it over the years. A thorough attempt at researching and identifying all the Jewish families who have resided in Baytown has been made using telephone books, city directories, Hadassah and B'nai B'rith records and personal interviews. Birth and death dates that are available from many sources are shown.

The twenty charter members of CKI were mostly European-born immigrants, first generation citizens. What is known about these men and their families follows:

Abe Aron (1876-1950)-wife, Rosie Wilkenfeld (1886-1978), three children, Marjorie, Leon and Lillie. Abe Aron was the oldest of the five Aron brothers who lived in Baytown. He operated a clothing store in Pelly, but retired and moved to Houston prior to 1948.

Esidor Aron (1895-1941)-wife, Orina Wilkenfeld (1900-1978), five children, Merilee, Peggy, Sidney, Hertzell and Bernadine. After his early death in 1941, his family sold the business to Max and Natalie Altman and moved to Houston.

Mose Sumner (1890-1966)-wife Tillie "Tee" Jacobs. He and brother, Joe Susnitsky (1891-1946), operated Sumner Dry Goods on Texas Avenue in Goose Creek. Prior to 1948 the business was sold to the Paine Brothers. Mose remained in Baytown for the remainder of his life, participating in many civic activities and received a "Baytown's Most Beloved Citizen" award. It has been reported that Friday evening services were held very early so Mose could attend the high school football games.

Morris Wilkenfeld (1900-1982)-wife, Beatrice Shafer (1909-1998), four children, Herschel, Jerome, Sharon and Byron "Butch". Wilkenfeld operated Wilkenfeld Furniture, moved to Houston, but commuted to Baytown. After his death, Mrs Wilkenfeld operated the business until her death. The business was operated by Sharon until it was closed in 2006. It was the oldest continuously operated retail business in Baytown.

Charles Trifon (1886-1948)-wife, Bessie (1892-1960), three children. Trifon engaged in several businesses in early days, including an ice house and two theaters. After they divorced, Mrs Trifon remained in Baytown and operated a root beer/hamburger stand near the old oak tree in Goose Creek.

Joseph Guberman (1878-1963)-wife, Betty (1886-1949), one daughter, Shuree. Guberman operated a dry goods store in Goose Creek, retired and remained in Baytown for the remainder of his life. For several years Shuree made an annual contribution to CKI for a Chanukah party because her parents enjoyed the parties in the Community Building.

Jake Feinberg (1886-1959) -wife Lillie (1886-1949), four children: Bessie, Morris, Harry and Blanche. Feinberg was a shoemaker and operated a shoe business in Pelly.

Elias Hochman (1878-1929)-wife Yetta Wachstein (1878-1954), resided in Galveston, operated jewelry store in Baytown. There were six daughters and one son. Hochman died in auto-pedestrian accident on January 1, 1929 and his widow operated the store, but closed it prior to 1940.

Alex Lensky (1889-1951)-wife Toby Croft (1903-1974), one son: Herman. Lensky operated a dry goods store in Baytown.

Pincus Goldfield (1898-1973)-wife Rose Lerner (1899-1990), three children, Max (1922-2004), Israel "Babe" (1926-1988) and Sue. The Goldfields operated Goldfield's grocery stores in Goose

Creek, Pelly and Baytown and lived in Baytown until their deaths.

Sol Aron (1888-1958)-wife Sadie Moskowitz (1893-1953), two children, Ruth and Alfred. Aron earlier operated confectionary in Crosby and mercantile business in Goose Creek, Grand Leader #1 and accumulated extensive real estate holdings in the area. The Arons moved to Houston in their later years.

Dave Aron (1889-1979)-wife Sarah Krakower (1890-1965), three children, Ruby Lee, Hannah Pearl and Meyer Leo. Aron operated a clothing store in Pelly and served a term as Pelly city councilman. The Arons moved to Houston after retiring.

Joseph Susnitsky (1891-1946)-life-long bachelor, partner with brother, Mose Sumner, in Sumner Dry Goods. He resided in Baytown until his death.

Harry Lerner (1867-1946)-wife Schprina (1877-1957), children: Ben, Ike, Dora, Rose, Sonia, operated dry goods store. His original name was Levi Guberman. He brought his two brothers, Joseph and Ira, from Europe to Baytown. All of his children, except Ben, remained in Baytown for most of their adult lives, the women marrying Baytown businessmen. The Lerner's remained in Baytown until their deaths.

Samuel Levin (1892-1966)-wife Edna Levin (1889-1992), three children, Bernard, Alfred and Louis. Levin operated Levin's dry goods stores in Baytown and Goose Creek and the entire family eventually relocated to the Rio Grande Valley.

Alexander Grenader (1889-1945)-wife Grace Keilin (1897-1978), one daughter, Charlotte. Grenader operated Grenader's grocery stores in Goose Creek and Baytown, later sold to Weingartens. After his death his wife left Baytown.

Harry Kaplan (1890-1964)-wife Sara Rosenstock (1898-1972), one daughter, Shirley. The Kaplans operated a grocery and liquor store in Goose Creek, and were involved in real estate. They resided in Baytown for the remainder of their lives.

Joseph Moskowitz (1896-1955)-wife Blanche Lowenberg (1895-1960), four children, Alfred, Gertrude, Benjamin and Dolly. Moskowitz operated Grand Leader #2 in Baytown and was later employed by Humble Oil as a blacksmith, a trade he learned as a youth in Hungary. They resided in Baytown until their deaths.

Jake Sampson (1891-1967) -wife Mamie Massin (1896-1948), two children, Eugene and Mae. Sampson operated a grocery store in Pelly. They resided in Baytown until their deaths.

Ira Guberman (d 1958)-wife Selma (d 1984), no children, operated Guberman's Department Store in Goose Creek . Guberman resided in Baytown until his death and Mrs Guberman later moved to Houston.

A few of the following families resided in Baytown in 1928, but were not listed as charter members of CKI. However, most of them arrived after 1930. Whatever is known about these families is included. Many of them resided in Baytown for only a few years. Marital situations are shown for the time they lived in Baytown. There were later marriages and divorces after they left Baytown.

Abraham Stern-wife Frieda Ginsberg (1895-1990), five children, Sylvia, Doris, Milton, Susanna, Arnold, operated Star dry goods in Pelly. Mr Stern left Baytown in the 1930's, and Mrs Stern remained until her later years when she moved to Houston.

Julius Fram (1905-1955)-wife Helen Ober (1908-1987), four children: Betty, Jerome, Toby and Lewis. Fram was employed as a chemist by Humble Oil. Both Frams resided in Baytown until their deaths.

Issy Stracks (1906-1983)-wife Freda Becker (1912-1995), two daughters: Shirley and Norma. Employed by Goldfield's and Grenader's. They moved to Houston in 1941.

Benjamin Wade (1893-1958)-wife Bertha (1897-1972), daughter, Ruth. Wade was Rabbi at CKI. They left Baytown prior to 1948.

Gus Jacobs (1892-1967)-wife Yetta Kopernick (1896-1971), three children, Sarah Pearl, Marvin and Joyce (1926-1949). Jacobs operated Jacob's Jewelers in Goose Creek, retired and moved to Houston in the early 1950's.

Jake Leder (1893-1942)-wife Rosabelle Greenberg (1895-1967), three children, Marion "Boots", Janice and Archie. Leder managed Aaron Rosenzweig's store. The family left Baytown prior to 1948.

Jacob Katz (1906-1974)-wife Malvina (1908-1977), two children, Louis and Linda, operated grocery/clothing store in Goose Creek between 1937 and 1942 when they left Baytown.

Bernard Katz-wife Sara, Manager Treadwell Food Store

Noah Katz-wife Anna Massin, clerk at General Table Supply Co.

Monroe Harf, wife Ruth, employed at Economy Dry Goods

Harry Blum (1891-1966)-wife Sadie Stein (1898-1975), two children: Maurice and Helen. The Blums operated the Style Shop in Goose Creek and resided in Baytown until their deaths.

Dan Bennett-wife Ann Bagelman, one son, Richard. Bennett was employed by Grenader's grocery.

Nathan Solomon, salesman at Wilkenfeld Furniture

Leonard Keller (1897-1981)-wife Sophie Rosenthal (1897-1972), three children: Olive (d 2007), Adrian (1923-1969) and Harris Lee (1933-1991). Keller was employed by Humble Oil. The Kellers lived in Baytown until Mrs Keller died, and Mr Keller later moved to Navasota.

Abe Rosenzweig (1906-1994)-wife Dorothy Gross (1911-2004), two children: Joelle and Harry. They owned The Economy/Town and Country Store and moved to Houston after retirement .

Idah Sumner-worked for brothers, Joe and Mose, at Sumner's Dry Goods. She left Baytown in 1943.

