

Temple Israel Archives
Interview of Herman Goldberger

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HERMAN GOLDBERGER

My name is Herman Goldberger.

I'm the editor and publisher of "The Hebrew Watchman."

[BACKGROUND DISCUSSION]

My grandfather, David Goldberger, was one of the founders of Baron Hirsch, along with his brothers. In fact, it was founded right over his tailor shop. They use to have services at his, you know, on top and that's how it originally started. Two of his brothers served as (stutter), one brother served as President and the other was his brother-in-law, who also served, as President, of the Congregation.

[BACKGROUND DISCUSSION]

My father, Leo Goldberger, along with his brother Emmanuel, were in a printing business. The company was started in 1913. And, in 1925, my father saw a need for a Jewish newspaper. And, he called it, "The Hebrew Watchman". There was another paper here that was published maybe for several years but it went out of business, and that was in the late 1800s.

My grandfather, David Goldberger, along with his brothers and brother-in-law (stutter) were among the founders of Baron Hirsch. In fact, it was started over his tailor shop. They use to meet up there, on top of, on top of the tailor shop, and that's how it originally started. One of his brothers was a past President of the congregation and his,

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also his brother-in-law was a, is a, was a past President or is the past President of the congregation. In fact, one of them, you know, his son, you know, became very instrumental in in (stutter) active in Temple Israel. In fact, I don't, I don't (Telephone Ringing) know the complete history but he may have eventually gone to Temple, I'm not sure.

My father, Leo Goldberger, started the paper in 1925. He thought there was a (Noise in Background)...

My father, Leo I. Goldberger, started the paper in 1925. Actually, we go by the anniversary year of, from September to September. The first issue was (stutter) Rosh Hashanah time. He felt that there was a need for a Jewish publication here, as the means of getting people together...

My father, Leo I. Goldberger launched "The Hebrew Watchman" in 1925. He felt that there was a need for (stutter) Jewish publication here, mainly because there hadn't been one. There had been one here earlier, in the late 1800s, called the, I believe the "Jewish Spectator." But, it folded and up from that time, up until the time that "The Hebrew Watchman" came into existence, there was no Jewish publication here.

His goal was primarily to bring the Jewish community together and he felt that the, in establishing "The Hebrew Watchman", that was the best way of doing it. He felt that the Watchman would serve as the focal point for having the Orthodox, the Reform, and the Conservative, you know, all together.

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My father, Leo, worked for many organizations, Israel Bonds, the Jewish National Fund, the Memphis Jew, you know, the Federation UJA, every, Israel Bonds, you know all the organizations, Shaare Zedek Hospital in Jerusalem, all the worthwhile causes, the Zionist district. ZOA, and for every major cause, Jewish cause, here and around the world.

[BACKGROUND DISCUSSION]

My father, Leo at one point, I believe belonged to every congregation - Temple Israel Baron Hirsch, and (stutter) you know Anshei Sphard, etc. Now, it's one congregation Anshei Sphard Beth-El Emeth, but at one point, he belonged to all of them. And, he kept his membership up, you know, through a certain, certain year and then he dropped all of them for some reason and just remained with Baron Hirsch.

My father, Leo was a, a gentle person, kindhearted, never wanted, never wanted to hurt anybody, never did. He was always good natured, just a, a great guy that had a soft heart that came out and helped everybody and anybody.

My father, Leo actually through the paper, felt you know he very seldom would write an editorial because he didn't want to, he was the type of individual who would not want to hurt anybody or cause any, you know, anything where it would just add to the, to the aggravated you know, situation. I do know however, when my uncle, Milton Goldberger, was the editor, he did take certain stands on certain issues. I don't know remember what they were, but I can, I know that at one point, he did write editorials

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for the Watchman, when he was the editor. But, my Dad through the, after you know, my Dad came back as the editor, just felt that the best way of keeping things happy, was not to, you know, say anything against anybody.

My father, Leo did take certain stands on certain issues, if it was for the betterment of the Memphis Jewish Community, as well as, the world community. He did write editorials, for example, on supporting Israel Bond campaigns, supporting the UJA through the efforts of the Memphis Jewish Federation. He came out with stories and like for the importance of Shaare Zedek Hospital in Jerusalem, and other, and Jewish National Fund campaigns or, or giving to that type of efforts for the Jewish cause. When he, you know, he did take a stand on that, but as far as trying to have an issue where it may cause a little more friction, within (Noise in Background) the community, I don't believe or cannot remember whether he did or didn't. And, in doing so, I kind of followed that route. I felt that it's more important for example, you know, just to, not to comment on something, you know controversial that would hurt or make the, you know, the community more divided (Noise in Background) .I will, I do allow people to make a comment, you know, if (stutter) when we go to interview stories...

