

This 'n That

Alan Ravitz, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Les Ravitz, is co-captain of the 1986-87 Johns Hopkins University varsity swim team. Ravitz, 21, is a senior who specializes in the butterfly stroke.

The masters division of Mecklenburg Aquatic Club (MAC) participated in the Sun Belt Regional swim meet Feb. 1 in Rock Hill against teams from Atlanta, Bristol, Tenn., Charleston, S.C., Winston-Salem/Greensboro/High Point and Raleigh. In the 35-39 Men, Rick Bober came in first in 100 freestyle, 100 backstroke, 500 freestyle, 50 backstroke, 200 backstroke; second in 100 breaststroke. He also participated in the 25-over Men's 200 medley relay and the 200 freestyle relay, both of which came in first. Bill Appelbaum, who swam in the 50-54 Men category, came in first in 100 freestyle and in 500 freestyle.

Seth Rosenberger, son of Mr. and Mrs. Jim Rosenberger, an 8th grade student at McClintock Junior High, is a budding artist. A piece of his artwork was selected for the city-wide scholastic art show at The Charlotte Observer Gallery.

If you have any special news for this column, please send it to the attention of The Editor, The Charlotte Jewish News, P.O. Box 13369, Charlotte, NC 28211.

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Non-Jewish Couple To Restore Synagogue

JACKSON, MISS — Jewish history is being made here as a non-Jewish couple, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Lum, have purchased the state's oldest Jewish synagogue and plan to restore it.

Temple Gemiluth Chassed, erected in 1891 in the Byzantine style that at that time for some reason was considered Jewish architecture, has not heard the niggun of a Jewish song for the drone of Jewish prayer for 10 years, and in that time has deteriorated to a deplorable condition.

Walking through the synagogue, Lum pointed to holes in the floor where termites and water damage had eaten the wood away. The walls are cracked in places and the roof leaks.

On the right as one enters the building is the rabbi's study, which is without a floor because of water damage.

The floor on one side of the auditorium had to be jacked up recently because the beams beneath it had rotted.

"The more work we do, the more we find that needs to be fixed," Mrs. Lum said.

But it's worth the effort, the Lums said, even though they don't know what they will do with it when it is restored. "Heaven knows what we're going to do with a synagogue," Mrs. Lum said. "We just bought it for the sake of preservation," her husband added.

Lum said after the structural restoration is completed

he will consult with experts on how to restore the synagogue to its original design and colors.

"We want it to be as authentic as we can get it," he said.

The most distinctive part of the synagogue is its onion-shaped dome, a feature characteristic of Byzantine architecture, which flourished in Germany and the Balkans during the Ottoman Empire and is found in medieval Russian structures.

Lum said the dome will be covered in gold leaf and the deteriorated 42-inch spire on top of it will be replaced with a copper one. The stained-glass windows, many of them broken or replaced with clear glass, will be restored to their original colors.

Lum said he was told the paint used inside and out should match the entrance's colored tiles, which are light blue, medium blue and terracotta.

Lum said the original chandeliers will be reassembled and placed back in the auditorium along with the 25 pews.

About the only undamaged part of the building is the ark, which once held the Torah. It is now at the Jacobs Camp in Utica, along with the silver breastplate, crown and scepter.

The Lums, who also restored and operate a bed-and-breakfast inn here, said people have suggested the synagogue be opened for tours

or be used for weddings or as a meeting hall for various functions.

But whatever its eventual use, the synagogue carries a divine purpose for Lum.

"I'm Methodist, my wife is Catholic and now we own a Jewish synagogue," Lum said. "One way or another I'm bound to get to where I want to go."

Karl Weil, one of the few remaining members explained the sale.

"We were just about to have it torn down because we didn't want to endanger anyone," Weil said.

Weil said the money from the synagogue purchase will be used for the upkeep of the Jewish cemetery across town, which also needed work.

"We are so grateful to the Lums," Weil said. "There was just no way we could keep it up and take care of the cemetery, too."

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