Aaron Rosenzweig (1900-1950)-wife Ida Klein (d 1992), two children: Caroline and Sarah Ann. Rosenzweig operated a clothing store in Goose Creek. The family moved to Houston in the 1940's.

Isidore Wiener (1899-1944)-wife Dora Lerner (1907-1993), four sons: Norman, Jerry, Herbert and Maurice. The Wieners operated Wiener's dry goods in Baytown. After Mr Wiener's early death, Mrs Wiener remained in Baytown and operated the store until her retirement when she moved to Austin.

Sam Bernstein (1902-1953)-wife Sonia Lerner, three children: Larry, Jeanette and Jerome. He operated Bernstein's dry goods in Baytown. After Mr Bernstein's early death, the family moved to Houston.

Abe Jarinkes (d 1987)-wife Lena Fleischman (1903-1960), no children. Jarinkes was a ship chandler known as "Abe Chicago" because he operated the Chicago Store. Mrs Jarinkes died while living in Baytown and Mr Jarinkes retired and moved to Houston.

Max Altman (1913-1999)-wife Natalie Lee, two daughters: Carol and Tina. The Altmans operated Max Altman's Mens Store in Goose Creek and later put in a Ladies Department managed by Natalie, who became a Bridal Consultant. The Altmans remained in Baytown.

Martin Baer-bachelor, employed by Humble Oil, left Baytown prior to 1948.

David Lefkovits-bachelor, employed by General Tire, left Baytown after 1948

Sam Levin-wife Mae, operated Sammy's Place in Baytown

Nathan Reingold (1888-1958)-wife Marcia, operated furniture store in Pelly

Earl Milton-wife Gladys, three children: Nancy, Emily and a son. Mrs Milton taught piano

Abe Bemel (1903-1950)-wife Ida Begelman (1908-1963), two children: Betty and Jerome (1931-1981), Bemel was in the scrap metals business. After Mr Bemel's early death, Mrs Bemel left Baytown,

Sol Goldsworth-wife Ann Isgur (1909-1963), three children, Jackie, Estelle and a son.

Charles Marshall (1906-1953)-wife Evelyn Melcer, three children: Dorothy, Saralyn and Jerome. Marshall operated Home Furniture Co and Marshall Photography in Goose Creek. After his early death, the family moved to Houston.

Ike Lerner (1901-1976)-wife Freida Pasternak (d 1996), two sons: Marvin and Bernard. Lerner operated a dry goods store in Baytown. They lived in Baytown until his death when Mrs Lerner moved to Houston.

Max Levy-Optometrist, sold office to Julian Spring and moved to Houston

Julian Spring (1918-2004)-bachelor. Bought Max Levy's optometry practice in Goose Creek and lived in Baytown until retirement. He moved to Houston.

Max Goldfield (1922-2004)-wife Marilyn V (1931-2000), two daughters: Stephanie and Beryl. The family moved to Houston.

Israel "Babe" Goldfield (1926-1988)-wife Renee Levin, children: Beverly, Linda, Howard and Sandra. The family moved to Houston.

Joseph I Gelber (1903-1974)-wife Jeanne Levy (1905-1997), no children. Joseph was employed by Humble Oil and Jeanne taught chemistry at Lee High School. After retirement they left Baytown.

Millie Jacobs (1875-1964)-widow, lived with daughter, Jeanne Gelber.

Ben Kulman-wife Jeanette, operated BayTex Liquors. Left Baytown in the early 1950's.

Ted Lieberman-bachelor, operated pool hall in Goose Creek

Alfred Aron (1914-2000)-wife Hilda Turboff-operated appliance business-moved to Houston in 1940's

Abe Edelman (1907-1978)-wife Hannah Rothkop (1911-2003), one son: Ivan. The Edelmanns operated a clothing and shoe store in Goose Creek. They lived in Baytown until their deaths.

Harry Rothkopf (1883-1967)-wife Sarah (1884-1974), two children: Louis and Hannah. Rothkop was in the scrap metals business in Corsicana and retired to Baytown where they resided until their deaths.

H A Goldstone-wife Maurine, operated Good Luck Store in Pelly. They left Baytown prior to 1948.

Robert L Purvin-engineer employed by Humble Oil. He left Baytown prior to 1948.

Sanford Friedman-wife Leah Seibel, two children: Marilyn and Mark. Friedman operated Mallin's Pawn Shop in Goose Creek and was killed in a car-train accident. The Friedmans were divorced, and Mrs Friedman and the children left Baytown.

Leon Paine (1906-1985)-wife Blanche Schneider (1914-1992) son, Jeffrey, daughter Lynn. He was a partner in Paine Brothers dry goods in Goose Creek. The family lived in Baytown until after Mr Paine's death, when Mrs. Paine moved to Houston.

Harry B Blum-wife Mildred/Miriam, operated Hollywood Tailors in Baytown. They left Baytown in the early 1950's.

Harry Levine (1904-1974)-wife Minnie (1911-1985), one son: Marvin. Levine was employed by Guberman's store. After his death Mrs Levine left Baytown.

Harry Aron-wife Rose, retired from working as a tailor in NY.

Sam Paine (1897-1961) Bachelor. He was a partner in Paine Brothers dry goods in Goose Creek. Mr Paine died in Baytown.

Joe Holland (1915-1972)-wife Rita. Operated liquor store in Baytown

Max Mosesman (1916-2002)-wife Henrietta (Heny) Gross (1914-2004). Two children, Michael and Leta. Moseman was employed as a Chemical Engineer by Humble Oil. He died in Baytown, she died in California.

Abraham Hurst-wife Eve, two daughters: Sandra and Phyllis, employed by Humble Oil. The family returned to Massachusetts in the 1940's.

Edel Schikman (1912-2002) -wife Freida Shafer, one son: Charles. Schikman was employed by Wilkenfeld Furniture and died while residing in Baytown. Mrs Schikman later moved to Houston.

Sam Davis (1899-1961)-wife Leah (d 1971), one daughter: Bernice. Davis operated Miracle Store in Pelly. After Mr Davis' death Mrs Davis moved to Houston.

Arthur Chasnoff (1917-1998)-wife Libby Morris (1917-1986), three children: Jarrell, Dora Lee and Minette. Chasnoff was employed by Wilkenfeld Furniture. They resided in Baytown until Mrs Chasnoff's death when he moved to Houston.

David Blum-wife Mary, managed Shaw Jewelry

Harry Ladner (1883-1968)-wife Agnes (1885-1925)-four children. He operated a used furniture store in Pelly

Alfred Moskowitz (1922-1987)-wife Rosalie Paley (1925-1996), three children: Judy, Stephen and Sandra. He was employed as a Mechanical Engineer by Humble Oil. The family left Baytown in the 1970's.

Samuel Schwartz-wife Beatrice, 2 children, Raymond and Patsy. He was Rabbi at CKI. The family moved to Houston in the early 1950's.

Maurice Blum-wife Mary Louise Strickler, two children, Diana and Richard. Blum practiced dentistry. Mrs. Blum died in Baytown and several years later Dr Blum moved to Round Rock.

Alfred Melinger (1908-1992)-wife Helen Blum, three children, Ann, Allen and Michael. Melinger managed the Style Shop ladies clothing store and resided in Baytown until his death. Mrs Melinger later moved to Austin.

Fannie (1884-1952) and Clara (1914-1982) Pasternak-mother and daughter. Fannie resided in Baytown until her death and Clara later moved to Houston.

Jerome Fram-bachelor. He was employed as a Chemist by Arco Oil Company, and is a lifelong Baytown resident.

Nathan Smolens-wife Esther Cohen, two daughters: Faith and Marjorie. Dr Smolens was employed by Baytown Mutual Benefit Association as a physician. The family left Baytown in 1960.

Herschel Karchmer (1911-2004)-wife Esther Hafter (1917-2006), two children. Kerry and Michael. He was employed as a Chemist by Humble Oil. The family moved to Houston in the early 1950's, but Mr Karchmer commuted to Baytown until retirement.

Peter Baumgarten, Bachelor. He was employed by Humble Oil. He left Baytown in the early 1950's.

Donald Teter-wife Gertrude Moskowitz, two daughters, Barbara (1951-1990) and Joan. Teter was employed as a Chemical Engineer at a synthetic rubber plant, Gertrude was employed by Lee College as Registrar, Teacher and Counselor. The entire family has remained in Baytown.

Richard Manne (1926-1996)-wife Beverly Maisel, three sons: Roger (1953-1984), Neal, and Burton. Manne was employed as a Chemical Engineer with Humble Oil and also practiced law. He died while residing in Baytown and his wife later moved to Houston.

