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Jewish Community Federation Leadership Oral History Project

William J. Lowenberg

PRESIDENT, JEWISH COMMUNITY FEDERATION OF SAN FRANCISCO,  
THE PENINSULA, MARIN AND SONOMA COUNTIES, 1983-1984

With an Introduction by  
Roselyne C. Swig

Interviews Conducted by  
Eleanor Glaser  
in 1993

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William J. Lowenberg, 1981



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President, Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties, 1983-1984, 1996, viii, 162 pp.

Family background, Octrup, Germany; effect of Nazi edicts: move to Borculo, Holland, Westerbork Transit Camp, Birkenau, Auschwitz, Warsaw Ghetto, Dachau death camps; liberation, 1945; arrival in San Francisco, 1950; real estate business; marriage to Fern Ellis, 1957; president of Jewish Home for the Aged (1970-1971) and Bureau of Jewish Education (1973-1976); Federation executives; accomplishments as president, San Francisco-based Jewish Community Federation, 1983-1984; construction of headquarters building; Jewish Agency; political and civic involvement; honors and activities in Jewish organizations.

Introduction by Roselyne Swig, past president of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties.

Interviewed 1993 by Eleanor K. Glaser for the Jewish Community Federation Leadership Oral History Project. Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.



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## PREFACE

The Jewish Community Federation Leadership Oral History Project was initiated in 1990, under the sponsorship of the Jewish Community Endowment Fund, to record the recent history of the Jewish Welfare Federation. Through oral histories with the thirteen living past presidents of the Federation, the project seeks to document Jewish philanthropy in the West Bay as spearheaded by the Federation during the past half-century.

The Jewish community can take pride in the manner in which it has, through the years, assumed the traditional Jewish role of providing for the less fortunate. Organized Jewish philanthropy in San Francisco began in 1850 with the Eureka Benevolent Association, today's Jewish Family and Children's Service Agency. With the organization in 1910 of the Federation of Jewish Charities, the community took the major step of coordinating thirteen separate social service agencies. The funding of local services was absorbed by the Community Chest when the Federation affiliated with it in 1922. Soon thereafter, the need was seen for an organization to support the financial needs of national and overseas agencies. This led to the formation of the Jewish National Welfare Fund in 1925, which pioneered in conducting a single annual campaign for Jewish needs outside of San Francisco. The Federation of Jewish Charities and the Jewish National Welfare Fund merged in 1955, becoming the Jewish Welfare Federation, the forerunner of the present Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties.

This oral history project was conceived by Phyllis Cook, executive director of the Jewish Community Endowment Fund, and Eleanor Glaser, the oral historian who had just completed the oral history of Sanford M. Treguboff, the late executive director of the Federation. They realized that 1990 would be the thirty-fifth year of the Jewish Welfare Federation and that it was none too soon to try to capture the insights and experiences of the Federation's first presidents. Not only would these leaders be able to document the dynamic history of the Federation, but they could link that to the activities of several other agencies since all had prepared themselves for their services as Federation president by working in one or another capacity in the earlier Jewish charitable institutions.

Thus, it was anticipated that through the recollections of these Federation presidents it might be also possible to understand the driving motivations and principles of those pioneer leaders and the forces they dealt with during the building of the Bay Area Jewish community.

Phyllis Cook, in consultation with the board of directors of the Jewish Community Endowment Fund, worked with the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, to carry out the project. Direction of the project was assumed by Eleanor Glaser, the office research editor for Jewish history subjects.

In the oral history process the interviewer works closely with the memoirist in the preliminary research and in setting up topics for discussion. For the Federation project, Eleanor Glaser conducted extensive research in the Federation Board minutes in order to determine critical events, committee assignments, and the pressing needs during each president's term of office. The interviews are informal conversations that are tape recorded, transcribed, edited by the interviewer for continuity and clarity, checked and approved by the interviewee, and then final typed. The oral history manuscripts are open to research in libraries nationwide. Copies of the Federation project oral histories will be available in the Federation Library; The Bancroft Library; the Department of Special Collections, Library, UCLA; and in other libraries interested in collecting source material on this subject.

Sam Ladar, president of the Jewish Welfare Federation in 1965 and 1966, was the first interviewee. As the initial oral history for the project, general Federation information such as early board minutes, lists of officers, etc., have been included in the Ladar volume. Researchers are advised to start there.

The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to record the lives of persons who have contributed significantly to the history of California and the West. The Office is administered by The Bancroft Library. Over the years the Office has documented a number of leaders in the California Jewish community. The Office is honored to have this opportunity to document Jewish philanthropy in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Eleanor Glaser, Project Director  
Jewish Community Federation Leadership  
Oral History Project

Willa Baum, Division Head  
Regional Oral History Office

January 1992  
Regional Oral History Office  
The Bancroft Library  
University of California, Berkeley



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Roselyne C. Swig, President, Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties, 1992-1994



INTRODUCTION--by Roselyne C. Swig

I am so very proud to be asked to write the introduction to the oral history of Bill Lowenberg, my special friend and co-worker.

We know each other most of all through our efforts on behalf of the Jewish people here, across the country, and abroad. But I cannot honestly reference him from young adulthood. I cannot talk about his hobbies or his vacation preferences. I cannot relay how he interacts in business, or what restaurants he enjoys, or which books he might read.

What I know about him is that though I am unfamiliar with those details, if I were to write about them, it would be certain that I would use the words passion, devotion, and drive--powerful words! And what images they provide; what energy they evoke! That is Bill: passionate, devoted, and driven.

And when I address the context in which I know him best, I add commitment--total, unswerving, unrelenting commitment. Bill is committed to his beliefs, to his sense of responsibility, to his obligations as a Jew. I believe he draws on his Jewish memory for searching for answers, for forgiving, for renewal. I know that his sense of commitment and his drive give him a sense of purpose for the role he must play as a participant, a leader, a survivor, as a role model.

I don't know Bill well in all of the many facets of his life, but I do know Bill, and I am proud, thankful, and strengthened by his friendship, by our collegial relationship, and by our mutual love for Israel, for our Jewish heritage, for our Jewish people.

Bill is a fighter. He fights long and hard for what he believes and he has the dignity and the presence of a leader and a teacher. In the years that we have worked together, I have watched his leadership grow and his skills become refined and honed. He has become a good listener. He respects and keeps his mind open to other opinions, and he has become a team player at a pivotal time when collaboration is so vital. I give him extra merit for this, aware that when you have come from the depth of human behavior, strength to return as an individual, to develop your sense of worth and to learn to trust, strength, for that, is most often beyond one's reach.

I will share only one experience with Bill that gave me a light into his persona and left me with a meaningful gift. I was co-chair of the design committee for the San Francisco Mayor's Holocaust Memorial and

Bill was on the committee as well. Together we met one of the artist finalists, George Segal, at the site to discuss the project. George had just come in from Japan and was fatigued. He was uncertain of his ability to properly immerse himself in the issue of the Holocaust and to emerge with an image that would significantly and credibly evoke the emotion and the message that he and we felt should be provided. He, for his own personal reasons, felt devoid of the ability, guilty of his own distance from his Jewishness, and fearful of failing in his task. Bill, his daughter Susan, George, his wife Ellen, and I sat together at the Legion of Honor in Lincoln Park and talked. Then George and Bill talked together and I listened, feeling privileged and also a bit uncomfortable at the intimacy of the conversation and the openness and trust surrounding their talk. I had never, ever heard Bill speak about his experiences in the camps, and there I was, suddenly included in a rare and loving moment of sharing.

My emotional tie to Bill and to his family started there and our friendship--always important to me--was strengthened by that experience and by the lessons it taught me of the human condition and its ability to go on.

George went on to become the sculptor for the memorial project and provided our community with a work that has become world renowned and a destination point for all. George and Bill became good friends for all times and George learned more about himself as a person, as a Jew, and as an artist--destined to help others to be in touch with themselves. I was a fortunate bystander, grateful for that moment in time.

Thank you, Billy, for the honor and privilege. You are a man, a leader, and a friend.

Roselyne C. Swig, President  
Jewish Community Federation of San  
Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and  
Sonoma Counties

March 9, 1994  
San Francisco, California

## INTERVIEW HISTORY--by Eleanor Glaser

The Jewish Community Federation Leadership Oral History Project documents the history of the San Francisco-based Jewish Community Federation through the oral histories of its past presidents. Since its inception in 1990, the project has been supported by the Jewish Community Endowment Fund. William J. Lowenberg, Federation President in 1983-1984, is the ninth person interviewed in this series. Known to one and all as Bill or Billy, Mr. Lowenberg is passionate about improving his own community and the cause of Israel.

Mr. Lowenberg was the first Holocaust survivor to serve as president of a major Federation. After his release from Dachau, he spent some years in Europe before deciding he could better himself in this country. He came to San Francisco in 1950 to join an aunt and uncle. His success in this city tells much about his intelligence, ambition, and tenacity. Mr. Lowenberg learned English by listening to the radio and riding buses to attend night classes wherever they were given.

While learning the real estate business from the ground up, Mr. Lowenberg also involved himself in the Jewish community. In his volume he states, "I am proud that I came here and that this community gave me a chance to be part of it." His early activities led to his becoming president of the Jewish Home for the Aged and of the Bureau of Jewish Education. He is now a successful realtor, active in the Republican Party, and has the reputation of being an outstanding fundraiser. His skill as a fundraiser has benefitted both the San Francisco-based Federation and the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., to which he was appointed council vice chairman by President Ronald Reagan. We had a heated discussion (heated on Mr. Lowenberg's part) when I read him a statement by a Jewish feminist that the funds raised for the Holocaust Museum would be better spent for life-improving purposes. Mr. Lowenberg is firm in his beliefs and does not hesitate to state them outright.

During his presidency, the Federation had one of the largest campaigns ever; Mr. Lowenberg viewed this as a way of getting the community more involved. He stated he felt very strongly about building the community. "I had this dream after the camps," he said, "that the only thing I could contribute to my people would be to rebuild a Jewish world. I now had a chance to do it within my own community, where I lived, by bringing as many people as possible into the system, the system meaning the system of the Federation."

We had our first meeting, a preliminary interview, in October 1992. The actual taping of five interviews was held in the spring and summer of 1993. In the interim, Mr. Lowenberg traveled a great deal. The interviews took place in Mr. Lowenberg's Montgomery Street office and were held at the end of his busy day. Many times business phone calls interrupted our sessions; these Mr. Lowenberg took on his speaker phone, enabling me to hear the conversations. I look upon this, like his strong opinions, as another indication that Mr. Lowenberg is open and forthright.

When the edited transcript of the interviews was sent to Mr. Lowenberg, he was deliberate in his careful editing, tightening it up, making it more concise. Asked whom he would like to write an introduction to his oral history volume, Mr. Lowenberg named Roselyne (Cissy) Swig, Federation president at that time. We appreciate her cooperation in responding to this request.

Eleanor Glaser, Project Director  
Jewish Community Leadership Oral  
History Project

June 1994  
Regional Oral History Office  
The Bancroft Library  
University of California, Berkeley

Regional Oral History Office  
Room 486 The Bancroft Library

University of California  
Berkeley, California 94720

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Wm. J. Lowenberg

Date of birth AUG 14 - 1926 Birthplace Ochtrup - Germany

Father's full name Johannes Lowenberg

Occupation Merchant Birthplace Ahlen - Germany

Mother's full name Emma Salomon Lowenberg

Occupation Housewife Birthplace Metelen - Germany

Your spouse Franz E Lowenberg

Occupation Housewife Birthplace Shanghai - China

Your children David W. Lowenberg M.D.

Susan E. Lowenberg

Where did you grow up? Germany and Holland

Present community SAN FRANCISCO

Education 7 years (Elementary)

Occupation(s) REAL ESTATE Developer

Areas of expertise REAL ESTATE

Other interests or activities \_\_\_\_\_

Organizations in which you are active \_\_\_\_\_

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Wm. J. Lowenberg

Date of birth AUG 14 - 1926 Birthplace Ocktrup - Germany

Father's full name Julius Lowenberg

Occupation Merchant Birthplace Ahlen - Germany

Mother's full name Emma Salomon Lowenberg

Occupation Nurse in F. Birthplace Metelen - Germany

Your spouse Fran E Lowenberg

Occupation Nurse in F. Birthplace Shanghai - China

Your children David W. Lowenberg M.D.

Susan E. Lowenberg

Where did you grow up? Germany and Holland

Present community SAN FRANCISCO

Education 7 years (Elementary)

Occupation(s) REAL Estate Developer

Areas of expertise REAL Estate

Other interests or activities \_\_\_\_\_

Organizations in which you are active \_\_\_\_\_



## I LIFE IN OCHTRUP, GERMANY

{Interview 1: May 25, 1993}##<sup>1</sup>

The Economy of Ochtrup

Glaser: You were born in Ochtrup, Westphalen Germany, on August 14, 1926. What was the town of Ochtrup like?

Lowenberg: It was a small town about maybe twenty-five miles from the Dutch border. Before the war and for many years, it had several large textile mills for weaving and spinning. They're not there any longer. They all disappeared during the war, like most textile in western Europe and Holland. It all moved to other countries, specifically to the Far East and the Orient.

Then there was an agricultural area around the town; the work force, the blue collar force, was mostly working in the textile mills and in agriculture. The rest was service, like retail stores. That's about all I remember.

Glaser: What would the total population have been?

Lowenberg: I'm guessing now, maybe between 7,000 and 10,000 people.

Glaser: To place it on the map, where was the next big town?

Lowenberg: The next town is the provincial city which is Munster, Westphalen; it is approximately twenty-five miles east of Ochtrup. The first major town in Holland is Enschede, a major town in Holland.

---

<sup>1</sup>This symbol (##) indicates that a tape or segment of tape has begun or ended. A guide to the tapes follows the transcript.

Family

- Glaser: Now, about your family, did you have brothers and sisters?
- Lowenberg: I had one sister, Erika, who was born in May 12, 1928. She was killed in Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- Glaser: What were the names of your parents?
- Lowenberg: My father's name was Julius; my mother's name was Emmy.
- Glaser: What did your father do?
- Lowenberg: My father had learned the textile business as a young man, but he was in the cattle business, because his father was in the cattle business. When we moved to Holland he went back into textile. But in Germany, he was a cattle dealer. They also imported cattle from eastern Germany into this area.
- Glaser: What sort of a life did your mother lead? I assume she was mostly a housewife?
- Lowenberg: Mother was a housewife. My father's parents lived in the same house with us, it was a two-story house. They lived upstairs along with my father's sister. My mother's mother was a widow. My grandfather died in 1923. She lived about eight kilometers from us in another town that we'll talk about in a few moments. They all had lived there for many years. We found gravestones going back to 1530.
- Glaser: In the same area?
- Lowenberg: Yes, in our town, in Ochtrup. And in my mother's town, in Metelen.
- Glaser: What did you say your mother's town was?
- Lowenberg: Metelen. That's eight kilometers from Ochtrup, very small, maybe 2,000 to 3,000 people, all farming. That's where my mother was born, that's where her father was born. They lived there for over 400 years that we knew of. I have some evidence of that from gravestones.
- Glaser: What was the Jewish community like in Ochtrup?
- Lowenberg: Ochtrup had ten Jewish families. Our family consisted of my grandparents and my grandfather's brother's family and cousins. Other Jewish families had their own millinery store, and a

haberdashery. There was a kosher butcher, a textile store, and several others traded in cattle.

Glaser: With ten families, you must have been a very close-knit group.

Lowenberg: Very close. We had our synagogue, of course, but we didn't have a paid rabbi. My grandfather read the Torah every Shabbas, he was very good at it. His brother was the schochet, the kosher slaughtering. My father did the praying with his cousin. They alternated the presidency of the congregation. My father blew the shofar at Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur. His cousin was the financial manager of the congregation. But they all shared it equally. They didn't have a formal structure.

Glaser: You told me one time that your father was active in veterans' organizations.

Lowenberg: Well, most of the Jews in the area fought in the First World War as German soldiers. My father was a soldier, both my grandfathers were soldiers. My father's brother was killed at the end of war, as a German soldier. My mother's brother was also in the war.

My parents built the house where I was born when they got married. My parents married in 1925; the house is still there.

Glaser: If they got married in 1925, they were married when things were very bad economically with a lot of political unrest, even before Hitler came in.

Lowenberg: I don't think so. They lived in a small town, and my mother came from a family who had some affluence.

I never heard them talk about economic times in those days. They did very well, I think. I never heard them talk about the Depression. We always dressed well, ate well, and lived well. One didn't go on vacations. I mean it wasn't what we think of today in American terms, but we went on vacations to stay with relatives.

Glaser: Where would you go on vacations?

Lowenberg: My mother's sister was married in the Rhineland, so in the summer I often went there because it was a larger Jewish community with a lot of children.

My parents traveled sometimes, but not at the level as one would travel today. Usually they traveled to see their families.

Glaser: Tell me about your schooling, the general schooling and the religious education.

Lowenberg: I went to school in Ochtrup. The town was 95 percent Catholic. It was a public boys' school, but it was Catholic. I was the only Jewish child at my time in that school. My sister and the daughters of cousins went to the girls' school.

The first year was okay, second year wasn't bad, but then the anti-Semitism started, and I had to sit alone on a bench in the back of the room. But there was one teacher, the first and second grade I think it was, he was very nice to me. He treated me like a human being. But the principal was a Nazi, and he forbade them to give me report cards. But things got worse as it progressed in '34, '35.

### Schooling

Lowenberg: We didn't have a Hebrew teacher in Ochtrup. My mother taught me the alef-bes [Hebrew alphabet]. She had books and she taught me until I was, I think, about six or seven. Then we went by train every Tuesday to the next town over, which was called Burgsteinfurt. It was a larger town and had a good-sized Jewish community. There may have been forty, fifty, Jewish families. They had a full-time Hebrew teacher. I remember his name was Mr. Emanuel.

There were Jewish families living in many towns in those areas.

But the school was okay until about 1936, I was beaten up one day. We went by train to Burgsteinfurt. I remember that there was a boy, and then later on a few more, who harassed us every time we walked from the railroad station to the school. They chased us; they knew we were Jews.

One day, one of them had a knife and threw it at me. It hit me in the leg. I was bleeding. I was about, I would say, seven or eight years old. Thereafter, an adult would travel with us every Tuesday.

But in 1936 we left Germany.

Relations with Christians

Glaser: What were the relations with your Christian neighbors in Ochtrup?

Lowenberg: They were very good until about the middle thirties. It so happened that in the block I was born were four boys all in the same class. We were all born in 1926, we were all good friends and we were always together.

It stopped, I would say, by 1934/1935. Aryans were forbidden to play with Jews. The neighbors couldn't or wouldn't talk to us any more, their children couldn't play with me any more.

I remember that my grandmother who lived with us died in 1936. It was actually the first death I ever experienced in the family.

By 1936 there were no more relations with the Christian community. That had stopped.





## II BORCULO, HOLLAND, 1936

The Move to Borculo

Lowenberg: And then, my father decided to leave Germany.

Glaser: What year was that?

Lowenberg: I don't know exactly when, it was August or September of '36.

Glaser: And what town did you go to?

Lowenberg: We went to Borculo in Holland; it was twenty or thirty miles from Ochtrup. It was less than an hour's drive by car.

I don't remember why my family moved to Borculo. Borculo was a very learned Jewish community; it was well known in Holland. Borculo was the best part of my youth; it was just wonderful. It was a short time but it was wonderful there. The Dutch didn't know anti-Semitism at that time. It was almost shocking for me that people would play with me. Holland was good.

And my parents, I remember, rented a very small house. We left Germany overnight. I don't know how we got over the border. I have no idea how it happened, but we ended up in Holland. They had no money; they left most everything behind.

Father's Business

Lowenberg: My father got himself a bicycle, and he went into textile. He went from farmer to farmer every day to sell textile. My grandfather (paternal) came to live with us.

Glaser: This is like an American story back at the turn of the century.

Lowenberg: Exactly. He sold textiles. He had two suitcases, one in the front and one in the back of the bike. It was hard on him.

My mother had a vegetable garden, she did the gardening. My father used to sell dresses and aprons to the farmers, and my mother sewed them. She was very handy in everything.

Glaser: Oh, so she was a seamstress for your father.

Lowenberg: Yes, she sewed the dresses and the aprons and whatever else was sold.

They had a tough time, but I know my parents took in a boarder, a Jewish man who fled from Germany. He got barely out of being arrested, and he needed a place to live. He lived with us for several years before he got married. His name was Maurice Frank. He also perished.

Glaser: Did you and your parents have any difficulty in switching from German to Dutch?

Lowenberg: No, not at all, because where we lived in Germany they spoke what's called Platt Deutsch. It was similar to what they speak in Holland. It's a slang of Dutch and German that people along those border areas spoke.

After about two years, a Jewish family who had a store on the main street left and my father took over that store.

The store was in the front, and the living quarters were in the back and upstairs. So we moved from that little house into this larger, stone house with a nice store and big plate glass window for merchandise display. And then my father became more of a merchant. He didn't have to go by bicycle every day, but he did go about two days a week, and then my mother ran the store. My father was very clever, and he worked very hard. But both my parents worked extremely hard.

Glaser: Did you ever work in the store?

Lowenberg: I had to deliver packages after school.

### Kristallnacht, November 1938

Lowenberg: In '38, my grandmother (maternal) came to live with us, because of Kristallnacht. Somehow my parents arranged to get her out of Germany. She was living with two of her sons. Their name was Salomon.

They were arrested on Kristallnacht by the local police. Some friends, during the night, had two bicycles waiting for them and they threw the keys into the jail cage. They took my uncles over the border; they ended up at our house in Borculo early in the morning.

The police told my father and mother that they could not have my mother's brothers living with us. We were resident aliens, we had no Dutch passport, we were stateless because of Hitler's Nuremberg laws. So they went to my mother's first cousin, who was a cantor in the next town. He was a native; two of my grandmother's sisters had moved to Holland around the turn of the century and married Dutch Jews.

My uncles lived with them for about six months. Then the Dutch government took all those German Jews who had fled to Holland during Kristallnacht (a few thousand) and put them in a camp.

### Westerbork Transit Camp

Lowenberg: And then the Dutch built Westerbork in the northeastern part of Holland. All these German Jews were sent there including my two uncles. When the Germans occupied Holland on May 10, 1940, they took over Westerbork and used it as a transit camp for Jews going to extermination camps in Poland.

My uncles were there when we got there in 1942. They stayed in Westerbork through the entire war.

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Lowenberg: The Germans had confiscated a farm near the camp, and they put my uncles in charge of that farm. They had to deliver every

morning milk and eggs to the German camp commander and his troops. That saved their lives.

Glaser: I want to go back and ask you about when war broke out in 1939. Did your family give any thought to emigrating from Holland or to sending you and your sister on the children's transport to England?

Lowenberg: Well, no, they didn't. There was very little communication in general; we didn't know. But I remember, at the end of '37, my grandmother spent a great deal of money to buy visas for Chile from someone for the whole family. She bought those visas and found out they were phony.

Very few did in our area. Families stayed together. Families were very close. Some sent their children to England, but they were very few.

Glaser: You mean the totality of the--

Lowenberg: The totality of the children who got out of Germany and Holland is small in comparison to the amount of children there were. But I would say that from Germany, they sent maybe 100-200 children to Holland.

Glaser: I wanted to ask you about the Dutch authorities sending people to what became Westerbork, in 1939. That sounds to me like an act of hostility.

Lowenberg: Well, it was, because they didn't want those German Jews living free in Holland. They took those Jews--men, women, and children--and locked them in the camp. They could not be living in the freedom of Holland.

Religious Education

Glaser: Let's talk about your bar mitzvah.

Lowenberg: We went to Hebrew school six days a week.

Glaser: Was this after the regular school?

Lowenberg: After regular school. Regular school stopped at 3:00, and from 4:00 until 6:00 we had Hebrew school. Of course on the Shabbos we had to go to Gemara cheverah and Mishna cheverah--

Glaser: Excuse me, what do you mean Gemara cheverah?

Lowenberg: Study groups, we studied the Gemara. On Sunday mornings we had to go to school from 9:00 until 12:00. I studied Gemara, I studied Mishna, I studied Rashi [a famous medieval Talmudic scholar], and Tanakh [the Five Books of Moses--the Bible]. We studied everything. We could even read Rashi. Rashi is written differently, you know that?

Glaser: No, I didn't know that.

Lowenberg: Yes, Rashi is written differently. We could read that and translate it.

German Occupation of Holland; Effect on Jews

Lowenberg: But anyhow, in '39 I was bar mitzvah. I remember that it was especially hard on my mother and my grandmother. The Thursday before my bar mitzvah, my uncle, another brother of my mother who was married with two children, got out of Germany--he was still there in '39. He came about a week before my bar mitzvah to stay with us. But two days before my bar mitzvah, he had to go to Rotterdam. He got out on the last boat before the war started in Poland.

