

# Dignity of Humans Motivates HBA's 'Holy Deeds'

Special to The Chronicle

SPANNING the entrance to a beautifully kept cemetery in Shaler Township is a handsome wrought-iron arch which bears the Hebrew inscription "Chesed Shel Emeth." Literally translated it means "Good to Truth," or more usually, "Good Holy Deed." Among the Jews burial of their dead is the holiest of deeds.

Since 1853, our Jewish community has used this cemetery to bury its indigent dead. It was once only a small piece of land, but in the years since it was acquired, two more tracts have been added under the support and direction of the Hebrew Burial Association, a beneficiary of the United Jewish Federation.

From 1853, when the organization was started, until 1910, it functioned much the same as most free burial societies—unaffiliated with any parent group. Its structure was loose. Few records were kept.

In 1910, it was incorporated as the Chesed Shel Emeth, but it soon became popularly known as The Hebrew Free Burial Association. In 1960, its title went through another change when the word "free" was dropped in deference to the sensitivities of the needy. However, there has been no alteration in the original concept that every Jew, however humble, is entitled to a dignified and religious burial.

Among the oldest of Pittsburgh's Jewish agencies, the Association provides a traditional burial. Were there no Association, the fate of an unclaimed body would likely be Potters Field or medical research—both violations of Jewish orthodox practice. Instead, there is a dignified burial by a warm and sympathetic group.

On a slender budget the agency functions through a Board of Directors, through the Ladies' Auxiliary headed by Mrs. Sarah Abrams, through its president, Nathan Snader, and through its executive secretary, Bert Horowitz. From his office in the new Federal Building in downtown Pittsburgh, Mr. Horowitz also directs the Jewish War Veteran's Service Council, another UJF beneficiary.

Mr. Horowitz inherited the burial task almost 10 years ago when Anna Schnurer.

"We hear of those who need our help from caseworkers, the Jewish Home and Hospital for the Aged, Mayview, Woodville, the community at large, even the penitentiary," he says. "Mostly it is the person who has lost

[Editor's Note: This is the fourth of a series of Chronicle articles about beneficiary agencies of the United Jewish Federation campaign.]



HEBREW Burial Association's treasurer and former president, Edward Scheinberg, stands before the gates of the cemetery grounds where Pittsburgh's Jewish community has accorded its poor a dignified burial for more than a century.

family, contact and becomes an institutional problem."

Mr. Horowitz has to work fast. One death may involve many hours of phone calls. The case must be carefully screened to make sure there is no existing family money or burial policy.

Then there are calls to the president, Nathan Snader, and the grounds committee chairman, Ben Edelstein. Together they arrange for a funeral, the plot, the services of a gravedigger (who is kept on a retainer), and the Gabbai, who sits with the body overnight. Next comes the work of the Ladies' Auxiliary.

The Burial arrangements divide themselves into six categories: Services of the Gabbai, the funeral, the grave—all of which are handled by the HBA. The next three steps, handled by the Ladies' Auxiliary, are ordering and paying for the stone's foundation, mounding and covering the earth with myrtle, and last, paying for the stone itself. The Ladies' Auxiliary also sees to other minor above-ground repairs such as sunken stones, road and fence damage.

But it takes more than the

subsidization by the UJF and the cooperation of the Ladies' Auxiliary to keep the Burial Association functioning. It takes the concerted effort of the entire community. Without the services and facilities of the Rabbis, the undertakers, and the stonecutters, the agency's good work could not continue.

The Rabbis and cantors, who are

was so moved by the work of the Burial Association that he turned \$100 of his fee back as a contribution.

Small problems which crop up are handled just as effectively and tactfully as the big ones. Occasionally, a body is received with no identification. It must be given a name. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are rotated.

Although most of the burials have involved men and women in their 80's and 90's, it is estimated that almost two dozen infants and babies of the poor have been buried by the Association. Sometimes there is a question of religion. Again the research wheels are put in motion to determine that at least the mother is Jewish and that the child is therefore eligible for burial.

The burial grounds are set in beautiful terrain, framed by rolling hills and enhanced by huge trees that are more than a century old. Where once no conveniences existed, there are now water, electricity, and fences.

In the last 50 years, 334 grave sites have been used—about 10 per cent of the existing land. Mr. Horowitz estimates there are enough sites for 300 years. Some of the stones, more than a hundred years old, are weather beaten, their inscriptions illegible.

Mr. Horowitz, who is approaching retirement age, says "Someday I hope to spend most of my time pouring over records and digging into history. I'll never give it up entirely."

The Board and Life Trustees continue to function quietly and with little recognition. They have, however, the satisfaction of knowing that they are performing Judaism's holiest of deeds.