Irving Leibson-wife Lola, two children: Russell and daughter. Employed as a Chemical Engineer at Humble Oil. The family left Baytown in the 1950's.

Mervin Rosenbaum-wife Jean Peterman, three children: Susan, Steven and Barry. He was employed as a Chemical Engineer by Humble Oil and they reside in Baytown.

Thomas Aczel (1930-1991)-wife Molly Goodman, four children, Joseph, Stephan, Elisabeth and Bettina, employed as a chemist by Humble Oil. The family left Baytown in the 1970's.

Robert Feinberg-wife Alice, one daughter, Linda. They operated House of Fashion. After retirement they left Baytown.

Benjamin Moskowitz-wife Doris Smith, four children, Joe, Melanie, Bonnie and David. Moskowitz was employed as a professor by Lee College. After retirement they moved to Austin.

Zachary Price-wife Selma, two children. They were employed by Town and Country Department Store. The family left Baytown.

B S Shapiro-wife Lynda. The family left Baytown.

Mark Walker-wife Darlynn. The family left Baytown

E G Johnson, wife Ruth, two children, Kevin and Melissa. Johnson was an auto salesman. His wife remained in Baytown after his death.

Arnold Barkman-wife Virginia Lehr, two children: Myles and Sara. He was employed by Humble Oil as an Accountant. The family moved to Fort Worth.

Gilbert Marcus-wife Diana, Employed by Humble Oil as a Chemical Engineer. They left Baytown.

David Bosniak-wife Eve, temporarily assigned to Humble Oil. The family returned to New Jersey.

Ike Pass-wife Annette, two children-temporarily assigned by Humble Oil. The family returned to their home.

Gerard Lahn-wife Karen, one son, temporarily assigned by Humble Oil.
The family left Baytown.

Marcy Bernstein-administrator of Baytown Nursing Home. She left
Baytown

Leo Heineman, retired. He left Baytown.

William Kolitz-wife Tootsie, three children, Robert, Mark and
daughter. Kolitz operated Courtesy Ford. The family returned to
San Antonio.

Ernest Dreyfus-wife Paula, free-lance photographer and writer. After
Mr Dreyfus' death, Mrs Dreyfus moved to Houston.

Mark Mendelovitz-wife Carol Engle, three children, Lenny (1970-1986),
Robin and Roger, Mark is a CPA and Carol is a social worker. The
family moved to Houston in the late 1990's.

Kenneth Carlson-wife Rachel, four children, Miriam, Michael, Jaime
and Shara, Carlson is a Pediatrician. The family moved to
Israel in the 1980's.

Ruben Linares-wife Joan, three daughters, Jamie, Leah and Alyssa.
Ruben is employed by Exxon and Joan by GCCISD as a School
Teacher.

James Bernick-wife Pamela Medellin, two children: Paige and Alex. He
practices Family Medicine and she is an Oncologist. They reside
in Baytown.

Michael Bleyzer-wife Natalie/Natasha, one child: Irisha, Russian
émigrés. The Bleyzers were engineers employed by Exxon. The
family moved to Houston in the 1980's.

Gregory Bleyzer (1924-1995)-wife Maya, two sons: Michael and Lev,
Russian emigres. The family moved to Houston in the 1990's.

Lev Bleyzer-wife Irisha, Russian émigrés. Bleyzer was employed by
Dillards. They moved to Houston in the 1980's.

Robert Serling-bachelor. He was employed by Bayer Chemical Co as a
Chemical Engineer. He died in Baytown.

Shirley Good-husband Jay, two children. The family left Baytown

Richard Fuhrman-wife Robin, two sons. The family moved to
Connecticut.

Vaughn Westheimer-left Baytown

Robert Clark-wife Susan. They left Baytown

Harold Goldstein-wife Jennifer. They operated fast foods businesses.
The family left Baytown.

Edward Bauman-wife Shana Kouchel, one daughter, Miriam. He was
employed by U S Steel and Exxon and she by San Jacinto Hospital
Lab.

David Sawyer-wife Sharon, one son. He was employed by Exxon

Donald Steine-wife Judy, two children, He was employed by Exxon. The
family left Baytown

Mark Glasser-bachelor. He was employed as an Engineer at U S Steel.
He left Baytown in the 1980's

Jerome Shafer (1926-1996)-wife, Conchita Garcia, one son, Jerry
Jacob. Shafer was employed by Wilkenfeld Furniture

David Sorter-bachelor. He was employed by the Baytown Sun. He left
Baytown in the 1980's

Eugene Malley-wife Ruchelle, three children He was employed as an
Engineer, she as a Medical Records Stenographer. Malley died in
Baytown and Mrs Malley left Baytown.

David Cohen-wife Bonnie Moskowitz, daughters, Rebecca and Sarah.
Cohen was employed by Vocational Rehab. The family moved to
Austin in the 1980's.

B Wallace-wife Charla. The family left Baytown

Paul Whalen-wife Carol. Whalen employed as an Industrial Pipefitter.
The family left Baytown

Michael Chavin-wife Victoria, four children, He practiced medicine.
The family left Baytown in the 1990's.

Scott Aarons-wife Karen Marks, He is a Urologist and she teaches
piano at Lee College. They reside in Baytown.

Isadore Lipkin-wife Faith, three children: Stuart, Phillip, and
Allison. Lipkin was a Cardiologist. The Lipkins died in
Baytown.

John Havenar-wife Denise, seven children: Andrea, Steffani, Jennifer,
Jonathan, Jason, Zachary and Steven. Havenar is a Financial
Advisor and the family resides in Baytown.

Joe Alan Moskowitz-wife Elizabeth, both employed by Brown and Root.
They left Baytown.

Nick Marr-wife Melissa Johnson. Melissa is a School Teacher and
resides in Baytown.

Debra Harper-one son. They left Baytown.

Arthur Chagan-wife Rhonda, four children. The family left Baytown

David Berkowitz-wife Lana, two sons: Benjamin and Daniel. They are
both employed as Journalists and reside in Baytown.

Arnaldo Faxas-wife Genell, two children. The family left Baytown

Max Monheit-wife Jackie Graubard, He is an Engineer/CPA and she is a
Physician. They moved to Houston.

Samuel Kagan, widower, Russian emigre. He was employed as an
Electrician at Inman Locomotive Repair. He retired and moved to
Massachusetts.

Jonathan Cooper-bachelor. He was employed by Baytown Sun as a
Reporter. He left Baytown.

Ruth Cornelius-single. She resides in Baytown, works in Houston

Janet Bright-husband Stephen, three sons: Harrison, Truman and
Bennett. The family resides in Seabrook.

Pamela Williams-one son, Gregory. They left Baytown in the early
2000's.

Rae Cohen-single employed at Funco.. She left Baytown to attend
University of Houston Law School.

David Lee-wife Michelle. They moved to Houston in the early 2000's.

Manuel Razo-employed by City of Baytown. He resides in Baytown.

June Foster, resided in Baytown many years, moved to Houston in 2007

Judith Rains, resides in Baytown.

Susan Mancil, resides in Baytown with husband, Robert.

Jeffrey Ackerman-wife Margo, Ackerman is President and CEO of San
Jacinto Methodist Hospital. They reside in Baytown. He retired
in 2008.

Scott Faingold-wife Alissa, one son, He is a Journalist and she is a Teacher at Chinguapin School. After a divorce, he and his son left Baytown.

CONGREGATION K'NESSETH ISRAEL (CKI) THE SHUL

As in many one-congregation communities such as Baytown, the synagogue is the unifying organization. When services began in the 1920's, CKI was considered an Orthodox congregation and was attended mostly by men. When women were present, most of them sat separately from their husbands, although there were a few families that worshipped together. Men wore head coverings and talits. The service was conducted mostly in Hebrew, as the majority of the members were European immigrants and trained in the orthodox tradition. Services were conducted every Friday evening and Saturday morning, the former sometimes early so that some members might catch the second half of the Friday night football game and the latter also quite early so the merchants could open their stores by 9:00 AM.

All of the Jewish holidays were observed. On Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur, Aliyahs (Torah blessing honors) were auctioned as a main fund raiser. Since money could not be handled on the Holy Days, there was a system of communication using pieces of paper with monetary amounts written on them. There were envelopes with all the men's names on them. The amount of the winning bid for each Aliyah was placed in the winner's envelope. After the holidays, collections would be made. Dave Aron and Mose Sumner were remembered as long-time "auctioneers". After the passing of the charter members, this ceremony was abandoned.

On the holidays such as Hanukah, Purim and Succoth there were parties with much food and fellowship to enjoy. These events are still celebrated in the same way. For a few years the Hanukah party was subsidized by Shuree Guberman Abrams who remembered these happy occasions and wanted them to continue.