My mother used to tell me that Uncle Emil got out on the last boat out of Rotterdam. He went to San Francisco because my aunt had relatives here.

Glaser: I have to ask you something. I read somewhere that proportionately there were more Jews sent to camps in Holland than in either Germany or Austria or Poland.

Lowenberg: Absolutely.

Glaser: I don't understand that.

Lowenberg: That is correct, Holland proportionately had the largest loss of Jews. We were not arrested by the Germans when we were picked up in '42. The Germans had such a hold on Holland. They made examples of the Dutch if they helped Jews; they killed them on site. Holland was under such strict control by the Germans, that when the Dutch police were given an order, they complied.

In the town we lived in there were two policemen. When the order came, they told us, "Tonight, we're going to pick you up," and we all went like sheep. Yes, Holland had the biggest loss of Jews. Much more per capita than any other country. Very few came back. There were about 20,000 Jews hidden in Holland; a lot of them were betrayed and sent to the camps.

Glaser: What happened to your family between 1939, the outbreak of the war, and 1942 when you had to go to Westerbork?

Lowenberg: When the Germans came in, the first year it wasn't so bad, 1940 to the beginning of '41. There were laws put in place, and we had to get out of public schools, but at least there wasn't that immediate threat. We didn't know what was going on. They did arrest our Rabbi in 1941, and some younger men. The young Jewish men were arrested in 1941. None of those people survived.

#### Ousted from Public School

Lowenberg: In '41 we couldn't go to public school any more. The Jewish community would send us by bus every morning to school in Enschede, that took about an hour by bus. The Jewish community there, a good-sized Jewish community, brought all the children from all of the neighboring communities. It was like a day school would be here today. We went for approximately a year. Of course, we had to wear a Jewish star, and in the buses we had to sit in the back. If the Germans or Christians came on the bus, we had to get up. A lot of Christians wouldn't make us do that, but some did. It was about a forty-five minute walk from the station to the school.

So everything became harder and harder and harder. I remember on a few occasions when the German soldiers came on

the bus all the Jews with the stars had to get off the bus, and we had to sit on the side of the road and wait for the next bus. That happened maybe half a dozen times, I remember.

Then that stopped and Jews were not allowed on public transportation any longer. My father decided I shouldn't be sitting at home. We were told that if you work in agriculture you won't get arrested. Rumors were always there. So my father said, "Well, you and I will work on the farms." So he called a client of his, and I had to go every morning at 4:00. I was fourteen years old, and I had to work on the farm. My father went to another farm, and all the other Jewish men did the same thing.

They didn't pay us because we just wanted to have the cover of working on a farm. Of course I couldn't eat there, it wasn't kosher, so my mother used to make a sandwich for me, and they gave me a cup of milk. They were nice people. I couldn't go by bicycle, I had to walk every morning and evening for about an hour. Our bikes had been confiscated by the Germans.





## III FAMILY SENT TO WESTERBORK

All Jews Arrested

Lowenberg: Early in '42 we were arrested and we went to Westerbork.

Glaser: Were all the Jewish families sent to Westerbork?

Lowenberg: Yes, from all the towns. They told everybody to report to the gymnasium of the school in the late afternoon. We all went there, everybody. This was a very orchestrated, organized event by the Germans. This was a money-making event from A through Z, this killing machine.<sup>1</sup>

A week before, everybody was told exactly what you could take. You didn't take more or less. So many bars of soap, so many shoes, so much underwear, so many shirts, so many suits, etc. Everything was in writing.

Glaser: Did your mother have to turn in silverware?

Lowenberg: Everything, everything had to be turned in. Silver and gold, whatever you had, was turned in long before. That was in 1941.

Glaser: And they gave you a receipt?

Lowenberg: You got a receipt, yes, I remember that now. You had to turn in your radio, your bicycle, your silver, your gold, whatever. Everything.

Glaser: They gave you a receipt as if you could get it back later.

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix for document of goods obtained from concentration camps.

Lowenberg: Yes.

Glaser: Did the Germans who were in charge give you any phony reason about why you were going to Westerbork?

Lowenberg: Yes, we were going to the east for the duration of the war. No one knew. And I must tell you, people were scared to death from morning until night.

I have this feeling that my father thought that Holland would be safe because Holland was not occupied during the First World War. The Germans kept Holland unoccupied so they could escape to it, which they did. The Kaiser escaped to Holland. And then we had these relatives in Holland, so we traveled to Holland often.

Glaser: How far was Westerbork from your home?

Lowenberg: Maybe two hours by car, but they took us there by train. It was such a shock; I was a child. A lot of things I don't remember. They're coming back slowly to me now, but for years, I couldn't think of it.

Glaser: Were you allowed to stay together as a family?

Lowenberg: We stayed together in Westerbork, yes. We stayed together in a big barracks; we all slept in the same barrack. Lots of people there, but we could sleep together. Women were on one side and men were on the other side.

#### Conditions at Westerbork

Glaser: What were conditions like at Westerbork?

Lowenberg: Westerbork wasn't too terrible. There was no hunger there for us. My uncles ran the farm, they could sneak food to us. We could visit with each other. My uncles made sure we had food.

Glaser: How did you occupy your time there?

Lowenberg: I worked. I worked in the machine shop. My father sewed potato sacks.

Glaser: Did your mother and sister have to work?

Lowenberg: My sister was a runner for one of the offices. My mother worked in sewing. She was very good at that; my mother could do everything. At night you went to the main kitchen and picked up the food and then we could all eat together.

Glaser: Were the Germans or the Dutch in charge of Westerbork?

Lowenberg: The Germans, German guards. It was a real camp with electric wires, and all. But there were no killings, there were no beatings, unless you did something wrong. But it was ironic how Westerbork was constituted. There was this huge camp with all these barracks, and the Jews had really built a social infrastructure. We had plays, we had concerts, and the Germans let us do that because they attended the performances.

There were a lot of German Jewish artists. Some were from the Berlin Theatre. Many Jews played instruments, so we had an orchestra. There were literary evenings, there were lectures. Jews kept themselves busy to make life easier.

Glaser: So there was a little bit of normality.

Lowenberg: There was some normality--for the general camp. But they used to bring in once a week Jews who were found hidden. When they found them, if they didn't kill them they brought them to Westerbork. And in the camp they had a couple of barracks which were just for the Jews who had been hidden. They had no communication with the rest of us. They were treated like real criminals. They were there maybe a week to two weeks. Then they went in separate boxcars to Auschwitz.

I know my best friend, a boy from Borculo, he and his family were caught. They were hidden. He came there; I couldn't even talk to him. We could see each other, could wave to each other. We were bar mitzvah one week apart.



## IV BIRKENAU DEATH CAMP

Separated from Parents

Glaser: How long were you in Westerbork?

Lowenberg: About eight months. I went to Birkenau in the early spring of 1943. You get a tattoo on your arm, and they shave you, and you get those striped uniforms. My number is 145382.

I was on the first transport in six months where they kept anyone alive. All the previous transports were killed on arrival, they went directly to the gas chambers. But the one I was on, they took 200 men to work out of a total transport of 4,000. I was one of them. The rest--men, women and children--were killed. I was taken away from my parents because I was sixteen. You could stay with your parents until the end of your fifteenth year.

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Lowenberg: But a week later my parents and my sister came to Birkenau. My parents wanted to go with me and my sister, but I insisted that they should stay in Westerbork. It was decided that I would go by myself, hoping that they would not have to leave there. That only lasted one week, and then they sent them also.

Glaser: What were conditions at Birkenau?

Lowenberg: It was horrible. This was in the height of the killings, 1943. The trains were waiting in line, around the clock, from all parts of Europe.

It was confirmed, after the war, that the trains to Auschwitz had preference on the rails over the troop trains.

Camps Around Auschwitz

- Glaser: You use the terms Birkenau and Auschwitz interchangeably. Would you explain that?
- Lowenberg: Yes. It's called Auschwitz, because Auschwitz was the main camp, and Birkenau was really Auschwitz number two. It was less than a mile away.
- Glaser: It's in Poland, isn't it?
- Lowenberg: It's in Poland, outside of Krakow. Auschwitz was an old army depot, army Kaserne the Germans call it.
- Glaser: Barracks?
- Lowenberg: Barracks. That was Auschwitz. But then they built Birkenau, which was all barracks. And that's where they built the gas chambers and the crematoria. Auschwitz three was Buna/Monovitz. There were all those camps, but they were all under the Auschwitz command.
- Treblinka was a different camp. So were Maidanek, Chelmo, and Sobibor (where my grandfather was killed). There were many more different camps, all killing centers.
- Glaser: So they were like satellite camps around--
- Lowenberg: All in Poland. And there were all those others. But Auschwitz was the center of it all. That's where the number of killings were the highest.
- Glaser: And it was there that you were separated from your parents?
- Lowenberg: No, no, I was separated in Westerbork. I went on the train to Birkenau by myself.
- Glaser: I understand that, but when your parents were brought to Birkenau--
- Lowenberg: I saw them, they didn't see me. I was working on a road gang near the gas chambers when I saw a friend of my family's.

He waved when I saw him, and he pointed to my father and my mother and my sister. I don't think they saw me. My sister was then twelve years old. My parents were forty-six years old; they were born in 1897.

So I stayed in Birkenau. I went to Auschwitz for a few weeks and they took us back to Birkenau. The day I arrived, I met a very good friend who was one of those boys sent from Germany to Holland, to an orphanage. He went to Auschwitz on the first transport from Holland, it was in 1942. He was the only one who was alive from that transport of all young people.

The reason he was alive, he was a magician. He loved magic; he still loves magic. He was playing with a deck of cards when he was standing in line before the Mengele selection. A German soldier saw him and asked, "Are you a magician?" He said, "Yes," answering him in German. He was from Dortmund, Germany.

The German took him out of this line and told him, "You will perform for us tonight." He was a very good magician. He was world-renowned. That saved his life.

Glaser: What was his name?

Lowenberg: His name was Hans Trixer, this was his stage name. His real name was Hans Elsbach. His father had a very fine tailoring business in Dortmund.

He saw me while I was being tattooed, I remember. He told me real fast what was going on. That helped me a little bit right then and there. He was able, because he'd been there that long, and he was in charge of fixing sewing machines and typewriters. He was a very talented individual. He used to come at night and bring me some food.

There were killings hourly. The killings were unbelievable, the standing in line for days at a time, standing in the cold weather, in the rain. One day my friend said to me, "I put you and me on a transport--destination unknown." I said, "What do you mean unknown?" He said, "We are going. If we stay here, we'll be killed in the next thirty days anyhow."

So, he volunteered me, and he and I went on this transport; I don't want to go into details what happened during Birkenau, it was awful. Weekly selections, the beatings, the killings, the crematoria.

Warsaw Ghetto

Lowenberg: We went in the boxcars for the third time. This was in the summer of 1943. We ended up in Warsaw, and we saw the ghetto still burning. We were 300 men taken off the streets of Birkenau. He and I were two of those 300--I didn't know anybody else. We were sent to Warsaw to clean up the ghetto, to burn bodies and to dynamite the ghetto. To destroy the evidence and to salvage all kinds of materials for the Germans, for their war machine. From copper wire to transformers to bricks.

We were in Warsaw from '43 until June of '44. We got out of Warsaw four days before the Russians marched in. It was a terrible cold winter, we lost a lot of people. After we'd been there a few months, 5,000 to 6,000 Hungarians were brought in from Birkenau and Auschwitz.

When we left in June of '44, there were 3,600 prisoners in Warsaw. The Germans had built a camp in the ghetto, just like any other camp. Most of us cleaned bricks. The Germans sold them to the Poles.

When the Russians broke through, there were 300 prisoners who couldn't walk anymore. Three hundred were kept behind to destroy all evidence. They were killed immediately thereafter, machine-gunned in their beds. Three thousand marched out. Three thousand marched for about twelve days due west. A death march.

Glaser: Why?

Lowenberg: Well, it's very sad. We came to a river and we hadn't had anything to drink or eat for about four or five days. We were going delirious. Anybody who didn't march any longer (they had a truck behind us with machine guns) was shot and thrown on the side of the road. If you couldn't walk, you were shot.

I happened to be towards the front of the column. We had been marching for days. We went to the river and started drinking. The people behind us were pushing. I got out of the way because I couldn't swim in those days. All those people were pushing. The Germans put machine guns on the bridge we'd crossed. They kept shooting and they were killing and killing. The people wouldn't stop trying to get across the river.



They decided to bring the dogs in, so the soldiers had to get into the water with the dogs. When the dogs came in, our Jews stopped pushing. That river was red with blood.

I don't know how many got killed that day, but they got us out of the water, and we marched for several days more. Then they put us in boxcars for another four, five days. Of the 3,600 prisoners in Warsaw, 240 were able to march out of the boxcars. The rest were all killed en route. I was again lucky.

Glaser: Do you think that it was your youth, that you were stronger?

Lowenberg: Yes; I was young, healthy, and I kept clean. I kept as clean as I could all the time.

Glaser: Typhus was one of the things that killed people, too.

Lowenberg: Yes, I had typhus. I had a very mild case of typhus in Warsaw. But I got out of it.

In Warsaw, we had some terrible incidents, working on the other side of the Weichsel River. One day, five of us had to go to dig foxholes for the S.S. Of the five, only two of us survived. The other three were beaten to death. They were Croatian Jews. And I think about it when I read or I hear about Sarajevo and Bosnia. I survived that trip. It just was about a one-day trip.

### Dachau

Lowenberg: We ended up in Dachau. And in Dachau we stayed for not too long, a couple of weeks. Then they took us from Dachau to a satellite camp near Landsberg. I think they took us by trucks, but it could have been by boxcars again, I don't remember. We were very weak.

We had to work to build underground munitions factories and underground factories for the V-2. All we did was hauling sand.

Glaser: How long were you there in that satellite camp before--

Lowenberg: Until the middle of April of '45.

Glaser: So you were there from '44 to '45?

Lowenberg: Yes.

Glaser: Where were you liberated?

Lowenberg: We went on another death march, from that camp for about four, five days, back to Dachau/Allach in the middle of April. Then on April 30 we were liberated by the American army.

## V CONDUCT WITHIN THE DEATH CAMP

[Interview 2: June 9, 1993]##

Survival Techniques

- Glaser: Within the various camps you were in, did the prisoners organize for self-help?
- Lowenberg: What do you mean by self-help?
- Glaser: Well, did they protect one another to the limited degree that they could, provide if possible food for somebody. If somebody was sick try to help them?
- Lowenberg: Of course, absolutely. There was self-help, yes, your friends, and anybody that needed help. If you were able to physically, of course you did.
- Glaser: Were there any attempts at sabotage or escapes that you witnessed?
- Lowenberg: We saw escapes in the camps. Sabotage I don't remember, but escapes we saw.
- Glaser: Were they successful?
- Lowenberg: No. We saw them being shot afterwards after they caught them.
- Glaser: Did anybody try to document what was going on? This would be important because it means that there was a sense of hope that there was a future.
- Lowenberg: We had no paper, we had no pencils, we had nothing to write with. As a matter of fact, if anything was found on you--you

were frisked very often, almost weekly--and if anything was found on you, whatever, you were severely beaten or shot.

Glaser: Within the barracks, was there any religious observance?

Lowenberg: Oh, people prayed, but obviously we didn't have any tefillin [phylacteries] or tallesim [prayer shawls], or anything of that nature. But there was no organized prayer ever that I know. We had no idea of the days, the dates, or holidays. We never saw newspapers and of course no radio. We didn't know what day of the week it was.

Glaser: I think you told me that you learned Yiddish in the camps. You didn't learn this at home?

Lowenberg: No, I never had heard Yiddish before. In Holland, or when we lived in Germany, there was no Yiddish spoken. When I came in the camps, I spoke German, which helped a bit. The first Yiddish I heard was not even in Westerbork. I heard it in Birkenau.

Glaser: And then you picked it up from the other prisoners?

Lowenberg: I picked it up, and I learned it as fast as I could.

Glaser: Why did you learn it as fast as you could?

Lowenberg: Because it was also part of survival; the majority of the prisoners spoke Yiddish. The only prisoners that I knew who didn't speak Yiddish were the Dutch and Greek Jews. From Belgium, there were some Jews who came from Polish families who had immigrated there, and the same was the case from France, and those people did speak Yiddish.

Glaser: When you said that it was part of survival for you to learn Yiddish, how did you mean that?

Lowenberg: Because what language was there to speak? All the Jews from the Balkans, with the exception of the Jews from Salonika, spoke Yiddish. But the universal language among the Jews was Yiddish.

Glaser: I see. How did you cope with the arbitrariness of the camp life, when you never knew what the next day would bring or what an order might mean?

Lowenberg: I don't know how I coped with it. I know that you followed orders and you kept a low profile, and you kept yourself as clean as possible. You were always in a state of shock and

fear. There was always the fear of not making it to the next day, and the fear and the constant hunger, and seeing the beatings and the killings around you. So there was a fear instilled in us that was overwhelming, and everything was so intimidating that you just followed.

Glaser: I could imagine that you would not know, if prisoners were asked to do a certain task, should you go along with that group or should you not go along, because you wouldn't know the end result.

Lowenberg: No, you had no idea. But also, you always had somebody in charge of you. Not individually, but every fifty or 100 people had somebody in charge, a kapo, which was like a foreman. There was no need for you to make decisions. They were all made for you because you were told when to get up, and you were told when to eat, and you were told when to march, and you were told when to work and told when to sleep. And told when to stand in line at the parade ground to be inspected and to stand there for hours and sometimes days.

### Kapos

Glaser: What was your relationship to the kapo? Kapo was a fellow Jewish prisoner, was he not?

Lowenberg: Not. Most of the kapos were Germans or Eastern European non-Jews, Ukrainians, Croatians, Lithuanians. The kapos were also prisoners, and there were some Jewish kapos, but not too many. The majority of the kapos, especially in Birkenau, were all German federal prisoners. They came out of the German federal prisons. They were murderers, they were gangsters, they were lifetime prisoners, they were homosexuals. The head of the barracks was a kapo, barrack elderly. Every 100 prisoners had a kapo.

Then there were some who were not Germans but also prisoners of the Germans. They wore the same striped uniforms as we did, but they had a band on their arm. They had a different identification on their jacket. We had the star, with the numbers, but others had different color triangles. The gypsies had black, the homosexuals had pink. Political prisoners had red triangles, and the Jews had a yellow star of David. So all were identified.

But the kapos, some of them were very bad, and even some Jewish kapos weren't good. That's why they were kapos. The kapos got more food. They got double the food we got plus what they could steal from us.

## VI LIBERATION, 1945

Return to Borculo

Glaser: When you were liberated, what did you do then?

Lowenberg: I was liberated in Dachau. There were quite a few Dutch political prisoners there, very few Jews. I don't know how many, it was all so overwhelming. I hooked up with them immediately because rumor had it that we would be picked up by the Dutch Red Cross.

Glaser: What did you mean that they would be picked up?

Lowenberg: The Dutch Red Cross picked up the Dutch prisoners very early, long before others were picked up. As a matter of fact, Prince Bernhard was there to accompany the convoy. He was the husband of the princess, Princess Juliana.

We went by trucks. We went from Dachau all the way back to Holland. I was the only one who went to the town I was brought up in--Borculo, Holland. I went to our house, there was somebody living there, and I went to our next-door neighbors. They took me in, Christian people. Like neighbors are in small towns, they are much closer, and they were very good to me.

I lived with them for a while, I would say six months. There were a few Jews who came back. There were remnants of Jewish families who came back out of forty-two. One was a single man whose entire family was wiped out. And one was an elderly couple whose children never came back. He was kind of the president of the remnants of the Jews. He was an officer of the synagogue before. And there was another couple who came back who had no children.

There weren't any whole families intact. I was the only one from my family who came back from the camps.

### Other Survivors

Lowenberg: Then, I found out that my mother's two brothers had survived in Westerbork. The mayor, who knew my family quite well, gave me a job to be a clerk in city hall.

I was called one day to be told, "Your grandmother is sitting in the middle of the town square." There was a Red Cross van and there was my grandmother, my mother's mother, who had lived with us. She was eighty-four years old and was in a daze. She was rescued and found in Theresienstadt. The Red Cross brought her back. I'm eighteen years old, there's my grandmother and I have no place for her.

This one couple who had been colleagues of my father said, "Look, we have our house back." They hardly knew my grandmother. They took my grandmother in.

Within a month or so, we found the three children of our Rabbi. Those three children were found in the north of Holland. They were hidden. The parents were killed in the camps. Two of the children the Christians gave up without any resistance. But one of the families wanted to convert the third child.

They were under ten years old. And this elderly couple took in these three children in addition to my grandmother. There was no place to go for these children. And that's how we survived. We took one of the classrooms of the school we had and made that into a synagogue. Our synagogue was burned; you see the picture there? [points to picture on the wall] That's the synagogue I was bar mitzvah in.

Glaser: That's a big synagogue.

Lowenberg: Oh, yes. Well, there were forty-two families. It was a beautiful synagogue, and it was burnt by the Nazis in '40. It's a warehouse now.

So we made a new synagogue. Somebody had hidden some Torahs at some farm house, we got some Torahs back. We had services. The lay people did the services. Every Friday night and Saturday, and the holidays. To have a minyan [it is



necessary to have ten men for religious services], they had to come from various parts of the area. There had been Jews in almost every town in Holland. Some towns had one or two, some had more.

### Work in Holland and Switzerland

Glaser: How long did you stay in that town?

Lowenberg: I stayed for one year and then I got myself a job in Utrecht, a larger city. I met some friends and I got a job as a salesman. That lasted for one year; I sold spices to the sausage factories. But it wasn't good for me. It was not what I wanted.

I ran into some people I knew who were in the oil business. They sold oil and chemicals to the paint industry. They were originally German Jews who had come to Holland and had built a very good business, two partners. They convinced me, since I spoke German, to go and represent them in Switzerland and Northern Italy.

I went to Switzerland, I spent three years there.

### Uncles Helped in Borculo

Glaser: Did you ever go back to Ochtrup?

Lowenberg: I went back to Ochtrup once in '45, to see if my parents and my sister had come back and my grandparents. I found out there was no one there. I just went for the day.

Glaser: But I think you told me that your two uncles had gone there.

Lowenberg: No, they came to Borculo. They came to Borculo after they got out of the camp. They had never lived there, but they came to Borculo because they had no place to go. They wouldn't go back to Germany. A Jewish house opened up for them which had been occupied by some Nazis.

They were cattle dealers. My father and mother had such a great reputation that the farmers decided that they had to help these men. They gave them two dozen head of cattle and said,

"Here, take them from us." They all got together and each contributed one or two. "Get yourself into business. When you make some money, then you can pay us back, no interest." Because they loved my parents that much. My parents were highly respected there. My uncles became very successful.

Glaser: Did you ever think of joining them in that enterprise?

Lowenberg: Never. I never wanted to be a cattle dealer. No, that was not for me. No. They became exporters to Israel. Every month or two they sent a shipload of cattle, breeding cattle, to Israel. They helped the Israeli cattle industry considerably. I'm talking after '48 and they lived until the late seventies.

Glaser: In the Holocaust Museum newsletter, there was a picture of you as a boy of fifteen. How was that preserved?

Lowenberg: I've forgotten now who had it. A neighbor I believe had the picture. I had a Jewish star on already, so it had to be taken in '40, '41.

## VII ACTIVITIES AS A SURVIVOR

San Francisco Jewish Community Relations' Committee of Remembrance

- Glaser: In this country, you've been involved in a lot of survival activities. You were chairman of the Committee of Remembrance of the JCRC.
- Lowenberg: I still am.
- Glaser: What does that committee do?
- Lowenberg: The first chairman was Erna Sparer.
- Glaser: Rabbi Sparer's wife?
- Lowenberg: Rabbi Sparer's wife. She was the first chairman, I think; I followed her.
- Glaser: Did that committee have anything to do with the Holocaust Memorial that's opposite the museum in Lincoln Park--the Palace of the Legion of Honor?
- Lowenberg: Yes. That committee was the organization who put it all together. We organized it, we raised the money, we brought others in. We needed a broader community support, so we brought in Rhoda Goldman who became the chairman. Cissie Swig got involved and some other people in the community. That was the committee also organized the annual Yom Ha Shoa event and still does, at Temple Emanu-El.

Unfortunately, the interest has kind of died down by the survivors; they are getting older. There's little interest, so we don't meet as often any more. But the subcommittee for Yom Ha Shoa still meets regularly.

Out of this committee came the Holocaust Education Committee and also the Holocaust Library and Research Center.

World Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, Jerusalem, 1981

- Glaser: You were also a coordinator of the World Gathering of the Jewish Holocaust Survivors that took place in Israel in June 15 to 18, 1981.
- Lowenberg: 1980 I think it was. Double check it; I thought it was '80.
- Glaser: I have an article that says planning was in 1980, and then the meeting itself was '81.<sup>1</sup>
- Lowenberg: I'll look it up tonight, but double check.
- Glaser: All right. How did that come about?
- Lowenberg: Well, I was not much involved at all until that particular time. Earl Raab called me one day. He was the head of the JCRC [Jewish Community Relations Council]. We had had an incident here in the Sunset with a bookstore. He said, "We have to do something.
- Glaser: That was firebombed, wasn't it?
- Lowenberg: Right.<sup>2</sup> And two Jews, the father was a survivor and his son, were arrested. Earl felt very strongly--Earl is very bright, and Earl decided that he had to organize the survivor community to give them some place where they can meet. He called me, he said, "You have to get involved." I hadn't been involved at all. I was working mostly within the Federation community.
- So I got involved at the request of Earl Raab. That's how this committee was started. Naomi Lauter was extremely helpful in that, too, because she worked for the JCRC.

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix.

<sup>2</sup>In March 1977, the National Socialist White Workers party opened the Rudolf Hess bookstore across the street from Congregation B'nai Emunah, which was founded in large part by German Jewish refugees. A few days after the bookstore opened, it was ransacked by a crowd. In turn the synagogue was vandalized, and the mob returned to burn the bookstore.

I knew Ernie Michel, a survivor of Auschwitz who worked in New York City with the UJA. A man by the name of Benjamin Meed in New York, who was from Warsaw, a survivor, had this idea. He had already brought some Jews together periodically in New York, survivors, and they came to me and asked me if I could help them to organize this event, a gathering of Holocaust survivors in Jerusalem.

Glaser: And you did, of course.

Lowenberg: The plan at that time was to have a one-time gathering. There was no thought at all of having a continuation or even an organization. It just was to marshal as many survivors as they could, bring them to Jerusalem, and have a celebration, a commemoration, whatever you want to call it.

They pulled it off, and I was part of that team. Ben Meed was the chairman, Ernie Michel was his co-chairman. I was one of the senior vice-presidents. We worked and we recruited, and we all ended up in Jerusalem. We had this huge march from the park right behind the Plaza Hotel, and we marched from there to the Western Wall. It was a very, very dramatic event. At the Wall they had a huge candle lighting and they had major speakers. Prime Minister Begin spoke. Of course Elie Wiesel spoke; he had already written his books.

#### Organization of American Survivors

Glaser: How did it grow from there?

Lowenberg: Out of that came the thought by Ben Meed to start an American organization. His plan was to make this a recognized institution, and he became the chairman. Sam Block of New York and I became each the senior vice-presidents, and still are.

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Lowenberg: The organization had an office in New York, Ben Meed was running it on a day-to-day basis, and is running it on a day-to-day basis even today.

Out of that particular group came the idea of doing what we did in Washington eventually, to build the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

What they did mainly is they organized after that about three or four more gatherings. I remember one in Philadelphia, one in New York, one in Washington, D.C. and one in Los Angeles. Out of this they established a register of Holocaust survivors in this country. Every Holocaust survivor has registered and given his background. Not an oral history, just the statistics: where they were, what camps they were in. It's similar to what one did for Yad Vashem in the registry there.

That particular registry has about, 80,000 names in it. We gave the registry to the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

Glaser: In 1985, you financially backed a mission to Paraguay to find Mengele.

Lowenberg: I did?

Glaser: Yes.

Lowenberg: I didn't get involved in the mission, though.

Glaser: No, but you financially backed it.

Lowenberg: Yes, I did.

Glaser: You don't feel you were terribly involved?

Lowenberg: No. I was asked by friends, to help them finance this.

#### Reunion of Westerbork Survivors

Glaser: In that same year, 1985, there was a reunion of Westerbork survivors in the United States.

Lowenberg: Yes.

Glaser: Did you attend that?

Lowenberg: No, I helped finance it but it was held in New York and there was a specific reason why I couldn't go in '85. Our son, David, was graduating.

Glaser: Do you know how many people showed up?

Lowenberg: Several hundred. It was at a resort in the Catskills.

## VIII HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

Appointed to Council by President Reagan, 1983

Glaser: Then in 1986, President Reagan appointed you to the Council of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Lowenberg: I was appointed in '83.

Glaser: In '83?

Lowenberg: In '86, I was appointed by President Reagan as the vice-chairman. Elie Weisel was the chairman. In '83, I was the first Jewish Republican appointed to the Holocaust Council.

Glaser: Are you saying your name was presented to President Reagan?

Lowenberg: Yes. Well, Reagan knew me because I traveled with him during his presidential campaign.

Glaser: Oh, is that right?

Lowenberg: Yes. I used to go to southern California, and I traveled with him to take him to congregations and to lodges, to present him. I liked him, I liked his sensitivity. I got involved in his campaign, and I locally spearheaded the campaign for President Reagan in the Jewish community.

Glaser: What was your function on the council?

Lowenberg: I was a council member first. There are fifty-five members to the council, it's non-sectarian, it's a broad section of America. The first council was appointed by President Carter, but he appointed only Democrats. That's why I say I was the first Republican appointment. There were five Congressman and

five Senators. The president of the Senate and the speaker of the House each appoint five members to the council.

One of the members of the council from San Francisco was Rabbi Joe Asher. But he was not reappointed when his term was up. Elie Wiesel, by the way, was the first chairman, and he was reappointed by President Reagan. Then in '84, when the term of the then vice-chairman was up, President Reagan appointed me vice-chairman of the council under Elie Wiesel.

When Elie got the Nobel Peace Prize in '86, he called me and he said, "I want you to take over the council, I'm going on a sabbatical." I wasn't prepared to do all this. He said, "I'll come back in six months or a year and you run the council in the meantime."

Glaser: What was your response?

Lowenberg: We already had gotten to the point of planning a museum. He couldn't get it off the ground. So when Elie called me, I said, "I'll let you know. I need a few days to think about it."

I did think about it. I decided this was going to be a very unpleasant situation because I would not accept it. I didn't want to get involved in the power politics with Elie and his clique around him. I decided to resign.

So I wrote a letter to the president and I resigned. The personnel office called me. I knew some of them. They asked me not to do it but I said, "No, I think I'm going to resign." They asked me to think about it for a week, which I promised and did.

During that week, there was a council meeting that I did not attend because I had resigned at that meeting. Elie resigned from the council as chairman at the end of the meeting, which was an absolute shock to everyone there. Alfred Gottschalk, the president of the Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati, became the acting chairman for a short period of time.

When Elie resigned, the White House called me and offered me the chairmanship of the council. I said, "I can't take that because if I take the chairmanship I have to move to Washington or spend at least two weeks a month or more to do that. It's an awesome and most important job. I cannot accept that." The White House understood it finally, and they asked me to please stay on the council, not to resign. I did that.



Then we had hired a new executive; I had interviewed him with others. His name was David Weinstein. He came from Spertus College in Chicago. A terrific man, a great fundraiser. We got to know each other quite well. Mrs. Lynne Meyerhoff from Baltimore was quite interested in the council. She and her husband were contemplating a major gift to the council.

I knew her because in 1981 we had met and were charter members of the Republican Jewish organization called the Jewish Coalition. I got to know her well. The coalition was chaired by Max Fisher.

### Council Vice-Chairman, 1986-1993

Glaser: What happened then?

Lowenberg: David Weinstein and I convinced Harvey Meyerhoff, Lynn's husband, to take the chairmanship. She died in 1988-1989. He said, "I will take the chairmanship if Bill Lowenberg comes back as vice-chairman." So we arranged with the White House that I would rescind my resignation, and he would be appointed as chairman by the president, and I would be staying on as vice-chairman.

That turned out to be a very good team. He and I became fast and very good friends. He's a wonderful man.

Under his chairmanship we built the museum. It was a very difficult job because no one believed we could pull it off. The government gave us the land. We hired Jim Freed, a senior partner of I. M. Pei, as the lead architect. We raised over \$200 million to build the museum.

Glaser: Is that the chief function of the council, to raise the money?

Lowenberg: The chief function of the council is two-fold. Number one, to commemorate each year the Holocaust, on Yom Ha Shoa, which we do in the rotunda of the Capitol. And number two, to build this museum. Incidentally, the only organization who can meet in the rotunda of the Capitol is the Holocaust Council. It's a major event.

We built the museum and we opened on April 22, 1993. We're in the federal budget, and the government is giving us this year \$20 million. We are funded by the government,

similar with the Smithsonian and the Corcoran Gallery and the Kennedy Center.

And then, Bud Meyerhoff and I were fired by President Clinton because of politics, politics by Jewish Democrats who couldn't stand that two Republicans were chairman and vice-chairman of the council. It was orchestrated by Sara Ehrman and Senator Frank Lautenberg, because they wanted to have their own Democrats in there.

Glaser: What is Sara Ehrman's position?

Lowenberg: I don't know. She has known me for twenty years. She used to work for AIPAC [American Israel Public Affairs Committee], now she works for the Democratic party. Sara Ehrman is a good friend of Hillary Clinton.

I was fired on the telephone one morning, on April the first. The phone call lasted about twenty seconds, and it said, "Mr. Lowenberg, this is the White House calling to tell you that you will be replaced on May 1. Thank you very much, goodbye." I never got a letter until months later.

Glaser: You must have felt uncomfortable going to the opening ceremonies.

Lowenberg: Yes.

Meyerhoff gave an enormous amount of time. I worked an average of three hours a day on this project for ten years, but Meyerhoff did even more. He spent one or two days a week in Washington. To do that to him was arrogant and insensitive.

#### Reaction to Statement Regarding Money Raised for Museum

Glaser: What do you say to those who say that the money for the memorial museum should have been used in different ways? I want to quote Letty Cotten Pogrebin from her book, Deborah, Golda, and Me. She said, "I would have preferred to see the money that Jews have raised to commemorate death to be used to enhance life. Imagine what \$150 million might have done to help resettle Soviet Jews, rescue more Ethiopian Jews, improve Jewish education for young people. In the wider society, it could have honored the 6 million by alleviating 6 million children's hunger and poverty. In the name of each of our dead, we could be keeping someone else alive. Instead, we are

encasing the Nazi horror in concrete, building a monument to their madness as much as to our survival. It makes no sense."

Lowenberg: Who is this person?

Glaser: She's a Jewish woman. The subtitle of her book is "Being Jewish and Female in America."

Lowenberg: She doesn't know anything about Jewishness or Jewish survival.

Glaser: Oh, she's very, very Jewish and knowledgeable.

Lowenberg: But I beg to argue with you on this. Anyone who would say this and put this in print has absolutely no knowledge of the Holocaust, has no knowledge about what happened in Europe, and has no feeling of what this is all about.

Glaser: But she does know, and she talks about losing relatives.

Lowenberg: Well, I would like to meet her; I never heard that name before. The evidence is that she is proven wrong already. The lines at the museum today are enormous since it opened April 22. We cannot handle the crowds, right now. People can't get in for months. The lines are around the building.

I know that people will say that, but the fact remains that there has not been a single negative report or newspaper article about this museum, at all. They are all positive. We were covered all over the world. The attendance there is not all Jewish. The attendance is 63 percent non-Jewish. Foreign governments, heads of governments. They have been here from the crown prince of Denmark to Mrs. Mitterand, Mrs. Thatcher and many VIP's.

Eleanor, it is a matter of teaching. We raised this money from people who really felt strong about doing this. We have Christian money; 98 percent was Jewish money. Some major corporations gave us money. After this museum opened, there was no one who said, "Why do you spend the money, waste the money?"

There were a few, very few in Israel who wanted the money to go to Israel. But everyone who sees this museum, who knows the purpose of this museum applauds us--She doesn't know anything about revisionism and denials, because that is exactly what we tried to accomplish.

It is unacceptable to a survivor to hear that we should just forget it. If we don't put something permanent in place,

then the Holocaust, 6 million of our people, the worst tragedy ever happened to the Jewish people, is lost. That's what the Germans are doing. That's what the Vatican is doing.

### Vatican Complicity

Lowenberg: The only competition we had was from the Vatican. They went and bought whatever they could buy and moved it to Rome.

Glaser: Jewish artifacts?

Lowenberg: Yes, artifacts from the camps, artifacts from the Holocaust. I believe very strongly that part of the major revisionism and denial comes from the Vatican. They do not want to have this publicized, they don't want this to be remembered. There are individuals who feel very strong about it, but the Vatican per se, that's why they put the nuns in Auschwitz.

Glaser: But the pope got them to move away.

Lowenberg: Five hundred feet. That's the only deal our people could make there. But they had to be there in Auschwitz. In Sobibor, in Maidanek, they have monasteries. The Vatican likes nothing better than to make this a forgotten issue because they were accomplices to it. Pope Paul XII was an accomplice to the murder of 6 million Jews. He didn't do anything. And when the war was over, Operation Odessa took all those Nazis out of Germany. The camp guards, the high-ranking officers of the Nazi regime, they all went through the Vatican. Operation Odessa took them all out.

As long as the United States government is in existence, this museum will be here to remind the world. And that's why we're on federal land, and that's why we wanted federal subsidies for this. We wanted to be in the federal budget to make sure that the federal government has an obligation to perpetuate the memory.

## IX COMING TO AMERICA, 1949

Affidavit from San Francisco Relatives

Glaser: Well, let me ask you, how did you manage to come to the United States in 1949?

Lowenberg: I was in Switzerland and I wanted to get out. I called my uncle in San Francisco. My mother's brother lived here. He'd come in the thirties. He sent me an affidavit. I got a subsidy from HIAS [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society] for the boat trip. They paid a third of it.

Glaser: Do you remember the name of the boat?

Lowenberg: Yes, the Veendam. It took quite a while to get out because it was very difficult, there were very few boats going. But through a connection, I got on a boat. I landed in New York, December 1949. I spent a couple of weeks there with friends and family, and then to Philadelphia. I went to Chicago to see an old friend, then I came to San Francisco.

Glaser: What was your uncle's name?

Lowenberg: Emil Salomon. He lived on 21st Avenue and Geary. He got me a job right away with Hockwald Chemical; he had worked there during the war. It was a company that sold soaps and disinfectants and paper. Hockwald Chemical was a Jewish firm, and I worked for them for one month. It was not a very pleasant job because I didn't like the sales manager.

I left there, but I was told that on 1600 Scott Street was the Jewish Family Service Agency. It's called now the Jewish Family and Children's Service. They had an employment committee of local Jewish people, five or six of them, who used

to meet once a month, and listen to the presentation made by the staff to find jobs for refugees.

San Francisco Committee for Service to Emigres: Albert Alberton Realty Company

Lowenberg: One of the members of that committee--I remember Dan Koshland was on it (later on, of course, I got to know Dan Koshland quite well) and Mr. Lester Loeb and Al Karp and Erik Livingston.

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Lowenberg: And Albert Alberton. I was presented, by staff, and the person that I remember well from that organization was Paula Schonholtz, a staff member. She took me under her wing.

I was twenty-three years old. I had a phone call from Paula and she said, "Go to see Mr. Alberton." She gave me the address. "See if you can get a job from him. He wants to see you." I had to go to 157 Sutter Street, Alberton Realty. We talked and he gave me a job as a rent collector working in the management department, against the will of some of the people in the office because I couldn't speak English.

But he was a very good Jew, a good person. He hired me, and he taught me a lot. I was almost like a third son.

Glaser: How did you learn English?

Lowenberg: I went to school every night, to public school. I went to every high school in town. Every night it was a different class. I went to Mission High, I went to Commerce High, I went to Washington High, I went to Balboa High. I went to all these high schools, every night to a different school, they had English classes for newcomers. I also went to the Council of Jewish Women's English class.

Then I left my aunt and uncle and I had a basement apartment at 25th between Geary and Anza. My aunt had a friend who owned the building. I had a cot, and that's where I lived. I only had one suit.

I went to work for Alberton. I made \$100 a month. That was great. And then the first thing I did, I bought myself a radio. I remember the radio cost \$5. I listened not to music

but to speaking, people speaking on the radio, and I picked up from that. I used a mirror. Somebody told me to use a mirror, to speak into a mirror to get rid of my accent as much as possible.

I went to school four nights a week for about two years, for a long time. I went to school first to learn English, and then to learn real estate. That's how I learned real estate and that's how I got myself a license.





## X PRIVATE WILLIAM J. LOWENBERG

Drafted and Sent to Fort Ord, 1953

Lowenberg: Then from management I became a salesman in the firm. In 1953, I had a draft notice, and my boss said, "Why? You can't go in the army, that's ridiculous. You have had enough; you did enough already." So he went to see the draft lady. There was a lady in charge of the draft board. She recommended I join a unit in the Presidio, a reserve unit.

I went to the Presidio. I signed up. I went to about half a dozen meetings, I think once every other week at night. I don't know what happened but before I knew it I was in Fort Ord. I was really scared.

So I went through Fort Ord--sixteen weeks of basic training. On weekends I used to come back to San Francisco sometimes.

Fort Lewis, Washington

Lowenberg: After four months, I went to Fort Lewis. Then they wanted to send me to Germany and I said, "I will never go back to Germany." I went to see the company commander, I said, "I will not go to Germany." I told him why. Then he said, "Well, then you have to go to Korea." This was during the Korean War. I said, "Well, I'll go anywhere but I'm not going to Germany."

I don't know if they took pity on me or they arranged it, they said, "We can keep you here." This company commander was a very nice man, I'll never forget his name--Captain Ira Rutledge. He gave me a job in the supply room, and before I

knew it I was promoted to private first class, then I became a corporal and then a sergeant, a supply sergeant.

We were in a training division, so we trained troops on their way to Korea and to Germany. And then in addition to being a supply sergeant I also became an information NCO. I had to give a speech every Saturday morning to the troops about current events.

Glaser: It must have helped your Americanization.

Lowenberg: Helped me a lot.

In 1954, after a year in the army, I applied for citizenship, because when you're in the army, you can apply in four years rather than five years. I was naturalized in Tacoma, Washington. I got my American citizenship, which was a great day in my life. I was individually sworn in by a judge.

While I was in the army, it was so boring. I made \$70 a month. So I decided to get a job. You can't go to movies that often, they don't change that often. So I went to the officers' club and asked to see the manager of the officers' club and I said, "I would like a job here as a waiter." He said, "What is your background?" I said, "Well, I've been at--" I mentioned about four or five major European hotels. He was a Swede, I could hear on his accent. I mentioned four or five hotels that I'd been at, and he thought that I meant I'd worked there. I had been there for coffee. I probably lied a little, but I wanted that job because that paid \$90 a month.

So I became a waiter in the officers' club. I liked it very much because I could work, but I only could work to \$90 then I had to quit. But that wasn't good enough because I wanted to work full-time. So we used other names. I used a friend--I gave him a bit of the money and I worked his shift. He didn't want to work. So I worked every night, Saturday and Sunday, because I figured when I came out of the army I needed money. I had no one to go to.

So when I came out of the army, I had saved about \$3,600. I saved all my money. I bought every month a \$25 U.S. savings bond, which cost \$18.75. When I got out of the army, I had twenty-four bonds. It was just an additional saving in case I ever needed it. I kept those bonds until about 1985.

The army was good for me because I got to know America. I never knew the Americans until then.

Army Experiences

Glaser: But did the military environment bring back some bad memories from the camps?

Lowenberg: Some of it, yes. Especially at night in the barracks. But it was of course different. But, I had no choice. I was drafted and I wanted to stay in America. I loved it here. And then I also learned a lot about Americans. I met Americans who had never worn shoes. I met Americans who couldn't read or write-- Indians, people from the hills in Tennessee. Because I was a supply sergeant, they'd come downstairs to the supply room, and I had to read the letter for them from their mother. And I used to write a note back for them, "To Mama," to their mothers. Because they couldn't write. They went to school while they were in the army.

Glaser: And you were probably the first Jew that they ever knew.

Lowenberg: I remember very well, one of those boys was a black. And I say that for reasons. He said, "Can you write a letter for me to my mother?" I said, "Well, it's too late today but I'll do it." He said, "Well, tomorrow." I said, "No, tomorrow I can't do it, because tomorrow I have to go to--" and I used the word "church" because he wouldn't know what a temple or synagogue would mean.

He said, "Why are you going to church? Tomorrow is not Sunday." I said, "Yes, for me it's a holiday."

The next day was Yom Kippur and I was going to Seattle. He said, "Why are you doing that?" I said, "Because I am Jewish."

"Oh, my God!" I remember it like it was yesterday. "Oh, my God, I better be careful because you're a Jew!"

I said, "Leroy, did you ever meet a Jew before in your life?" He said, "No, I've never met a Jew before." I said, "Why do you say you have to be careful?" He said, "I don't know, that's what they say about you guys." See, those are the incidents in the army.

There were Indians who had never been off the reservation. There were the Poles from Chicago and the Jews from Brooklyn and the Irish from Boston and the Southerners. A whole group of Mormons came in one day, about 100 Mormons from Utah. So I got to know the American people, so this was a blessing in

disguise. I still correspond today with people from the army. I correspond with one in Wyoming, one in New York, and one who lives in the state of Washington. These are friendships I developed and they still remain today.

Then I was discharged, with honors of course, as a sergeant. I'm very proud of that. I'm very proud that I was part of the American army. In my recent episodes it has had a great meaning to me because our Holocaust Council has close connection with the army. The American army takes deep pride that they liberated the camps. So much so that when we go to the Pentagon there's never anything they won't do for us. They're wonderful.

Glaser: Obviously, you didn't play poker, if you came back with all your money.

Lowenberg: I never played poker. I saw those guys playing poker or shooting craps on the blankets, and I still don't know how to do it, to shoot craps. I don't like to gamble.

## XI RETURN TO CIVILIAN LIFE

### Back to Real Estate and Albert Alberton

Lowenberg: So then in '55, I came back to San Francisco. When I came back, Mr. Alberton, the man who hired me, took me right back in his office. We always stayed in touch.

Glaser: Was he like a father figure to you?

Lowenberg: Not so much a father--I called him always Mr. Alberton. I never called him by his first name. This man gave me this opportunity. He advised me properly, he criticized me properly, he pushed me properly, he taught me. And he had me to his house very often with his family. His wife was a wonderful person, who by the way grew up at Homewood Terrace.

So this family were very good to me. In 1957, he introduced me to my wife.

### Bachelorhood

Glaser: But before you get into that, I want to ask you about your social life while you were a bachelor. I understand you were a member of the Buffalo Club.

Lowenberg: Oh, we had a wonderful time.

Glaser: "The last of the herd."

Lowenberg: "The last of the herd" how do you know that?

Glaser: [laughter] Your friend Art Zimmerman told me.

Lowenberg: Oh, yes. Well, in 1955 after I was discharged from the army I met Hillard Lerner because I had sold his mother's house. We became friends. He was an orthodontist here and very, very bright. We are still close friends.

He knew other people. One day he threw a dinner party. He invited twelve people, all single fellows. He said, "We ought to start an eating club," so we did.

So we had this club, "We're going to call it the Buffaloes."

I used to go to the Jewish Community Center most nights after I finished with the school. After '55, when I came back from the army, I moved to a boarding house on Washington Street which was run by a German Jewish woman, Mrs. Strauss, who had about five boarders. She was a great cook. We got two meals a day, and I remember it cost \$72 a month. I was only making \$100 per month. I went to the Jewish Community Center at California and Presidio. The membership was \$10 per year. I paid \$1 a month, that's how I paid it off. It was wonderful because I met a lot of people at the Center. People I still know today.

#### Marriage to Fern Ellis, 1957

Lowenberg: I met Fern through Mr. Alberton, my boss. They were family friends. One day he said, "I'd like you to meet this girl." I met Fern on a Saturday night, blind date, in April, and we got married on August 4, 1957.

Glaser: Tell me about Fern. What was her maiden name?

Lowenberg: Her maiden name was Ellis. She was born in Shanghai and brought up in Hong Kong. Her father was a Sephardic Jew. He was the export manager in Hong Kong for Crown Zellerbach. My wife's grandfather was also born in Hong Kong. The family came from Iraq in the middle of the 19th century to England. Their name was Elias. When the British acquired the crown colony the Ellis family moved to Hong Kong with the Sassoon family, they were merchants.

Glaser: Elias is a famous name in Hong Kong.

Lowenberg: Yes. That was my wife's family's name, Elias. They changed it to Ellis. My wife's great-grandfather (I think it had to be great-grandfather) was the official chemist for the crown in Hong Kong. That's why they were all born there. My father-in-law, Jack Ellis, worked for Crown Zellerbach because his uncle was the executive secretary to Isidore Zellerbach. His name was Albert Ellis. I never knew my father-in-law because he died in 1946.

