



# Tree of Life Congregation

UNIONTOWN  
PENNSYLVANIA

*100th Anniversary*



*Fourth of July Weekend  
July 4-5-6-7, 2002*

The name our founders chose for their new congregation,

## Tree of Life (Aitz Chaim)



comes from Proverbs 3:18

*"She is a tree of life  
to them that lay hold upon her,  
and happy is every one that holdeth her fast."*

We sing this verse each time  
we place the Torahs back into the ark  
at the conclusion of the Torah Service.

The Synagogue's glass front doors, designed by Harriet Kronick, carry out this theme. The doors are so attractive, they were included as one of the 36 DOORS OF UNIONTOWN, a poster widely distributed throughout Fayette County by the State Theatre Center for the Arts.

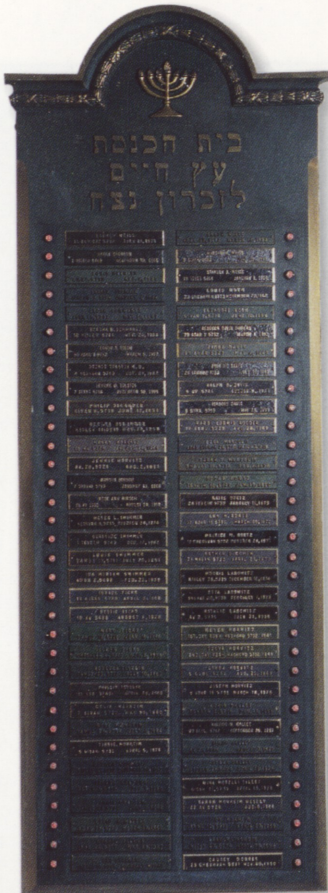


## 100 Years! Impressive! If Walls Could Talk!

Imagine the Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, brit milahs, anniversaries, engagements, confirmations, baby namings that were celebrated under this roof. Think of the many onegs, kiddishes, dinners and luncheons that were prepared and enjoyed in this building. In ONE year there are 104 Sabbath services, 6 high holiday services, 20 festival services, plus assorted minor holiday services, 52 Tuesday evening services and many yahrzeit minyons. That's almost 200 worship services a year TIMES 100 – Impressive!

The memorial plaques surrounding us give silent testimony to the hundreds of lives that have been part of our Synagogue these many years. One hundred years of joy and sadness, life and death. If walls could talk, the memories would overwhelm.

Rosalie Opall  
*Editor*



### Yahrzeit Tablets

There are five Memorial Tablets on either side of the bimah containing the names and dates of 492 souls. Another 30 are remembered on large plaques placed throughout the Synagogue.

The oldest names inscribed are:

**Menachem M. Mosesson**  
December 16, 1879

**Ziporah Friedberg**  
February 4, 1879

**Issac Hoffman**  
August 30, 1916

**Yitzchok Leib Koidanov**  
December 15, 1918



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
HARRISBURG

THE GOVERNOR

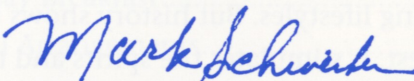
**TO: CONGREGATION TREE OF LIFE**

**It gives me great pleasure to send my deepest congratulations to the Congregation Tree of Life, in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, as you celebrate your 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.**

**For centuries, inspirational citizens have risen above their individual potential to create a better life for themselves and for those around them. As a congregation, you have worked hard to preserve a spiritual legacy in your community. As Governor, I commend your commitment and dedicated work to unify Uniontown's spiritual community under the guiding principles of faith, hope, and love.**

**Since its founding, Congregation Tree of Life has been blessed with inspirational leaders, dedicated members and a host of tremendous achievements. This momentous occasion reminds us of the distinguished history your church has sustained and the bright future you pursue.**

**As Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I would like to take this opportunity to personally commend the members of the Congregation Tree of Life for many years of honorable and faithful service to the spiritual community of our Commonwealth. Congratulations upon reaching this impressive milestone in your history and best wishes for continued success in all of your future endeavors.**

  
MARK SCHWEIKER  
Governor





## The Chairman's Message

Welcome to our Congregation's Centennial Celebration to all who have traveled from near and far to be here, to all the Synagogue members and friends who have helped with the planning, execution, and arrangements. A big "Thank You" to those who could not make it but helped with financial contributions and support.

Rarely, only once in a hundred years, are we so fortunate to honor an institution that has stood the test of time while continuing to perform its mission . . . serving its members, the larger community and the nation steadfastly, with dignity and adherence to such high ideals.

Any organization is, in great part, measured by the quality of those who serve it, and notwithstanding of a few "wackoes," the members have been exemplary in their accomplishments.

The expression "the first hundred years are the hardest" may be wrong in this case. The next hundred will be quite a challenge, because of declining Jewish population, aging members with fewer "rookies" on the horizon, assimilation and changing lifestyles. But history shows that when the picture has been the bleakest, it stimulates the spirits and the creativity, toughens the resolve and uncovers leadership.

So let us enjoy our accomplishments, revel in our history, welcome old friends and make some new ones, tell some stories of the "good old days," enjoy the desserts and everything that is served, and then let's start planning for the next hundred years. I volunteer to be Chairman in 2102!

Wolford Swimmer

## Centennial Celebration Committee Chairmen

General Chairman .....	Wolford Swimmer
Co-Chairmen .....	Harold Cohen and Mort Opall
Invitations and Correspondence .....	Lisa Burger, Elaine Malyn, Gertie Greenwald
Acknowledgements Century Club .....	Shirley Radman and Mort Opall
Reservations and Registration.....	Barbara Margolis, Maria Swimmer and Chari Kronick
Program Booklet and Historian .....	Rosalie Opall
Proof Readers.....	Elaine Malyn and Lisa Burger
Archive Display .....	Sue Kirshner
Hospitality.....	Nancy Port
Treasurer .....	Ralph Mazer
Picnic.....	Chester Miller, Milt Kronick, Ralph Mazer
Friday Night Service....	Zolen and GeGe Lazer, Harold Cohen, Larry Smith
Friday Night Dinner.....	Lenore Swimmer
Saturday Morning Service.....	Harold Cohen, Larry Smith, Perry Haalman
Dedications .....	Mort Opall, Herb Margolis and Milt Kronick
Saturday Luncheon.....	Marcia Cohen
Sunday Breakfast.....	Sylvia Miller and Bernice Davis
Floral Arrangements.....	Julia Cornue
Transportation.....	Sam Davis
Security and Housekeeping .....	Bill and Gerry Parker, Dave Sisler

### SPECIAL MENTION

Secretarial .....	Brenda Sabatini
Movie.....	Tsiona Blitstein
Friday Caterer .....	Rania Harris
Saturday Caterer.....	Sandra Tatelman
Musical Numbers.....	Karen Bennett Jackson
Service Booklets.....	Derek Perrone
County Commissioner .....	Ron Nehls



## Message From The President

The good Lord works in mysterious ways. Little did I know when I was a boy who had to be dragged kicking and screaming to Hebrew School and Sunday School and services, that I would become a faithful attender of services and that the Synagogue would be such an important part of my life.

Four generations of Opall's have sat in these seats – my parents, Louis and Mary, my wife Rosalie and I, my children and lately my grandchildren. I see my oldest grandchild, Noa, at age five standing before the ark many times proudly singing Alenu. I recall the baby naming of my granddaughter, Megan. I see my youngest grandson Pele crawling up the aisle to the bimah where he would sit on the step very pleased with himself. I see Evan and Kayla struggle as I did to sit through the service.

Our children, Barbara, Ed and Laura, received their religious training at this Synagogue. Although in their youth, they didn't appreciate its significance in their lives – Hebrew School, Sunday School, being made to miss school to attend services on every Jewish holiday – they seem to have an appreciation for it now. They all love to come home for Rosh Hashanah. Our expanded family now takes up almost two rows. Though they each belong to congregations in their adopted towns, they comment often about the beauty, simplicity and warmth of our Synagogue. I call it “haimish.”

One of the things I enjoy most is homecoming or pilgrimage of many of our members' children and grandchildren who come home for the High Holidays. I love the sound and noise of the babies and toddlers. It is painfully quiet the rest of the year.

I pray that Tree of Life can survive many more years. Though we lack numbers, we have a dedicated and faithful group of members who strive to keep traditions alive in our dwindling community.

Morton Opall  
*President*

# CENTENNIAL WEEKEND PROGRAM

## Thursday, July 4, 2002

Picnic at Uniontown Jewish Community Center

1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Registration, Swimming Pool, Playground, Games

5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Picnic Supper Sponsored by Sisterhood

Klezmer Music by Henry Shapiro

8:00 p.m.

Evening Service at Temple Israel, Socializing

## Friday, July 5, 2002

Cemetery Visitation at Holy Society Cemetery 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Group Picture at the Lodge at Chalk Hill 5:15 p.m.

Shabbos Dinner at the Lodge at Chalk Hill 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Welcome ..... Wolford Swimmer

Invocation..... Rabbi Zion David

Greetings.... Fayette County Commissioner, Ron Nehls

"God Bless America" ..... Karen Bennett-Jackson

Shabbat Service at the Lodge at Chalk Hill 8:00 p.m. to 9:15 p.m.