A Chedar (Hebrew school) was held on weekdays for the boys by the Rabbi. As in all communities there are stories about unruly students and Baytown was no exception. It was reported that one Rabbi resorted to throwing chalk at students. It seems that they eventually learned to at least read Hebrew as evidenced by some of the former students who still reside in Baytown. Most of the boys celebrated Bar Mitzvahs at CKI.

Sophie Keller collared all the children to form a choir. It didn't matter whether they could sing or not, as she stood before them with the feather in her hat waving back and forth while she directed the singing with her own high-pitched voice dominating the melody. This

was carried on without the assistance of music, as musical instruments were not permitted in the Shul.

Over the years there have been weddings, confirmations and Bar/Bat Mitzvahs in the Shul. The first Bar Mitzvah was that of Eugene Sampson in early 1930's. The marriage of Ruth Aron and Harry Kessler was the first wedding and the confirmation of Rabbi Wade's daughter, Ruth was another first event.

Some of the early records indicate that dues were collected, with \$25 being listed as the minimum for membership. During the periods when the congregation employed Rabbis, all services were conducted by them. After Rabbis Gray and Wade, who served in the 30's and early 40's, Rabbi Benjamin Danziger held the post for a few years. Rabbi Samuel Schwartz, who was in England, had a brother in Houston who wanted Rabbi Schwartz to immigrate. Baytown offered him a job, and his brother filled in for him until he and his family arrived from England. He served the congregation until 1950 when he moved to Houston to take a teaching position at a large congregation. The last Rabbi at CKI, who served for only a short time, was Orthodox like all the others. When he arrived in Baytown he asked Libby Chasnoff to take him to "running water" so he could make his cooking pots kosher. She took him to a nearby area on one of the bays, but never told him it was called "Hogg Island".

CKI was financially unable to keep a Rabbi, as the opportunities for advancement were limited. Since the early 1950's, all services have been conducted by lay members. Harry Rothkop and Pincus Goldfield led the services in Hebrew until their deaths, with others reading English. For the High Holy Days there were no services for some years, while in other years a Mr. Paperman from Houston was hired to conduct services.

Many families belonged to CKI and also a Houston congregation. Essentially all of the children born since 1950 have received their Jewish educations, mostly at either a Reform or Conservative congregation in Houston. By the 1980's, attendance at CKI had diminished to a very low number, and High Holy Day services were not held for several years. Most families attended services at Houston or Galveston congregations. In the 1980's a few younger people (James Bernick, Joan Linares, Kenneth Carlson and Robert Serling) decided that services at CKI should be held on the holidays, and they succeeded in organizing services for Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur. Conservative prayer books were purchased, and these services continue currently with lay readers. Almost half of those attending are not Baytown residents, but attend services because they enjoy the smaller, more intimate atmosphere. The break-fast after Yom Kippur is hosted by most members who prepare the dishes, and it is attended by many visitors from the area.

Friday evening services were always held at CKI, but when attendance dwindled to perhaps three or four persons, it was decided to hold them only once a month on the first Friday. This resulted in better attendance, although there are those who feel that the synagogue should be open every Friday evening. In later years the Conservative prayer book for Shabbot has been replaced by the Reform book. When asked what denomination of Judaism is followed by CKI, a good answer is "Conformadox". CKI belongs to no National organization of synagogues.

CKI was very fortunate in leasing its adjoining vacant land to the first TV cable company to enter the Baytown market. A 15 year lease was given with a monthly rental. Although the cable company abandoned this location after a few years, due to their growth which demanded a larger piece of land, the terms of the contract were met, and the synagogue received a substantial amount of money over the years.

On occasions when funds were needed for replacement of air conditioning equipment for both buildings and when the three Torahs required extensive renovation, former Baytown residents responded very generously to a solicitation for funds.

In 1943 the congregation held a "mortgage burning" celebration at which Rabbi Ben Danziger presided. Other participants included Sam Davis, Mose Sumner and Joseph Guberman.

On May 6, 1979, the 50th anniversary of the congregation was observed, having reached that landmark in November, 1978. Everyone who had once lived in Baytown was contacted and a large number attended the brunch and rededication service conducted by Rabbi James Kessler, a grandson of Sol and Sadie Aron, founders of the synagogue.

On March 22, 1992, CKI was designated a Texas Historic Landmark at a ceremony in which an official historic medallion was placed on the building and dedicated by Al Davis, Chairman of the Harris County Historical Commission. Many former members attended the service conducted by the officers of the congregation. Faye Brachman, President of the Texas Jewish Historical Society, also attended and gave greetings. The designation is for the building architecture, rather than for the congregation.

On Wednesday, December 9, 1992, the only overt sign of anti-semitism in the history of the Baytown Jewish Community occurred. On the doors and signboard were painted two swastikas and the word "Hilter" (sic). Many non-Jewish friends contacted members expressing deep concern and regret for such an occurrence. It was obviously a work of ignorance--in spelling, but not necessarily in meaning. The graffiti was removed, and no further concern was shown other than an article and editorial in the local newspaper.

The 75th anniversary of CKI was observed on November 2, 2003. Many former Baytonians attended the Sunday afternoon service conducted by Karen Aarons. Also on the program were Mervin Rosenbaum, Chairman of the event, Pete Alfaro, Mayor of Baytown, Gail Singer, Hadassah Director for Third Coast, Don Teter, CKI President, and Rabbi James Kessler of Temple B'nai Israel of Galveston. A reception in the Community Building was held..

Congregation K'nesseth Israel has been fortunate to have Karen Aarons among its members. She was extremely well-educated at a large Houston congregation, and serves as a volunteer spiritual leader. She conducts most of the Friday evening services, but calls on others when she is unable to attend. She has also taught Hebrew and Judaism to non-Jews who want to practice the Jewish religion, but do not plan to convert. She and her husband donated an organ, and she has introduced singing of melodies from the song book that was purchased several years ago.

Currently, the Jewish population of Baytown numbers fewer than 50 persons. Almost all of the children of the past 20 years are products of interfaith marriages. However, they have been well educated in Houston synagogues, all of them have experienced Bar or Bat Mitzvahs, Confirmation and Religious School through High School.

For many years the monthly *Baytown Jewish Community News* has been sent to all members of the community and some non-residents who are interested in Baytown activities.

ORGANIZATIONS

B'nai B'rith

In 1939 Goose Creek Lodge #1383 of B'nai B'rith District 7 was chartered. With fewer than 30 members at its peak, the Lodge continued in existence until the 1980's when the membership was so small that it was no longer feasible to maintain an organization. A few men of the community have continued affiliation through the national office.

Over the years, the Lodge raised funds for District 7 B'nai B'rith projects and various charitable donations through raffles, suppers and membership solicitation. For several years an annual meeting with the men from First Christian Church was sponsored by the Lodge or the churchmen in alternating years. ADL Date Books, an annual publication of the Anti-Defamation League, were donated for many years to each local school Principal to make them aware of the Jewish Holidays in addition to the secular ones.

Hadassah

The Tri-cities Chapter of Hadassah, founded prior to 1928, has served the Shul as a Sisterhood in addition to participating in the many activities of the Hadassah organization. Essentially all the Jewish women in the community are members and most of them are Life Members. In 1948, the name was changed to Baytown Chapter of Hadassah coincident with the consolidation of the Tri-cities.

Over the years the Chapter has raised funds for Hadassah's comprehensive health and social welfare programs through rummage sales, yearbook ads and membership donations for memorials and honorariums. At the monthly meetings programs of Jewish interest are presented, and the men of the community, some of whom are Hadassah Associates, also participate.

United Jewish Charities

Some time in the 1940's, Mose Sumner established the United Jewish Charities as a non-profit to collect funds from the Baytown Jewish Community for disbursement primarily to the United Jewish Appeal and to a few other Jewish organizations.

Over the years under the leadership of Sumner, followed by Max Mosesman and Merv Rosenbaum, over \$500,000 has been collected and distributed through annual campaigns.

Upon the departure of the Rosenbaums in 2008 and the shrinkage in the community size, the decision was made to distribute remaining local funds to the UJA and dissolve the organization. Further solicitation is to be done directly by the UJA and Houston Jewish Federation.

BAYTONIAN ACHIEVEMENTS

Mose Sumner was awarded the honor of being "Baytown's Most Beloved Citizen" in 1950. Known as "Mr Mose" throughout the community, he helped many young people pursue college careers. A bachelor until the age of 67, he went to Hot Springs for a week of relaxation and came home with a bride, Tillie "T" Jacobs. He built a beautiful home and lived with his wife for the ten years remaining in his life. She then left Baytown

Jerry Wiener, son of Isidore and Dora Wiener, became a child psychiatrist. During his career he served as President of the American Psychiatric Association and appeared several times as an expert on "Night Line" with Ted Koppel. During the crisis with the Cuban child, Elian Gonzalez, who survived a trip to Florida in an inner tube and about whom there was much controversy concerning whether he should remain with relatives in Florida or be returned to his father in Cuba, Janet Reno, the U. S. Attorney General, called on Dr Wiener for his advice and counsel concerning what was best for the child.