EVERYBODY is TALKING about the FABULOUS 18 HOLE STEVENSVILLE CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF COURSE 7070 YARDS (ON PREMISES) FREE GOLF During May and June

SPECIAL RATES TO MIDWEEK GOLFERS & GROUPS

INDOOR POOL HEALTH CLUB All Weather TENNIS COURTS • FISHING • BOATING TOP B'WAY SHOWS GOURMET CUISINE (dietary laws) TEEN-AGE PROGRAM SUPERVISED DAY CAMP LOW BUDGET MAY & JUNE RATES

STEVENSVILLE Country Club  
Your Host: HARRY DINNERSTEIN SWAN LAKE N. Y.  
Write for Color Brochure or phone Hotel (914) 292-8000 or SEE YOUR TRAVEL AGENT NOW BOOKING MID-WEEK & WEEK END CONVENTIONS

LOCH SHELDRAKE, NEW YORK HOTEL

**EVANS**  
ON LAKE EVANS

"FAN-FARE" NITE-CLUB THEATRE

SHOWCASE OF BROADWAY STARS ALL STAR SHOWS Featuring JACKIE WAKEFIELD THE HIGHLIGHTS, OTHERS DECORATION WEEK-END LATE, Late SHOWS

New LOUIS XIV DINING ROOM DECOR IMPORTED FROM FRANCE

INDOOR POOL MARINE LOUNGE HEALTH CLUB

Air conditioned Accommodations COMPLETE SPORTS PROGRAMS. BOATING • FISHING • PRIVATE LAKE Teen Program Supervised Children's Camp

FREE GOLF All Summer 18 HOLE COURSE ADJOINS HOTEL NEW GOLF DRIVING RANGE

WRITE FOR BROCHURE OR PHONE HOTEL (914) 434-5500 OR SEE YOUR TRAVEL AGENT

UNLIMITED FREE GOLF 18 HOLE CHAMPIONSHIP COURSE Electric Carts — Driving Range Putting Green

**Windsor** HOTEL Sussman Family  
So. Fallsburg, N. Y. Tel: (914) 434-4100

FAMILY SUMMER VACATIONS

**BON SOIR NIGHT CLUB**  
to make your nites a little brighter

INDOOR POOL & HEALTH CLUB  
All Sports — 3 Pools Lake for Boating & Fishing Solarium — Steam Baths 2 Nite Clubs Early & Late Shows Top "NAME" Entertainment 4 Orchestras — Dance Studios

Air Conditioned Elevator Service — Steam Heat Dietary Laws

ACCENT ON YOUTH Day Camp — Nite Patrol New TEEN ROOM Rock 'N Roll Band

LOW MID-WEEK RATES

Write for Information Or See Your Travel Agent  
N. Y. Phone Circle 6-0127

**Bedford Springs** HOTEL

Luxurious Informality in Mountain Splendor!

Enjoy yourself amid scenic mountainous splendor at Western Pennsylvania's finest resort hotel. Pleasant accommodations, all activities, starlight dancing, pure relaxation. POOL TERRACE for cocktails, American Plan rates include 3 superb meals daily. The finest in informal luxury vacationing. Favor golf? You'll find new challenges on our 6200-yard, 18-hole. Championship course. Our Pitch 'n Putt course is ideal for practice. Thrill to Summer Playhouse performances. Swim in outdoor or indoor pools or lake; fish to your heart's content, enjoy riding, tennis, shuffleboard, surrey rides... comfortably high in the Alleghenys.

RESERVE NOW Write, wire or telephone 814-623-6121 L. Gardner Moore, Gen. Mgr. E. Harris Knight, Sales Mgr.

BEDFORD SPRINGS HOTEL Bedford, Pa. Easily accessible by car, near Bedford Interchange of Penna. Turnpike and Route 220 South.

You're All Invited

To Our Annual Open-House

Sunday, May 21 — 12 Noon to 4 P. M.

SEE OUR MAGNIFICENT FACILITIES

ALSO AVAILABLE . . . JUNIOR AND SINGLE MEMBERSHIPS

Only a ten minute drive for the tired businessman (or woman) from Sq. Hill or East Boro.

Here's what we've got to offer... Finest gourmet dining facilities served in our beautiful \$400,000 clubhouse... A Health Club... A Snack Bar for the Younger Set... A handsome large L-Shaped Pool, with two auxiliary pools, including one for the small fry... Plenty of deck chairs... Tennis Courts and facilities for Badminton, Shuffleboard, Basketball and Horse Shoes... Children's Playground... Those big weekend affairs, featuring floor shows and dancing to the best bands in town... all of this at less than a cost of a two-week vacation for you alone.

**Riviera COUNTRY CLUB**  
150 CURRY AVENUE • TURTLE CREEK, PENNA. 351-1510