My wife was raised by two aunts. They were in the Japanese prison camp in Hong Kong, not because they were Jews but because they were British. They all had British passports. One of their sisters and one brother died in that camp in Hong Kong; I've been to Hong Kong, I've seen where the camp was.

They came to this country after the war. Their brother lived here then--my father-in-law--so he brought his sisters here. They lived in the same building where Mr. Alberton lived. My wife went to Lowell High School and graduated from Stanford University.

#### Children, David and Susan

Lowenberg: David was born in '58, Susan was born in 1960.

David went to Town School, Lick-Wilmerding High School, and Lowell High School, as well as to UC Davis and to medical school at UCLA. He is a very successful orthopedic surgeon. He is married to Jackie and they have two wonderful girls, Alison, six, and Daniella, four.

Susan went to Hamlin's, San Francisco University High School, and the University of Oregon. She manages the leasing and construction department of Lowenberg Corporation. She is also a member of the San Francisco Planning Commission, appointed by Major Jordan, and is very active in the Jewish world including the Jewish Community Federation and the Young Leadership Cabinet of UJA.

Glaser: I assume your wife stayed home with the children?

Lowenberg: Oh, yes. She also did a lot of volunteer work.





## XII MOVING UPWARD IN REAL ESTATE

### More About Working for Mr. Alberton

Glaser: Now tell me about your rise in the Alberton firm.

Lowenberg: Well, when I came out of the army in '55, I worked very hard. I worked seven days a week. I never had a vacation. The first vacation I ever had was when we got married, after seventeen years in this country.

In 1957 I was offered a job by Harry Shuster. I said, "Well, I can't do that." He took me to lunch and offered me a job. He knew more about me than I realized. I went to Mr. Alberton and I said, "This man wants me to go to work for him. What do I do?" He said, "You can't leave here. You're a partner." I said, "I'm not a partner." He said, "Yes, you're a partner." I said, "Since when?" He said, "Since now." Mr. Alberton made me a partner in 1957.

I said, "I don't have any money to buy the partnership." He said, "Well, here's what we'll do." He said, "We'll make you a partner starting last January, so you can take the distribution from the profits and pay me. And you can buy my half out over four years. Every year you buy a quarter of my half." That's how I paid him.

So I bought the first quarter, and I bought the second quarter, and then Mr. Alberton died, in 1959; he was in his middle seventies. So I was a partner. It ended up that I had 37.5 percent of the company I had bought. The other partner, Milton Mack, was very good to me. He was a wonderful man.

Firm Sold, in Business for Himself##

Lowenberg: Milton was twelve years older than I. He was a very good friend to me, and he was very helpful to me, and we got along extremely well.

In '68, we sold Alberton Realty to Hayman Homes. Milton retired and went on his own. We kept our assets together for four more years.

Then Milton died shortly after we liquidated our assets. He had a heart attack. I stayed with Hayman Homes, for short of a year. That was by agreement.

I opened my own company and moved to 44 Montgomery in 1969. I've been here ever since.

Glaser: When you went on your own, what kind of real estate did you handle?

Lowenberg: When I went in business by myself in 1969, I decided I wanted to do industrial real estate. I had learned the apartment house market and commercial at Alberton. I was very intrigued by the industrial business.

Glaser: So you do warehouses and industrial parks?

Lowenberg: Yes, and commercial buildings, retail stores.

Glaser: I understand that you are in construction in Salt Lake City.

Lowenberg: Yes, I did. We don't do any construction now in Salt Lake. I went to Salt Lake City in the middle seventies.

**XIII EARLY COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

[Interview 3: July 20, 1993]##

Men's Club of Temple Emanu-El

Glaser: When you started to become active in the Jewish community, what was it like?

Lowenberg: What was it like? Well, the Jewish community was very supportive of me. My activities started originally at Temple Emanu-El with the help of Louis Freehof, who was then the executive director. He became a great friend to me. Louis got me involved in the men's club, he got me involved in the usher program for the High Holy Days. It was my first exposure in the Jewish community.

Jewish Family Service Agency

Lowenberg: But parallel to that I also got involved in the Jewish Family and Children Service--they were the ones who found me a job.

Because of Albert Albertson's activities in the Jewish community--he was a board member of Temple Emanu-El, he was active in the Federation--he got me involved. He encouraged me.

Then I became a member of the Jewish Community Center at California Street; later I became a member of the house council.

- Glaser: When you were active with the Jewish Family Service and were on the employment committee, what did you do?
- Lowenberg: Well, we listened to the presentations of refugees, just like me, who came to this city to find jobs. I don't recall much detail but I remember being involved.
- Glaser: Did the members of that committee serve as mentors to you?
- Lowenberg: Indeed, Mr. Alberton definitely was a mentor to me, yes. Albert Alberton definitely was more than a mentor. But the others were people who befriended me by virtue of giving me encouragement and making me feel very much at home in this community. They were among the leaders of the Jewish community in San Francisco.
- Glaser: Did you see instances of anti-Zionism in the Jewish community in those early years?
- Lowenberg: No, I didn't see that at all.

#### Federation Committee Activities

##### Fundraising

- Glaser: I want to ask you now about fundraising and your efforts in that field. You've been involved in fundraising from your earliest Federation activities. You were chairman of the real estate division, vice chairman of the business and professional division, vice chairman of the capital funds campaign, you were chairman of the community division of the campaign, and then after being chairman of the annual campaign itself in 1977, you were on the cash collection committee of the campaign in 1978.
- Lowenberg: I'm still doing it.
- Glaser: And Ernie Weiner says that you are a superb fundraiser. I want to ask you, what is the best method of fundraising?
- Lowenberg: The best method of fundraising is to make people understand that they are not an island by themselves, that we as Jews and as human beings have a responsibility to share to the best of our ability with our fellow Jews and with other people.

In the Torah, and in our religion, Tzedakah and the caring about other people is very, very important.

In addition, my family, going back to my grandparents and my parents, I knew that this was a matter of policy and a matter of life to them. To take care of people. To take care of poor people and to take care of people around them and to take care of people in need. It isn't a matter of obligation alone; it's a matter of decency, a matter of how you were brought up. I was brought up in that milieu and it always stays with me. And I know it stays with my children now; I can see that.

Glaser: Do you believe in open solicitation? Aside from the Business and Professional Division, which I understand does that, in general, do you think people should be asked to declare their pledges publicly?

Lowenberg: It was done and it is done in certain communities. It was done here for a short period of time; I know Bonds did it for a long time. It depends on who the person is who does it, number one. But number two, I also believe that people shy away from that in general. I think that Tzedakah giving is not a matter of publicity. I know it's written somewhere in the Tenach that the best charity, the best Tzedakah, comes anonymous. So people should not be praised; should be respected, but not praised, if they do their share as a human being. To announce gifts publicly to me is very insulting. I abhor that.

Glaser: In all of these committees and groups in which you did fundraising, did you make any changes, particularly when you were chairman?

Lowenberg: In the community as such? In the system?

Glaser: In the Federation committees.

Lowenberg: I don't know. I don't have any specific reasons, vivid memories of any specific changes. I think some changes are made by anybody who is in a leadership position.

#### Setting an Example

Lowenberg: I do believe my being a survivor of the camps has set a bit of an example. It sets some example to the Jewish

community, in particular, of showing responsibility to remember what happened to our people.

Maybe had they known in the thirties and forties that so many Jews, 6 million of our people, were killed; had they known the tragedy and what was ultimately the end result, they would have reacted differently. Inasmuch as they didn't have as much political power as the Jews have today--we are more organized, and we have better leadership. If they had to do it over again, they would act differently. I think I am to some extent a reminder to them. And as sad as it may be, as a symbol of Jewish tragedy or Jewish loss of life, it does create something when people listen to me.

In the past, yes, my activities, I hope, set an example. I know they did to some people. I feel that Jewish survival depends on Jews. Since I was able to tell our people what happened to our Jews in the thirties and forties, may have turned on some people. It may have moved people to think of the necessity of supporting Jewish institutions and, more so, to support Israel. I believe deep down it could have been the watermark of my existence here, my presence in the community.

I sometimes resent that people say, "Well, yeah, because you were in the camps, you should do it, and you should know it, and you should--After all, why shouldn't you do it?" I resent that because after all I'm just another Jew. But I always feel bad when people say, "Well, for you, it's different." I take this as an insult rather than as a compliment. It has been said to me by people who should know better.

Glaser: Really?

Lowenberg: Oh, yes. That bothers me a great deal. I say, "Look, you've got to do this. This is Israel. There are our institutions, this is our Jewish Home, this is our Bureau of Jewish Education," et cetera. And then I get answers from some of my coreligionists, "Well, for you it's different, you are a survivor." That, to me, is insulting.

#### Study of Jewish Philanthropy

Glaser: Last year, in 1992, there was a study sponsored by the United Jewish Appeal on trends in the American Jewish

philanthropy. It was done by Gary Tobin. The study found that Jewish federations are often seen as "consistently creating a crisis in order to raise money," and it found resentment regarding strong-arm tactics used to raise money. Is your Federation guilty of this?

Lowenberg: I don't think any federation is guilty of that. When people say this, this is a cop-out. Now, if you bring this into focus of what crisis they are talking about, the crisis of the war of 1956 or the war of 1967 in Israel or '73--this was a created crisis to raise money? That's terrible. Is it a crisis? Do we create a crisis when we have saved in the last three, four years 500,000 Russian Jews and almost 20,000 Ethiopian Jews, and this last week we brought about 300 Yemenite Jews to Israel? I mean, if this is creating a crisis in the minds of some people, then they don't know what Tzedakah is all about and what Jewish survival is all about.

If people believe that, then they don't understand what we are doing. We have to rebuild a Jewish world. That's not a crisis. Yes, we are creating a crisis right now; we're building a new wing at the Jewish home. Is that a crisis? But if we don't, the opposite is that people can't have a decent place to end up the last years of their life. To me those are excuses uncalled for.

#### Social Planning and Budgeting Committee

Glaser: For many years, starting in 1970, you were a member of the social planning and budgeting committee. How does that committee function?

Lowenberg: Well, it basically starts with knowing how much money is available to distribute within the community during the ensuing year. Then, it creates priorities of needs within the community based on the available sums of money. I don't know much about it now, I haven't been on it for a number of years, but it also used to be kind of an oversight committee.

The Federation is the community. They should have some say in how the institutions function and how they use their funds. I'm not saying control; I am in favor of the independence of the institutions. I think that the least

that the Federation can ask for audited statements and demand audited statements of their expenditures.

Because if there's no control, then we have relinquished the community's right to know. There has to be a line of communication and responsibility. When you asked me, what does this committee do, it does the proper job, but it should go a bit further. Not to control, but certainly some more fiscal responsibility.

Glaser: Well, these agencies are autonomous. Do they then feel that they do not have to be accountable?

Lowenberg: They are autonomous institutions. But that doesn't mean that we don't have the obligation--the Federation--to know that its funds are spent properly and spent on the basis of what they are given for. People give money to the Federation expecting that the Federation knows that the monies are spent for the purpose they are solicited for.

#### Jewish Vocational Service

Glaser: The committee in 1972 recommended the establishment of the Jewish Vocational Service, and it became a constituent agency in 1975. You told me in our preliminary interview that you felt that the agency should be part of the Jewish Family and Children Service. Did you feel this way in part because you were on the employment committee of the Jewish Family Service?

Lowenberg: No. The only reason that that relates is because I knew a little bit about the employment committee of the Jewish Family and Children Service.

The reason that I was against the establishment of another institution, I felt that this was duplication. Now, let me say that the Jewish Vocational Service does an excellent, excellent job. I've had personal experience with them. They are very good; it's no criticism. What I said at that time was why do we have to establish another bureaucracy of institution while we have an infrastructure, not as broad as yet, but we have an infrastructure at 1600 Scott Street at the Jewish Family and Children Service? It should be there. It's a duplication. That's why I was against it.



And I feel the same today, inasmuch as I really respect that institution. It's a good institution today, the JVS, but it should be one organization.

### Satisfaction from Involvement

Glaser: You've been on so many committees, and chairman of quite a few. To name just a few, you were chairman of the constituent agencies division; you were on the allocations review committee for capital funds; personnel committee; cash collection committee; project renewal committee; and various ad-hoc committee. I wonder, which of all of your committee assignments gave you the most satisfaction and pleasure?

Lowenberg: And frustrations. [laughter] Well, I don't know which gave me the most. I enjoyed and felt very honored to be the chairman of the campaign. Of course, the biggest accomplishment in those days was for me to become president of the Federation. That to me was a deep honor especially because of my background. I wasn't born here; I'd only lived in San Francisco since 1950.

It was certainly not a matter of being a large contributor vis-a-vis some of the more established families who, of course, were the backbone of the Federation. But my gifts were always, frankly, more than I could afford. It was always a strain on me. But that's secondary. It was done with full intention and knowledge on my own. It worked out well because I paid my pledges.

I don't know what was the most exciting. I would have to think about it for a while. They all had deep importance because when I work on something and I'm involved, I get involved sometimes too deep, I take it too serious. The presidency was an enormous accomplishment for me. The chairmanship of the campaign was probably the second highest. And then, of course, the presidency of the Jewish Home was wonderful for me. I love the home because of the accomplishments and the atmosphere it created for our old people in the community.

The presidency of the Bureau of Jewish Education was a very good job, was very difficult because during my time some transitions were made. I forced some transitions of necessity. And then, of course, a very important assignment and honor was given when I became a member of the board of governors of the Jewish Agency. I was the first San Franciscan, the first from northern California. Only three at that time were appointed from California: I in San Francisco and two in Los Angeles. So this was an enormous appointment for me. I took it seriously because I went to Israel at least three times a year for seven years.

Glaser: We'll go into detail later on these various things.

## XIV JEWISH HOME FOR THE AGED, PRESIDENT, 1970-1971

Federation Internship Program

Glaser: I want to talk to you now in detail about the Jewish Home for the Aged. What made you interested in that agency?

Lowenberg: Good question. The Federation started an internship program. I was on the first or second grouping of interns; it had to be in the fifties, late fifties. I think Doug Heller was with me on that, and Don Pritzker, alav ha-shalom [of blessed memory].

The intern had to pick two institutions. You sat in those board meetings each month to learn the institution. It was a wonderful idea. I picked and was given the Jewish Home and the Bureau of Jewish Education.

The Jewish Home taught me a great deal, and I became extremely attached to the Home. And as you know I became president, I still go there once a week. Every Thursday afternoon I am at the Home, supervising the construction of the new wing.

I'm still involved at the Bureau of Jewish Education, in a different way. We'll get to that.

Board Member and President

Glaser: What were the problems of the Home while you were on the board and then while you were president?

Lowenberg: No major problems as far as the continuity of the Home. They had to find a new executive. The executive they had at that time was not very popular. Then they found Sidney Friedman, who became one of the most outstanding executives in this country. There's no question about it. He became a great friend to me; his devotion to the senior citizens, to our people, to the Home, and to the community, was outstanding. He was the best executive in our community. I say that without reservation.

Glaser: Did you have any staffing problems and employment problems?

Lowenberg: Never. Sidney had the best of control. There were the inherent problems of running a large institution like that. But he was very good. I was the chairman of the first expansion. There was one expansion in the early forties. That was just for a dining room. But the first expansion was a new wing. I got deeply involved in that when we built a new building--the fundraising of it, but mostly the supervision and the construction and the marshalling of all the forces.

Glaser: I think you had a capital funds drive.

Lowenberg: Yes, we had a capital funds drive, and the Home built a new five-story building.

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Lowenberg: And now we're building the final building on the land. That will be the last building we can build there, by virtue of the size of the land.

But the problems of the Home were always to maintain a good profile in the community. They have an outstanding auxiliary, and they always had a great working board, which I admired. Of all the boards I've been on, the Jewish Home has probably the best working board of any institution.

That was mainly due to Sidney Friedman.

#### Other Members of the Board

Glaser: Who were some of the members of the board when you were president?

Lowenberg: Oh, God. There were men I really liked very much. There was Moe Bernstein, Ben Blumenthal, Harold Dobbs. There was in those days Murray Knox, Toby Magner, Sam Fendel, and Howard Friedman--I've got to think now. So many old friendships I made in the community were from the Jewish Home. Obviously, there are more names, I hope nobody gets insulted if I didn't mention them.

Howard Friedman was a wonderful president of the Home. He was president before me. I was one of his vice-presidents. Oh, and Stuart Greenberg, Jeanette Heller (Doug Heller's mother), and Alfrieda Goldmeier.

### Keeping the Home Kosher

Glaser: What were some of the policies established by the board when you were the president?

Lowenberg: Oh, I don't know in particular. I remember one particular episode, there was a move on to do away with kosher. I felt extremely strong about the fact that that should never happen, for two reasons. One reason is that there were people who still ate kosher.

Second, and more importantly, that this is a Jewish Home, and we wanted it to stay a Jewish Home. There are elements in the general community who feel, since we are getting federal and state funds, that we should be open to everybody. But we have that protection, and I always felt very strong, and Sidney Friedman agreed with me, that if we can claim that we are a Jewish Home, a kosher Jewish Home, that that was enough protection to keep it a Jewish Home, a kosher home. That, to me, was the only catalyst to maintain it as a fully Jewish Home.

Glaser: Is it still kosher?

Lowenberg: It's still kosher.



## XV BUREAU OF JEWISH EDUCATION, PRESIDENT, 1973-1976

Representing the Bureau on Federation Board, 1969

Glaser: Now, I would like to talk to you about the Bureau of Jewish Education. The Federation minutes show that in 1969 you were on the board representing the bureau. But you didn't become president of that agency until 1973, which I find unusual because I would have thought that the president of an agency would represent that organization on the Federation board.

Lowenberg: That came later. There was a period of time that the president of the beneficiary or constituent agency appointed a delegate to the Federation board.

But I know that created some conflicts. I think during my administration, or when I was an officer, we changed it to the presidents only.

And we did it for another reason: I remember there were discussions that it was important to the Federation board, to the Federation leadership, that the presidents of these beneficiary agencies should know what the Federation was all about. Remember that in the early days of this community, the Federation was not as strong as it is today.

There was a move on where we wanted to invigorate the community more and get the Federation's annual campaigns increased. I think when I was chairman of the campaign we had the largest campaign, \$10 million. Today, obviously, it's much bigger every year.

So it was important that we had the leadership of the institutions with us. That's why we wanted presidents to be sitting on that board.

Jewish Day Schools

Glaser: When you were on the social planning and budgeting committee in the 1970s, the Federation started to look at Jewish day schools. The committee was directed by the Federation to confer with the Bureau of Jewish Education and establish a policy for allocations to Jewish day schools. And also, to look at the direction that the community was going, because there was a question: did the community wish to have Jewish education for its children, or was this a way of getting better education because of dissatisfaction with public schools? And then, as a result of this committee's action, the Federation committed itself to the support of Jewish day schools. You must have been very active in this.

Lowenberg: In the middle of it.

Glaser: I'm sure so.

Lowenberg: Let me tell you: in those days, and especially the leadership of the community, really didn't have the commitment to Jewish education to the depth we have today. They expected this to be done by the congregations. Whatever that meant. Yes, there were Jewish day schools in other parts of the country, on the East Coast more so, of course. But San Francisco, being a Reform community to a great extent, didn't see the necessity of it--it wasn't that they had any feeling for it one way or another. In all fairness to them, the reason that they had ambivalence about it was as much because of the nature of the way it was brought to them rather than the reason why we should have it.

Now, yes, there were statements made that there were some people who thought that they wanted to use it because they didn't like the public school system. That was not the important element. The overriding factor was the pull for Jewish day schools because we felt that education of our children was so poor, Jewish-wise, so poor. And there were many newcomers in the community who had come here from other parts of the country who wanted Jewish education, and we saw a trend nationally. You couldn't hold back what was a trend nationally to internationally. There were many discussions.

The unfortunate part was that there was almost a dichotomy, because there was a radical element who wanted to shove this down the community's throat without having open



and honest dialogue. It was sometimes very, very difficult, almost embarrassing.

Glaser: We'll go into that.

Lowenberg: Deep in their hearts, they all believed in Jewish education, but they felt that the demand was not big enough, that it was a subterfuge. So there were many elements.

The bottom line is that we did get a Jewish day school: I'm talking about the Hebrew Academy. What set us back more than anything else (this hasn't been said) it's that if only the Hebrew Academy had been more open, meaning that they would take in children of mixed marriages. This was very hard to take for some of our community members, great Jews, who were most generous to the community, were great supporters of Israel and the congregations--the Hebrew Academy wouldn't take their children or grandchildren in.

That, to me, was destructive rather than helpful, and that's why Brandeis Hillel Day School was born, to find a middle path. Frances Susnow started Brandeis; I used to work with her. Originally she came from City College [of San Francisco], and she came to see me. It goes back a long time, maybe in the middle or early sixties. She visited people like me and others to see how she could establish a school.

She was helped by some people in the community. She had space that was given to her at Homewood Terrace. But she was a committed person who thought it was important that we had a Jewish day school. She didn't have enough support. There was some jealousy and some misunderstanding. She was frustrated, very frustrated, but I always thought that she had Jewish education at heart.

#### Effectiveness of Jewish Day School Education

Glaser: How important are Jewish day schools to Jewish continuity, which is something that everybody is talking about nowadays?

Lowenberg: Jewish day schools are very important, except they are sometimes too exclusive. I happen to believe that the Sunday schools have done a terrible, terrible job with our children. I don't mind saying this. Were it not for summer camps, i.e. Camp Swig and Towanda and others in southern

California, and were it not for the confirmation classes going to Israel, our 50 percent intermarriage would be even worse. We had two children in Sunday school and were it not for Camp Swig, the confirmation classes' trips to Israel, and afterwards when we took them to Israel, our children would not be as Jewish oriented.

The parents can only do so much. Our synagogues have done a mediocre job, and I will tell you I hear this very often. With all due respect to the Rabbis, their priority has never been Jewish education. To many of the Jewish parents, this was their way of educating their children in the Jewish life, and it failed.

#### Cost of Jewish Education and Designated Giving

Glaser: Is there a correlation between the money spent on Jewish day schools--now I'm not talking about synagogue schools but Jewish day schools--and a result in Jewish commitment?

Lowenberg: That's hard to say because I've never seen statistics. I would say that it's better than if there were none.

Glaser: What do you mean, better than if there were none?

Lowenberg: Well, if there were none, it could be worse, so at least we have some. I also feel that the follow-through has not been very good after they come out of those schools. That certainly is the case with the Sunday schools. It could be the case to some extent with the day schools. It could be the same situation. The follow-through has not been as good as I would like to see.

They're doing quite a bit more than they did in the seventies and eighties. When the children came back from Israel, for instance, from their confirmation class, there was no follow-up at all.

See, in college you have the opportunity to go to the Hillel Houses. They do as much as they possibly can, but they also have the money problems. At least Hillel is on most campuses, not all but most. So there's a place where they can go.

But going back to your question: have the day schools been responsible for making better Jews? Can't get worse,

can't get worse. So yes, it did some job. I would love to see some statistics; I've asked many times.

I would like to see the statistics of all the Russian children that the community has spent a great deal of money on. Where are they today, what schools are they at, are they members of congregations, are they members of the Jewish world, are they supporting Israel, are they married in the Jewish faith?

Maybe we should recommend to have a study done. That would certainly give us some ideas whether we are wrong or right.

Glaser: Now, if there is that much money going to support Jewish day schools and Jewish education, does this mean that other agencies have suffered?

Lowenberg: Not necessarily, because there was a move on for a while, especially in San Francisco, and others too, that one of our thrusts during fundraising time was to talk about Jewish education. So now that the Bureau gets much, much more, over a million dollars--I don't know the exact number, but it's quite a bit more.

Glaser: Well, designated funds are discouraged by the Federation, aren't they?

Lowenberg: They were discouraged for years until this year. The last [Jewish Agency] board of governors meeting in Jerusalem, there is a move on of designating certain percentage of funds. It's complicated; I don't want to give you the details because it's not refined yet. But I can tell you that Karen Hayesod had designated funds for years, and their campaigns are disasters. They always have been, with the exception of Canada. But the Europeans, their designated funds go to institutions who have no connection with the Jewish Agency. They give it to Jewish institutions, but they designate a gift through the Jewish Agency.

Glaser: You've got that here in this city, where you have the--

Lowenberg: Yes. But you can't designate your gift here.

Glaser: Not to the Federation, but you can have separate fundraising from the Hebrew University and Shaare Zedek Hospital.

Lowenberg: That's right. The Federation could never control the separate fundraising by Hebrew University and Shaare Zedek, and rightfully so.