Irving Leibson, who lived in Baytown for several years and was employed by Humble Oil as a Chemical Engineer, later became president of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers.

Jean and Mervin Rosenbaum, residents since 1955, have contributed tremendously to the Baytown community, as well as to the Jewish community. In 2006 they were chosen as Citizens of the Year finalists. They have both been leaders in B'nai B'rith and Hadassah and the Shul for many years, and Mervin currently heads the United Jewish Appeal campaign for Baytown. Jean has volunteered at the Sterling Library and has headed the Library Board and Mervin has served as chairman of the Goose Creek Stream Development Committee, president of the Beautify Baytown Association and has been an advisory board member of the Baytown Police Academy. Both have been box office volunteers of the Baytown Little Theater for many years and have been elected life members of that organization.

Richard Manne was a Chemical Engineer and Attorney. He was very active in the Democratic party in Harris County, and was once elected chair of a Harris County Democratic Convention.

Gertrude and Donald Teter have served both communities as leaders. Gertrude came to Baytown at the age of six months and has essentially resided in Baytown since then, making her the longest-time resident of the Jewish Community. Their grandchildren are the fourth generation of her family to reside in Baytown. When Gertrude retired from Lee College, the Counseling Center was named for her as a result of a request by the students to the Board of Regents.

Donald Teter has served as President of the Texas Jewish Historical Society. He and Gertrude compiled and edited *Texas Jewish Burials*, a listing (34,000) of all the known Jewish burials in Texas. He was a founder of the Baytown Opportunity Center, serving the mentally retarded, the Houston Association for the mentally ill and The Gathering Place, a social facility for the mentally ill. In 2002 Donald was a Baytown Citizen of the Year finalist.

Max Mosesman was active in many civic endeavors, at one time being both the President of the YMCA and Congregation K'nesseth Israel.

Benny Moskowitz-The Natatorium at Lee College was named for Moskowitz, a professor of Physical Education at the college.

Neal Manne, a native of Baytown and an attorney in Houston, has served on the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission and has worked pro bono for Planned Parenthood in their effort to prevent pro-choice opponents from blocking entrance to their clinics.

Burton Manne, also a Baytown native and attorney in Houston, has served on the Southwest Anti-Defamation League Board and is currently the Chairman.

Tomas Aczel was hidden in the Netherlands by Gentiles, being the only member of his family to survive the Holocaust. He was educated in Italy after World War II where an uncle lived. He earned a PhD in Chemistry and came to Baytown to work for Humble Oil. He became one of the outstanding Mass Spectrometry chemists in the country.

Bleyzer Family-In 1979 a young Jewish couple moved to Baytown. Michael and Natasha Bleyzer were both trained as Electronic Engineers in their native Ukraine and were able to immigrate to the U.S. along with their six year old daughter, Irisha. With the help of a Jewish employee of Exxon, they were both hired by that company to work at the Baytown refinery.

The Jewish community welcomed them most cordially. In the USSR they were not allowed to practice Judaism. They soon became ardent members of the Shul, B'nai B'rith and Hadassah.

Michael's parents and brother wanted to leave the Ukraine, but were unable to manage it on their own. Through Michael's determined efforts over a period of time, Gregory, Maya and Lev Bleyzer were finally allowed to immigrate.

Gregory was a thoracic surgeon and Maya an engineer, but they were not allowed to work in the USSR because their son had chosen to leave. Lev was a student in a university, and he, too, could no longer attend school. In Baytown, Michael provided a home for the family and supported them until they could eventually become self-supporting.

Gregory no longer felt he should do surgery, but believed he could be of service as psychiatrist. Getting licensed required him to take training at a medical school. After much effort he was accepted at the University of New Mexico medical school in Albuquerque, and upon completing the requirements, was employed as a psychiatrist at a Tennessee State Hospital in Chattanooga. He developed cancer and died in 1995.

Lev began working in a management training program at Dillard's Department Store in Houston. His fiancé and her mother were able to immigrate to Baytown and a wedding was held at CKI. A wedding dress was borrowed for the occasion, Rabbi Walter and the Cantor from Congregation Emanu El in Houston performed the ceremony under the canopy they brought, which was held by two local couples.

For the reception, the ladies of the community wanted to do the refreshments, but the Bleyzers said they would handle it. The wonderful European pastries they baked were enjoyed by all.

The families all left Baytown for Houston in the 1980's.

MEMORIES

Merilee Aron Weiner, 1990:

Several years ago former and current members of the Baytown Jewish Community were asked to write whatever memories of Baytown they desired for inclusion in this history. The following quotations (with some paraphrasing) are some of those received at that time and since:

My father, Esidor Aron, immigrated as a young man and served in the army during World War I. For this he was granted citizenship. He married my mother, Orina Wilkenfeld, and since he was a tailor, he started making suits for the oilfield workers. Eventually he opened a men's clothing store on Texas Avenue in Goose Creek. Since he carried quality brands, he was not in competition with his brothers, Abe and Sol, who operated general merchandise stores also in Goose Creek. Abe Aron married Orina's sister, Rosie. A fourth brother, Dave Aron, operated a general store in Pelly, while a fifth brother, Harry, who had worked as a tailor in New York, retired to Baytown where he and his wife, Rose, raised an adopted niece, Freida.

Morris Wilkenfeld, a brother of Orina and Rosie, owned a furniture store in Goose Creek. The Arons and Wilkenfelds with their many children were involved in family activities and also were a significant part of the Jewish community.

Hannah Edelman, 1990:

My late husband, Abe Edelman, and I came to the Tri-cities in 1937. We bought a ready-to-wear store from Mrs Mike Katribe in Goose Creek. We later went into the shoe business called "Edelman's", and we retired in 1970.

My son, Ivan was born in Goose Creek in 1943. My parents, Harry and Sarah Rothkopf, moved to the Tri-cities in 1943 from Corsicana. My father conducted services and even Bar Mitzvahs for several young men. Lots of changes have taken place since my 53 years in Baytown. It is wonderful to have the doors of our synagogue open once again and may they be open for many years to come.

Ruby Lee Rosenzweig, 1990:

Our parents, Dave and Sarah Aron, moved to the Tri-cities about 1921. I was the oldest of three children, which included my sister, Hannah Pearl, and my brother Meyer Leo. My parents were in Ladies, Men's and Children's ready-to-wear in Pelly, where we lived on Nazro Street. Dad was active in the congregation and was in charge of

selling "aliyahs". We all went through the Goose Creek schools and graduated from Robert E Lee High School. I attended the newly established Lee Junior College for two years. Classes began at 4 PM and lasted until 10 PM, as the high school building was also used for the college in those years. In 1937 I married Eddie Rosenzweig and moved to Houston where we have enjoyed two children and four grandchildren.

Helen Blum Melinger, 2002:

The Harry Blum family moved to Goose Creek from Mont Belvieu in 1929. Texas Avenue was about three blocks long with Main Street perpendicular to it. This was pretty much the "city" of Goose Creek. Sadie Blum was buyer, seller, merchandiser and presser for their business, The Style Shoppe, in the early days, while Harry Blum tended to personnel and finances.

Our family included two children, me and Maurice, whom the local paper referred to as "The Ganders Fighting Jewish Guard". We attended middle school and high school in Baytown and Maurice became a dentist in Baytown, where he practiced for 41 years before retiring. His wife, Mary Louise Strickler, died in 1968.

After obtaining a degree in 1941 from Texas University, I married Al Melinger, who served in the Air Force during WWII. After living in Austin, we came to Baytown in 1949, where we both became involved with the Style Shoppe and many community affairs.

Ben L Lerner, 1990:

My family's name was Guberman, but my father chose his mother's name when he came to the USA before World War 1. He brought over his brothers, Ira and Joseph Guberman. He changed his name from Levi Guberman to Harry Lerner. My mother was 15 when she married. She had 11 children, but only 5 of us survived. My father left us in Europe and came to the USA. I was 15 when he brought us over, and that was the first time I ever saw him.

I started school in Pelly and graduated from Robert E Lee High School. I entered the University of Texas and got a 5 year Mechanical Engineering degree in 4 years and 3 summer schools. I then received a medical degree from Baylor in 1937 and served as an Army doctor during World War 2 and practiced medicine in Houston until I retired 10 years ago.