Guest Rabbi..... Rabbi Jacob Friedman

Guest Speaker..... Judge Rochelle Samuels

Oneg Shabbat at The Lodge at Chalk Hill 9:15 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.

## Saturday, July 6, 2002

Shabbat Services at Tree of Life Synagogue

10:00 a.m. to 12 Noon

Schachrit ..... Cantor Jack Siegel

Dvar Torah ..... Dr. I. William Grossman

Torah Reading ..... Dr. Perry Haalman

Haftorah..... Pat Freeman

Musaf ..... Myron Kirshner

Shule Keeper Awards..... Herb Margolis

Dedication of Plaques ..... Morton Opall

"America The Beautiful" ..... Karen Bennett-Jackson

Kiddish Luncheon at Tree of Life Synagogue

12 Noon to 1:30 p.m.

Movie at Swimmer Hall at Penn State Fayette Campus

9:00 p.m.

*The Producers* starring Zero Mostel and Gene Wilder

Dessert Reception 10:30 p.m.

## Sunday, July 7, 2002

Buffet Brunch at Tree of Life Synagogue

10:00 a.m. to 12 noon





## I. William Grossman, M.D.

Bill was director of the Pathology Department of the Uniontown Hospital from June 1986 until September 1998. During this period he was very active in the Tree of Life Synagogue. He was a regular Shule attendee at the Tuesday and Friday evening and Saturday morning services. Bill frequently led the Tuesday evening services. In the absence of a rabbi, he frequently gave the Dvar Torah sermon at the Shabbos morning service.

Bill served as a member of the Board of Directors for twelve years and was President of the Synagogue for a two-year term, 1988 to 1990. During his presidency, he was responsible for having a community Passover seder in the Tree of Life Synagogue and a Jewish community picnic at the Uniontown Jewish Community Center. Bill chaired a committee to refurbish the Synagogue Holy Ark with beautiful wood-paneled doors and curtains. He was asked by the congregation to give the eulogy for Rabbi Joseph Spector of blessed memory who had served the congregation for five years. Bill was a member of the Chevra Kaddisha (Holy Society) and is currently an honorary member of that group.

Bill served as an unofficial medical advisor to the members of Tree of Life Synagogue and their families when they were sick. He has maintained his membership in the Synagogue and maintains telephone and e-mail contact with shule members while residing in his home in Southeast Vermont.

Thirty years ago Bill was a founding father of the Brattleboro Area Jewish Community (BAJC) located in Southeast Vermont. He served as the second president of the BAJC which established an organized Jewish presence in this region. His children, Anne, Robert and Jon, were the first Bat and Bar Mitzvahs of the BAJC. There are more than 130 members at present, and Jewish education is provided to the children. Regular and holiday services are held. A Jewish cemetery was established. Bill has recently organized a men's Chevra Kaddisha for the BAJC.

## Judge Rochelle S. Friedman

Judge Rochelle S. Friedman, also known as Shelly Friedman, was elected to Commonwealth Court, an intermediate appellate court of Pennsylvania, in November 1991. Judge Friedman was retained in the municipal election on November 6, 2001.



Judge Friedman was born and educated in Pittsburgh. She received her undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Pittsburgh. Prior to her election to Commonwealth Court, she was a sole practitioner, whose trial and appellate cases primarily involved criminal, first amendment and family law matters. She also served as a judicial law clerk to the Honorable James R. McGregor in the Criminal Division of the Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County; solicitor to the Honorable Robert N. Pierce, Jr. Clerk of Courts of Allegheny County; director of two Governor's Justice Commission Projects. Alternate Sentencing and Victim Compensation; and as an adjunct faculty member in the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health. Judge Friedman also served as a consultant to the Mayor of the City of Pittsburgh and as liaison between the Pittsburgh Model Cities Program and the Mayor. She also was a consultant for the American University Law School, Criminal Courts Technical Assistance Program.

Judge Friedman has been admitted to the United States Supreme Court, United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania and the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. She is also a member of the American, Pennsylvania, Allegheny County and Bucks County Bar Associations and the National Association of Women Judges.

She is also director of Jewish Prisoner Services International and is a founding member of the National Museum of Women in the Arts. Judge Friedman has served as chair of the Legislative Committee on Juvenile Justice of the National Council of Jewish Women in its pilot project, as chair of the Board of Directors of Southwest Pre-Trial Services Agency, Inc. and as a board member of the former C. Howard Marcy State Hospital.

Judge Friedman has also been a member of the First Amendment Lawyers Association; Pennsylvania Association of Trial Lawyers; National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers; Executive Women's Council of Greater Pittsburgh; NOW, American Civil Liberties Union; the International Platform Association and has been listed in several editions of Who's Who in American Women.

Shelly is the widow of Irwin Mark Samuels, the son of Morris and Mollie Samuels of blessed memory. She is the mother of Michele Lauren Samuels and Sharon Beth Brushman and the grandmother of Liza Eden and Gabriel Benjamin Brushman. She currently resides in Doylestown, Pennsylvania.

## History of Congregation Tree of Life

The congregation dates back to February 24, 1902, when a small group of Jewish citizens of Uniontown applied to the Court of Common Pleas of Fayette County for a charter of incorporation to form a religious congregation to be known as The Tree of Life. The purposes of the corporation were "the support and maintenance of the public worship of Almighty God, according to the faith, doctrine, discipline and usages of the Jewish Orthodox Synagogues of the United States.

The incorporators were Harris Cohen, David Friedberg, Louis E. Rubin, David Goodstein, Issac Silverman, Jacob Davis, Harry Meyer, J. Ogusky, and Simon Cohen. The charter was granted and Harris Cohen became the first official president. Jacob Davis was the first treasurer and Adolph Hershkovitz was the first secretary.

On July 8, 1902, the congregation purchased a lot on the corner of Beeson Avenue and Dunbar Street where Asbury United Methodist Church is now located. This lot was sold in 1909, when a second lot was purchased from the Uniontown School District. This lot was located between Iowa and East Fayette streets and contained a building known as the White School House.

High Holy Day services were held in various public halls and Sabbath and other weekly services were held at the home of Reverend Samuel Cohen on Pittsburgh Street.

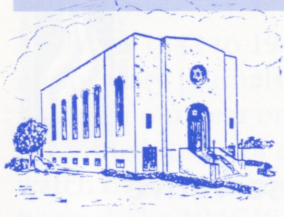
The present site of the Synagogue was purchased on May 10, 1922. Title to the property was in the names of individuals who were trustees of the Tree Of Life Corporation. On June 23, 1925, the deed was turned over to the Corporation. Construction was completed in 1925.

Through the years there was a very active religious school providing the Sunday School and Hebrew School education of our youths. Dedicated members served on the school board and as faculty. Adult Education classes were a regular feature of the education program.

In addition to the regular religious services, many worthwhile projects were sponsored by the Congregation. Among them were a Young Men's Association, Boy Scout Troop #6, AZA, Junior Hadassah, B'nai B'rith Girls, a basketball league and a Bar Mitzvah Club. A nursery school for children aged three to five was conducted for many years. Many of these organizations and programs were eventually moved to the Jewish Community Center.

The members and rabbis of the Congregation have always taken an active part in community organizations and committees such as Red Cross, Heart Association, Rotary, Lions, United Fund, Chamber of Commerce, Bar Association, Medical Society and others.

Though a distinctly separate organization, the Chevrah Kaddisha is associated closely with the Synagogue and provides a beautiful burial ground at The Holy Society Cemetery in Hopwood.



## Building the Synagogue

The lot was purchased May 10, 1922.

Architects were Harry W. Altman and A.B. Meyer

Contractor was Dominick DiGregory – Republic Construction Co.

Following are excerpts from various agreements:

Agreement dated July 7, 1924 between Dominick DiGregory, D/B/A Republic Construction Company and Tree Of Life, a corporation “for the complete erection of a brick synagogue at a cost of \$44,796.00 to be paid thusly:

\$10,000 on completion of excavation and foundation

\$12,000 when building is under roof

\$12,000 on completion of plastering

\$10,796 sixty days after entire completion.

Work on the building will start upon the signing of this contract.”

Agreements dated August 19, 1924 between Peerless Supply Company and the Tree of Life for the following:

“complete wiring system at a cost of \$1050.00”

“complete plumbing and gas fitting system at a cost of \$1345.00”

“complete steam heating system at a cost of \$2898”

All work to be completed as fast as the condition of the building will permit.

Agreement dated January 15, 1925 between Pittsburgh Art Glass Company and the Tree of Life “to furnish the stained and ornamental glass for the sum of \$1900, installed.”

All agreements were signed by Abe Cohen, president and John Treelisky, secretary. Witness was Charles Bowman.

The total of all these agreements, thus the cost of building the synagogue, was \$51,989.00.

The value of the building today as per our insurance coverage is \$750,000.

The oldest plaque in the synagogue is this one in the foyer.

### CONGREGATION TREE OF LIFE

Solomon Cohen, Founder

1901 – 1925

#### Building Committee

Jacob Davis, chairman

Louis Bernson

Louis Bremler

David Cohen

Abe Cohen

Harry Cooper

Israel Ficks

Aaron Feldstein

David Goldberg

Elias Goodstein

S. Joe Levinson

Lewis Meyer

Henry Sinay

John Treelisky

Samuel Weiss

Aaron Weiss



## Evolution From Orthodox To Conservative

From its beginnings Tree of Life was an orthodox congregation. We were affiliated with the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America. Records show we paid \$25 a member dues in 1953.

