

THE CHARLOTTE JEWISH NEWS

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Editorials

Each month we fill this column with our thoughts which we feel have meaning in our community. From time to time we have used a "reprint" we think is pertinent. It is our hope that in future editions we will feature guest editorial writers. We know there are many of you who have something worthwhile to say. What better way is there than submitting your views to *The Charlotte Jewish News*?

We are blessed with many individuals who are involved in our city in various capacities in civic organizations, the arts, politics, science, fraternal organizations, etc. They play a viable role in our community and should be heard. If you would like to write an editorial or know of someone who has something "to say" please let us know.

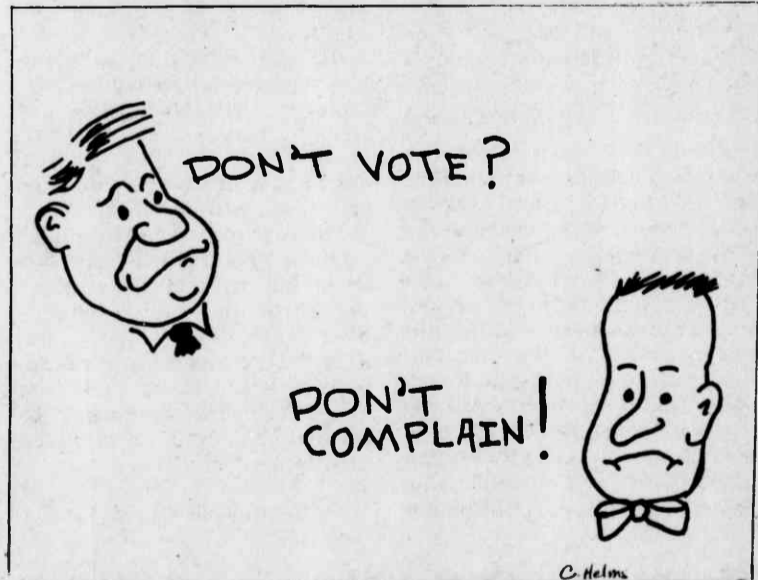
The Elections

The most important date will soon be here — voting for the future of our country, the presidency of the United States. However, the President alone does not dictate the policies of this country. Therefore it is of utmost importance that we also elect the most capable people to serve in Congress and in our state and local governments. They are our direct representatives to the President and voice our thoughts and needs.

Whether you're a Democrat, Republican or Independent does not matter. What does matter is that you go to the polls and exercise your rights as an American. Voting is a privilege that we can not and must not overlook.

We urge you to take advantage of the course the JCC is offering this month, "Critical Choices for the 1980 Elections." This three-part series should be a must on everyone's list.

We're casting our ballot on Nov. 4th are you?



The Editors welcome comments and letters expressing all points of view and reserve the right to edit.

Random Thoughts... by Muriel Levitt

Since I have devoted several columns to various members of my family, I do believe that it's time my father got equal billing. My dad was a unique character, a rugged individualist and a turn-of-the-century nonconformist. He was an original and certainly one of a kind.

For openers, he was born in Bucharest, Roumania in 1891 during an era when the Jewish crowd was not too popular with the existing establishment. His older brothers fled the country to escape conscription because conditions for Jews in the army had become insufferable. Each brother purchased a passport on the gray market and three of them came to America with different surnames. At the age of 15, Daddy decided to make his exit also. He was sponsored by his oldest brother and consequently they shared the same last name — Solomon. The other branches of the family flourished as Gartners and Lerches. It is interesting to note that in Roumania, the original family name was Kamil, derived from an earlier patriarch who dealt in camel's hair.

So ... my father arrived in the *goldeneh medina* and found that everyone he knew had congregated on New York's lower east side. This was not quite his cup of tea. The crowds, the tenements, the heavy ghetto-like concentration did not exactly thrill him and before he could even speak English fluently, he left.

Traveling up, down and across the country, my father worked for the railroads, not the usual occupation for your average European immigrant. He gradually lost any trace of an accent and acquired the speech patterns of a typical mid-westerner together with an extensive vocabulary. These cross country adventures continued until, on a return visit to New York, he and some friends crashed a local wedding. On that fateful day he met my mother who was one of the bridesmaids. It was love at first sight and goodbye to the railroads. They married shortly after at which time he opened a business which ran successfully for over sixty years.

Daddy's window shade, mirror and picture frame store became a meeting place for the neighborhood. Customers came for minutes and stayed for hours entranced by his stories. People went to Solomon's for a framing estimate and remained for coffee and danish. His remarkable personality was the drawing card.

I must confess that my father's business practices were somewhat unorthodox. If you needed white window shades, chances were you might well leave with ecru. When he was cutting colored cloth, he would sweet talk you into whatever he was pushing, and it was ac-

complished so adroitly that you never realized he had done you in. Late deliveries, mistaken measurements and substituted colors were all forgiven under the spell of his persuasive charm.