David Cohen, 1990:

I moved from Pennsylvania to Texas in 1985 to work for Goodwill of Houston, which was a transfer from Goodwill in Pennsylvania. In 1987 I started work for the Texas Rehabilitation Commission in Baytown. Joan Linares gave me the needed impetus to ask Bonnie Moskowitz for a

date on October 30, 1987. I came up with the brilliant idea of proposing marriage to Bonnie on December 13, 1987. We married April 17, 1988.

Bonnie Moskowitz Cohen, 1990:

I was born to Benny and Doris Moskowitz on August 16, 1962. I graduated Robert E Lee High School and Lamar University with a degree in Home Economics. I was employed by the Goose Creeks schools as the fixed asset clerk, leaving for the birth of my first daughter, Rebecca. Then I opened and ran Incredible Edibles for over 4 years.

Betty Fram Weiner, 1990:

Following his graduation from Southern Methodist University in 1929, my father, Julius Fram, came to Baytown as a 24 year old chemist to work for Humble Oil. My mother, Helen Ober, came from her home in Shreveport Louisiana, in 1931 to visit her Aunt and Uncle, Sadye and Harry Blum. She met Julius and after a short courtship they were married in June, 1931.

Their four children are Betty (Mrs Ira Weiner), Jerome, Tobye (Mrs M R Joachim) and Lewis. We all have fond memories of CKI and the Jews of Baytown. I remember little Mrs Guberman coming to our house to make strudel for Jerry's Bar Mitzvah. At the Friday night Onegs we always had hot tea and lemon and sugar cubes to go with all those good homemade cakes. I remember Sunday School, taught in corners of the Community House. Alfred Moskowitz was one of my first teachers, and Sophie Keller was there leading the singing of Hatikvah in her quavery voice. The High Holy Days were great fun, The kids played "school" on the steps of the shul while the parents prayed inside, or went into the Community House to fool around. I loved playing with the fringe on my father's Talit and seeing the ladies dressed in their finery, especially their hats.

Yom Kippur became the "Ice Cream Holiday". The kids would plague their parents for money for an ice cream cone from Rettig's, On this holiday, someone would always or nearly faint from the fasting and would be taken across the street to Sol Aron's house. In retrospect they probably suffered from 80-90 degree heat, dressed in their winter finery, before air conditioning.

There were the unforgettable Chanukah parties, Succoth and Simcath Torah celebrations and the noisy Purim events. I remember Mose Sumner selling Aliyahs, the Young Judea group that flourished during my teen years, the Sunday School picnics at Sylvan Beach. Goose Creek was a strange place to grow up Jewish, but grow up Jewish we did!

Herschel Karchmer, 1990:

I was hired by Humble Oil, arriving in Baytown from Florence, Alabama on May 3, 1944. Esther and Kerry remained in Dallas for the two weeks it took me to find a small house. During this time my most vivid recollection is of the constant rain and the meals I had at Speedy's restaurant and the disorganized state of the town which was divided into three population centers.

We set about filling the bare floor space with some furniture from Wilkenfeld's and a few orange crates until our furniture arrived from storage in Dallas.

One of the lasting memories I have were the German prisoners of war brought from Huntsville to plant grass in our new subdivision. The neighborhood children would stand on the front porches pointing their fingers, making rat-tat-tat-tat sounds.

The only other Jewish persons in my department were Julius Fram and Martin Baer. Esther quickly became acquainted with Natalie Altman, Bea Wilkenfeld, Freida Schikman and Louise Danziger. Esther's first intimation that she had moved to an Orthodox community came when she prepared a shrimp luncheon for Louise and Natalie. She was saved from embarrassment by Natalie who sacrificed a precious can of war-rationed salmon.

Our son, Michael, was born in Goose Creek Hospital in 1945. While he was still an infant he managed to live in three towns: Goose Creek, Pelly and Baytown. In 1947 at a Hadassah meeting in the Blum home, the first one that Esther ever attended, she was drafted to be president of the chapter. She held this position for 4 years until we moved to Houston. She also taught Sunday School in the Community House with classes separated by blackboards.

When we left Baytown there were 45 Jewish families in the community. It was difficult to leave so many good friends.

Merilee Aron Weiner, 1990:

One of the earliest families to immigrate to Goose Creek was that of Charley and Bessie Trifon, who moved from Galveston. They owned the light company and two picture shows. There were three sons, Morris, Harry and Arthur, plus an adopted son. Originally from Odessa, Russia, Charley and his brother, Nat, came to America first, followed by brother, Max.

Eventually the Trifons divorced, both remaining in Goose Creek. Bessie opened a root beer and hamburger stand across from the Oak Tree on Texas Avenue and later moved it to Highway 146 and Texas Avenue.

Saranne Rosenzweig Kosberg, 1990:

My parents, Aaron and Ida Rosenzweig, came to Goose Creek from Houston in 1929. Daddy had previously lost a retail operation, and they sought to begin anew here. Rosenzweig's was located on the corner of Main and Commerce Streets. It was a general store, carrying men's, women's and children's clothes.

My older sister, Carolyn "Cookie," went through the Goose Creek schools through the 11th grade, when she left for Ward Belmont in Memphis to complete her high school education. My parents sold the business in 1948 due to Daddy's ill health, and we moved to Houston. I was 10 years old and had completed the 4th grade at Lamar Elementary in the Goose Creek system.

I vividly remember attending "cheder" for several years before begging off. My grandfather, Baruch Kline came to stay with us and had a profound influence on our religious practices. We often walked with him from W Adoue Street to the Shul on Shabbat.

Bernard L Levin, 1990:

My parents, Sam and Edna Levin, moved first to Pelly and then to Baytown in 1926 where they opened a store across from the Humble Power Plant. In 1932 they moved to Texas City, returning to Baytown in 1935, where they opened the Rainbow Shop. I was a member of the Robert E Lee band, graduating in 1938. I worked for Ira Guberman in his store for a short time, leaving Baytown in 1940 to work for Burt's Shoes in Houston. After serving in the Army for three years during World War 2, I opened a dry goods store in Brownsville in 1950. My parents opened Levin's Store in Goose Creek, eventually moving to Brownsville in 1965.

My synagogue experience was going to services Fridays, weekdays and Saturday, as my father was a very religious person. I enjoyed every moment of it and still try to hold on to his convictions.

I married Betty Ziman in 1969 and have one daughter, Sharon, who is a student at the University of Texas.

Susanna Stern Friedman, 2002:

My father had already lived in Texas/Goose Creek and went to New York in 1919 to marry his first cousin. He was in business with his sister, Clara, and her husband, Joseph Waldman, but this was dissolved upon his marriage. He had a small store for himself. I recall Goose Creek businesses: Wilkenfeld Furniture, Culpepper Furniture, that gave the girls small cedar chests when they graduated high school, Woolworth Five and Dime and Penney's.

Beatrice Shafer Wilkenfeld, 1990:

I came to Baytown after marrying Morris Wilkenfeld in 1928. He had come to Baytown when he was 17 years old in 1917 to work for Abe Aron delivering furniture to the oil field workers. In 1926 Morris bought the business and established Wilkenfeld Furniture.

Rabbi Gray was the first Rabbi, who was employed in the early 1930's. Following him came Rabbi Wade and then Ben Danziger, who was paid \$100/month. I remember he was here on D-Day 1945, because he opened the shul for a service. Maurice Schwartz and a brother served the community until 1947 when their brother, Samuel Schwartz, came from England. He was paid \$200/month plus a furnished house.

Sampson, Katz and Kaplan were Cohanims, but Mr Lerner did not want them to bless him. Services were Orthodox. Some families sat together, some men sat separated from their families. On Friday night we had to have services early enough for Mose Sumner to go to the football games. My husband and Dave Aron bought the four lots on Sterling Street and donated them to the shul. This land had playground equipment for the children.

There was jitney service from Houston when I first came to Goose Creek. The route was through Crosby, as there was no Market Street Road to cross the San Jacinto River. The jitney wouldn't leave until they had a load of passengers.

Donald Teter, 2007:

I came to Baytown in June of 1948 to work for the General Tire and Rubber Co., operators of a government-owned synthetic rubber manufacturing plant. I had known Alfred Moskowitz in college and had met his sister, Gertrude, when I was a freshman in 1942. Re-acquaintance with the Moskowitz family led to my marriage to Gertrude in December, 1948. We were married at CKI with Rabbi Schwartz conducting his first wedding ceremony in the USA. My family all stayed at the Del Monte Hotel, the only hotel in Baytown at that time. It now houses antique stores.