Of course, men and women were seated separately – men downstairs and women in the balcony. One of our scrapbooks contained the following High Holiday 1954 tickets: Abe Weiss, downstairs center F1, Rose Weiss, balcony left A1.

There were enough Jewish merchants closing for the High Holidays to warrant the printing of signs such as this one.

THIS STORE IS CLOSED  
Saturday, September 17 and Monday, September 26  
For Jewish High Holy Days

This sign distributed courtesy of Tree of Life

The first important milestone in the change from orthodox to conservative philosophy was July 28, 1957, when it was passed that “men and women may, if they so desire, sit side by side at all religious services.”

The second milestone was October 8, 1959, when the congregation voted to follow the direction of Conservative Judaism and affiliated with the United Synagogue of America. Rabbi Irving Dick was the first conservative rabbi.

The third milestone was reached in December, 1977, when, after two years of discussion, it was voted to count women in making up a minyon.

New prayerbooks were purchased in February 1994. The “Sim Shalom” published by United Synagogue replaced the Silverman prayerbooks that were used for many years.

After a lapse of approximately twenty years, we again affiliated with the United Synagogue of America on February 27, 1996.

The final step away from our orthodox roots took place November 4, 1997, at the general membership meeting when it was voted that “women be allowed to have aliyahs and the full rights of the bimah.”

## The War Years



From 1942 to 1946 Tree of Life's annual anniversary journals were dedicated "in honor of our dear ones who are serving in the armed forces of our nation. May God watch over them and bring them safely home." The 1946 Victory Journal had the most complete listing of all the Jewish men and women of Uniontown who served in the armed forces.

J.M. Axelrad	Herman Ficks	Malcolm Lebowitz	Lawrence Smith
Allen Barasch	Herbert Fisher	Sidney Lebowitz	Arthur Snyder
Bernard A. Barasch	Marvin Frank	Meyer Levinson	Edward D. Snyder
Howard Barasch	Leonard Freeman	Martin B. Levy	Robert E. Solomon
Seymour Berkman	Stanton Freeman	T. T. Levy	Sidney Solomon
S. B. Berkowitz	David Friedberg	Robert S. Lisowitz	Harry Staman
Donald S. Bernson	William Friedman	Edward Maslan	Albert J. Steiner
Julian A. Bernson	Milton C. Freeman	Jack Maslan	R. R. Steelman
Alvin Bortz	Helen Fruhlinger	Harold I. Michael	Sydney Stern
Marvin Bortz	Arnold Goldberg	S. J. Michael	Wolford Swimmer
Maurice Bortz	Morton A. Goldberg	Sol J. Michael	H. Tevelin
*Arnold M. Bree	Sydney I. Goldberg	Z. Mosesson	Philip Tevelin
Abner H. Broad	Milton S.	Alvin Mundel	Sydney Wallack
Jack L. Broad	Gottesman	K. Neuhausen	Eugene Weinberger
Maurice I. Broad	Herbert Greenspan	Maurice Ostroff	Samuel Weinberger
Alfred Buck	Arthur Greenwald	D. F. Pariser	Sidney Weinberger
Bessie R. Buck	Baily Greenwald	Jay Pariser	*Stanley Weiner
Herman M. Buck	Harry Greenwald	Ben Platt	Harold Weiss
Leonard Burger	Robert Greenwald	Oscar Platt	Robert Weiss
Abe Cohen	Yetta Haught	Pearl Platt	Stanley J. Weiss
David E. Cohen	Theodore Hertz	David Radman	Julian H. Zilber
David W. Cohen	Melvin Hirsh	Jake Radman	
Harold Cohen	Teddy Hurwitz	Will Recht	
Harry W. Cohen	Edward Kaplan	Bernard D. Rodney	
Jason H. Cohen	Joseph H. Katz	Henry E. Rodney	
Sol Cohen	Morris Katz	Louis F. Rogel	
Milton B. Cohen	Milton Kronick	Dave Rosen	
Walter Cohen	Sidney Kronick	Mollie Rosen	
Floyd Coyne	Sol Kronick	Sol J. Rosenbaum	
W. Eisenberg	Adolph Labowitz	James F. Roth	
Nate Feigus	Emanuel Lebowitz	Jacob Ruben	
S. J. Feigus	Lila Lebowitz	Bernard Silver	

*\*Those who made  
the supreme  
sacrifice.*

## Leaders Throughout Our History

Harris Cohen is listed as the first official president of the congregation followed by Solomon Cohen, David Goldberg, Morris Friedman and Abe Cohen.

The first president of the Auxiliary was Mrs. Ben Davis succeeded by Mrs. Elias Goodstein, Mrs. Mendel Peril, Mrs. Esther Horelick, and Mrs. Stein.

The first spiritual leader of the congregation was Reverend Samuel Cohen followed by Rabbi's Samuel Leibowitz, Morris Max and Samuel Goldberger.

Our most accurate listing of leaders and the years they served begins with the earliest Journal we have – 1938.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Rabbis</b>	<b>Shule Presidents</b>	<b>Auxiliary Presidents</b>
1938	Julius Washer	J. N. Kronick	Edith Gusky
1939	Julius Washer	J. N. Kronick	Edith Gusky
1940	Julius Washer	J. N. Kronick	Edith Gusky
1941	Julius Washer	J. N. Kronick	Edith Gusky
1942	Samuel Chill	J. N. Kronick	Ethel Lebowitz
1943	Samuel Chill	Abe Cohen	Ethel Lebowitz
1944	Samuel Chill	Joseph Horwitz	Ruth Geduldig
1945	Irving Rockoff	Abe Cohen	Ruth Geduldig
1946	Irving Rockoff	Abe Cohen	Ruth Geduldig
1947	Irving Rockoff	Meyer Swimmer	Gussie Labowitz
1948	Irving Rockoff	Meyer Swimmer	Gussie Labowitz
1949	Irving Rockoff	Meyer Swimmer	Ruth Geduldig
1950	Irving Rockoff	Meyer Swimmer	Ruth Geduldig
1951	Irving Rockoff	Sam Koidanov	Fannie Pearl
1952	Irving Rockoff	James Labowitz	Fannie Pearl
1953	Irving Rockoff	James Labowitz	Fannie Pearl
1954	David Leiter	Abe Weiss	Ruth Geduldig
1955	David Leiter	Abe Weiss	Ruth Geduldig
1956	David Leiter	Joseph Horewitz	Libbie Glasser
1957	David Leiter	Joseph Horewitz	Libbie Glasser
1958	David Leiter	Abe Weiss	Libbie Glasser
1959	David Leiter	Abe Weiss	Libbie Glasser
1960	Irving Dick	Myron Kirshner	Gertrude Greenwald Ethel Halprin Delores Lurie
1961	Irving Dick	Myron Kirshner	Libbie Glasser
1962	Jacob Friedman	Erwin Eisen	Libbie Glasser
1963	Jacob Friedman	Erwin Eisen	Marcia Cohen
1964	Jacob Friedman	Jack Hirsch	Marcia Cohen
1965	Jacob Friedman	Jack Hirsch	Chari Kronick
1966		George Tolstoi	Chari Kronick
1967	Arnold Fine	J. N. Kronick	Fritzie Cohen
1968	Arnold Fine	Myron Kirshner	Fritzie Cohen
1969	Harry Goldwater	Myron Kirshner	Fritzie Cohen

<b>Year</b>	<b>Rabbis</b>	<b>Shule Presidents</b>	<b>Auxiliary Presidents</b>
1970	Harry Goldwater	Meyer Swimmer	Fritzie Cohen
1971	Harry Goldwater	Meyer Swimmer	Ruth Vanderglas
1972	Harry Goldwater	Harry Hershman	Ruth Vanderglas
1973	Israel Silber	Harry Hershman	Anita Roth
1974	Israel Silber	Wolf Swimmer	Anita Roth
1975		Wolf Swimmer	Anita Roth
1976	Edward Portner	Zolen Lazer	Lisa Burger
1977	Edward Portner	Zolen Lazer	Lisa Burger
1978	Chaim Burstein	Harry Hershman	Elaine Malyn
1979	Chaim Burstein	Harry Hershman	Elaine Malyn
1980	Pinchas Aloof	Myron Kirshner	Lenore Swimmer
1981	Stanley Savage	Murray Horewitz	Lenore Swimmer
1982	Stanley Savage	Murray Horewitz	Lisa Burger
1983	Stanley Savage	Morton Opall	Anita Roth
1984	Stanley Savage	Morton Opall	Arlane Horewitz
1985		Sidney Simon	Lisa Burger
1986		Sidney Simon	Rosalie Opall
1987	Joseph Spector	Harold Cohen	Rosalie Opall
1988	Joseph Spector	Harold Cohen	Lisa Burger
1989	Joseph Spector	I. William Grossman	Lisa Burger
1990	Joseph Spector	I. William Grossman	Lisa Burger
1991		Zolen Lazer	Lisa Burger
1992	Yaakov McDaniel	Zolen Lazer	Lisa Burger
1993	Yaakov McDaniel	Sarah Goodstein	Lisa Burger
1994	Yaakov McDaniel	Sarah Goodstein	Roz Radman
			Gege Lazer
			Lenore Swimmer
1995	Samuel Krasner	Zolen Lazer	Roz Radman
			Gege Lazer
			Lenore Swimmer
1996		Morton Opall	V. P. Lenore Swimmer
1997	*Emanuel Epstein	Morton Opall	V. P. Lenore Swimmer
1998	*Emanuel Epstein	Harold Cohen	V. P. Lenore Swimmer
1999	*Emanuel Epstein	Harold Cohen	V. P. Lenore Swimmer
2000	*Emanuel Epstein	Myrray Horewitz, Milton Kronick	V. P. Lenore Swimmer
2001	*Emanuel Epstein	Morton Opall	V. P. Lenore Swimmer
2002	*Dr. Perry Haalman	Morton Opall	V. P. Lenore Swimmer

*\*Part-time. Baal Torah and service leader*

Note: In the years without a Rabbi and helping the Rabbi's we had, the Congregation was and is fortunate to have the services of outstanding learned laymen. Prominent among these were Dr. Harry Hershman, Myron Kirshner and in recent years Harold Cohen and Larry Smith.