Whenever time permitted, my father would drive through the city with my sister and me. He treated us to all kinds of ethnic goodies, much to the despair of mother who was sure we would sicken from forbidden foods. He scoffed and continued to broaden our outlook by taking us everywhere and showing us everything. To be sure, this was not your ordinary stay at home kind of father. There was adventure in his soul and wanderlust in his blood. It was a tribute to mother's intelligence and stamina that she was able to tame this early day maverick.

He was an avid reader, devouring any and all non-fiction. He loved reading in Yiddish and latched on to *The Forward* newspaper whenever he could find one. Botany became his parttime hobby and he could identify hundreds of trees and plants. But daddy's real love was opera and the theater. He frequented the Metropolitan whenever possible and saw all the current Broadway shows. His interest in everything musical included a clear, true tenor voice and the seders he conducted were masterpieces of song and harmony.

When mother died, he was only 59 years old. His love of people and travel surfaced once more. As often as he could close his store, daddy was off and away. For about 25 years he journeyed all over the world at various intervals. He fell in love with Israel and visited there repeatedly.

Daddy had a natural talent for languages and spoke seven fluently, an amazing feat since most were self taught. At the age of 80, he taught himself Italian prior to a trip to Italy where he even had an audience with the Pope! At 82, a sense of nostalgia drew him back to Roumania, the place of his birth. Incredibly, the house where he was born still remained in tact with occupants just as poor as his family had been. Within a few days he regained full command of his mother tongue and bragged that had it not been for his American clothes, people would have never known he was an outsider.

Now hear this. When you think of an 83 year old man going on a two-month vacation, what would you imagine his destination to be ... Florida maybe, or Israel perhaps? Not my father! Would you believe that at age 83 he spent a summer in Africa and even went on safari! And in Africa, as it happened wherever he went, he made friends immediately. His open nature and zest for life were recognized at first meet-

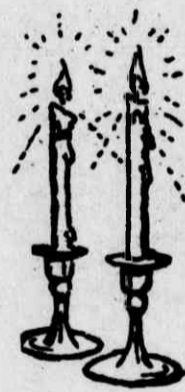
ing. No matter where he went, all over the globe, he collected people and remembrances to last a lifetime. Daddy said that he never knew a stranger — once he met them, they were friends.

On and on he went, still in business and working a six-day week until the age of 85. Gradually, insidiously, he began to decline with one illness following another. At 86, he slipped away quietly in his sleep.

Try to understand when I tell you that his passing was not mourned tragically. He had lived a long, rich, full life doing what he wanted, when he wanted. We were left a treasury of happy thoughts and good memories. While we certainly miss him, he is still all around us. The pictures and mirrors on the wall were made by his hands. The healthy life philosophy we enjoy was taught by my dad. The respect for Judaism, family and moral ethics was his manner of living. Our love for learning and literature was another important bequest.

Yes indeed, my father's 86 years counted for something. His presence was felt and both friends and family are richer for having shared him. I really think we are all better people because we were lucky enough to have known and loved the extraordinary Jack Solomon.

The Jewish Calendar



CANDLELIGHTING

- Oct. 1 — 7:03 p.m. (Erev Shemini Atzereth)
- Oct. 2 — 7:02 p.m. (Shemini Atzereth)
- Oct. 3 — 7:00 p.m.
- Oct. 10 — 6:51 p.m.
- Oct. 17 — 6:42 p.m.
- Oct. 24 — 6:34 p.m.
- Oct. 31 — 5:27 p.m.

Judaic Studies on the College Campus: The Current Situation

In the last ten years, Judaic studies in American and Canadian colleges and universities have expanded tremendously. In large university centers and in small colleges, one finds course offerings in biblical and modern Hebrew, Jewish history, rabbinic Judaism, midrash, medieval Jewish history, Jewish philosophy, Zionism, the Holocaust and countless other topics closely or remotely related to Jewish studies. Why such a proliferation of Jewish studies?

answers to this significant question. One is that during the last decade, many Jewish students rediscovered their heritage. Through the study of Hebrew and related subjects, they were able to learn what had either been mistaught in Hebrew school or had been ignored by Sunday school teachers. Although the term "roots" has become an overused word, Jewish culture took on great significance for the Jewish students on campus during the 70's.

A second answer must be the

State of Israel. A number of my former students, when asked why they were studying Judaica, replied they were eager to visit and possibly settle in Israel. A familiarity with the Hebrew language and a knowledge of Jewish history were perceived as prerequisites for that trip to Israel.

A third answer to that question is a sociological one. Jewish students on major campuses are eager to meet other Jewish students. Although Hillel and Jewish Cultural Foundations try to bring Jewish students

together, often it is the classroom which serves as the medium for such encounters. Because the overwhelming number of students in Jewish studies courses are Jewish, the classes provide an important setting for Jews to get to know other Jews.

Students also select these courses because of the popularity of the individual instructor or as preparatory courses for graduate degrees in Jewish and related courses.

A number of factors have contributed to the development

of Jewish studies in academia during the last decade. It remains to be seen whether interest in these courses will remain as strong over the next ten years.

— Raphael I. Panitz

(Ed. note: Mr. Panitz has taken his doctorate in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies at the U. of Penn. and has taught Jewish studies at both the U. of Penn. and SUNY-Binghamton.)