#### Hebrew Academy and Rabbi Pinchas Lipner

Glaser: I want to ask you now about the Hebrew Academy and Rabbi Pinkus Lipner. I think while you were president he was attending the Bureau's meetings, and you found it very disruptive.

Lowenberg: Oh, it was long before me. That goes back when Bob Lauter, Ernie Lilienthal, Henry Bernstein were president, long before me. I may have left one out. When Lipner first came to town, he disturbed a lot of the meetings because he demanded money. We didn't have the money. Then we helped him and we made agreements, "If we give you some money, will you stop picketing us?" or "Will you stop disturbing the meetings?"

I remember vividly there were two or three meetings which had to be stopped in the middle of the meeting because he would get up, he and his so-called friends, and they started screaming and hollering. The president had to end the meeting.

Those times were very disturbing; they created a lot of turmoil in the community.

#### **Proposed Merger with Brandeis School Rejected**

Lowenberg: I remember when we were at the height of some negotiations in this turmoil that we proposed the Hebrew Academy get bigger funding if they would merge with Brandeis, so we could have one good Jewish day school. And a high school would come out of that later. I was very, very much in favor of it, I worked very hard on it. So did some of my colleagues on the Federation board who felt like I did. But it was unilaterally rejected by Rabbi Lipner. Brandeis would have been delighted, and we even went as far as we could to have a two-track system--Reform and Orthodox.

Glaser: Secular?

Lowenberg: Secular. The reason for it, in our minds, was community, to have a better community, more unity, and economics. Because at that time the Hebrew Academy was on 25th Avenue in residences. They had a terrible building. They were fighting us for years. They wanted quarters, wanted money, and the community wasn't prepared yet.

We proposed the merger because Brandeis also needed quarters; they went finally to Brotherhood Way. But we felt very strong, the executive committee of the Federation and staff, that we should have and support one quality Jewish day school in San Francisco, where the Orthodox as well as the Reform and Conservative, could all join hands.

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Lowenberg: That was rejected by Rabbi Lipner.

#### Relationship with Federation

Glaser: Jesse Feldman, when he was president, made a statement that he thought Rabbi Lipner was out to destroy the Federation. Was this your opinion too?

Lowenberg: Well, I wouldn't go as far as saying destroying the Federation; I would rather say he would have loved to take over the Federation. You know, sometimes you'll say, "If I go down in flames, I'll take everything with me." No, but he was a most difficult member of this Jewish community. I don't know if anybody has told you this, but they picketed the Federation. They came into the Federation offices when we were on Bush Street and destroyed things, threw things out of the windows.

I remember going to the Concordia Club when the Bureau had a meeting there. There were pickets from members of the board of the Hebrew Academy in front of the Concordia Club.

They created too much turmoil. They claimed to be good Jews; I will give them the benefit of all of that. They want to educate their children Jewishly. So do we. But when you live within a community, you have to act within a community. It was too destructive at the time, it turned people off. It turned donors off. It was not necessary. You can sit down in good faith, without threats and fists, and negotiate.

I was very criticized when I recommended to the Federation board (I think when I was president): "Let's put Mrs. Lipner on the board to show our good faith."

Mrs. Lipner sat there for the two or three years, never opened her mouth, but was always critical behind our backs. It was tragic. We wanted them to become part of the community.

There was some criticism should an employee of a beneficiary agency be a member of the board of Federation. That was a conflict of interest.

I had to ask two people to leave the board. One person was with the JCRC [Jewish Community Relations Council], and one person was with the Hebrew Academy. The JCRC gracefully and with deep respect said, "Yes, we accept that," and resigned. We discussed this with each person individually and in person in the presence of our executive. The Hebrew Academy started a telephone campaign against me. I was called a Nazi, I was called a dictator.

This community has a heart of gold. The people are good Jews and good citizens. They were not prepared, couldn't accept, these radical tactics constantly.

#### Lawsuit Against Federation

- Glaser: The community must have been shocked when Rabbi Lipner instituted a lawsuit against the Federation in 1975.
- Lowenberg: All of this happened at the same time, yes. That lawsuit was just devastating, was terrible. Sanity prevailed with some of the people, especially Sam Ladar, who was a past president and our counsel.
- Glaser: The judge threw it out. I think he said, "Don't wash your dirty linen in public."
- Lowenberg: Exactly, you saw the record. It was appalling to us. It was appalling to me that one Jew sues another Jew on this issue--to sue the Federation.
- Glaser: But the Hebrew Academy now is a constituent member of the Federation.

Lowenberg: Always was. We did that very early. But it was never enough money. It was never enough. It always had to be more. We never had an audited statement from that institution. We've asked for it for years.





## XVI FEDERATION EXECUTIVES

Sanford M. Treguboff

Glaser: Sanford Treguboff was the executive when you first became active. His place was taken by Louis Weintraub in 1970, and then subsequently Brian Lurie. Would you talk about these three executives?

Lowenberg: Starting with Treguboff, I thought he was a great executive. He was stimulating, he knew the community extremely well. He was a bit isolated, but I liked him. We knew each other well. Treg was always supportive. He stimulated me. He gave me a lot of guidance.

Then Treg retired and I worked with Treg when he became the executive of Newhouse Foundation. I managed all the real estate assets for the Newhouse Foundation for a number of years. I disposed of some of the property for them. They had a lot of land, oil lands and lands in Kern County and I spent a lot of time on this, pro bono of course.

Louis Weintraub

Lowenberg: Then came Lou Weintraub, who was also a man I really liked. But Lou, I thought, didn't have the touch with everyone. With me he did; we were friends so I could talk to him freely. But Lou did not want anyone to question or interfere with his management style, and I think that got him in trouble sometimes.

His office was not an open door. Not with me so.

I'm not so convinced that the establishment was 100 percent supportive of him like they were with Treg.

Glaser: You were one of the San Francisco Seven that got his replacement.

Lowenberg: Yes. Are you familiar with the San Francisco Seven? That's a long megillah. The San Francisco Seven were orchestrated by Jess Feldman. Do you know who the San Francisco Seven were?

Glaser: Yes.<sup>1</sup>

Lowenberg: Okay. Since you know that--. Yes, I felt that we were at a standstill, that we had to have a change. It was never confrontational. Lou was not responsive to some of the lay leadership who really did the work in the trenches. We went on many missions to Israel together. He's a very good person. I think that Jess Feldman was very intimidated by him.

Glaser: But you had establishment people, like Mel Swig, who was one of the seven.

Lowenberg: Mel Swig yes, but not Franny Green, who was very hurt about it.

Glaser: Franny Green was very close to Lou Weintraub.

Lowenberg: Yes, and Franny was very hurt about it.

Glaser: I think it started during Mr. Feldman's presidency, and then--

Lowenberg: And then Franny became president. I think it was part of the recommendation that Franny as president and a friend of Lou should be kept out of this. It was done more out of respect and courtesy and diplomacy than to hurt her feelings. It was nothing against Franny because everybody loves Franny. She's an outstanding, wonderful person, great in every respect, she and her husband.

Glaser: And then Brian Lurie was brought in--

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<sup>1</sup>The "San Francisco Seven" were: Jerome I. Braun, Jesse Feldman, Richard N. Goldman, Douglas Heller, William J. Lowenberg, Laurence E. Myers, Melvin M. Swig.

Lowenberg: Weintraub was not fired because they had found Brian. They knew Brian because he had been at Temple Emanu-El as assistant rabbi. He didn't get along with the rabbi there. He and Joe Asher never got along.

I would say that Lou did it to himself. It was not vindictiveness by anyone.

Glaser: And then you worked with Brian Lurie.

Lowenberg: I worked with Brian Lurie very, very, close. I was a great supporter and admirer of him.

### Brian Lurie

[Interview 4: July 27, 1993]##

Glaser: At our last meeting, you were discussing the different executive directors of the Federation, and we stopped before you got to Brian Lurie. Let's pick up at that point.

Lowenberg: Okay.

Glaser: You were discussing how you worked with the different executives, what their style was.

Lowenberg: Indeed. Brian came to work for the Federation as an associate director. Lou Weintraub was the director. Brian was brought back from New York, where he was working in the UJA office.

Glaser: That was New York UJA? [United Jewish Appeal of Greater New York]

Lowenberg: Yes. I don't think that he and Weintraub got along too well. Same like he didn't get along too well with Joe Asher at Emanu-El, who was also his superior. Brian is a very strong person.

So he came to work, and I don't know the exact details, but it was during the presidency of Jesse Feldman that all this happened. You mentioned earlier about the San Francisco Seven. Jesse Feldman appointed a committee of people who he thought were in the leadership of the Federation to ask Lou to retire, and to make Brian the new

executive. That took some doing, and there were moments where it wasn't too pleasant I would say.

But there was a feeling that the time had come for Lou to retire. And Brian was picked to lead the Federation, bring it into new avenues. Lou Weintraub was not too happy with us. I'd known Lou for a long time; I felt bad for him but I could see the necessity that he should retire.

And then we had a new executive. I think that happened when we were on Bush Street.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Federation board minutes indicate its headquarters on 230 California Street was purchased in 1956. Subsequent moves were to the Mills Building in 1968, 220 Bush Street in 1973, and in 1984 the Federation held its last meeting in the 254 Sutter Street building before moving to its new headquarters building on Steuart Street.

## XVII FEDERATION HEADQUARTERS

### Sale of California Street Building

Lowenberg: We moved to Bush Street, because the building at 230 California Street was sold, unfortunately. It was bad advice, it was a mistake. It should have never been sold; it was sold when the market was very, very low. They would have made more had they held on to that building.

When we moved the Federation to 254 Sutter Street I was very involved in this. Hank Kaufman was managing the building on Sutter Street. I hired the people who did the remodeling of the offices. I also hired the architect.

### Construction of Steuart Street Building

Lowenberg: We moved from Sutter Street when we finished the new building. I was chairman of the building committee. And that started after Brian came to us. A lot of us felt that the Federation should own a building again. We were contemplating making an offer on another building that was subsequently bought by the Bay Area Crusade.

Brian was probably the most active fundraiser for the Federation building on Steuart Street. I was involved in the acquisition of the land.

There was a serious problem with the land. There was a turntable designated on that land for the Municipal Railway. I happened to know the man in charge at the city. I worked with him until we arranged that this planned turntable was moved from the land.

The reason I knew him, I took him on his first trip to Israel, one of our missions. That was his exposure to the local Jewish community. He was an engineer in the Municipal Railway.

Then we hired architects and builders. We built the building, which I supervised until I became president of the Federation. Then Ron Kaufman took over as chairman of the building committee. The building cost about \$7.2 million. That money was all raised. We have a beautiful building today.

The other plan for the building was to move all the Jewish institutions into one location, which we did, as many as we could get in the building. We moved the Bulletin in, we moved the American Jewish Congress in, the American Jewish Committee, the ADL [Anti-Defamation League], the Board of Rabbis, the Jewish Community Relations Council, and of course the Federation.

And we established the Jewish museum, because a few of the gifts were made specifically to pay for the building of a Jewish museum. I was on the museum founding board.

XVIII FEDERATION PRESIDENT, 1983-1984

Appointed to Jewish Agency Board of Governors

Glaser: To go back to Brian, when you were president your term was from 1983 to '84; how did you work with Brian?

Lowenberg: I worked very well with him. There was a national dialogue about the Jewish Agency, and there was pressure that the membership of the board of governors should be broadened. It was decided by the leaders of the Jewish Agency that I should become a member of the board of governors. At the same time I was appointed, the president of the Los Angeles Federation also became a member of the board of governors. They brought in seven new people.

That, of course, took a lot of my time. I had to go to Israel at least three times a year, and each trip was for two weeks. This had an impact on my business but also had a great impact on me personally. It was a very prestigious appointment, and I saw the activities and the makings of the State of Israel. I was deeply involved and I took it very seriously.

The problem created for me, was the pressure that I was put under by my San Francisco Federation. Brian had the idea that he could control me. I like to work from within and not attack from the outside. He and I had some very serious discussions at many times. His attacks on the Agency were severe. I'm not saying that they weren't all justified. Some of them were. I didn't believe that his way of doing it was the proper way. I believe that you work from within.

It took a long time to get to know the Jewish Agency. As a matter of fact, Brian told me, "It will take you five

years to get to understand the Agency." Well, it took close to three years, but it took a long time to see the workings. It's a mammoth organization with many arms. Obviously, most activities are in Israel. The activities in this country are mostly the fundraising aspect.

### Working with Brian Lurie

Lowenberg: Brian had long-range vision. I understood that fully. My problems with him were that he was dishonest with me because he tried to use me. When I made a deal with him to share information and to work together, he broke those agreements very often. He and I are not the friends we used to be, of which I am sad. I am sorry to say this, but as long as you asked me about our relationship, it's not what it used to be. When he came here first we were very good friends. I helped him in any way I could. He knows that.

But at the Jewish Agency he was instrumental indirectly that I did not get a chairmanship of a committee for the first three years. After finally proving myself with my colleagues, I became chairman of one of the most important committees. That was Amigor, the housing committee, which controlled at that time 65,000 apartments. I instituted a sales program. It became a money-making organization after I took it over, because we were able to go from being subvented by the Agency to contributing enough money to cover our expenses but we also gave an additional \$25 million a year to the Agency. Selling off assets and apartments to the tenants was beneficial to the Agency, and also beneficial to the people in the apartments, because they became the owners and that created a feeling of pride in ownership.

I changed the management of this department. I brought in young people, a new executive, and changed the bidding process and the relationship with the contractors, et cetera. So this agency started making money.

I could not communicate with Brian. He did not share with me the things he should have shared with me. Even though each member of the Agency board sits ad personam (in their own right). Even though I felt responsible for my community, I was not kept apprised of anything. These were to some extent jealousies. I also had my own principles. I



felt protective of my community and I felt protective of the Agency.

San Francisco was looked upon in those days as an outcast. And I had to wiggle between those issues, which made it difficult. Only because of the protection of my friends out there and my relationships I had created with members of the staff and the Agency board members did I get the credibility that I wanted and needed to run a major department. I was not helped by our executive here. It was most unpleasant for me at times, most embarrassing.

### Functions of the Jewish Agency

Glaser: In the minutes of 1984, you're quoted as saying, "We have every reason to be proud of the Jewish Agency and criticism is often unfounded and misguided." Does that mean that you were getting the criticism from your own Federation board?

Lowenberg: Well, not from the board. It was orchestrated mostly by Brian. There is no question that the Agency was archaic at points and was not responsive, was wasting money. Federations were looked on mostly as giving money and don't ask questions. I understand that fully.

We dealt with an infrastructure which was started long before the state; members were mostly of the World Zionist Organization. Federations were taken for granted, the rapport was not very good. The leadership to some extent was archaic. Max Fisher had enormous control, and still does for that matter.

But the bottom line was that some good work was being done, and to change it was very, very difficult. You dealt with the Israelis, the employees, the department heads who were political appointees. It was a most unusual situation, and to change it was extremely difficult.

When I became chairman of the Amigor committee, we had a chairman of the board. We were a separate corporation within the system. That chairman of the board had a salary, had a car, had a secretary, and he came to one meeting a month. There was no need for him and I eliminated those perks.

Presidential Agenda, Accomplishments

Glaser: When you became president in 1983, you had a term of only a year and a half because there was an adjustment to the fiscal year. Did that impede your presidency and what you wanted to accomplish?

Lowenberg: Not really. One of us had to take a short shift. It was too late for the previous president; I volunteered to do it, to make adjustments in the system. It never created a problem.

Look, every president may have agendas, but their agendas also are dictated by the needs of the community. I felt very strong about building the community to have more outreach. I believe I was most effective in that, to work with the institutions, to participate in their activities. Brian and I had set out to build community.

I had this dream, after the camps, that the only thing I could contribute to my people would be to rebuild a Jewish world. I had a chance now to do it within the community I lived, by bringing as many people as possible into the system, the system meaning the system of Federation. I feel very strongly about young people. During my presidency, I insisted that we do the internships (for young people) again in the beneficiary and constituent agencies.

I don't know what we started in particular during my term, but I felt very strong the need to build community to expand the Federation, to expand the membership. During my presidency we had one of the largest campaigns ever. Obviously, I didn't do it by myself, but what I did was to talk to enough people and to marshal resources and to get people involved and to make them understand what our community was all about. What Israel was all about, and the needs of the State of Israel.

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Lowenberg: It did several things. It got the community more involved. We were able to take as many people as possible on missions to Israel. But it also reassured the Israelis that there was a Jewish world outside of Israel who cared and who wanted to make sure that they survived. When I look back and I see Israel now, it helped a great deal that there was an early involvement and a continuous involvement and a deep involvement by the American Jewish community. It obviously

took the heat off the Israel government as far as it helped the underpinning of their social welfare programs and their education. And it created friendships that we have still today, and it created also a broader, worldwide Jewish community.

- Glaser: Aside from having such a successful campaign during your year's presidency, there was established the Jewish Emergency Aid Network, JEAN. Can you tell me about that?
- Lowenberg: I don't remember too much about it. I know we started it. I'm not too familiar with it now.
- Glaser: It was something that you mentioned in one of your speeches.
- Lowenberg: Frankly, I did so many things in those days, this one I don't remember.
- Glaser: Well, during your presidency, there was the construction of the Albert L. Schultz Jewish Community Center.
- Lowenberg: In Palo Alto you mean?
- Glaser: Right.
- Lowenberg: Yes, we were involved in that acquisition; we felt very strongly that it had to be done. There was some opposition, but it was important that we accomplished it to bring in that community, to give them service.
- Glaser: And then there was the Gauss wing of the Brandeis-Hillel Day School at Brotherhood Way and a new Koret Wing of the Jewish Home for the Aged.
- Lowenberg: Yes. I was not involved in the Koret Wing of the Jewish Home because that was the period when I was busy somewhere else with the Federation. I was chairman of the building committee when we built the A building. It was the first expansion after the war, and that was a major project.

### Confederation

- Glaser: During the year and a half you were president there was a first-time confederated fundraising event, and I wonder if you would discuss confederation. The Federation received

the Schroeder Award in 1983 from the Council of Jewish Federations for the concept of confederation.

Lowenberg: Yes. It was a great challenge, and Brian and I worked in it very intensely. I think San Francisco probably was more serious about it than Oakland, with all due respect, and I know you are from that side of the Bay. We thought maybe by having a confederation in the Bay Area would increase the interest and especially the giving levels of the Oakland community.

We felt by having a much broader community and the congeniality, could bring out more speakers and better speakers. We would have higher recognition on the UJA level nationally. It could have an impact on the national UJA. It would give us strength.

What I saw and what others saw was that by being together, having one large confederation would give more emotion, more involvement, and we felt that people would like this. And on a national level it would give us more exposure. It didn't work out. It didn't have enough support.

Glaser: How did the Koret Foundation get involved in that?

Lowenberg: The Koret Foundation funded some of the expenses.

I am sorry it fell apart. I am not so sure I want to blame the lay people for it. I think I would blame the executives for it more so, because they should have kept it together. But remember, San Francisco is always intimidating to the other communities because of the amount of people and also the giving level.

#### Russian Emigre Program

Glaser: I want to ask you about the Russian emigre program during your administration. At that time it was still the Soviet Union. Can you discuss the community support for the refuseniks?

Lowenberg: Well, the person that I would like to credit more than anyone else with building up our emigre program and finding the means and the emotion is Anita Friedman. At one time she worked for a different institution and she went to the

Jewish Family and Children Service. She really took it seriously. She took it personal to make sure that this project would come off the ground and was workable. She has done probably the most remarkable job in the entire United States, and beyond that.

We had the Lewis Fund, which is strictly for the benefit of emigres. There is a precedent in this community to take care of immigrants coming to San Francisco. The Jewish Family and Children Service always had a hand in it, and a good hand in it. But Anita Friedman expanded it.

Glaser: I think other agencies were involved also, Mount Zion Hospital and Jewish Vocational Service.

Lowenberg: That all came later.

#### Demographic Study

Glaser: I don't have the year for this, but there was a demographic study done by Gary Tobin. What were the results of that and was it worthwhile doing?

Lowenberg: I was not involved. It was past my presidency and was during the time I was going back and forth to Israel. Well, we found out how many Jews there are in the Bay Area. Did it do everything that we thought it could do? I doubt it. The impetus was basically during the confederation talks. That was one of the reasons why we thought we should have a demographic study. It was costly. Gary is an outstanding guy. He did a very good job. I read it, of course, but I was not involved in it.

Have we taken advantage of the study? I doubt it. When I heard how many Jews are living in the East Bay, in communities like Fremont and other towns and especially on the other side of the Caldecott Tunnel, there are so many Jews. And even up north.

We didn't take advantage of the knowledge we gained.



## XIX OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Institutions Established and Maintained

Glaser: Did you accomplish everything you wanted to accomplish during your presidency?

Lowenberg: That's hard to say. You did the best you could, you worked within the system. We had a fairly active board. We had good campaigns in those days, relative to other communities. We brought the campaigns to the level of some eastern communities of the same size, raising the same amount of money. You can compare San Francisco with Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Boston, and Philadelphia, which have about the same amount of people; we came up to the level of their giving. I thought we accomplished a lot. Now, is it because of the president of the Federation? No, but it helps.

We built a building for the Federation. We have a wonderful Jewish Home, which we maintain well. We established the Jewish Vocational Service [1975], which is a successful institution today. We merged the Jewish orphanage of Homewood Terrace with the Jewish Family and Children Service [1977]. They should have never sold the land. We had a committee, on which I served, we recommended not to sell that land but to lease the land. But that board was not responsive to the committee's recommendation.

Selling Emanu-El Club

Lowenberg: There was the Emanu-El Residence Club and I was appointed to the committee to recommend its future. It was in a relatively bad location. I think Dan Koshland appointed me to that. Dan Koshland or Edgar Sinton, or both. My two favorite people. They were outstanding in every respect; they set the tone for this community.

I was able to sell the property to the Zen Buddhists. The girls had moved out. That committee is still in existence. The money<sup>1</sup> is managed by the Federation endowment funds designated for girls who need help when they come to San Francisco. It's a great institution. I used to go there. It was a fun place to go. They had a wonderful executive, Mary Michaels.

Jewish Home for the Aged and the Bureau of Jewish Education

Lowenberg: So did I accomplish a lot? Yes, I've accomplished a lot. I'm proud that I came here and that this community gave me a chance to be part of it. The Jewish Home is still a favorite, especially right now. I am chairing the building committee for the new wing.

And the Bureau, we made the Bureau a more community-oriented institution.

We built a library, which I organized, and I supervised the building.

Glaser: So you were very involved at that point.

Lowenberg: Yes, almost singlehandedly. It's a beautiful place now.

Glaser: What else did you do at the Bureau?

Lowenberg: I was part in starting the Ben Yehuda School. It's gone now.

Glaser: Where was that located?

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<sup>1</sup>In 1973, the Emanu-El Residence Club assets, \$492,000, were transferred to the Federation--"to aid worthy young Jewish girls."



- Lowenberg: At the Bureau. We had two branches. At one time they met in my house for a while, because they didn't have a place. I felt that we needed more daily Jewish education, separate and in addition to the Sunday schools. We had a special director for that. We wanted children to have more than just a Sunday school education.
- Glaser: During your administration, a committee studied the Federation's funding to Jewish education institutions, and it was to consider if a long-range study of Jewish education should be undertaken.
- Lowenberg: And what did we do?
- Glaser: I want you to tell me.
- Lowenberg: There was a time in this community, when Jewish education was at the back burner. The only Jewish education in this community was the Sunday schools and that was not very good. It's still not good. Some of us felt that we needed more than that. Some congregations, the more religious congregations, did a little better job. But I must tell you that my kids went to Sunday school, they didn't learn a thing. Were it not for Camp Swig and Israel trips, confirmation class, et cetera, and their own interest because of my wife and me, they would know very little about Judaism.

I felt that study was most necessary. The Bureau was an orphan. It had very small funding. The Federation leadership really weren't aware of what they were missing and what they were depriving our children of. But there wasn't any interest, they relied too much on the congregations and the rabbis. That's why I felt the Bureau had to be expanded. And we did.



**XX ISRAEL**Trips to Israel

Glaser: I want to talk to you about Israel. You met with Prime Minister [Menachem] Begin in 1971. Was that on your first trip to Israel?

Lowenberg: Menachem Begin also came once to San Francisco. A few of us met with him. I met with him privately. We spent about a half an hour together alone. And then on Federation trips to Israel we usually met with government dignitaries. When I did my later trips, in the early eighties, when I took the Republicans to Israel, we also met with many dignitaries. We met with Begin, we met with Shimon Peres, we met with Arik Sharon, I met with Shamir. We met with all of the then leaders of Israel. Of course, Golda [Meir] and I met several times. When Golda came to San Francisco, we of course met with her, which was a special treat.