## Auxiliary/Sisterhood History

In 1919 the women of the congregation formed the Auxiliary to handle social matters, carry on the traditions of Judaism and aid the congregation in all its aspects. The first president was Mrs. Ben Davis. Elsewhere in this book all the succeeding presidents are listed.

In 1925, during the presidency of Mrs. Alta Peril, the congregation built and moved to its present site on Pennsylvania Avenue.

The early years saw many fund raising activities – card parties at the Adelpia Club, food sales, rummage sales, and dinners. Slowly but steadily funds trickled into the treasury to help defray the expenses of the Synagogue. In June, 1930 the first Donor Luncheon was held with Mrs. David Lebowitz as chairman. During the depression through the 1930's the women assumed the great burden of paying the interest on the mortgage, which was then \$20,000.

The earliest minutes we have are from September, 1931 through 1941. The secretaries of those years were Mrs. L. Goodstein, Mrs. M. Goldberg, Bertha Koidanov, Ethel Lebowitz, and Sally Krongold. These women did an excellent job relating what transpired at the monthly meetings in remarkable detail. These minutes make for fascinating reading. They will be on display during this Anniversary weekend at the picnic and at the Lodge at Chalk Hill before the banquet.

In 1935 Rabbi Julius Washer started the "Hashomer." Its arrival each month was eagerly received. He inspired the women to publish an annual Ad Journal in order to pay off the mortgage. This tradition continues uninterrupted to this day. We have in our archives the journals from 1938 through 2002. They are also on display this weekend. Proceeds from these books have enabled the women to remodel, repair, furnish and finance many needs of the Synagogue.

Great was the rejoicing when in March, 1943 president Mrs. David Lebowitz, Rabbi Samuel Chill, president Abe Cohen and the members of the congregation saw the mortgage go up in flames. Now the ladies busied themselves with remodeling and refurnishing the shule.

Every time you turned around there was a dinner, a luncheon, an installation, a graduation, donors, plays, skits, picnics, breakfast minyons, confirmations, bar mitzvahs to keep the women and the kosher kitchens

## Recent History of Tree of Life

### Highlights From Shule and Sisterhood Minutes and Scrapbooks

On Sunday, August 22, 1976, a Hanukat Ha-Torah, a service for the dedication of Torah Scrolls, was celebrated. This is an exciting highpoint in the life of a synagogue. The Torah Scrolls were consecrated in memory of Meyer L. Swimmer and Sara B. Kronick.

The stairglide from the street level to the foyer was installed in 1982. In 1984 the stairglide to the social hall was put in. They gave the few people who needed them freedom of access to all services and social events.

The Sisterhood gift shop closed in 1984. Unfortunately business had declined and it was difficult to recruit workers.

The years 1984-1985 saw the Sisterhood busy with preparations for and the completion of an ambitious kitchen remodeling. A new gas oven with an electric starter, a commercial refrigerator, new cabinets, counters and painting cost about \$6000.

Shortly after, the Shule Board authorized up to \$15,000 for the remodeling of the social hall. The old classroom partitions were removed. A storage room was created. The walls were panelled and painted and there were many other improvements. The Sisterhood completed the project with the installation of new window treatments.

The entrance foyer was furnished by the Mundel family.

The sanctuary was completely painted in 1990.

A Community Seder was held on April 9, 1990. Chairlady was Sarah Goodstein. Co-chairmen were the president Dr. William Grossman and Rabbi Joseph Spector. It was a massive undertaking that took months to plan. The seder was well attended and every aspect of it was outstanding.

In 1990 the Sisterhood raised \$11,600 of which \$7600 went to the Synagogue.

Our Ark was totally refurbished inside and out in 1992. The dedication plaque reads: Ark Renovation – 1992 – In Memory of Rabbi and Mrs. Joseph Spector By the Spector Family – and In Memory of Our Parents – By Mr. and Mrs. Wolford Swimmer.

A Kashrut Policy for events taking place on Shabbat was established May 4, 1993.

A new roof costing \$6000 was installed in October, 1994. Sisterhood paid half the cost. At this time the bricks were pointed at a cost of \$1400.

A security system was installed in June, 1996.

The library and Rabbi's office were completely renovated into a sitting room and meeting room. Shirley Radman took charge of the sitting room project and Maria Swimmer arranged the study. The work was completed in

the summer of 1996. The dedication plaque over the sitting room reads: A Quiet Place – Dedicated To The Memory of Our Parents – Lenore and Woldford Swimmer. The dedication plaque over the door to the meeting room reads: In Loving Memory of – Arlane Horewitz – By the Horewitz and Swimmer Families.

A new constitution and by-laws were created and approved in 1996.

The last full-time Rabbi we had was Yaakov McDaniel whose contract expired March 31, 1995. Serious attempts to hire a Rabbi were made in 1995 and 1996 when many prospects were interviewed. Emanuel Epstein served as our part-time rabbi from February 1997 through December 2001. Dr. Perry Haalman began as Shabbat service leader and Torah reader in February 2002.

Chester Miller arranged for carpeting to be purchased and installed on the stairs and downstairs hallway in November 1997.

In 1999 the Torahs and the Megillah were repaired at a cost of \$5000.

In March 1999 eleven smoke alarms and two heat detectors were installed to supplement the security system.

On Saturday, August 7, 1999, fifty members attended a Kiddish luncheon in honor of Libbie Glasser who was moving to Pittsburgh.

A gala Millenium Shabbat and dinner was held December 31, 1999. Following a moving service, delicious food, fabulous flowers and decorations were enjoyed by the seventy-five people who attended.

An education policy was established in February, 2001. If a family with children moves to Uniontown and joins the synagogue, the responsibilities of the congregation and the family are spelled out.

All the memorial tablets were equipped with new, eye-pleasing and energy-saving lights in June 2001.

Lisa Burger donated a beautiful case for our Megillah in 2001 in memory of Leonard Burger. The Megillah is now placed in the Ark with the Torahs.

Three times during the 1990's there were attempts to have a merger with Temple Israel. The closest we came to agreeing on a merger was in 1995. Discussions and meetings went on for almost a year. A history of Tree of Life Congregation would not be honest and accurate without saying that this attempt and failure was a low point in our history. There was much controversy, dissension and hard feelings. The final vote on June 27, 1995 was close. Eleven families voted for the merger. Thirteen families voted against it with one abstention. Another try in 2000 was defeated. But, as in most families when there is a dispute, time heals, forgiveness overcomes animosity and life goes on.

The life of the Tree of Life has certainly gone on. Planning and having this 100th Anniversary celebration is testimony to that. We are very proud that in spite of our declining membership, we are able to conduct services every Friday night, Shabbat morning, Tuesday evening, holiday and necessary yahrzeit minyon. With a nucleus of dedicated officers and the cooperation of our members, the work of the synagogue continues. We pray that Tree of Life Congregation will be able to survive for many more years.

## Acknowledgements

A special thank you to Jim Burger who spent several precious hours of his Thanksgiving weekend taking the pictures for this book.

Thank You to Roz and Dan Radman for underwriting the floral arrangements.

### *We thank . . .*

The Congregation thanks these former members and friends for their donations to help defray the cost of this weekend.