For the few months I rented a room in someone's home, I ate most of my breakfasts at the Humble Waffle Shop or Scarborough's Drugstore and dinner was usually at the Humble Dormitory Cafeteria or one of the few other restaurants. I did no cooking, mainly because I didn't have any facilities, but also because I had no inclination to do so.

Baytown, which had just become the surviving city of the Tri-cities, was still a small town with three distinct shopping and living areas. The majority of the retail businesses were Jewish-owned. There were a few professional people employed by the local industries, but no Jewish lawyers or physicians at that time.

My attendance at CKI services was usually a "schlep along" with the family, as my religious experience and preference had been at reform temples. We did join Congregation Emanu El in Houston and attended there on the High Holy Days for many years. I seldom attended Friday night or Saturday morning services, unless asked for a special occasion, such as when our children were born, or for Yahrzeits. Some people, particularly Sophie Keller, saw to it that there was a minion for each of her Yahrzeits by personally calling me and others. She could not be refused, and I did my mitzvah by being there, although I couldn't participate in the all-Hebrew service. As time passed and the shul became less orthodox, I attended more frequently and many years ago stopped going to Houston for High Holy Day services, not only attending CKI, but participating in the services.

Having lived in Baytown for over 59 years, I've seen a lot of Jewish families come and go. Some of them were sent here by their companies on limited assignments. Most of the Jewish merchants have died or retired, but we now have lawyers, teachers, physicians and other professional people comprising our community.

One factor for the decline in the Jewish population is that more people have passed on than have migrated here, another being that almost all of the "baby boomers" generation did not return to Baytown after college. A third reason is that some families have relocated to other parts of the country to join their children or other relatives.

I have enjoyed living in the Baytown Jewish community, as well as in the total Baytown community. It is still a relatively small city, but the advantages of a large city are always within a thirty minute drive.

Arnold Barkman, 2007:

I lived in Baytown for 9 years, from the summer of 1965 to the summer of 1974 when we moved to Fort Worth. I'll always have a warm spot in my heart for the Baytown Jewish Community. I came to town as a single "New Yorker" not knowing anybody, and everyone made me feel welcome. I recall my first New Year's Eve at the Chasnoff's being introduced to the tradition of "black-eyed peas." Jerold Chasnoff, Jerry Fram and I would go to the singles events in Houston as the threesome from Baytown. After Virginia and I were married in 1967 she too was welcomed into the Jewish Community with open arms. When she and I left to accept a teaching position at TCU, there were 4 of us including son Myles and daughter Sara.

I felt a special relationship with the community and Congregation Knesseth Israel. In our small community, each of us was important to each other. I would feel guilty if I didn't go to services on Friday night because I might have been the difference between having and not

having a minyan. I often miss that closeness even though Fort Worth has a much larger Jewish population.

Natalie Altman, 2008:

I came to Baytown from Mexia in 1941 and Max, my husband, had come about a month earlier. When I came to Baytown I came alone by bus from San Antonio, where I was visiting my parents, to the bus station on De Fee St. Max and I had bought out a store that was for sale by the family of E Aron who had passed away. It was a men's store on Texas Ave, which at that time was a thriving area of two full blocks of department stores, shoe stores, drug stores and a movie house. When I came here it was hard to find a place to live—it was during the war years. We had to stay in the Del Monte Hotel, the only hotel in town, which was around the corner from the store. Max was called by his draft board to Mexia, and I was alone running the store and staying at the Del Monte Hotel.

My husband had known the Edelmans and I knew the Jacobs. I was 23 years old. The fondest memory I have is that Hannah Edelman made me come stay with them in their three room apartment, rather than being alone in the hotel. Everyone living in Baytown was very cordial. The Wilkenfeld family came to get us when the first hurricane arrived and had us stay with them because their house was more substantial than where we were, and we had never experienced a hurricane..

We soon became affiliated with Congregation K'nesseth Israel, and have been members ever since. I'm presently the oldest member. We had a Sunday school and our children went there until we could no longer support one and then we took them to Houston to Congregation Emanu El to continue their Jewish education.

We were in business for ten years and decided to move to the old Citizens Bank Building on the other side of Texas Ave. and added a Ladies' dept. It was leased to the Feinbergs, but operated under our name. When their lease was up after 5 years, we decided to take that over, and I went into the business to operate the Ladies' dept. I also put in a Bridal department which kept me busy. We were there 20 years and decided to venture into our different interests. Max majored in finance in college and always wanted to go into the brokerage business. He went to New York for initial training and studied for two years. He then became the only broker in town and he continued until his death in 1999. I returned to my college major—music---and started teaching piano to neighbor children which I had been doing even while we ran the store. I started with ten and escalated to 30. Now I am back to about where I started and have some adult students also.

I'm a member of Hadassah, Pilot Club, and the San Jacinto Music Teachers Association. I have lived in Baytown for 65 years, raised two daughters who graduated from Robert E Lee High School where they participated in many activities. They have said that growing up in Baytown and making lifelong friends was a wonderful experience. I still live in Baytown and also have wonderful friends and feel my roots are here.

Jean and Mervin Rosenbaum, 2008:

In 1955, after having lived in New Jersey for four years, we decided it was time to return to the warmth of Texas. We had thought that we would live in Houston and Merv would commute to Baytown. However, when he came to Baytown for an interview, he was introduced to Irv Leibson, and Irv convinced him that there was a nice Jewish community there.

We arrived with two children: Susan who was 2 1/2 and Steven who was 9 months. In 1958, our family was complete when Barry was born in San Jacinto Hospital. It was a lovely surprise to find that we could rent a three bedroom house for the same amount as a one bedroom apartment in New Jersey.

Jean's first contact with the Jewish community was when she phoned Leah Friedman (a fellow Galvestonian) and was invited to attend a Hadassah meeting. Following that, Rosalie Moskowitz and Gertrude Teter came to call. A dinner invitation at the Moskowitz's led to meeting Julian Spring and Heny and Max Mosesman. In time, we also formed close friendships with Hannah Edelman and Natalie and Max Altman.

We have both been active in the community. Merv's activities include president of B'nai Brith; president, vice-president, and treasurer of K'nesseth Israel Synagogue; UJA chairman for 40 years. In the Baytown community, he served as president of the Lakewood Civic Association twice; president of the Lakewood Neighborhood Watch; chairman of the Goose Creek Stream Development Committee for many years: AARP tax aide counselor for over 20 years. He has also been involved in many Baytown bond elections and political campaigns.

Jean has served in all Hadassah positions; Brownie Scout Leader; president of the Baytown League of Women Voters; president of the Friends of the Library; president of the Library Board of Directors; chairman of a library bond election committee.

Both Jean and Merv were named Life Members of the Baytown Little Theater. Both were also named Baytown Citizen of the Year finalists in 2006.

Some of their early remembrances include Merv and Irv putting on a skit at a joint B'nai B'rith-Hadassah meeting which no one else but

they thought was hilarious; also the time Merv and Gertrude attended a meeting of the White Citizen's Council when the Council were in their anti-everyone-but-them mode and they thought they were risking their lives.

Gertrude Teter, 2008:

My parents, Joe and Blanche Moskowitz, my brother and I moved to Baytown in June of 1925. My brother, Alfred, was two and I was six months old. Prior to moving to Baytown, my parents had lived in Port Arthur, Texas, where my father worked for the Texas Company and my mother was a full-time homemaker.

My parents moved to Baytown at the urging of my father's sister and brother-in-law Sadie and Sol Aron. They owned the Grand Leader, which was a dry goods store located at the corner of Main and Sterling Street in Goose Creek. They enabled my parents to open the Grand Leader 2, which was located in Baytown on Main Street next to the Reidland Hotel. We lived in a house behind the store. It was in this house where my brother Benny and my sister Dolly were born. Later our store moved to Market Street, where it was located between Smith's Barber Shop and the Bergeron Café.

My parents closed the store in 1933 during the Depression. When some of their regular customers came in to outfit their children for school, they could not refuse them credit even though they were out of work and had no means of paying for the clothes. After my parents closed the store, my father went to work for the Humble Oil and Refining Company, where he worked until his death in 1955. My mother had worked with my father in the store, but when he went to work for Humble, she became a full-time homemaker again.

We enjoyed growing up in Baytown where much of our social life centered around the Humble Community Building and the Humble tennis courts. We enjoyed playing badminton and table tennis in the Community Building as well as reading in their library.

Both of my brothers were Eagle Scouts and later became scout leaders, continuing to work in scouting for several years.

My siblings and I attended Baytown Elementary, Baytown Junior High and Robert E Lee High School. We were all associated with Lee College. Benny, Dolly, and I graduated from Lee College. Alfred taught engineering drawing at Lee College two evenings a week while he was working as a mechanical engineer at Humble. Benny worked at Lee College for 36 years and I for 32 years. Benny was selected for the Excellence in Teaching Award, and one of Benny's students donated the necessary funds to establish the Benny Moskowitz Natatorium at Lee College.