Project Renewal

Glaser: Project Renewal started in 1978.

Lowenberg: Yes.

Glaser: San Francisco was one of the first communities to accept that program.

Lowenberg: Yes, let's talk about it. Brian explained Project Renewal to me, and he and I went back East to a meeting. I think I'm not overstating it, but were it not for Brian Lurie and me they wouldn't have accepted it here so early. This was

so new and such an additional financial commitment. Brian did a good job on me to get me to understand it. He was very much in favor of it, and when I saw the need and the purpose, I also was very much in favor of it.

I remember giving one of my major speeches about Project Renewal at that time, at a Federation board meeting.

Glaser: First it was Tel Hanaan, and then Kiryat Shmona?

Lowenberg: Oh, Kiryat Shmona came much later. Tel Hanaan was the first community--Nesher/Tel Hanaan, two adjoining communities. We took that on first and we went and visited there. San Francisco was one of the earliest, if not the earliest community who adopted Project Renewal. It was a wonderful concept and it did great jobs. I have been in many communities in Israel where other communities did the same thing, and you can see the results. The results have been absolutely fabulous. Los Angeles, and then Detroit and New York, all these different cities who adopted a community. I think the concept was a genius concept, was very well put together, it was most cost effective.

I consider Project Renewal a success. It had good leadership in Israel. The people there were the most reliable. It had great enthusiasm, and it did wonders in the country at a time when it was most needed. I'm glad I was part of it, I really enjoyed it.

I would have preferred a more intensive three-year program, even though it needed five years for the payouts. The only problem it created in Israel was the fiscal management, and that's where I came in during my time at the board of governors. The fiscal management lost at one point control of the destiny, and they created some debt. That hung over the agency for quite a while until they cleaned that up. It was internal management, unfortunately, but it didn't impact too much on the successes.

Glaser: Is it still ongoing?

Lowenberg: It's now finished. They had some wonderful leaders at certain points in time.

War in Lebanon, 1982

Glaser: What was the effect in this community of the war in Lebanon?

Lowenberg: In the beginning there was some enthusiasm and then, of course, when it stalemated on Beirut then there were some doubts in people. Three of us from San Francisco went to a special mission into Lebanon. We went close to Beirut. I'm trying to think who was with me--it was George Frankenstein and Dick Goldman. We went with the Israeli troops, a small UJA mission.

We also went all the way to the Suez Canal, which was exciting. The first mission to the Suez Canal, and the first mission to Lebanon. It was exciting.

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Lowenberg: We overlooked the airport of Beirut, we overlooked the city of Beirut. The people on the streets were applauding us and throwing flowers at us. They loved it. We went into the restaurants, in the small towns we went through. There was no security problem at all. The local people talked to us, and shook our hands. It was most revealing, it was most heartwarming.

We went through the towns that we hear about now. No Jew could go there today, no Israeli could go there today.

Glaser: Sidon and Tyre?

Lowenberg: Sidon and Tyre, we went there and we walked the streets.

Glaser: Don't you think that Arik Sharon went too far?

Lowenberg: No, I don't think so.

Glaser: In terms of distance?

Lowenberg: Well, yes and no. I don't think so, but I don't think the Israelis could afford to go into Beirut and have house-to-house fighting. Arik Sharon is Arik Sharon. I happen to like him. I happen to think that he's sometimes a little too radical. But Arik Sharon sees that there is no way you can deal with these people. There's only one agenda for the Arabs, and that is the destruction of the State of Israel. They don't intend to have peace. There are some people who

would like it, but the bottom line is that there will never be a peace with the Arabs and we better stay strong.

We are seeing it right now. It's the elements in the Middle East financed by Libya and Iran and Syria and Iraq, and the Hamas. They have no intention of having peace with Israel. I'm against giving up any land at all, it would be tragic. There's a wonderful book written by Bibi Netanyahu that just came out.<sup>1</sup>

Glaser: My husband is reading it right now.

Lowenberg: Yes, I'm reading it now, it's very good. He is telling it the way it is.

#### More on Jewish Agency

Glaser: Mr. Lowenberg, what was the article "A Crossroads to Responsibility?"

Lowenberg: You have to refresh my memory.

Glaser: Well, that seemed to have been the jumping-off point for the San Francisco Federation taking on the UJA.

Lowenberg: Oh. That article I don't think had any particular strength or importance. It was used at that point--. Look, there were people here, and I don't fault them for it, who felt that they didn't have enough input into the UJA, which is true. But neither did Los Angeles and neither did Seattle or Portland. We are too far removed from the center of power, which is in New York and Jerusalem.

Brian Lurie instigated to ask more questions, and rightfully so. They, the Jewish Agency, weren't forthcoming because we had no representation on the board of governors until I was appointed. I personally believe that confrontation was wrong. Yes, you are entitled to ask questions and we should have and we must have. It was handled wrong. After they had me there, I had no one to talk to here, because after I was on, Brian felt that I

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<sup>1</sup>"A Place Among the Nations: Israel and the World," by Benjamin Netanyahu. Bantam Books, 1993.

wasn't good enough to represent the community. He did it on his own behind my back.

But that's all past history. We did as much as we could, the new members of the board of governors, tried to change the system. It was most, most difficult. We didn't have the support from Max Fisher, et cetera, and that leadership. We certainly had no support at all, rather to the contrary, from the World Zionist Organization. The Zionists had no use for us; they still don't have any use for us. They don't raise funds. We are called the fundraiser and they are called the Zionists.

But I felt that it could be done "within" the Jewish Agency. Some of the members in this community, under the leadership of Brian, felt that I was intimidated by that leadership. I felt very strongly we had to work within the system and change it that way. And when I did work within the system, I changed the department assigned to me. The institution I was responsible for was changed, and others changed too.

#### Overseas Committee

- Glaser: While you were president of the Federation, the overseas committee was started. Was that to oversee what was being done in Israel? Was it at that time that the direct funding was started?
- Lowenberg: Parts of it, yes, but mainly the overseas committee was also started just to have better links with the Israelis. The overseas committee was really started for Project Renewal, not for overseeing the spending of the Jewish Agency's money.
- Glaser: But there's a five-year gap between the two.
- Lowenberg: But the overseas committee still does also the Project Renewal with Kiryat Shmona today. But also, to bring more San Francisco Jews to Israel, to make them understand the system.
- Glaser: It was a forceful thing that had a great impact, when the Federation decided to give a certain amount of its funds directly to Israel rather than through the UJA.

- Lowenberg: I never agreed with that. I think to take \$50,000 or \$100,000 as a matter of threat was ridiculous. I disagreed with them because that made no friends. The amount was too little to have any impact. And if you really want to know why I say this, we allocated \$100,000, as a special project, and it cost us approximately \$100,000 to spend \$100,000.
- Glaser: How was that?
- Lowenberg: We had to have staff people there. We had to have an office there. They wanted an office in Jerusalem, which I felt as long as we had to have it we should have shared it with others. Our overhead to distribute that extra money from San Francisco is exactly what we criticized the Agency for, wasting money. If you want to know the real facts, go and find out today what it costs to run the San Francisco office in Israel, staff-wise and rental-wise and media-wise and telephone-wise and fax-wise, et cetera. I will tell you that every dollar we spent there cost us another dollar. I may be off by 10 percent. I have always objected to it.
- Glaser: Wasn't it looked upon as a wake-up call for UJA?
- Lowenberg: Wake-up call? That could have been done with sending a delegation with some people and getting more people on the board, rather than taking \$100,000 and spending another \$100,000.
- Glaser: You felt that the Amuta was not necessary, that committee that's overseeing the funds?
- Lowenberg: I'm not a great supporter philosophically of that. They're nice people, I know those people, and they all mean well. What is the bottom line? The bottom line is that it's too costly.

#### Jewish Agency's Creative and Innovative Fund

- Glaser: What is the Jewish Agency's creative and innovative fund?
- Lowenberg: Well, that came about in the last year or two. That was basically created because of some of the pressures we exerted on the Agency to get some funds for new ideas and new issues. But let me tell you, the monies they spent were taken from other institutions as well, like the rural



settlement, the Aliyah Kliti [immigration and absorption] departments. They all were cut down year after year.

Now, that fund, I haven't heard much about it. But they did a few things here and there. But if I had to do it over again, I would have liked to change the management rather than the system. By changing the management, you would have changed the system. There are people in place who are political appointees because they were old hacks from WZO. There are too many department heads, there is too much bureaucracy. I would have changed that rather than starting new projects.

Glaser: Well, Simcha Dinitz is in trouble right now, isn't he?

Lowenberg: Deep, deep trouble. Political appointment.

Glaser: Is he going to get the door?

Lowenberg: Yes, yes. The only reason they haven't pushed him out yet is because if he's out a Likudnik will get the job. That's the system, so the Labor party is in power, and they cannot appoint another Labor person until the next WZO assembly. So if he is fired today, a member of the Likud party, the treasurer, will get the job. When Dolchin was in, the treasurer was a Likudnik, Akiva Lewinsky.

#### A Motivation for Fundraising

Glaser: It's been said that Israel is a theme for raising money in this country. What is the importance of Israel to the American Jew?

Lowenberg: I always believe that the federations raise their money on the back of Israel, not on the back of the local institutions. Because people will help the local institutions, individually.

We always raised our money on the back of Israel. And that's why I am upset that only 35, 36 percent of our dollar goes to Israel now.

"Who is a Jew" Issue

- Glaser: You were on the committee on "Who Is a Jew" issue.
- Lowenberg: Oh, I love that. [laughs] Yes.
- Glaser: Why?
- Lowenberg: Well, because I took on my own colleagues in Israel. This issue of "Who Is a Jew" really annoyed me.
- Glaser: Your political colleagues?
- Lowenberg: Well, some.
- Glaser: Oh, so you're saying your party is the Likud party?
- Lowenberg: Yes. It was not all Likud, but there were some of the Likudniks who said it, but the religious community said it. Yes, that annoyed me, "Who Is a Jew," because they disqualified everyone who is not 100 percent. I was once interviewed on Israel television, at some event and they asked me, "How do you feel about 'Who Is a Jew?'" I said, "I don't think that any of these people screaming are qualified to say who is a Jew. I think that decision was made in Auschwitz, who is a Jew. Not by some of these radicals here." I felt very strong about it, and I was very vocal about it.

Look, we have some wonderful Jews in this community who are intermarried. I am not in favor of intermarriage, but they are some of the great supporters of Jewish survival. To hurt those people's feelings and to tell them that they have secondary status in our Jewish world was unacceptable to me.

It's not enough to just lay tefillin every morning and to go to shul every day. You also have to be a humanitarian with it, you worry about your other Jews. I was brought up in a religious community, and we went to shul two times a day. And so I understand that just as well as they do, but we cannot exclude Jews who want to be Jews. That bothered me.

**XXI FEDERATION ENDOWMENT FUND**Eva Heller Kohn Helping Fund

Glaser: I want to ask you about the Endowment Fund. You're on more than one committee, are you not?

Lowenberg: Well, as an ex-president, we are ex officio on the Endowment Fund, I believe. I just finished a number of years on the Eva Heller Kohn Fund, which I really enjoyed. It has a noble purpose, because one of the big things they're doing now is the internships, which are very successful, and of course education, Jewish education. But I'm not on it any longer. I finished my term.

I go to as many meetings as I can. I must say that the person who runs the endowments funds, Phyllis Cook, is one of the finest executives that we can ever wish for. She is just outstanding, and she has done a fabulous job with the Endowment Fund. It's a shining example on the national scene. People talk about it; when I see my colleagues across the country, they're very envious of how successful we are.

I am sorry to say that our surrounding communities are not taking notice of it and following her success. She works at it, she's wonderful.

Effectiveness of Endowment Fund and Its Executive

Glaser: What gives you the most satisfaction as being part of the Endowment Fund?

Lowenberg: Two things: number one, what we can do with our dollars now, and to have funds left in perpetuity to maintain the gifts to the annual campaign. Some of the wealthier families have set up endowment funds for the annual campaign. The things we do, the recognition we have of taking care of our institutions, it's a great deal of pride. We take care of our own institutions, and well. Is there anything better than a Jewish Home as an institution. It's the most successful--it's a wonderful institution? Our Bureau is doing a good job. Jewish Family and Children Services is doing a good job, and those endowment funds help support them.

Then, of course, the educational aspect, the special projects we do with the endowment funds. One of the big things to me, which I think is invaluable, is the trips to Israel, of the confirmation classes, the scholarship funds we're giving out to Camp Swig, to Israel trips. For instance, at the Bureau we have educationally disadvantaged children, special classes, special programs for them. The scholarships for children to go to Israel for high school and college.

When I see what we raise in a Jewish community and the amounts we have available, and compare that with the general community, it's so out of balance. I think in four or five counties the Bay Area Crusade raises \$50 million. It's small, I used to be on a committee at one time. Where the Jewish community raises--including if you take Oakland, which is part of the Bay Area Crusade, and Marin County--our Federations probably raise about \$25, \$27 million. Plus all the money we send to Israel for the hospitals and other institutions of learning. It's fabulous.

I remember some time ago that of the fourteen largest gifts to the Bay Area Crusade in San Francisco, eleven were Jewish. That shows we have great people here.

## XXII POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

[Interview 5: August 10, 1993]##

National Jewish Coalition

Glaser: I want to ask you about your political involvement. In 1981, you and twenty-three other Jewish Community leaders met with [Ronald] Reagan and [George] Bush with regards to Israel. On what basis did you meet with them?

Lowenberg: In Washington, you mean?

Glaser: Yes.

Lowenberg: Well, what had happened, after President Reagan was inaugurated, some of us who had worked on his campaign, (I worked on his campaign here quite intensively up and down the coast) we felt nationally there was no Republican Jewish entity in place at all. We formed what's called the Jewish Coalition, which were Republican Jews. A lot of us knew each other from the UJA or the Bonds organization, mostly UJA. It was chaired by Max Fisher. We got together and we felt that we wanted input into the administration from the Jewish community.

We met with the President and the Vice President, and there were other meetings. It was most important, I believe. I even remember there was some problem at one point and I called a mutual friend here who happens to be very active in the Republican party. He was Vice President Bush's roommate at one of the Ivy League schools. I had lunch with him and told him there were some items that I was questioning the administration about. He said, "Well, let me talk to George Bush."

Within twenty-four hours, I had a phone call from the Vice President. He said, "Bill, I hear you are troubled about some

of our policies." I said, "I certainly am, and I wonder why-." He said, "Let me assure you that we will do everything possible that Israel is taken care of." Vice President Bush said that. And they did. We had an open door to the Republican White House and it worked very well, especially with George Shultz as secretary of state, who was very pro-Israel. I think we did quite well.

I was involved of course with the Holocaust Museum.<sup>1</sup> We visited President Bush twice to report to him on the Holocaust Museum; he was very interested. The chairman Bud Meyerhoff and I as vice chairman and one of our other members and our executive visited with the President to report on our progress. He wanted to know; he invited us.

Glaser: Tell me a little bit more about the National Jewish Coalition of Jewish Republicans.

Lowenberg: Well, it's still in existence. They are Jews in the leadership of the Jewish community nationally who are active in the Republican party.

Glaser: Do you have a central organization?

Lowenberg: We have a central organization with an executive director and a staff in Washington, D.C. They meet regularly. I'm on the board now.

Glaser: But you are one of the founding members.

Lowenberg: One of the founding members of it, yes. But it's very hard to maintain a level of continuity when you're that far away. Even though I was in Washington once a month, I only had time for the museum. I went to a few of the meetings, but I didn't have the time. The organization is funded by Jewish Republicans.

Glaser: I wouldn't think the Democrats would fund it. [laughter]

Lowenberg: Hardly.

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<sup>1</sup>I was appointed by President Reagan to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council in 1983 and Vice Chairman in 1986.

National Republican Convention, 1992

Glaser: I wanted to ask you about the 1992 Republican Convention because you were quoted in the Bulletin as blaming the media for exaggerating the influence of the right wing Christian organizations.

Lowenberg: Well, I was on the floor of the convention, I was a delegate. In retrospect I probably would have said it differently. But at the convention in Houston, I didn't feel an overwhelming strength of the religious right.

Glaser: But weren't you rather appalled by Pat Buchanan's statement?

Lowenberg: Yes, everyone was appalled. People I sat with, the California delegation, he did not get an applause. Everyone was appalled. People felt that he was off the wall, and he was not taken seriously by the people I was with. Sure, there were some pockets where he got some applause, but the California delegation felt that he shouldn't have spoken.

Glaser: Well, he was running for president.

Lowenberg: Yes, but that died very fast. It died because he couldn't raise the money. As far as we were concerned, it was a past issue. But then he did speak; I believe they made a mistake to let him speak.

I don't have the fear that someone like Pat Buchanan would get anywhere in this country because he really is too radical. He's not even a person that creates friendships. When you listen to him, he sounds terrible. He's insulting, he's rude, he is not a typical politician. We can't neglect it, but to make major issues of it just feeds into their hands.

Northern Californians for Good Government

Glaser: On the local scene, in 1986 you were elected chairman of San Franciscans for Good Government; now it's called Northern Californians for Good Government. Not only were you the chairman but you helped develop it.

Lowenberg: Yes. Naomi Lauter, Ron Kaufman, and I took it on, and we spearheaded the move to establish it here.

Glaser: What was the purpose for developing it?

Lowenberg: The purpose was to establish a PAC to support congressmen and senators Israel-oriented outside the state of California. We needed to help to get support for Israel from other parts of the country where there were few Jews. We needed to find bigger support. We, like other communities, started these PACs; ours became very successful.

As a matter of fact, I remember when we were looking for the first chairman. Ron Kaufman and I visited Harold Dobbs to ask him to be the first chairman of the PAC, which he accepted. From there on we had several chairmen. I was chairman, and Mel Swig followed me. The PAC is still in existence.

Glaser: How do you raise your funds?

Lowenberg: Each member of the board is paying \$1,000 or more, and then we raised money from whoever we could convince how important this issue is of helping congressmen and senators in their elections.

Glaser: Andrea Spiegel is your new executive director.

Lowenberg: Yes, and she's very good. We have been very fortunate, we always had very good executives. We had Debbie Cohn, who's now with AIPAC [American Israel Public Affairs Committee]. We had Debby Lauter, Naomi's daughter-in-law; she was a good executive. We had good executives, and by and large we had good chairmen with one exception. So now we're back on track, now we have a good chairman again. Larry Myers is now the chairman, and he'll do a good job.

#### American Israel Public Affairs Committee

Lowenberg: It's important because it cemented some very good relationships with congressmen and senators. Our PAC is a single-issue PAC, only Israel-oriented.

Glaser: It is also nonpartisan?

Lowenberg: Nonpartisan indeed, and only Israel-oriented. It's sometimes difficult; there are some candidates who are supporting Israel but have issues which were not to the liking of some of our members. We have to convince people that this is a single-issue PAC, Israel.



Glaser: This is in contrast to AIPAC, and you were a vice chairman of that.

Lowenberg: AIPAC, yes, but AIPAC raises money for their operations but it's not a PAC. They're a lobbying organization.

Glaser: When you were the vice chairman, what were some of the issues at that time?

Lowenberg: Oh, God. Since it's also an Israel-oriented organization, the issues were--you name it. Whatever you see in the daily papers, from the Lebanon war, to the weapons sales, to the Begin years, to the David Halevy years, to Arik Sharon. There were always issues which concerned us. We had very good advice and very good leadership from Naomi Lauter. She is an outstanding executive who built up this AIPAC office as the model for the country.

Glaser: I think it was the first regional office.

Lowenberg: It was the first regional office outside Washington. Since then, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas, New York, all over the country now. But we set the pattern. She single-handedly developed this, most admirable.

#### Mayor Frank Jordan

Glaser: Then also locally, you worked on Mr. [Frank] Jordan's election as mayor?

Lowenberg: Yes. I felt very strong that we needed a change in the local government because during the [Art] Agnos administration things weren't going so well for the city. I knew Frank Jordan. I met him the first time on an issue when he was police chief. It had to do with the swastikas paintings and something with the skinheads, something which concerned the Jewish community greatly. He came out immediately and spoke at a couple of events I was involved in. I liked him and then we met a few times after that. I felt that he would make a good mayor.

Glaser: Jordan was a Democrat. How was it that you were supporting him as a Republican?

Lowenberg: Well, I felt that it would be almost impossible to elect a Republican at this time in San Francisco. The best we could do would be to find and to support a moderate Democrat, who would

have some feeling to the downtown business community, and would understand the business world a bit better, at least would give us an open door. I prevailed on the Lincoln Club and the Republicans here to listen to him. Some of the leaders, the older leaders of the Republican party, were supporting Tom Hsieh, the supervisor. But I persisted and I felt that Hsieh couldn't and shouldn't be mayor, and that Frank Jordan had a great chance if he could get some Republican support.

So I talked to my colleagues and my Republican friends to invite him to have a luncheon for him. I introduced him, he was very well received. Good attendance. He raised money from the people there for his campaign and he succeeded, of course, as mayor. He started out good.

I knew that he was going to Hawaii, and Fern and Susan and I had dinner with him and his then-girlfriend, now wife [Wendy Paskin]. We had a wonderful evening.

When he went into office he appointed my daughter, Susan, to the planning commission. I was very proud of that; she's doing a great job.

### Lincoln Club

- Glaser: Tell me about the Lincoln Club; you were on the executive committee. What does the club do and what did you do as an executive?
- Lowenberg: Lincoln Club is the PAC of the Republican party here. It has about 160, 170 members, plus branches in Marin County, Alameda County and San Mateo County. The different divisions make up the executive committee. It's a very interesting group. They have an executive and staff and raise money to give to Republican candidates in their areas.
- Glaser: Well, aren't you swimming upstream because San Francisco is such a highly Democratic city?
- Lowenberg: Yeah, you're telling me. It's difficult. While I was on the executive committee, I had the privilege of working on the interview committee to interview candidates.

## XXIII CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

Mayor Shelley's Special Committee on Redevelopment

Glaser: Of your civic appointments and memberships in other organizations, you have a long list. I want to ask you about them, starting off with the mayor's special committee on redevelopment.

Lowenberg: Oh, I enjoyed that. The mayor appointed about ten or twelve people.

Glaser: Which mayor was that?

Lowenberg: Mayor Shelley. He asked us to travel with him and his staff to major cities in the country who had preceded us in redevelopment projects. We went to Pittsburgh, to Philadelphia, to Detroit. Then we went to New York; we had a special tour of Lincoln Center, which was most interesting. It was very helpful to all of us, to staff as well as the lay people, to give us a concept, an idea, how things could be changed from an older part of a city into a more modern and upscale functioning part of a city.

Our committee met frequently, I would say for a year thereafter, with the redevelopment staff and the City Hall staff. The staff didn't listen to all of our recommendations. We felt very strong, and I personally felt extremely strong about opening up the South of Market. Not with buildings on the side on Market Street, but an open plaza that would tie in better to Union Square and the retail area of Union Square, and the areas of Geary and O'Farrell and Stockton and Grant.

San Francisco Commission on Aging

Glaser: And then you were on the City and County of San Francisco Commission on the Aged. Who appointed you?

Lowenberg: Alioto. When Joe Alioto became mayor, Lou Freehof, who had been the executive at Congregation Emanu-El and now the executive of Sinai Memorial Chapel, he and I felt very strong that we needed a commission on the aging here. We prevailed with the mayor and he appointed a commission, of which Lou Freehof became the first chairman, and a good chairman he was. He was a wonderful man, a wonderful friend. I was made chairman of the personnel committee. We had to put a whole new staff together. Unfortunately, we had a lot of controversy on the commission.

As a matter of fact, on that commission I met Art Agnos for the first time. He was on the commission from the social welfare department as a representative. We became quite friendly. We used to visit with each other.

That commission didn't function too well in the first few years. It was very difficult; there were elements on the commission who wanted to take over. As chairman of personnel, the pressures of hiring only for race rather than quality became intolerable and I resigned. I was personally threatened, my children were threatened, phone calls during the night. I decided I'd better step down.

San Francisco-Haifa Sister City Program

Glaser: You were chairman of the San Francisco-Haifa City Sister City Program.

Lowenberg: Yes. The federal government allocated certain amounts of money to each city to have the sister city programs. My frequent trips to Israel made it easier because I had connections there to have a San Francisco-Haifa Sister City Program. I didn't start it. Someone else started it.

Glaser: Richard Goldman served on the committee.

Lowenberg: At one point, but I think later. I don't remember now who started it. You can probably find out, it's in City Hall, they will know. But I followed the pattern. It wasn't functional

at all because there was no money for us available. I tried to make contact in Washington, and I had a visit from a bureaucrat from Washington, who told me that as far as he was concerned all the money in the sister city program should go to Africa. That Israel doesn't need any money, the Jewish community was supporting it enough. That was not well taken by me.