**A. J. Burger**

**Jim and Anne Burger**

**Dr. Harry Binafofsky**

**Larry and Penny Cooper**

**Rick Franks**

**Karen Germain**

**Pauly and Alan Heller**

**Claire Iszauk**

**Risa and Charles Koby**

**David and Ina Labowitz**

**Aaron Maslin**

**Edward Maslin**

**Clodius and Maxine Cooper Willis**



**Tree of Life  
Congregation  
is Grateful to These  
Century Club Members  
Whose Generous Contributions  
Helped Subsidize This  
100th Anniversary  
Celebration**

*CENTURY CLUB*



**Debbi, Rob, Lauren and Todd Banchefsky**

**Robin and Dennis Bickerstaff**

**Phyllis and Merrill Broad**

**Stephen and Bobbi Brunoehler**

**Lisa Burger**

**The Burger Kids**

**Caryn Cherpak**

**Fred and Shirley Cohen**

**Harold and Marcia Cohen**

**Jason and Betty Cohen**

**Mildred B. Cohen**

**Rabbi Sion and Helaine David**

**CENTURY CLUB**



**Friends of Sam and Bernice Davis**

**Neil Doppelt**

**Abe and Maxine Feigus**

**Anne Feigus**

**Mrs. Bertha Feldman**

**Mark Freund**

**Charles and Patricia Friedman**

**Barbara Fruchter**

**Jerry and Myrna Giannopoulos**

**Libbie Glasser**

**Gloria and Alvin Greenfield**

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**CENTURY CLUB**



**Dr. and Mrs. Saul Greenwald**

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**Dr. and Mrs. Perry Haalman**

**Michael M. Halprin**

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**Ida Baron Hochberg**

**Dr. M. Seth and Zella Hochman**

**Milynn and Mark Hoffman**

**Deborah Horewitz**

**Gary and Jessica Horewitz**

**Esther and Stuart Itzkovitz**

**CENTURY CLUB**





**Sarah C. Kaiser**

**Cy and Lois Kanterman**

**Evelyn Kaufman**

**Myron and Sue Kirshner**

**The Kronick Family**

**Allan Labowitz**

**Judith Labowitz**

**Zolen and Gege Lazer**

**Ruth F. Levine**

**Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Lipnick**

**Dede and Leroy Lurie**

**Neil and Hilary Malyn, Bryan and Daniel**

**CENTURY CLUB**



**Herbert and Barbara Margolis**

**Ralph and Marsha Mazer**

**Carol Melman**

**David and Shirley Merlin and Robert**

**Chester and Sylvia Miller**

**Dr. Mark Allan Miller**

**Perry, Tamara and Laurel Miller**

**Alvin and Shirley Mundel**

**Phyllis Burger Myers**

**Edward and Terry Opall**

**Morton and Rosalie Opall**

**Wayne and Nancy Port**

**CENTURY CLUB**



**Daniel and Rosalind Radman**

**David and Shirley Radman**

**Mrs. Samuel Radman**

**Zvi and Barbara Opall Rome**

**Stephen and Sharon Silver Rose**

**Joyce and Yaacov Rose**

**Michael B. Samuels**

**Dr. Ivan C. Schatten**

**Barnett and Judith Schorr**

**Richard and Ruth Schorr Schwartz**

**Mark and Anna Lisa Silberman**

**Sam Simon**

**CENTURY CLUB**



Jordana and Kenneth Sklar

Larry and Rae Smith

Dr. and Mrs. I. Sanford Smith

Sherman and Phyllis Smith

Aaron Swimmer

Joshua and Maria Swimmer

Wolford and Lenore Swimmer

Benjamin and Leslie Turner

Robert Weiss

Max and Sylvia Williams

CENTURY CLUB

## Our Oldest Member



**Sarah B. Radman**  
**Birthday is May 6, 1903**

Sarah B. Radman came to Uniontown in 1923 as the young bride of Samuel Radman. She immediately became an active member of the Tree of Life Synagogue.

Sarah and Sam had five children – Hilda Radman Rosenbaum, Gladys Radman Klein, Daniel J. Radman, Saul Radman and Sheila D. Radman. They all attended Hebrew School and Sunday School at Tree of Life and were all confirmed there. Daniel and Saul both had their Bar Mitzvahs at Tree of Life. Hilda and Richard Rosenbaum were married at the synagogue.

Sarah has been a member of the Tree of Life Sisterhood since she came to Uniontown. She could always be counted on to work in the kosher kitchen. Her baking specialties were mandle bread and her famous chocolate tortes.

Sarah is now 99 years old. Although she has Alzheimer's, she is in relatively good health and doing well.

Sarah loved her synagogue and would be very happy and proud of this special 100th Anniversary Celebration.

Dan and Roz Radman

## A CENTURY OF JEWISH PHYSICIANS

by Dr. David Goodman

During the Tree of Life Congregation's lifetime, there have been approximately twenty-five known Jewish physicians practicing in the Uniontown area. A small number (3) were part-time consultants who practiced in and commuted from Pittsburgh. The remainder, who almost always resided locally while practicing here, were almost evenly divided between private practice (12) and full time hospital based physicians (10) at the Uniontown Hospital.

The earliest physician in the past 100 years, on available records, is **Simon H. Baum**, who died in 1927. Other than that he was a listed member of the Fayette County Medical Society, nothing further about his professional career was found. The second earliest known was **Jesse Margolis** who is also deceased. He was born in Lithuania but was raised in Uniontown. He was graduated from the University of Illinois College of Medicine in 1924 and returned to Uniontown as a general practitioner.

The majority of physicians practiced here from the 1940's to the 1990's with the number being gradually diminished due to retirement, relocation elsewhere, or by death.

**Jacob Goldblum** was Chief of the Radiology Department of the Uniontown Hospital from the 1940's to 1975. He was born and raised in Pittsburgh. All three of his brothers were also physicians. He was graduated from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine in 1935 and had his radiology residences in New York City. While at the hospital, he was active in its affairs and also served a short term as its Acting Administrator. He also was the first president of the Fayette County Unit of the American Cancer Society. He retired to Pittsburgh and subsequently passed away there.

**George Tolstoi** was born, raised, and educated in Washington, D.C. He received his medical degree from George Washington University, had his Pathology residency at Sibley Hospital in Washington, D.C, and settled here just after World War II. He served as Director of the Pathology Department at the Uniontown Hospital. He was extremely active in hospital affairs as well as the affairs of the Jewish community. He passed away in 1982. Subsequently, **Charles Krifcher** served at the hospital in the same capacity until 1986 at which time he resigned to relocate elsewhere. After his resignation, he was replaced by **I. William Grossman**, who remained until 1998, at which time he resigned and relocated to Vermont. While in Uniontown, in addition to being active in hospital affairs, he also was extremely active in congregational affairs at the Tree of Life and he has remained a member since leaving.

**Howard Eisen**, a nephew of George Tolstoi, was born and raised in Uniontown, received his medical degree from the University of Pittsburgh in 1960, subsequently had his radiology residency there, then returned here as a radiologist at the Uniontown Hospital. He ultimately resigned to take a similar position in Pittsburgh. **Eli Abramson** also was a hospital based physician here, serving as Chief of Anesthesiology at the hospital in the 1960's. He resigned and moved to Pittsburgh where he became the Regional Medical Director of Research for a pharmaceutical company. **Donald Franklin**, a Uniontown native and a nephew of the Kamons brothers, was an Emergency Room Physician during the 1970's and early 1980's. He resigned to take a similar position in Florida. **Myron Lipkowitz** served as an Ambulatory Care Center Physician for a short period in the 1970's and left to return to New Jersey to enter

private practice. *Harry Katz*, an oncology radiologist, came from Pittsburgh to become the Director of the Fayette Regional Cancer Center for a short time but resigned to return to Pittsburgh.

There were three part-time consultants who commuted from Pittsburgh. *Jerrold Hydovitz* was instrumental in the early functioning of the Uniontown Hospital's Nuclear Medicine Department in the 1960's. *Eric Safyan*, a medical oncologist, was a member of a Medical Oncology group of the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute. *Jon Brillman*, a neurologist, was the senior member of a Pittsburgh based neurology group which provided neurological services in the area in the 1980's and 1990's.

The physicians in private practice included family practitioners and specialists. Two brothers, *Edwin and Harold Kamons*, were in family practice. Both received their medical degrees from the Medical College of Virginia. Edwin opened his office in Uniontown in 1948 and Harold in Farmington in 1953. They died within a short time of each other while still actively in practice. Harold served on the Uniontown Area School Board for a period of time. Another pair of brothers were *Paul and Harry Staman* who were raised in Uniontown. Paul was a Dermatologist who died, along with his wife, in an automobile accident, at a young age. Harry received his medical degree from the University of St. Louis, went on to his Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology residencies, then returned to Uniontown in the late 1940's to practice his specialties until retirement to Pittsburgh.

*Daniel Glickman* opened his Dermatology practice here following Paul Staman's death and practiced here until the late 1950's when he relocated to California. *David Goodman* was born, raised and educated in Pittsburgh. He received his medical degree from the University of Pittsburgh, interned at Uniontown Hospital, had his Internal Medicine residency in Pittsburgh and Cleveland, and returned here in 1960. He practiced Internal Medicine until 1992 when he retired from private practice. He then served part time as the Uniontown Hospital's Employee Health Service Physician until fully retiring in 1995. While in practice, he actively participated in Hospital and Medical Society affairs.

*Morris Ellenzweig*, a Canadian from Hamilton, Ontario, received his medical degree from the University of Toronto in 1939. He received his postgraduate training in Obstetrics and Gynecology in Ireland and England. He came here in 1966 and practiced his specialty until his retirement in 1985. He has since passed away. Two other specialists who practiced here for a few years before relocating elsewhere were *Robert Gordon*, a thoracic surgeon, and *Norman Krause*, an orthopedic surgeon.

At the present time, there remain two actively practicing Jewish physicians in Uniontown. *Richard Kaplan*, a physiatrist, was raised in New York City, New York, received his medical degree from the University of Miami in 1990, and had his Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation residency at the Mayo Clinic. He came here in 1995 and is the Director of the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Department of the Uniontown Hospital. *Barbara Wilhelm* was originally from Lancaster, Pennsylvania. She received her medical degree from the University of Pittsburgh in 1979 and then had a Family Practice residency at the McKeesport Hospital. She came here in 1984, is a family practitioner, and currently is President of the Fayette County Medical Society.