I can remember, you know, you know, people would ask me, how long have I been working for the paper and I'm going to be 60 years old, this December. And, people used to say, how long have you been working. I say, all my life, I say, really I started when I was five years old, because I can remember as a kid, when at a printing company, which was down, in downtown Memphis, on Second Street, I use to run up and down the (stutter), up and down the stairs with the galley (stutter), you know, galley proofs,

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giving it to my Dad or taking it back down to the typesetters. I can remember that. It was just a fun time. It just, that's, I guess that's how I got "started" into it. (Interviewer's Voice in Background) So, I love every minute of it.

Really just going to (stutter), you know, going to school, I really didn't do any. Actually, I, I did do, edit a, (stutter) special teenage page that I was in charge of, when I was in high school. And, then called the teenage page and I use to be in charge of that. And, then I don't know, I went to, after high school, I went to, I studied at Memphis State and went into journalism.

Well, it went - not really. I felt that I wanted to be with my father and his brothers and once you get in, once you get in, your hands in the printing or dipped into ink, printing, you know, printer's ink, you really can't get, get rid of it, and I literally did not. I've enjoyed every minute of it.

Well, my Dad, Leo when he started the paper, felt that it was a, a way of bringing the Jewish community to Memphis. I mean, not to Memphis, but bringing them together to (stutter), in Memphis, by giving them a voice to express their opinion and to keep Everybody happy, that it was an opportunity to do that and he did so. He did bring in the, you know, he just wanted one happy community and he felt that "The Hebrew Watchman" was the, the best way of doing it, and keeping the Jewish people informed.

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Some of the, you know, the issues have changed. A lot of it is remained, has remained the same, it's just you know been, you know, new title, new different way of, of presenting stories.

People you know, I guess some of the, you know, ways that might affect the State of Israel, some of the issues that may be bringing, that occur here, (stutter) there is always, you know, there's some (stutter), you know, separate divisions, whether it be Reform, Conservative or Orthodox. There's still issues that you know, that hurt people and they felt, you know, feel like theirs is the most important and nothing is, you know, but it's their way.

I think the Jew, Memphis Jewish Community is unique because and, mainly because of the fact that they have different.. .

I believe that the Memphis Jewish Community is unique because as you, it is a small (stutter)...

I believe, I personally believe that the Memphis Jewish Community is unique because it is a small community and people know one another more and will remain friends, because of that. I think that once you move to a larger city, you really don't know one another, like in, say New York or it's wide spread, or the communities, even other communities, even in the South, when it becomes really big, people don't know one another. But, here in Memphis I think that, having a small community that we know one another and they,

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you know a lot, it's amazing how a certain (stutter) you know, the organizations bring the community together, to work for one cause.

I would say, I would say that what has mainly become, would be the two really, two things. Number one is a, is the Memphis Jewish Federation, working for here, for Memphis, as well as, for the state of Israel and for other causes, how the leadership has come from, all you know, Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. Also, the Israel Bond, Israel Bonds, how it has brought the community together, even though we don't have a, (stutter) a regional office here anymore. They still work for, you know, selling Israel bonds and the Orthodox, Conservative, as well as, Reform.

My father, Leo, got into the publishing business. He had already established himself in the printing (stutter) printing business, and he felt that there was a need for a Jewish publication here and he called it, "The Hebrew Watchman". At the beginning, he did have a group of individuals that he called his, advisers who were composed of various segments of the community - Orthodox, Conservative, or you know, Reform. And, he sought out their advice to what the people should be called and so forth. And, he listened, not listened to them, but they all worked together, they had been friends, as far as I know, you know, from, for years.

I feel that "The Hebrew Watchman" has a close relationship with the *Commercial Appeal*. We have always, you know worked together. There had been certain, a few reporters who have written for us, through the years. Of course, in recent years, they have not. But, I feel like, we're, we are respected by the, the paper.

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[BACKGROUND DISCUSSION]

The reason why, what I base my opinion...