I think the whole sister city program has kind of died off. I don't know if the funds have dried up. But it was well meaning, it had great purpose because we were talking to the city government of Haifa. Specifically we had arranged meetings here with our public utility departments, our water departments, to bring that knowledge into Haifa. We had visits from members of the Haifa city government. I remember the mayor. The local staff people here were extremely helpful, except we had no money to spend, and we tried to do it as best we could.

There was an exhibit here at one time from Haifa, maritime archaeology. It was a very nice exhibit which was brought to San Francisco because of the sister city program. So it served a purpose but had a very short life.

#### California-Israel Exchange##

Glaser: You are currently a member of the executive committee of the California-Israel Exchange.

Lowenberg: Yes. That is starting to function now. It was established by Governor Wilson. I think the world of him. I've worked in every campaign he has had. I think Pete Wilson was a great senator. Pete Wilson was very helpful, to the FTA, the free trade agreement with Israel. When the free trade agreement came to the floor of Congress, I was asked by AIPAC to visit with Pete Wilson and see if I could be helpful.

I had a date with Pete Wilson; we spent close to two hours together, and talked about the issue. I explained how I felt. I explained why it was important, that it would be important to both Israel and the United States. He saw it.

He saw the long range of it, and he was proven right. I walked with him out of his office and he went right to the floor [of the Senate], and it was because of Pete Wilson that that passed. Others may have taken credit for it, but Pete Wilson could have killed this by a two-minute speech. He had

more ammunition to kill it than any other state because of the economics of California, which are very similar to Israel's.

And now, going back to what we have today, he established all within the last year the California-Israel Exchange, which is geared to Silicon Valley, and agriculture. The chairmen are Gordon Moore from Intel and Howard Marguleas from Sun World (agriculture.) I was invited on it, and so was Cissie Swig and Mervin Morris. And of course a good friend of yours and mine, your husband. Right?

Glaser: [laughs] Yes. [Ernie Glaser]

Lowenberg: Those are the only Bay Area people on the commission. And to prove that Pete Wilson was correct, currently California is exporting \$500 million per year to Israel. A huge sum of money, it was astonishing to us. Trade between the state of California and Israel created 10,000 jobs.

I talked yesterday with the executive; we are bringing a delegation of Israelis here. In April, the California delegation went to Israel. I couldn't go because I had to be in Washington for the opening of the museum. It's working. It creates business for both sides, almost \$1 billion between California and Israel.

Glaser: Wasn't this started originally under Lieutenant Governor Leo McCarthy?

Lowenberg: I like Leo McCarthy, I've known him for a long time, but that never went anywhere.

XXIV JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

State of Israel Bonds

Glaser: You were national vice chairman of State of Israel bonds. Is that current?

Lowenberg: Current, yes.

Glaser: What's involved with that?

Lowenberg: Not much. You sell bonds. I was chairman for Northern California. Then I went on the national board.

Boys Town of Jerusalem and Shaare Zedek Hospital

Glaser: Are you still on the board of governors for Boys Town, Jerusalem?

Lowenberg: No. I was quite active; we started Boys Town here and we raised quite a bit of money here.

Glaser: Is that the function, to raise money?

Lowenberg: Yes, to raise money. It's a religious institution, most of the children are from North Africa. They teach them a trade. These children came from the poorest of families, from the Katamon area in Jerusalem and other parts of the country.

Glaser: Which area?

Lowenberg: Katamon; it's a very poor area in Jerusalem. They teach them engineering, printing, and some of them end up as pilots in the Israeli Air Force. It's a wonderful institution.

I was just appointed the vice chairman of the international board of governors of Shaare Zedek Hospital.

### San Francisco Institute on Aging

Glaser: You are on the board, or were on the board, of the San Francisco Institute on Aging?

Lowenberg: I was on the institute for a couple of years, yes.

Glaser: And what was involved in that?

Lowenberg: Well, they are interested in medical care for the aged who are staying in their own domicile. It's a clinic. I don't know much about it really. I was on the board, but it was not an institution I really enjoyed being on. They met at eight o'clock in the morning, and I don't think that any board should meet at eight in the morning. Business people are anxious to go to work in the morning.

Glaser: Is that the organization that's connected with Mount Zion hospital?

Lowenberg: Yes, it's part of Mount Zion, yes.

### American Joint Distribution Committee

Glaser: And the board of American Joint Distribution Committee; is that current?

Lowenberg: No, I am off that. I was on there while I was more active in the Federation. JDC; I was on it for a number of years.

Glaser: How did you function as a board member?

Lowenberg: Strictly as a spokesman from this community and going to meetings back East. While I was on the board of governors of the Jewish Agency, that tied in quite well because they're part of it.



Glaser: Did you have to make decisions as to allocations of funds?

Lowenberg: To some extent, yes. Because the meetings are back East, I didn't make all the meetings. It's more of a staff-run organization.

Glaser: That sounds like a rubber stamp position.

Lowenberg: I wouldn't say that, no; but they have very outstanding staff. And since the activities of the JDC are all in countries where we had no access to. Behind the Iron Curtain and Africa and Ethiopia, and even parts of Russia, it was difficult. And it was more of a staff-driven organization because we had representatives in those areas. Even in the Arab world, too. So it was not the type of organization where the lay people would be totally immersed in or involved in.

#### Stanford University Jewish Studies

Glaser: Are you still a member of the advisory board of Stanford University's Jewish Studies?

Lowenberg: Yes, indeed. I'm on the Executive Committee. That has developed into a very outstanding institution, Judaic Studies at Stanford.

Glaser: It has a very impressive staff.

Lowenberg: Very impressive, very knowledgeable. With Barbara Oshman, my family and I funded a special scholarship that's called the Kennedy Scholarship. It has to do with funding a few students each year in Judaic Studies.

Glaser: You were a member of the National Park Service Western Regional Advisory Committee, which is part of the Department of the Interior.

Lowenberg: Yes. That doesn't exist any more. During the Reagan administration there was so much going on here in the Park Service, part of the Department of Interior, that they wanted an advisory team of Californians. There were seven members to advise the regional directors of the Interior Department on local issues. For instance, we had jurisdiction over Alcatraz; we had jurisdiction over Yosemite and others. Not in a hands-on but in an advisory capacity.

That was started by the Secretary of the Interior, James Watt. I liked him. I know he took a lot of flak; I thought he was an outstanding guy. He was misunderstood, he was tough, he wanted to streamline the department. I will tell you that James Watt did more for things behind the scene than people realize. They never gave him any credit.

There was something--a situation where the Arab boycott office did something of excluding certain American issues. I forget the details. It had to do with the Department of Interior and Israel.

When I heard about that, I requested a meeting with James Watt. He happened to be traveling to San Diego, and he was staying with a mutual friend I know through business, another Republican. I met James Watt at my friend's house in San Diego. I explained to James Watt about this issue, and James Watt singlehandedly signed the directive immediately stopping it. It was never publicized, never discussed publicly. The Arabs tried to interfere in an Israel issue here in this country, and it was stopped immediately.

But James Watt was a different person. He was not a bureaucrat. He was a tough man. I thought he and his wife were very nice.

#### Anti-Defamation League

Glaser: You were the chairman of Society of Fellows of the Anti-Defamation League.

Lowenberg: Yes. The ADL had a fundraising arm here which was strictly to raise money once a year for a dinner. Oh, there were some terrific guys--Al Karp and I worked on that and Henry Berman later on. Mel Swig and I got it started here. It was to raise money for the ADL with an annual dinner, and honoring somebody.

## XXV HONORS

New Life Dinner; Israel Bonds and Holocaust Library and Research Center

Glaser: I want to ask you about the honors that you have received.

Lowenberg: Too much.

Glaser: Too much? In 1985 there was a New Life dinner that established the Permanent William J. Lowenberg Endowment Fund for Holocaust Education and Research. That was established with the State of Israel bonds.

Lowenberg: Yes. [laughs] We had a problem at that time, we needed a dinner for the Holocaust Library and Research Center, and we needed an annual dinner for bonds. I was involved in both of them, so we didn't want to compete with each other, and I insisted that I wasn't going to have two dinners. They both wanted to honor me and they both needed money. Marlene Siminow, who's a terrific executive, and I worked out a deal. We would have an Israel Bond dinner where they would honor me, and people would buy bonds and give the bonds to the Holocaust Library and Research Center as an endowment for Holocaust studies.

Glaser: That was the local center?

Lowenberg: Only local. Not everybody gave the bonds to the center. So we raised about maybe \$60,000--it is over \$100,000 now--devoted to Holocaust studies.

Shaare Zedek Jerusalem Award

Glaser: In 1992, you and Mrs. Lowenberg received Shaare Zedek Jerusalem Award.

Lowenberg: I want to say something. I must tell you that my wife hates those things. She's fabulous, but she hates to be in the limelight. I certainly agree with her. And I'm not saying it to be a hero, but one does this, in my opinion, at least I did it and I know most of my friends who are honored do it, not for themselves but because the institution needs the money.

But do I like to do this? No. I don't like to be in the limelight. But it serves the purpose to raise money. People have to lend their name to these issues.

American Jewish Committee Distinguished Service Award

Glaser: I was present in 1989 when you received the American Jewish Committee's Distinguished Service Award, and that was a very lovely evening. I think Art Zimmerman spoke.

Lowenberg: Yes, my friend Art spoke. I think he presented the award. See, my friend Ernie Weiner put me up to that. I don't think I'm that much of an activist for the American Jewish Committee. It was very kind of them.

Glaser: But you must have enjoyed that evening.

Lowenberg: It's nice to be with all your friends, yes. Well, it serves a purpose. These institutions need the help. The issues are the same--it's either anti-Semitism or Israel. It's for good purposes. The American Jewish Committee does an outstanding job. We have a wonderful executive here; Ernie Weiner is outstanding.

## XXVI A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

Federation

- Glaser: I want to ask you now something about in the future, or to combine the future with a view of the past: what changes do you see in the future for the Federation?
- Lowenberg: That's a difficult question. At one time the institution's survival depended a great deal on the daily input of the lay community. I see more and more of our Jewish institutions becoming too institutionalized, too mechanized. They are losing, to some extent, their neshomah, their soul.

Anti-Semitism

- Lowenberg: Have we had successes? We have had successes in terms of our freedom here. Have we had successes in terms of eliminating anti-Semitism? Absolutely not. If you had asked me in 1945 will there ever be anti-Semitism again, I would have said, "Never." After what we saw in our lifetime, what happened to our Jewish people, anti-Semitism is a thing of the past. That certainly did not happen. That's probably the biggest disappointment I have about this world.

Yes, we got the State of Israel, thank God. But look at the struggle that country has to live as a free democracy. The Israelis didn't kill people, they weren't robbers, they weren't dope dealers, they didn't grow marijuana and hashish and all of this. Their neighbors do. But the Israelis are being punished for being alive. At the United Nations, if Israel coughs, they meet and condemn.

We have four defense agencies in this country: the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, and the Jewish Community Relations Councils. I wish that we could merge them all into one organization, because the combined budgets of these institutions are too high. If they were one well-run institution, we could get much more for our money.

Even though they're vigilant, have they been successful? In my opinion, I don't think so. It's mediocre, with all due respect to the executives. It's mediocre because there's still anti-Semitism, there's still prejudice. Can we get into clubs? Yes, but who cares? I don't think it's serious if I can't get into the PU [Pacific Union] Club.

### Federations and Religion##

Glaser: There was an article in the Jewish Bulletin that was headlined, "Federations Should Try Raising Jews, Not Just Money." In other words, to have better relationships with synagogues and more religious content. How do you feel about that, that the Federations should work through a religious framework?

Lowenberg: I totally disagree with that. I think the synagogues ought to take care of their business, and the Federation should take care of its business.

Glaser: But on the other hand, the federations have now nationally undertaken a program, what they call Jewish continuity. That brings in the religious aspect, doesn't it?

Lowenberg: Not necessarily. I think to me Jewish continuity means that I want to remain a Jew and to have my family remain Jews. But for the Federation to get into religion, or the congregations to get into fundraising, it would be counterproductive. It would never work because the congregations have their own problems. The rabbis have self-dedicated, self-serving interests, keeping the congregations alive and viable.

The Federation has a much broader issue. It's major issue is Jewish lives, rescuing and taking care of Jews as human beings, not their religious aspect. But if we start mixing that and merge it with the congregations, that will be the end of the Federation. I think they ought to be separate.

We're doing fine. We raised plenty of money to do the projects we wanted to do: rescuing Jews of countries of distress and to help Israel. I think world Jewry has done a fairly decent job--not as much as it could have, but it's much better than we all could have expected. Israel has now a viable economy with huge exports.

### Concerns

Glaser: Speaking of children, what sort of a world do you want for your grandchildren?

Lowenberg: I'm very concerned about this. I'm not so much concerned about my life--I'm already sixty-eight--and my children are in their middle thirties, but I believe for the coming generation the going to be very, very difficult in this country. I am fearful about the polarization. I am concerned about the liberalism by our politicians to get votes. I am even concerned when I go to take a driver's test, that I can take it in four languages. I don't believe in that.

When I came to this country, I went to school every night for two years, Monday night through Thursday night. I've been to every high school in this town, because every night was a different program, to learn the language. It was great for me because I met people, and I learned how the country works before I went into the army during the Korean War.

When we brought the Russian Jews into this country, they were off the welfare rolls within 150 days. San Francisco was very good except for the older people, which our institutions take care of.

So I am concerned about my grandchildren, and I am even worried that some day the English language may not be a major language in California. It will hurt the country as a whole. It will bring turmoil and it will bring war. You can't have a peaceful country if you divide the country. You polarize it.

Glaser: Are you talking about a civil war?

Lowenberg: Yes. I believe by dividing the country language-wise, you polarize the country, and I think it's wrong.





## XXVII SUMMING UP

Satisfaction from Volunteering

Glaser: Of all of your numerous volunteer positions, what gave you the most satisfaction?

Lowenberg: I had quite a few. I had great satisfaction. My first satisfaction probably was when I became president of the Jewish Home. I love the whole make-up of the Home, how it's being handled, how the lay community relates to it, how we're taking care of our elderly.

I also enjoyed the Bureau because we did a lot of new work there while I was president. And then, of course, when I became president of the Jewish Community Federation. For a refugee who came here penniless and couldn't speak the language, that was a great compliment the Jewish community gave me.

And then, the board of governors of the Jewish Agency, the first Jew from San Francisco who was appointed to the board of governors of the Jewish Agency, on which I served seven years. It took me to Israel three times a year.

And then when I was appointed by President Reagan and then by President Bush to the U.S. Holocaust Commission, first as a member and then as vice chairman. So I have had a lot of good things happen to me in this country and in this community. But I saw this on my grandparents and my parents, they did similar things in Europe.

Glaser: If you had stayed in Ochtrup, if there had not been Nazis and the Holocaust, what would your life have been like?

Lowenberg: I've thought about it quite often, and recently I found my report cards, the first years in elementary school. My father was a cattle dealer, so was my grandfather--on both sides of my family. My uncles, everybody was in cattle there. I don't think I would have been a cattle dealer, because I knew my father even then used to say that. They would have probably made me go to college; I was a very good student. I would have studied, even though my parents were poor.

My father was originally trained in textile. He worked in a department store when he was a young man. Because of the Depression he went with his father into the cattle business. But it also could have been because my father's brother died shortly after the First World War from gas poisoning from the war. They all fought for the Germans. I was named after my father's brother.

So what would I have done? I don't know.

Glaser: I think with your intelligence and drive you would have found Ochtrup too small.

Lowenberg: It would have been too small, most likely. My mother's brother moved into a larger city, even though he still remained a cattle dealer, but he moved to a larger city to have more exposure to the world. Not very far from us. My mother's first cousin was a physician. When I was a child, I remember I had to go to him once or twice.

So who knows? I wish my parents could see my successes, and I could share all of this with my sister.

Glaser: Oh, I imagine you do think of that. Do you think you possibly could have gone into real estate? Was there that opportunity for you?

Lowenberg: No, that's the last thing, because this was not done in Europe. My parents owned their own house, and my grandparents, of course, but real estate was an American-type business. Now it's in Europe too. There were always what they call in Holland makelaars, which is real estate people, but only in the large cities. Those kind of deals were handled by the local notaries and attorneys. But there were no real estate people as such. That's why today's real estate companies in Europe are all patterned after the American system.

Philanthropy

Glaser: Let me ask you my last question: what is your favorite philanthropy?

Lowenberg: I don't really know what my favorite philanthropy is. Obviously Federation gets the biggest share from me. I think it's important that the Federation maintains its strength, because it covers a very broad segment of our Jewish needs.

More on Israel

Lowenberg: I don't have a favorite. I know some I wouldn't give to because I find the management and overhead too heavy or too irresponsible. I think overall Israel is extremely important. I think San Francisco is down now to between 35 and 37 percent. I remember when San Francisco sent 72 percent of the dollars we collected here to Israel.

Now, does it all go to the poor people? No, because there are too many layers. We have not eliminated all the layers of bureaucracy. They have done some in Israel; the Jewish Agency has eliminated a lot of them. Their staff is down to less than half from what it was when I came there first.

Glaser: To be a Jew is to believe in tikkun olam, to repair the world.

Lowenberg: Exactly. Are we doing it?

Glaser: And I think that speaks for liberalism rather than conservatism.

Lowenberg: You don't have to be a liberal to believe in the tikkun olam. I think a Jew has to care about the poor and the orphans and the widows, but that doesn't mean that we have to create welfare states.

Glaser: Well, you have a time constraint; we could go on for a long time, but I think this is our end. Thank you very much.

Lowenberg: You were very helpful. I'm very grateful the way you handled me.

[tape interruption]

Federation Leaders

Lowenberg: I want to say something about Federation leaders.

Glaser: Who in the Federation really stands out in your mind?

Lowenberg: Well, there are a few men. The first one I worked with very closely, not only for Federation but also for the Henry Harris Library in Israel, which we didn't talk about, was Dan Koshland. He, with Professor Sam Lepkovsky from Berkeley, had established years ago a scientific library in Rehovot, which was supported by a few in this community. I followed Dan Koshland as chairman of that.

Another man I greatly admired and took very good lessons from was Edgar Sinton, a wonderful leader who often gave me some very good advice.

Another person I still listen to and have a deep affection for is Robert Sinton, a great leader of our community. I hope I don't forget anyone. I've talked about my Mr. Alberton.

But in Federation, one I really enjoyed and worked with very closely was Mel Swig. I miss him. He had always good advice and an open ear for me. Even though he was a Democrat and I, a Republican, we kidded each other, but we had deep respect for each other's feeling. I miss Mel Swig.

But above all, in all of our thirty-seven years of marriage, Fern has always given me good counsel and has always supported my many activities for which I am most grateful and comforted. My family is my reward and my reason to be alive.

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"Remembering Mengele: a voice of doom from the past," <i>Northern California Jewish Bulletin</i> , February 15, 1985	
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"GOP Jews Forgive Abortion Plank, Focus on Israel," *Northern California Jewish Bulletin*, August 21, 1992



## CHRONOLOGY--William J. Lowenberg

- 1926            Born August 14 in Ochtrup, Germany.
- 1945            Liberated from Dachau.
- 1950            Arrived in San Francisco in January.
- 1953-1955      U.S. Army.
- 1955            Member, real estate section, Jewish Welfare Federation.  
Member, employment committee, Jewish Family Service Agency.
- 1963-present   Board member, Jewish Home for the Aged.
- 1964-1966      Vice-chairman,, Business and professional Division.  
Chairman Real Estate Division
- 1968            Federation board member representing the Bureau of Jewish Education; on budget committee and social planning committee.
- 1970-1971      President, Jewish Home for the Aged.
- 1970            On committees of social planning and budgeting committee and fundraising.  
  
Social planning and budgeting committees combined.  
Board passes motion: "Resolved that the social planning and budgeting committee confer with the Bureau of Jewish Education and establish a policy with regard to allocation by the Bureau of funds from Federation and Bureau to day schools." This relates to concern about schools that request subvention but would not accept Jewish children whose mother was not Jewish and had not converted to Judaism.  
  
Board grants \$18,000 for local Jewish population study by Dr. Fred Massarik.
- 1971            Elected to two-year term on Federation board.  
  
Chairman, constituent agencies division; on social planning and budgeting committee.  
  
Overnight sit-in by group of thirty-five young men and women students who present demands related to claim that there is insufficient support for Jewish education. Subcommittee on

youth, education, and recreation and the budgeting committee to meet with students.

1972 On social planning and budgeting committee.

Jewish Vocational Service established.

1973-1976 President, Bureau of Jewish Education.

Vice-chairman of Advance Division of annual campaign; on fundraising committee and social planning and budget committee of 100.

Mr. Lowenberg and others on executive committee meet with representatives of Hebrew Academy, which wants to become direct constituent agency rather than presenting program and needs through the Bureau of Jewish Education, and it also wants to be included in the capital funds campaign.

President Feldman announces decision that no allocation be made to the Hebrew Academy because of interference in 1973 campaign. Subsequent lawsuit by Hebrew Academy settled out of court in 1975.

Chairman of Community Division of campaign

1975 Appointed to executive committee by President Green; vice chairman of capital funds campaign; on fundraising committee; on committee to review and recommend Federation policy regarding real estate.

Louis Weintraub designated consultant; Brian Lurie names chief executive officer.

Jewish Vocational and Career Counseling Service now a constituent agency.

DROME Associates formed by Federation members to buy property for non-profit project, a proposal of the Federation's committee on aging.

1976 On fundraising committee and allocation review committee for capital funds.

Jewish Community Endowment Fund created as a standing committee, Marshall Kuhn director.

1977 Chairman, annual Campaign. Chairman, fundraising committee; on personnel committee.

- 1978 Federation vice-president, on cash collections committee of campaign and fundraising committee. Appointed by Federation to Menorah Park board.
- General Assembly in San Francisco.
- Executive committee recommends major reorganization of United Jewish Appeal, which should have significant Federation representation.
- Project Renewal accepted; Tel Hanan will be the project town.
- 1979 Federation vice-president; on executive committee; on personnel and Project Renewal committees.
- 1980 Federation treasurer; chairman of finance committee; vice chairman of personnel committee; on Endowment Fund Committee.
- 1981 Federation vice-president; on ad hoc committee to study content and structure of board agenda and site of board meetings; on ad hoc committee to study United Jewish Community Centers; vice chairman of personnel committee, and on committees of Project Renewal, fundraising, capital funds, Endowment Fund.
- Concept of confederation accepted by East Bay and San Jose Federations.
- Bay Area Coordinator, World Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors.
- 1982 Chairman of building committee for new Federation building; on committees of capital funds, fundraising, and Project Renewal. As member of Project Renewal, to be part of planning and budgeting process.
- Federation name changed from Jewish Welfare Federation to Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, Marin County and the Peninsula.
- Kiryat Shmona adopted as second Project Renewal city.
- South Peninsula multi-use facility is a reality.
- Sonoma County merges with Federation.
- 1983-1984 President, Jewish Community Federation; term to be 1-1/2 years --in order to synchronize with new fiscal year. Ex officio member of philanthropic fund advisory committee of Endowment Fund and of building committee. Chairman of executive committee and the confederation committee.

During presidency:

New Federation building dedicated.

1983 campaign, \$15.5 million, most successful in Federation's history.

New program: JEAN (Jewish Emergency Aid Network).

First time confederation fundraising event.

Capital investments in Albert L. Schultz Jewish Community Center, the Gauss wing of Brandeis-Hillel day school at Brotherhood Way, the new Koret wing of the Jewish Home for the Aged.

- 1983 Federation receives Schroder Award for confederation from Council of Jewish Federation at General Assembly in Atlanta.
- Brian Lurie reports on Jewish Agency and plans to reform governance structure. Federation is the first ever to make an in-depth study of the Jewish Agency.
- Mr. Lowenberg refers to "A Crossroad to Responsibility" article and gets board approval for creation of overseas committee. The committee recommends opening San Francisco office in Jerusalem, becoming first community to do so.
- Project Renewal committee to study the Jewish Agency and Federation's relationship to it.
- 1983-present Member Philanthropic Advisory Committee, Jewish Community Endowment Fund.
- 1983-1990 Member, Board of Governors of the Jewish Agency.
- 1983-1993 Member, United States Holocaust Memorial Council, subsequently serving as vice-chairman. Council is fund-raising arm of U.S. Holocaust Museum.
- 1984 Member of Amigour--the Housing Committee of the Jewish Agency. Subsequently appointed chairman of Amigour.
- Board approves demographic study of confederated areas.
- 1985 Overseas committee now a standing committee. Richard Goldman reports that San Francisco is first community to establish an overseas committee and to raise questions about Jewish Agency's governance and accountability.
- Jewish Service Corps begins--fully subsidized college students to work in Israel. First time American Jewish establishment has stood behind programs involving Diaspora youth service in Israel.