Herbert Margolis was asked by our chairman, Wolford Swimmer, to compile a history of the Jewish members of our community who were prominent in the legal and judicial life of Fayette County. His research into the records of the County Bar Association resulted in this listing.

Judges: Samuel D. Braemer and Samuel J. Feigus

Lawyers: Elias Goodstein, Max J. Laponsky\*, Oliver Goldsmith\*, Arman H. Friedman, Benjamin F. Bortz, Jacob Ellis Horewitz, Alex Z. Goldstein, Oscar B. Goldstein, Samuel J. Feigus, Samuel D. Braemer, Herman M. Buck, William Ackerman, Milton D. Margolis, David Ezra Cohen, Daniel F. Pariser, Herbert Margolis, Lawrence Wilner Kaplan, Murray I. Horewitz, Anne Feigus Johnson, Wayne H. Port, Bernard B. Klein, David B. Reiss, Ezra David Margolis, Mark S. Galper\*, Philip H. Rubenstein\*, Gary Horewitz

\*May not be Jewish – the name sounds as though the person may be Jewish.

Herb Margolis continues with the following observations:

“My own favorite Jewish attorneys excluding my brother Milton as an eligible candidate, were Jacob Horewitz and David Ezra Cohen. Both were liked by everyone and were brilliant.

When I was a kid, Jacob Horewitz stayed at the New Mason Hotel in Masontown many nights because he was the lawyer for R. B. Hays, the man who opened the Second National Bank of Masontown around 1938. He would come to our home on many Friday evenings to have a Shabbos dinner. He gave me a fountain pen on my Bar Mitzvah in 1940 that I used through high school, college, law school, and part of my law practice. He played the piano and had a great sense of humor. The stories that some of the older attorneys told me about Jake were extremely believable because he loved people, they loved him, and they enjoyed being together.

David Ezra Cohen was my first cousin. His mother was my father's sister. I think he was a genius. If he had not been a lawyer, he could have been anything else that he desired, I assume his father, Harry, was also brilliant because my father told me so. That was quite a compliment coming from my father because he was truly brilliant himself and never complimented other people in regard to mentality.

David was one of the youngest adults called upon to speak at my Bar Mitzvah party in the Masontown Synagogue. After all of the other adults had spoken and informed me of becoming a man that day and charged with serious living and religious responsibilities, David told me that it would be very difficult for me to assume



all of my new obligations because no changes would be made in regard to me having to listen to my parents and drinking milk.

Later, David told me that being a child of Jewish parents was significantly different than being a child of gentile parents because success in education was mandatory, not complimentary. When he was in high school, David was a straight "A" student. His father knew his many gentile friends. One day he gave his report card to his father to review and sign. The card showed an "A" in each course, David's father signed his name and gave it back. Because he had said nothing about the grades, David very quietly asked his father if he would be willing to reward him with some money for each "A," as all of his friends were getting \$1.00 for each "A" on their report cards. Dave's father, who had been a brilliant cheder student in Europe, then began to talk to his son. Following is a summary of their conversation.

Father: Do you attend the high school on Fayette Street?

David: Yes, I do.

Father: Is the school building heated in the winter like our house?

David: Yes.

Father: Do the books you bring home have anything to do with what you are learning?

David: Yes, I have a study book for each course I am taking.

Father: If you read anything in those books that you do not understand, are there teachers who are available to help you?

David: Yes, I have a teacher for each course.

Father: Well, if you go to school in a warm building, have a book to study and a teacher to help you, how can you not get an "A." Here is your report card. Take it back to school.

Herb comments that the above anecdote deals with matters that concern how some immigrant Jewish fathers dealt with their children.

## Main Street Merchants . . . and then some!

The Four Lads used to sing “Where have all the Flowers gone?” The same refrain, “Where have all the Jewish Merchants gone?” could easily explain the current somber condition of the downtowns of Uniontown, Connellsville, Brownsville and Masontown. During the late 1940’s into the 50’s and 60’s over 225 Jewish owned and operated businesses thrived in Fayette County.

The hustle and bustle energy generated by this business community was in great part responsible for the excitement of “Downtown.” In the two block area of Uniontown between Gallatin Avenue and Morgantown Street there were enough Jewish retailers to have three minyans going on at the same time and still have enough players left for a touch-football game. (Granted that this never happened . . . but it could have!)

During the century just ended, the Jewish community’s businesses evolved from peddlers carrying brooms on their back (Joseph Rubin) and solicitors selling home furnishings from their cars (the Smith Brothers) to some of the most elegant and fashionable ladies wear shops (Leonards, Select Shop, Davidson’s), trend-setting haberdashers (Lee Fell, Daniels), and high style knitted sweaters (Gallet). While clothing and soft goods had the most people involved (44), grocery stores and produce distribution, such as Sol Sieff and Streamline were a close second (43).

But diversity was the name of the game. A steel beam could be engineered into a bridge component (Goldberg and Sons) or cut up for feeding a steel mill furnace (Platt’s). You could choose furniture for your house from 15 different stores like Cohens or Household, do your plumbing (Koidanov), roofing and air-conditioning, (Henry Cooper), or shingle the outside (Halprin Bros.) all from congregation members. For recreation there was Bowling (Mt. Vernon Bowl), music (Dave Rosen), read a magazine or play a number (Bree’s), get a beer at Jake’s or Lou Doppelt’s or get some extra energy at Fingeret’s marvelous bakery. To buy a car, we called Davey Cooper and to fix a car everything was available from Superior Auto and Franks.

And this was only the tip of the iceberg. Almost every thing we needed or wanted including legal, medical, dental and speech therapy was available from a landsman.

All told the Jewish population in the county was involved in forty-three different types of commerce, and contrary to common accusations only one banker (Jay Leff) was among them.

The automobile spawned the suburban malls and the new generation left town for other opportunities. A few Jewish owned businesses still remain (Opalls, Mundels, Simon, Rosenshines, Franks, Swimmer) but no Main Street minyans or touch-football is possible, even if we wanted to.

Wolford Swimmer

RICK SANTORUM  
PENNSYLVANIA



United States Senate  
Washington, D. C.

**In Recognition of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Of the Congregation Tree of Life**

**June 11, 2002**

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate the Congregation Tree of Life on its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It is truly commendable that through the test of time your congregation and fellowship stand strong today.

The Tree of Life in Uniontown has fostered a sense of faith, grace and service in lives of those in the congregation. Furthermore, I believe that the Tree of Life played a very important and influential role in the community of Uniontown. It is truly a testament to the strength of your congregation's faith that it has continued throughout the years.

With warmest regards, I congratulate the Congregation Tree of Life on its centennial celebration, and hope that your service and fellowship will continue for many years to come. May God continue to bestow His blessings upon the members of the congregation Tree of Life. As always, I remain at your service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rick Santorum". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Rick Santorum  
United States Senator

## Stained Glass Windows

The original Articles of Agreement dated November 26, 1924 between Pittsburgh Art Glass Company and the building committee of the Tree Of Life, Uniontown, PA reads in part . . . “WITNESSETH, the said party of the first part contracts to furnish the said party of the second part the stained and ornamental glass for the above named building for the sum of \$1900.00 installed. All will be ready for delivery on or about January 15, 1925.”

“Ten large windows of design #2141, five on each side having a different emblem. One circle window for the front of building of design #2143—a small picture of a tree to be placed within a star of David with appropriate Hebrew lettering. Two small windows in the front using design #2142. Two small windows in the rear to harmonize in design and color with the other windows. Inscriptions extra at \$3.00 each up to 25 letters. Extra letters 15 cents each. Windows to be made of the best opalescent glasses.” Today these windows are valued at \$67,260 as per our insurance coverage.

The windows depicted on the front and back covers of this book are inscribed as follows:

### Mogen David Windows

In Memory of Jacob Davis 1868 - 1925 (*right window*)

Donated by Harry Cooper (*left window*)

### Priestly Blessing Windows

In Memory of Harris Cohen 1864 - 1920 (*right window*)

In Memory of Joseph Levinson 1884 - 1925 (*left window*)

### Tablets Windows

In Memory of David Friedberg (*right window*)

In Memory of Samuel L. Cohen 1896 - 1920 (*left window*)

### Menorah Windows

Donated by Mr. and Mrs. William Frankel (*right window*)

Esther Rachel Resnick 1833 - 1924 and Jacob Cohen 1894 - 1918  
(*left window*)

### Ark Windows

In Memory of Henry Monheim 1860 - 1918 (*right window*)

In Memory of our Beloved Parents – Mr. and Mrs. Barnett Pearlstein  
(*left window*)

## MEMORIES OF OUR MEMBERS

*My sister, Ruth Schorr Schwartz, and I are children of Sara and Chuck Schorr. The Tree of Life community was such an important part of the lives of our family during our stay in Uniontown. This was particularly so for our mother and her association with Hadassah and the Sisterhood and our dad with his involvement with the Shule Scout troop. Our family left Uniontown in 1947, but our folks returned often and kept up a steady correspondence with their friends from the Synagogue during their mutual lifetimes.*

*Ruth thinks that our grandparents on our mother's side, Lena and Barnett Weinsweig were founding members of the Shule.*