I feel that "The Hebrew Watchman" is, has a close relationship with the *Commercial Appeal* because in your, oh I'd say, maybe 15, 20 years ago, and of course there were several Jewish reporters that did work for the *Commercial Appeal*. And, that they felt that there was a, a story that, that they were covering for the *Commercial Appeal*, that they thought would be of interest, in "The Hebrew Watchman" , and they just , gave a, (stutter) didn't give us a story, but they rewrote to, you know, for us. I can remember you know, several you know, incidents in that, of that nature.

My father got interested in the printing business. He would, I believe this is what, what you were referring to, he would go out and sell printing.

My father, Leo used to go out and sell , you know , solicit printing , selling business cards and other just small items like that , to get started. I (stutter) and it built up into one of the finest, you know , printing companies, here in Memphis.

(Stutter) I feel that "The Hebrew Watchman", in the next few years will be the same as it has been, when it was first started. It's been the, the type of paper to present the news nationally and locally and people will continue to look, to the paper, for stories that you will not find in the daily papers here, because I was once told that in editing the paper ,

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with you know , suggested by my, you know , one of my cousins, that that people who read "The Hebrew Watchman" want stories that are different. They want stories that you would not find in the dailies. You would want stories, more of a feature, that would you know, or news analysis or behind the scenes type of stories, that you know , you would not find in the daily papers . And, that's what I have basically based you know , or selecting my stories . Of course, when we also at the same time select stories that are immediate hot stories that, you know, controversy stories that may hurt people , you know, one way or the other, you know , we don't mean to do that or anything of that nature. But, it's something, you know, there's always (stutter) stories that several people may not like, my selection.

"The Hebrew Watchman" tries to be neutral, in presenting the news. If there are certain issues that that we feel like should be brought out, we do try to go (stutter), we do go after it. Sometimes the people that we are interviewing , may not want to comment on it, and as far as, but we try, you know , do our best and I think we do , in keeping the community informed (stutter) in presenting the news .

I believe that the community is coming together on certain issues. There is still issues that are pulling them apart, but basically there are some issues that bring them together , you know , in in going out in fund raising , say Israel Bonds or the United Jewish Appeal, or working for hospitals in Israel or through Hadassah or through other sources .

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I think that the community has certain issues that are things that have come to the forefront and I think they're meeting that through Jewish education, through special programs. I know that the congregations have established different programs...

Well okay, I think that what I mean by that is the fact that they bring in certain speakers to discuss certain issues like for the, with the, (stutter) you know, with the Swiss Bank's situation, where they bring in speakers for a program, featuring a person, for example, who is knowledgeable of what has taken place with the Swiss Bank's situation. I think that bringing in speakers on Israelis who are knowledgeable on what's going on in Israel has aided the various congregations, as well as, the Memphis Jewish Community Center, in their series that, you know, brings in certain speakers to bring everybody to, up with the latest information.

I think, I believe that the community, Jewish Community of Memphis is about the same. I mean, you we, get new people in and people move out, for certain reasons. But, I think the Jewish Community, here in Memphis has actually, you know, stayed the same, as far as, population-wise. It's around the same as, you know, of course in the early years, as you know, as it grew, has grown, but basically we're that type, you know, the community is a small community.

I think the energy, as far as the Jewish community and its energy is more working, you know, for organizations and (stutter) for causes that will help, to help here in Memphis, as well as, around the world. They have a sense of being compassionate.

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I believe that the community is...

[BACKGROUND DISCUSSION]

(Stutter) I believe that the community is, as far as religion is concerned, depending on who you are. I believe that the Orthodox has grown, I believe that the Reform congregation has grown, and of course, with the birth of Beth Shalom some 40, over 40 years ago, you know, with the Conservative movement, they have grown as well, and each one, each congregation is working for ...

[END SIDE A -- BEGIN SIDE B]

I think about certain things that have happened in in one's life and what I can remember if, you know, just talking about it, how I got started, or you know, the fact that I was you know, five years old or, and then of course then, you know then as in high school, you know with the with the, working at the paper , you know, it just, you know, I don't , I just ...

He wrote editorials like I was saying for, for Israel Bonds, for JN.. , you know, UJA, ZOA, etc.

There's, he was President of the, of the local district here. In fact, he was honored in about 1955 for his work for the Zionist District and for the ZOA of America.

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Right, that was the type of person that he was. I mean , he just, did not push you know , his beliefs on. And, he did it, in such a way that you would not think that. I don't know, he was just a mild man , who just really never pushed his beliefs on everybody , that he just worked for the cause and it just came out, in the right way.

[END OF TAPE]