Alfred Moskowitz received a degree in Mechanical Engineering from Rice Institute in 1943. He worked for the Humble Oil and Refinery Company and other companies in the United States and overseas. He served in the U. S. Navy in World War II. He died on January 16, 1987.

Benny graduated from Lee College and received a Bachelor's degree from the University of Texas. He worked for the Humble Oil and Refining Company before he returned to the University of Texas to earn a Master's degree. He then taught at Lee College for 36 years. He served in the U. S. Army during the Korean War.

Dolly Moskowitz Golden graduated from Lee College and the University of Texas. She and her husband, Eddy, live in Austin. He is a retired insurance executive, and Dolly is a retired certified travel counselor. Both are involved in civic organizations as well as activities at Temple Beth Israel in Austin

I received a Bachelor's degree from the University of Texas, and a Master's degree from the University of Houston. I have done graduate work at the University of Houston at Clear Lake. At Lee College I received the Excellence in Education Award. When I retired, the counseling center was named the Gertrude Teter Counseling Center. I felt especially honored because students went to the Board of Regents and requested that this be done.

In one of the early elementary grades I was selected to play Mary in a Christmas play. All I had to do was sit next to a cradle with a baby doll in it. I wasn't to say anything. I couldn't understand why so many people went up to my mother and told her how great it was that I took the role of Mary.

Also when I was in elementary school, I remember a Jewish merchant who had a store near ours come running in to the store, visibly upset. He said that his son and all other students were singing Silent Night and other Christmas songs at school. He thought the Jewish children should not be required to sing Christmas songs. My parents told him that we were a small minority, and they didn't think that we would change our religion as a result of singing Christmas songs.

In the early years of the Hadassah rummage sale, my mother was an active worker. One store gave her new tuxedos for the rummage sale. She knew that the customers who patronize our sale were not interested in tuxedos. She took them to one of our local cleaners who bought the tuxedos and started a rental business of formals.

When our rummage sale location moved to a location that Leonard Keller thought was too rough for us ladies to be without a man there to protect us, he came to stay with Natalie Altman and me. Natalie, an excellent salesperson, was praising the Stetson hat that a

customer was examining, and she said that she knew all about the quality of that hat because her husband sold them in his store. The customer made the purchase and proudly walked out with his new hat. Fortunately, Leonard missed his hat in time for me to catch the man and explain to him what happened. I returned his money and he returned the hat.

Only a couple of years ago a similar incident occurred. After the rummage sale ended, one of our Hadassah members noticed that a picture that had been hanging on the wall was missing. To this day we do not know who sold the item. My daughter was cashiering that day, and when someone described the customer who bought it, Joan said that the woman paid by check. Since not many of our customers pay by check it was easy to find her check. Joan called the woman and described what had happened. Joan returned the woman's check, and she gave back the picture.

SUNDAYS WERE THE LONELIEST DAYS OF THE WEEK is a book written by Eli Evans. It is an accurate picture of Jewish youngsters who grow up in a town with very few Jews. I could easily relate to the events in this book.

On Sunday mornings we would go to Sunday School until noon, and then we were free for the rest of the day. Our non-Jewish friends were involved with youth groups at their churches in the afternoons and sometimes in the evenings as well. A Jewish friend of mine, who lived within a block or two of both the Baptist and Methodist churches often would attend the social functions at those churches. He told me that he enjoyed socializing with his friends and was not aware of any attempts to proselytize him.

Since most of my friends were busy with church-related activities on Sunday, I found that that was a good day to do my school homework. In my senior year in high school I was taking shorthand. I completed my shorthand assignments for the week on Sunday. At the end of the course the teacher, who had taught for many years, told me that I was the only student that she had ever had who did her assignments a week in advance. I did not tell her that that was because I was Jewish and I had nothing better to do.

In my junior year of high school we were studying *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE* in an English literature class. When they were discussing the unsavory character of the merchant, I was embarrassed, and felt that all of my classmates were looking at me because they knew that I was Jewish.

I dated non-Jewish boys in high school, as it was appropriate to have dates for some of the school functions. In one of Harry Golden's books, he uses the phrase niceJewishboy. I was probably grown before I learned that niceJewishboy wasn't one word. If I dated the same

boy a few times, my mother would remind me that he was nice, but he wasn't a nice Jewish boy!

My mother and I went to Austin to find a place for me to live when I went to the University of Texas. Someone in the Dean of Women's office told us that servicemen occupied all of the University-owned dormitories, but she had a list of University-approved boarding houses. From the housing application, she saw that my name was Moskowitz and I listed Jewish as my religion. She suggested that I might like to live in Rosie Weinberger's house. When we went to see Ms. Weinberger's house, we liked the looks of it. My mother really liked it when she learned that all of the girls who live there are Jewish. We paid the necessary deposit, and went home thinking that my housing was taken care of.

A few weeks after that, a Baytown friend of mine told me that her mother told her that she could not go to the University of Texas unless I would be her roommate. Ms. Weinberger's house was full, and I am not sure that she would have accepted my non-Jewish friend, so I gave up my room there and Jo Anne and I found a room in another boarding house. The fall term consisted of September and October. At the end of the term, Jo Anne returned home, as the preceding summer she had met a serviceman who was stationed there and they wanted to get married. The boarding house proved to be unsatisfactory, so another girl from the house and I moved to Kirby Hall, a Methodist dormitory. I did not know until after we had graduated that the social director at Kirby Hall had told my roommate that she hesitated letting us have the room because I was Jewish. My roommate was Methodist, and she knew that if she had told me what the social director said that I would not be interested in living there. We were happy there for our last two years at UT. I was the only Jewish girl at Kirby, but I was used to that since I had grown up in a non-Jewish community.

When my brother Alfred was a senior in high school, he asked another senior, who was Jewish, to go to the junior-senior banquet with him. When they arrived at the banquet hall, they were surprised to see that there was a table reserved just for the Jewish students. They had looked forward to sitting with their senior class friends. They later learned that one of the Jewish students had heard ahead of time that ham was to be the entrée and she told those who were in charge that Jews could not eat ham. They thought that the best solution to the problem was to seat the Jewish students at a separate table and serve them an alternative to ham. My brother was mild-mannered and was not upset about what happened, but his date was furious.

When I graduated from the University of Texas I accepted a position of registrar-faculty member at Lee College. When the mother of a friend of mine heard that, she told my mother that she had hoped that I would accept a position some place more exciting than Baytown. She said that I would live and die at Lee College.

At that time Lee College classes were held in the local high school, so our classes could not start until 12:30. The first two years of my employment my hours were 12:30 to 9:30 Monday through Thursday, and 8:00 to 4:30 on Friday. Those hours were not conducive for socializing, so even though I liked my work very much, I resigned my position and went to work at the University of Houston. After two years there I met the "nice Jewish boy" that my mother had told me about for so many years. We had actually met six years before but we were in college at that time and we were interested in doing well in school rather than getting married. Since I had last seen him, he had graduated with a degree in chemical engineering from Rice Institute and had served two years in the U. S. Navy. We married on December 26, 1948 at K'Nesseth Israel and I moved back to Baytown.

We reared our daughters, Barbara and Joan, here. We are members of K'Nesseth Israel and Congregation Emanu El in Houston. I am proud to say that our three granddaughters were Bat Mitzvah at Emanu El and completed high school level religious school there.

When we retired, some of our friends in Houston asked us if we were going to move from here. Since we have our home, family, and many friends here, we see no reason for moving. We are close enough to Houston to attend programs and cultural events that may interest us, without the hassle of living in a big city. Since Jews number less than fifty in a population of seventy thousand in Baytown, we serve proudly as ambassadors of our religion.

TODAY, JANUARY 2008

Where is the Baytown Jewish Community today? We currently have eighteen dues paying members of CKI and a few more attendees and visitors from time to time. All of our services are led by lay people, and we are fortunate to have Karen Aarons, who most frequently conducts the services. Her training, knowledge and ability are truly a blessing for our community.

We have our losses due to death and relocations. Jean and Mervin Rosenbaum are moving to Houston in the very near future. They have been among the most active in perpetuating Jewish life in Baytown and will be greatly missed.

After many years of discussion and wishing, we are presently undertaking a badly needed renovation of the kitchen in the Community Building.

Baytown seems to be growing in population. It is hoped that a few Jewish families may be attracted to living here. There are some Jewish people who commute to work in Baytown, but unfortunately live elsewhere.

Our younger people are beginning to take responsibility, and that is a good sign that there will continue to be a Jewish presence in Baytown.