*We have not been back to Uniontown often in the past 50 or so years, but when we are in the area we stop by the Synagogue and the cemetery and experience a rush of fine memories.*

*Congratulations on the 100th!*

*— Barnett "Bud" Schorr*



*Congratulations on 100 years! You are a one of a kind synagogue. Growing up at the Tree of Life Synagogue was a special experience. I remember Hebrew School with Mrs. Opall and Rabbi Fine and my classmates Terry Cohen, Mindy Kronick, Howard Goldberg, Herschel Cohen and Michael Katz. I got the best Hebrew education ever.*

*I remember great Purim carnivals and drinking glass bottled soda pop in the Succah. Junior Congregation on Saturday mornings couldn't be beat, especially with the yummy luncheons of gefilte fish and salami sandwiches after services.*

*Getting married in my hometown synagogue was also a very special occasion.*

*Congregation Tree of Life provided me with a wonderful Jewish foundation. I have been able to share my rich Jewish background with my own family. My kids have benefitted from having a mom that can help them through Hebrew school and Bar and Bat Mitzvah training. I have been able to offer a lot to my Jewish community in Valencia also.*

*Thanks, Congregation Tree of Life! May you impact the lives of your congregants for another 100 years.*

*— Jordana Swimmer Sklar*

## MEMORIES OF OUR MEMBERS

*I grew up in our synagogue. My parents, David and Ethel Lebowitz, were active throughout their lives. My dad was on the Board of Directors. My mother held all offices in the Sisterhood including the presidency.*

*They were living on Fayette Street when the shule was built in 1925. Our house was where the "schnorrers" used to come when collecting in Uniontown. One of our maids knew what to serve if my mother was not at home. (Dairy)*

*I completed Hebrew School and at one time I think I was the oldest pupil.*

*Cy and I were married in the Synagogue 50 years ago last Thanksgiving. Our daughters also went to Hebrew and Sunday School at Tree of Life.*

*We have only the fondest memories of our living in Uniontown until 1997 when we moved to Pittsburgh.*

*Congratulations on the first hundred years.*

*— Lois and Cyril Kanterman*



*Before the Congregation bought the lot next to the synagogue, we would erect the succah in the rear of the building. We had dozens of children in the Sunday School in those days, and the succah was always beautifully decorated.*

*One year, after an especially well attended Erev Succos service, John Montegue, our custodian, arrived the following morning to find that vandals had ravaged the tent, slashing the canvas and trampling the fruit and decorations. The Sisters from Saint John's Church, tears streaming down their faces, were standing around the succah trying to repair it with needle and thread. After that incident, we erected the succah in the backyard of the rabbi's house on Wilmington Street.*

*Over the past one hundred years, Tree of Life has been blessed with wonderful and supportive neighbors.*

*— Lisa Burger*

## MEMORIES OF OUR MEMBERS

*Sylvia Miller was teaching a little children's Sunday School class during the Passover season. When she asked the class if they knew what a "slave" was, my son Eric shot his arm up in the air immediately. His answer: "MY MOM!!"*

— Shirley Radman



*I remember the old seats were arranged with two aisles. There was a large center section flanked by two smaller sections. During the High Holidays, children were only allowed to sit in the back of the side sections. Abe Weiss would patrol the aisles banging his prayer book and scolding us for being noisy.*

*I remember the famous sword fight. Ike Koidanov was Gabbai and was sitting across the aisle from Paul Feurman. When it was Paul's turn to go to the Torah, Ike poked him with his cane to remind him. Paul got angry and poked Ike with HIS cane. These two 80-year-old men were standing in the aisle poking each other with their canes until the Rabbi yelled at them to stop.*

*I did not personally witness this, but this story has been told many times. Joe Horewitz was president and some major problem was being discussed at the general membership meeting. Everyone was trying to talk at once including Joe's brother Harry. Joe pounded the gavel and yelled to Harry, "Sit down, I don't recognize you!" Harry answered, "I'm your brother. You know me all my life and you don't recognize me?"*

— Morton Opall



*Do you know how our kitchen got its first freezer? We acquired it with green stamps! In the 50's our Auxiliary had very little cash, but we wanted to get a freezer. Someone came up with the idea of writing to Sperry & Hutchinson. I believe they wanted 200 books of stamps. At every meeting we arrived with our accumulation of stamps and spent part of the evening "licking." Eventually we were able to send for the freezer. Excitement was great when it finally arrived.*

— Lisa Burger

## MEMORIES OF OUR MEMBERS

*I started working at the Tree of Life Synagogue in 1983. It's been said that once you get a job there, it's permanent. I've met a lot of people there and it's sad to see the minyons getting smaller.*

*I learned a lot by following the services in the Silverman prayer book. In shule one night, Mr. Roth was told to say Kaddish and he asked what page it was. Without thinking, I called out, "page 39." Everybody laughed.*

*It's sad to be younger at the shule, because people I know pass on and I miss them. Some more than others, because I got closer to some people by working with them, but I remember them all.*

— William "Bill" Parker



*I can't remember if it was Jimmy Burger or Aaron Swimmer who introduced me to the gallon jug of Kedem Kiddish wine tucked away in the closet of the rabbi's study. But I do remember that it was Melvin Goldwater, the rabbi's son, who gave me my first peek at a Playboy centerfold . . . Ah, the virtues of Junior Congregation.*

*Most of my memories are blurred and somewhat trivial – the gefilte fish balls, the pastries thawing on the counter in the downstairs kitchen, my near – obsessive admiration of Diane Lazer's gloriously long and lustrous hair. Other memories remain crystal clear, and become more meaningful with each passing year. To this day, I can recite by heart the entire Amidah and the Birchat Hamazon (Blessing After Meals).*

*More valuable, however, are the lessons inherent in our constant household battles over Junior Congregation. I remember my brother Ed and I protesting over the "wasted" hours or so we would have to spend in shule each week in addition to Hebrew and Sunday School time. I also remember, in vivid detail, my parents unwavering response. Their insistence on infusing us with a sense of Jewish identity is something I've come to treasure. It would have been so much easier to give in and let us stay home to watch cartoons or roam the neighborhood. Thankfully, they didn't.*

— Barbara Opall Rome



## MEMORIES OF OUR MEMBERS

*In May 1933, I gave the last Yiddish Bar Mitzvah speech in our Synagogue. In years past, the religious education was extensive. I remember Hebrew School was four days. There was Sunday School, children's Shabbos services and Bar Mitzvah classes Saturday afternoons.*

— Lawrence Smith



*As young kids during the High Holidays, we were pretty restless after Junior Congregation and then quietly sitting in the balcony during the "adult service." We used to gather on the front steps for long stretches of time. There were many kids around the same age. Josh and Aaron Swimmer, Eddie Lazer, Tom Margolis, Tione Cohen, Sam Simon, Neil Malyn, Jim Burger, Barbara Opall, and Lee Margolis were the regulars who I remember clearly. Every so often, a parent would come out and the particular child belonging to that parent would disappear into the synagogue for awhile and then return. The services would last forever so we had plenty of time.*

*If you remember, every September, the bushes in front of the synagogue sprout little red berries. Since we were always dressed up for the services, we never really intended to start throwing berries at each other. We knew the berries would stain our nice high holiday clothes. But one casual toss (usually instigated by my sister or Aaron) of a berry would lead to a retaliation. "I didn't start it Mom, I swear!" After lobbing a few at each other, there was usually one person who was the target of all the others. (Sorry, Lee). At least one time, they weren't tossed, they were skwished on the chosen victims. I'm sure the dry cleaners made out well after the holidays. Of course, after the parents came out and got upset with us, we had to take our lumps. But that was also part of the tradition.*

— Ed Opall



*A million years ago Joe Kronick, Milt Kronick, Ed Maslin, Wolf Swimmer and I played football on the shule lawn before and after Cheder. We named the game "Steal the Esrog" because the old men didn't approve of us playing football.*

— Dave Radman

## MEMORIES OF OUR MEMBERS

*During the depression years, my parents were involved with fund raising through the Yiddish Theater to meet the monthly mortgage payment. Also they worked with the Chevra Kadisha. My father, Sam Fingerett, was on the Board of Directors when the Tree of Life was founded. My mother attended the women with Tahara.*

— Phyllis Broad

*It has been 46 years since GeGe and I came from Pittsburgh to Uniontown, expecting to stay for one year. We were lucky enough to raise three children in a wonderful Jewish environment, thanks to Tree of Life Synagogue. Our heartfelt congratulations for 100 years of service to the Uniontown Jewish Community.*

— Zolen Lazer

*For 40 years from 1956 – 1996, just like the Israelites of old. I was the modern day wandering Jew. I was unable to find a religious affiliation of my liking. Then I found Congregation Tree of Life. I found the services and the membership to be a perfect match. They in turn seemed to like me. They even made me Treasurer. Happy 100th.*

— Ralph Mazer

*Having grown up in Uniontown, I have many memories of Tree of Life. I remember the long holiday services with the men and women seated separately. The kids left the synagogue and went to Cookie McLellan's house or to Myrna Rofey's. On the way home from Rosh Hashanah services we stopped at the Weiss's or Ginsberg's. Such delicious goodies we had! I also remember being a waitress for shule dinners.*

*I went to Hebrew School and Sunday School here. I was confirmed in 1950. Harry Hershman was our teacher that year and Rabbi Rock-off was the rabbi. We had classes down stairs with the sliding room dividers. I remember walking to Saturday morning services with Florie Kaufman.*

*After college and getting married, I moved back to Uniontown in 1964. After the children were in Sunday School, Anita Roth and I were in charge of holiday parties for the Sunday School.*

*I have been active in Sisterhood for many years. In the mid 80's I became a regular at Saturday morning services, bringing my mother. I have continued being a regular at both Friday evening and Saturday morning services. I have enjoyed my many years at Tree of Life.*

— Elaine Malyn

## MEMORIES OF OUR MEMBERS

*I am proud to have been President, Vice President, and Board Member of Tree of Life Synagogue for many years. When I came to Uniontown in 1946, our Orthodox congregation was blessed with 300 families of all ages. On holidays there was always a full house with separate seating and a children's service.*

*It required a lot of devotion and foresight from our leaders to bring us to this momentous 100th anniversary. In 1958, the Board approved, and the membership passed, a decision to become a Conservative synagogue with affiliation in the United Synagogue. The changes were evident in the new prayer book, mixed seating and renewed interest among the younger members. It took some diplomacy to prevent a breakaway. The majority rules, however, and with good leadership and prosperous times our synagogue grew.*

*Later, when economic conditions took a turn downward, the entrepreneurs, as well as the younger generation, began leaving Uniontown. This had a profound effect on our congregation and so began the struggle to maintain the Tree of Life as the hub of Jewish life in the area. Our present nucleus of devoted members is to be congratulated upon its determination to continue to sustain the Tree of Life for many years.*

— Myron Kirshner



*Two memories that come to mind are breaking the Shule's glass front door with Eddie Opall and getting a black eye on the way home from Hebrew School from Neil Malyn.*

— Risa Radman Koby



*There was a Sisterhood Chanukah meeting and party at the home of Lenore Swimmer in December, 1979. Arlane Horewitz presented each of us a beautiful magnetized felt menorah to hang on our refrigerators. I still have mine. It has been part of our Chanukah decorations since that time. Needless to say, it is a bit worn and tattered after 23 years. Each time I put it up, I remember the beautiful soul who made it.*

— Rosalie Opall

## MEMORIES OF OUR MEMBERS

*We have been members of Tree of Life Synagogue since 1946. Our sons Mark and Perry received their religious training and had their Bar Mitzvahs here. Many fond memories come to mind about the Shule, and we enjoy working toward keeping the doors open. We are proud to be a part of our small congregation, and be able to help accomplish so much.*

— Chester and Sylvia Miller



*It is part of the Tree of Life History, that when paying the mortgage on the building was a problem, it was important to negotiate a reduction. I found a letter written to my father, J.N. Kronick, on April 14, 1939 that illustrates this. It reads in part:*

*“Dear Mr. Kronick:*

*Pursuant to our several conversations with reference to the mortgage on the Tree of Life property in Uniontown held by George H. West, and on which mortgage the balance of the principal owing to the present time is \$20,250, I have gone over this matter many times with Mr. West and am now able to advise you as follows:*

*On payment of \$7,500 and interest in full to the date of the payment, Mr. West will reduce the amount of principal remaining to \$10,000.00 and extend the time for payment five years with the right on the part of the Tree of Life to anticipate payment of all or any part thereof at any time.”*

*The rest of the letter details a payment timetable for the \$7500. The math will tell you that the Congregation saved \$2,750 plus the interest as a result of this negotiation.*

*As a committee member of the Holy Society, I work with the record books for the cemetery. I see much of the history of our Jewish community recorded in those pages. We could probably learn more by studying the details and dates in these books. The babyland (infant) section, for example, tells some stories.*

*We are impressed by the fact that in the 1920's and 1930's our parents had the vision and determination to provide us with such an outstanding Synagogue. We take our shule, the Uniontown Jewish Community Center and our Hopwood Cemetery for granted and rarely consider how they all came about.*

— Milt Kronick

## MEMORIES OF OUR MEMBERS

*B.J. Mundel, a stalwart, hard working member of the board and officer of the Tree of Life Synagogue for many years, came to Uniontown in 1912. He was working in Pittsburgh and his sister suggested he visit his Aunt Freda in the country in Uniontown as he looked pale. He decided to make Uniontown his home.*

*In 1914 he started his own business, becoming a well known and respected business man. I entered the business in 1949 and my sons Mark and Randy followed in 1974 and 1978. Over the years the business has grown and expanded.*

*B.J., as he was known to everyone, devoted 50 years working very hard to make the Synagogue successful. My father along with Sam Koidanov and Abe Weiss literally ran the Synagogue for many years. If there was a problem, they took it upon themselves to solve it.*

*My father also was extremely active in the Holy Society. I can remember his being called out at night when there was a death of a Synagogue member.*

*He was treasurer of the Synagogue and Holy Society for almost 50 years, and during lean years at the Synagogue he would put in his own money to pay expenses or meet the payroll.*

*My father served in World War I in the Quartermaster Corps in the postal department because he could read and speak several foreign languages.*

*My mother, Marie Greenberg Mundel, met my father while he was stationed in Fort Dix, New Jersey. After he was discharged from the service, they were married. They had three children – my sister Louise (deceased), Elaine and myself.*

*I followed my dad as Treasurer of the Synagogue for over ten years and my son Randy was on the Board for several years.*

*I was Bar Mitzvah at the Synagogue. My sons Randy and Mark were Bar Mitzvah here and two years ago the third generation – Randy and Elinor's sons, our twin grandsons Alex and Benny had their Bar Mitzvah at our Synagogue. That's a triple header. Three generations of Mundels had their Bar Mitzvahs at our Synagogue.*

*— Alvin Mundel*

## MEMORIES OF OUR MEMBERS

*In August of 1953 I came to Uniontown with Rabbi David Leiter, as a bride of nine months to start life as a Rebbitzin. There were many young couples with whom to be friends and the older people were always kind. "You look so young for a Rebbitzin," they used to say. I learned to cook from the example of some of the really great cooks in town like Rose Weiss and Bessie Ginsburg. Friends and family back east in New York City (where Jews couldn't believe there was any kind of life beyond the Hudson River) could not imagine what kind of life one led in a small town, but life was full in those days. There was the Ladies Auxiliary with luncheons and dinners and Hadassah where I started as Historian and rose to be President. There was the Council of Jewish Women and the College Club. In the summer we all met on Sundays at Gorley's Lake or at the Jewish Center pool to cool off. There were parties and dinners and dances and trips to Pittsburgh for shopping or a ball game. I'll always remember that I learned to play Mah Jongg here and picked it up again when I moved back.*

*In 1954 my daughter Dena was born and in 1959 my son Jonathan. We had a wonderful life here and only moved away in 1959 to send Dena to a Jewish Day School. We did keep up our friendship with several people here and visited occasionally. In 1980 Rabbi Leiter died of lung cancer when we were living in Youngstown, Ohio. I moved back East to New Jersey to be near my children and old friends and picked up my life as a school librarian. I continued to keep in touch with Myron and Louise Kirshner and often visited them in the summers. Sadly, Louise died of cancer in 1988.*

*In 1989 I married Myron and returned here to live. Much had changed in 30 years and the Jewish community was much depleted. Once more I was warmly welcomed and found friends again. Myron and I live in Boca Raton, Florida now, but have been returning to the area for a few months each summer. We are happy to participate in this wonderful anniversary and wish everyone Mazal and Bracha!*

*— Sue Leiter Kirshner*

## Congregation Officers During Our Centennial Year

President ..... Morton Opall  
 Vice President .....Harold Cohen  
 Treasurer ..... Ralph Mazer  
 Secretary ..... Elaine Malyn  
 Past President .....Milton Kronick

## Board of Directors

Lisa Burger	Zolen Lazer	David Radman
Sam Davis	Chester Miller	Lawrence Smith

Sisterhood Representatives: Shirley Radman, Rosalie Opall



## Sisterhood Officers

Vice President ..... Lenore Swimmer  
 Treasurer .....Rosalie Opall  
 Financial Secretary ..... Elaine Malyn  
 Corresponding Secretary ..... Rae Smith

## Chairladies

Marcia Cohen ..... Rosh Chodesh Kiddish  
 Elaine Malyn..... Friday Night Hostesses  
 Rae Smith.....Golden Book  
 Anita Roth.....Floral Donations  
 Sylvia Miller.....Baking  
 Rosalie Opall..... Yearbook

The Most Recent Major Endowment  
To Our Synagogue was the purchase of  
Beautiful New Torah Covers.

They were dedicated in November 2000.



*A Plaque in the back of the sanctuary lists these donors  
and their memorials:*

TORAH COVERS  
5761 – 2000

Lisa Burger  
Shirley and David Radman  
Myron Kirshner  
Sue Kirshner  
Samuel Silver  
Marcia and Harold Cohen  
Shirley and David Merlin

J. Leonard Burger  
Radman & Freund Parents  
Louise Kirshner  
Rabbi David Leiter  
Ethel Sieff Silver  
Our Parents  
Our Parents



# Tree of Life Congregation

UNIONTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA



**100<sup>TH</sup>**  
**ANNIVERSARY**  
1902 - 2002