"Who Is a Jew" issue; Jewish Identity Task Force to take up issues polarizing Jewish world.

By-laws revision adds Women's Division president to executive committee.

Member, Endowment Fund subcommittee to deal with issues arising in future regarding Hebrew Academy's capital project (\$1 million from Endowment Fund).

Assists in establishing new Hawaiian Federation.

Honored by State of Israel Bonds and the San Francisco Holocaust Center, which establish the William J. Lowenberg Fund for the Holocaust Library and Research Center.

1985-1987 Chairman, committee for remembrance, Jewish Community Relations Council of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties.

1986 Chairman, San Franciscans for Good Government.

Allocation of \$100,000 for independent projects in Israel out of 1986 overseas allocation. Brian Lurie states, " The goal is to strengthen the bond of the Federation with Israel. Amuta committee headed by Avraham Infeld.

Jewish Community Information and Referral Service, funded by grant from Endowment Fund; newly formed and coming out of Jewish Identity Task Force.

1987 Chairman, Northern California Israel Bonds campaign.

1988 Mr. Lowenberg, as board member of the Jewish Agency, is asked about its Creative and Innovative Fund. Fund is for programs regarding Arab-Israeli relations; economic development, fostering peer relationships between Israeli and Diaspora Jews, and programs encouraging democracy, civil and consumer rights in Israel.

This is year the Jewish Agency accedes to the Federation demands.

1989 Received American Jewish Committee Distinguished Service Award.

Member, Eva Heller Kohn Helping Fund of Jewish Community Endowment Fund.

Project Freedom campaign for Soviet Jews.

- 1990           General Assembly in San Francisco.
- 1992           Jerusalem Award (with wife, Fern), from American Committee for  
Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem.
- On Northern California AIPAC board.
- Delegate, Republican National Convention.
- Co-chairman with Harold Dobbs for construction of \$20 million  
new wing of Jewish Home for the Aged.
- Member, executive committee, California-Israel Exchange.

## TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENT ON POSTER

Notice from the Erfurt Branch Office of the District of Central Germany of the *Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland* (Reich Association of Jews in Germany), dated September 10, 1942, containing "Changes in Packing Regulations of September 4, 1942."

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Important Notice concerning Changes in Packing Regulations from September 4, 1942

To be followed precisely!

In accordance with the last directives, it is permitted to take the following:

(1) A knapsack or suitcase with the following equipment, no unwieldy items, including complete outfits, to consist in detail of:

For men:           3 sets of underwear  
                  2 suits (including the one you are wearing).

For women: 2 summer and 2 winter dresses (including the one you are wearing).

For everyone: a coat, 2 pairs of shoes in good condition (including the pair being worn), 2 sets of bed linens, towels, and the like.

Also sweaters, socks or hose, warm gloves, warm caps, and the like.

Everything is to be limited in quantity.

If possible, everything is to be stamped with full name or marked in ink with laundry marks.

**EVERYTHING MUST BE IN GOOD CONDITION!**

(2) Bedding, consisting of a blanket rolled together with pillows in a cover.

(3) Provisions for three days, a dinner plate or pot with a large and small spoon.

Everything is to be packed in a bundle or satchel.

All pieces of luggage are to contain identification tags, on which the exact address is listed.

One suitcase key should be attached to the suitcase itself, the second key is to be retained by you.

The one piece of luggage can only be as large as can be easily stored in a luggage rack above the seat in a railway car.

We are already informing you today that dwellings must be left in clean condition. Perishable foodstuffs are not to be left behind.



## WICHTIGE BEKÄNNTMACHUNG

über

ÄNDERUNG DER GEPÄCKVORSCHRIFTEN vom 4.9.1942.

G e n a u e s t e n s zu beachten!

Nach letzten Anweisungen darf mitgenommen werden:

1. Ein Rucksack oder ein Koffer mit Ausrüstungsgegenständen,  
kein sperriges Gut,

enthaltend vollständige Bekleidung

- des näheren -

für Männer: 3 Garnituren Unterwäsche,  
2 Anzüge einschließlich des am Leib getragenen,für Frauen: 2 Sommer - und 2 Winterkleider, einschließlich der  
am Leib getragenen,für alle Mäntel, 2 Paar Schuhe in ordentlichem Zustand, einschl.  
~~der getragenen~~, 2 Garnituren Bettwäsche, Handtücher u.ä.,  
Wolljacken, Strümpfe, warme Handschuhe, warme Mütze u. dergl.  
- alles in beschränktem Umfang -,  
möglichst alles mit vollem Namen gestempelt oder mit  
Wäschebinte gezeichnet.

A l l e s i n g u t e m Z u s t a n d e !

2. Bettzeug, bestehend aus Decke im Überzug mit Kopfkissen, eingerollt.

3. Mundvorrat für 3 Tage, Essgeschirr (Teller od. Topf) mit großem  
u. kleinem Löffel.

Alles in Beutel oder Handtasche verpackt.

Alle Gepäckstücke sind mit festem Anhänger, auf dem die  
genaue Anschrift verzeichnet ist, zu versehen.1 Kofferschlüssel ist am Koffer anzubinden, der zweite  
wird in eigene Verwahrung genommen.Das Gepäckstück darf nur so groß sein, daß es bequem  
über dem Sitzplatz im Waggon untergebracht werden kann.Wir machen schon heute darauf aufmerksam, daß die Wohnungen in  
s a u b e r e m Zustand verlassen werden müssen.

Verderbliche Lebensmittel dürfen nicht zurückbleiben.

Erfurt den 10.9.1942

Außenstelle Erfurt  
der  
Bezirksstelle Mitteldeutschland  
der Reichsvereinigung der Juden  
in Deutschland.

## TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENT ON POSTER

Report from SS Lieutenant General Oswald Pohl, Chief of the SS Central Office for Economy and Administration (WVHA), to Heinrich Himmler, dated 6 February 1943 (Nuremberg document NO-1257): concerning recyclable textiles and possessions taken from deceased Jewish deportees to the Lublin (Majdanek) and Auschwitz concentration camps.

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Report about the Valuation of Used Textiles from the Jewish Resettlement

6 February 1943

TOP SECRET

The attached list provides an overview of the quantities of used goods obtained from Jewish resettlement to the concentration camps at Lublin (Majdanek) and Auschwitz. In this context, it is important to note that the quantity of rags is extremely high. This of course reduces the value of the used clothing, especially the men's clothing. We are therefore unable to completely meet the full quota of men's clothing requested.

Shipment by train has been particularly difficult. Shipments have been backlogged because of the constant freezes on the use of rail transport, so that goods have accumulated in several concentration camps.

This has been especially noticeable since December 1942, since the ban on shipments to the Ukraine has prevented us from delivering the used clothing promised to ethnic German resettlers there. Consequently all deliveries for ethnic Germans in the Ukraine has been rerouted via Litzmannstadt (Lodz) by the Ethnic German Aid Office (*Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* or VOMI) and stored there in a large warehouse. As soon as the transport situation has eased, VOMI will carry out the distribution of these goods.

Requisitioning the required number of freight cars could until now only be implemented through close cooperation with the Reich Ministry of Economics. The Ministry of Economics will inform the Reich Transport Ministry that shortages of textiles and other raw materials necessitate the shipment of used textiles from the General Government.

Signed: Pohl, SS Lieutenant General and Waffen SS General

Aufstellung

Über die von den Lagern Lublin und Auschwitz auf Anordnung des Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt abgelieferten Mengen an Textil-Altmaterial:

1. Reichswirtschaftsministerium

Männer-Altbekleidung  
ohne Wäsche . . . . . 97 000 Garnituren

Frauen-Altbekleidung  
ohne Wäsche . . . . . 76 000 Garnituren

Frauen-Seidenwäsche . . . . . 89 000 Garnituren

insgesamt: 34 Waggon

Lumpen 400 Waggon 2 700 000 kg

Bettfedern 130 Waggon 270 000 kg

Frauenhaare 1 Waggon 3 000 kg

Altmaterial 5 Waggon 19 000 kg

insgesamt: 2 992 000 kg

insgesamt: 536 Waggon

570 Waggon

2. Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle

Männerbekleidung:

Mäntel 99 000 Stck.  
Röcke 57 000 "  
Westen 27 000 "  
Hosen 62 000 "  
Unterhosen 38 000 "  
Hemden 132 000 "  
Pullover 9 000 "  
Schals 2 000 "  
Pyjamas 6 000 "  
Kragen 10 000 "  
Handschuhe 2 000 Paar  
Strümpfe 10 000 "  
Schuhe 31 000 "

Kinderbekleidung:

Mäntel 15 000 Stck.  
Knabenröcke 11 000 "  
Knabenhosen 3 000 "  
Hemden 3 000 "  
Schals 4 000 "  
Pullover 1 000 "  
Unterhosen 1 000 "  
Mädchenkleider 9 000 "  
Mädchenhemden 5 000 "  
Schürzen 2 000 "  
Schlüpfer 5 000 "  
Strümpfe 10 000 Paar  
Schuhe 22 000 "

Frauenbekleidung:

Mäntel 155 000 Stck.  
Kleider 119 000 "  
Jacken 26 000 "  
Röcke 30 000 "  
Hemden 125 000 "  
Blusen 30 000 "  
Pullover 60 000 "  
Unterhosen 49 000 "  
Schlüpfer 60 000 "  
Pyjamas 27 000 "  
Schürzen 36 000 "  
Blütenhalter 25 000 "  
Unterkleider 22 000 "  
Kopftücher 85 000 "  
Schuhe 111 000 Paar

Wäsche usw.:

Bettbezüge 37 000 Stck.  
Bettlaken 46 000 "  
Kopfkissen-  
bezüge 75 000 "  
Geschirrtücher 27 000 "  
Taschentücher 135 000 "  
Handtücher 100 000 "  
Tischdecken 11 000 "  
Servietten 8 000 "  
Wolltücher 6 000 "  
Krawatten 25 000 "  
Gummi-  
schuhe und Stiefel 24 000 Paar  
Mützen 9 000 Stck.

insgesamt: 211 Waggon

Jackets	26,000	"	Pillow cases	75,000	"
Skirts	30,000	"	Tea towels	27,000	"
Shirts	125,000	"	Handkerchiefs	135,000	"
Blouses	30,000	"	Towels	100,000	"
Sweaters	60,000	"	Table cloths	11,000	"
Underwear	49,000	"	Napkins	8,000	"
Panties	60,000	"	Wool scarves	6,000	"
Pajamas	27,000	"	Ties	25,000	"
Aprons	36,000	"	Galoshes and		
Bras	25,000	"	boots	24,000	pair
Slips	22,000	"	Hats	9,000	pieces
Head scarves	35,000	"			
Shoes	111,000	pair			

# Man Who Escaped Nazis Becomes U.S. Citizen

By JACK TINKLE

"Good citizenship is just good housekeeping," Mrs. Farlin B. Nye of the Daughters of the American Revolution told a class of new citizens in federal court Monday after the group had sworn to be loyal Americans.

Each American, the speaker explained, must "do his full share according to the best of his ability in support of continuing progress in these United States." Mrs. Nye addressed a class made up largely of military personnel. Of the 46 inducted, only 14 were civilians.

Among those who expressed their appreciation of Mrs. Nye's talk was a 27-year-old German-born petitioner who spoke with knowledge of what it is to live under the new tyranny which Mrs. Nye likened to that which 300 years ago drove the early colonists from their native lands to found a new civilization in the wilderness.

## Jews Persecuted

William Jacques Lowenberg was 10 years old when his family left a Germany which no longer would permit individuals to live their own lives because they were Jewish.

The family moved to Arnheim, Holland, in 1938, but soon found the Nazis hounding them again. In November, 1942, the whole family was arrested in raids which swept up thousands of Jews. After a short time in a German concentration camp in Holland, William was sent without his family to Auschwitz, a concentration camp in Germany. A week later his parents and sister arrived, but the joy of reunion turned to horror when the youth saw them herded into the gas chamber.

After the futile uprising by the Jewish population of Warsaw, William was among those ordered

into the ghetto to clean up after the bloodbath. He stayed there until the following year when the Russians approached the former Polish capital. Then with 4,400 others he was sent to Dachau. Crowded 90 into a boxcar, only 1,500 survived the hideous journey.

## Offered Cigarette

He remained at Dachau until the Americans liberated the camp — "at 12:30 noon, April 30, 1945," he said, the day burned into memory. When a GI offered him a cigarette, the 86-pound William fainted. Eager to come to America, he sweated out a waiting period and was admitted on an affidavit signed by an uncle in San Francisco. The first sight of the Statue of Liberty was the "most thrilling moment" of his life. Two uncles and his grandmother still live in Holland.

In San Francisco he went to night school to finish his education a Nazi edict had curtailed six months before his arrest.

His quiet voice was emotional as he told about the man who gave him his first "break in America." Albert E. Albertson, a San Francisco realtor, took him into his firm. He had worked up to being a salesman when he requested active service after spending some time in a Reserve Guard outfit. At present he is an acting supply sergeant stationed at Fort Lewis.

# Dachau POW Finds Peace In U.S. Army

**FT. LEWIS.** — An odyssey of agony almost beyond human endurance has ended in happiness and peace for Cpl. William J. Lowenberg of the 2nd Infantry Division.

The troop information and education non-com was seized with 4,000 Dutch countrymen in 1942 and sent from Holland to a labor camp at Auschwitz, Poland. Everyone who could not work was killed. Corporal Lowenberg never saw his family again after arriving at Auschwitz.

An accident while working in a ditch left the corporal with a gaping cut on his leg, and he was sentenced to death. It was then he planned to escape.

He hid in an attic four days while a friend brought him food. He smuggled himself aboard a truck convoy with prisoners which was leaving Auschwitz for an unknown destination.

Human indignities followed—days without food and water, of standing at attention in the rain, of being thrown into icy water, and of traveling in boxcars crowded with 80 to 90 people. The labor prisoners arrived at Warsaw where they built their own barracks and renovated the Warsaw Ghetto.

### Ill With Typhus

Corporal Lowenberg contracted typhus and the disease held him for 14 days. Shortly after his recovery, pneumonia conquered him and wasted the once stout and hearty Dutchman to a meager 84 pounds.

When the Allies steamrolled to the gates of Warsaw, the workers were shipped by boxcar to Dachau. There the laborers constructed underground factories and prepared subterranean munition dumps.

Corporal Lowenberg will always remember April, 1945, when



**CPL. W. LOWENBERG**

American soldiers liberated Dachau. The corporal saw the first American infantryman cautiously edge over the rise of a hill. He was wearing a camouflaged helmet and carrying a walkie-talkie. Other soldiers soon followed and the prisoners rushed to greet them and warn them away from the high-tension wires surrounding the camp. "The generous Americans gave us our first cigarettes in years, and dressed our wounds. The C-rations tasted like a Thanksgiving meal. Their humor, ideals and way of life were our best medicines."

### Back Home

He returned to Holland late in 1945 to find only three of the original 4,000 that were shipped from his homeland to Auschwitz. Corporal Lowenberg maintains correspondence with the survivors. He worked for the International Red Cross identifying pictures, served the Dutch government by giving war crimes and inheritance testimony, and restored his father's department store before coming to the United States in 1949.

The corporal, who has an uncle living in San Francisco, came here "to live a normal life. I wanted to live free for once and forget Europe."

Corporal Lowenberg, who speaks German, Dutch and English, joined the service out of appreciation for the country which has made him a citizen and offered him new faith in the dignity of man.

**LOWENBERG IS LOCAL COORDINATOR**

**'81 Survivor World Gathering For Past, Present And Future**

**By Phil Bronstein**  
(Jewish Bulletin Assistant Editor)

There are very few events that can be said to have impact in terms of the past, present and future. One such event is scheduled for June 15 to 18, 1981 in Israel.

The World Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, an event which hopes to bring together all those Jews who suffered under the shadow of Hitler, will have great

significance, not only for the survivors and their own past, but for future generations, according to the event's organizers.

The gathering was conceived by Ernest Michel, the executive vice president of the United Jewish Appeal-Federation in New York, part of a dream he had while in Auschwitz, that "someday we would be able to come together as one and say to Jews and non-Jews

all over the world that what happened to us must never happen again in human history."

One of the friendships Michel forged in that struggle to survive in the camps was with local Jewish community leader William Lowenberg. Lowenberg is the coordinator for the World Gathering in the Bay Area and is hoping to organize together as many survivors as possible to attend the event in Israel next year. "It will be a one-time event," Lowenberg says. "Most of us are older" (Lowenberg, at 53, is one of the younger survivors — he was 18 when he got out of the camp) "and this is perhaps the last opportunity for us to get together on a large scale."

Lowenberg feels that there will be an enormous sense of spirit at the Gathering, similar to the "This Year In Jerusalem" mission to Israel several years ago when thousands of Jews marched through the streets of Jerusalem. Any such gathering would, in addition to the emotion inherent for the survivors, make a strong statement about Jewish survival as a whole. But Jewish survival may on-



**Lowenberg**

ly be a corollary lesson that the organizers of the Gathering hope to teach. "What we hope to accomplish," Lowenberg says, "is to again remind the world that there was a Holocaust...we, the physical witnesses are still here." Lowenberg points out that there is now, more than ever, an attempt being made in many countries to deny the existence of the

Holocaust. He feels that the Gathering will be a statement too emphatic to ignore and will create a lasting impression.

But despite its ultimate lesson of history, Lowenberg says that for many who attend, the event will be an emotional reunion. And, according to Ernest Michel, it will be a testimonial of sorts to those who did not survive. "It's something we owe to their memory...and to ourselves," says Michel. And, he added, it will be something owed "to future generations."

Michel is the chairman of the World Gathering which is being held under the patronage of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Author and Chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council Elie Wiesel, and Simone Veil, president of the European parliament, are honorary chairmen. The organizers expect many thousands of survivors to attend. Michel says it may well be the largest number of people to come to Israel for one event. Participants have been encouraged to bring their families to "reinforce the continuity of our history and heritage."

The Gathering is intended to be symbolic in many ways. It is being held 36 years after the liberation of the concentration camps; 36 is twice Chai (18), the Jewish symbol for life. The fact that it is being held in Israel also has its significance because, Lowenberg points out, "Israel is the focal point of the Jewish people." There are, however, technical

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

July 25, 1983

Dear Mr. Lowenberg:

Enclosed is the Press Release dated July 21, 1983 in which the President announced his intention to appoint you as a Member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council.

Your offer to serve on the Council is certainly greatly appreciated by the President.

Sincerely,



Barbara McQuown  
Associate Director  
Presidential Personnel

Mr. William J. Lowenberg  
125 Santa Ana Avenue  
San Francisco, California 94127



## THE WHITE HOUSE

## Office of the Press Secretary

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For Immediate Release

July 21, 1983

The President today announced his intention to appoint the following individuals to be Members of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council for the remainder of terms expiring January 15, 1986:

NORMAN BRAMAN would succeed Frank R. Lautenberg. Mr. Braman is President of a car dealership in Miami, Florida. He has served as Vice President of the Greater Miami Jewish Federation. He was a founder and serves on the Board of the Mount Sinai Medical Center. He graduated from Temple University (B.S., 1955). He is married, has two children and resides in Miami Beach, Florida. He was born August 22, 1932 in West Chester, Pennsylvania.

WILLIAM J. LOWENBERG would succeed Albert A. Spiegel. Mr. Lowenberg is a real estate developer in San Francisco, California. He is President-Elect of the Jewish Community Federation and is a board member of the Council of Jewish Federations. Mr. Lowenberg is a survivor of the Nazi Holocaust of World War II. He is married, has two children and resides in San Francisco, California. He was born August 14, 1926 in Ochtrup, Germany.

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# Remembering Mengele: a voice of doom from the past

By PEGGY ISAAC GLUCK  
Of the Bulletin Staff

Just a week ago, Susan Lowenberg of San Francisco stood in a spot in Poland where her father William stood more than 40 years ago. But in 1943, when William Lowenberg was at the railroad station in Birkenau, he feared for his life.

"I stood in front of Josef Mengele," said William Lowenberg. "He pointed at me and asked 'Vie alt?', how old are you? I said 18. I was 16. I don't know why I said that: I was upset because I lied. I was upset because everyone younger and everyone older were sent to the other side."

YON: the other side were trucks that took them to crematoria. Lowenberg was sent to a work camp.

Four decades later, Lowenberg, a Jewish community leader and a member of the U.S. Commission on the Holocaust, finds it hard to talk about those days, days that still haunt him. But he did talk to the Bulletin last week about them, the same week that about 100 others testified about their experiences with Mengele at a "mock trial" in Jerusalem.

The hope of those in Jerusalem — mostly twins and dwarfs who were the main victims of Mengele, the Auschwitz doctor who caused the deaths of thousands of Jews through grotesque medical experiments and who remains at-large today — is to call attention to his crimes.

Lowenberg did something recently to fight back in a different way — he was among the group of survivors who backed a mission into the South American country of Paraguay, the country believed to

be Mengele's haven for some years.

"I want to find that, that inhuman monster, that murderer," Lowenberg says, "because a week later, my parents, my sister, my grandfather came through the same process. But they went right to the gas chamber."

The mission took the form of an international delegation that met with Paraguayan government officials, who agreed to launch an investigation into the whereabouts of Mengele.

The delegation included French Nazi-hunter Beate Klarsfeld, Brooklyn district attorney Elizabeth Holtzman, Bishop Rene Valero and Menachem Rosensaft, chairman of the International Network of Children of Jewish Holocaust Survivors.

The mission was followed last week in Israel by the Jerusalem hearing, which was timed to coincide with the 40th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

At the same time, U.S. Attorney General William French Smith announced that the Justice Department would open an investigation into reports that the Nazi war criminal had been held in Vienna, which after the war was an American occupation zone.

Mengele, now 73, is believed to live in a remote military area in Paraguay. He is thought to have come there in 1959 or 1960 from Argentina, soon after the Israelis abducted another notorious Nazi, Adolf Eichmann, from Argentina.

From then on, his life became a secretive maze. From the time West Germany sought his extradition in 1962, sightings have been reported all over Paraguay. The Germans sought another extradition in 1979,



Photo by Peggy Isaac Gluck  
Visibly moved by his memories, William J. Lowenberg recalls the day at Auschwitz when he faced Josef Mengele.

only to be told by the Paraguayans that Mengele no longer resided in that country and that his citizenship had been revoked.

Lowenberg says he isn't sure exactly what the mission could do to help catch Mengele, but he notes that public pressure was helpful when it came to arresting another notorious Nazi, Klaus Barbie. Barbie was extradited from Bolivia in 1982 and is scheduled to face trial in France this spring for crimes against humanity.

"I want (Mengele) to be caught and tried and exposed," Lowenberg says. "The whole experience was so devastating, so overwhelming, so shocking. It takes days for me to get over it when I talk about it."

Lowenberg had been asked by a few friends in New York to help finance the December mission. He

remembers, would decide who would live and who would die.

Suddenly, Lowenberg's anger returns. "The person who had that much power granted to him by a nation in the 20th century should not be a free man."

There are few people alive today who knew Lowenberg in Westerbork, the camp in Holland that was the first of the many concentration camps he was held in. One in ZimBABWE. Another in France. They just met each other again after 40 years. It was a miracle, Lowenberg believes.

During his time in the concentration camps, Lowenberg worked on the road gangs in the railroad yards, in the quarries. He doesn't wonder anymore why he survived. Every day in the camps, he wished only to make it through that day.

"The most important thing we knew we wouldn't get out. On one side of the worries of survival, of food and medicine, we were concerned that no one would be alive to tell the story," he explains.

This summer Lowenberg will attend a reunion of survivors of Westerbork, to be held in the United States at a location still to be determined. He also plans to attend survivors' reunions in Philadelphia and Israel.

There's an irony in the emphasis on the Holocaust now, Lowenberg says. "When we were ready to talk after the war, when we wanted to talk, there was no one who wanted to hear the story."

"Now," he adds, "there isn't a day that goes by that I don't remember about it. I don't need a help to remember it, and since I'm a member anyway, it makes it harder to go into the details."

By PEGGY ISAAK GLUCK  
Of the Bulletin Staff

More than 800 people jammed the White House Rotunda Tuesday for a solemn, hour-long Yom Hashoah service sponsored by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

San Francisco Jewish community leader William J. Lowenberg, who was named vice chairman of the council Monday, was master of ceremonies for the ceremony.

The San Franciscan, past chairman of the survivors' committee of the Jewish Community Relations Council of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma, introduced other participants in the program, including council chairman Elie Wiesel; Vice President George Bush; Holocaust survivors Benjamin Meed and Sigmund Strochlitz, co-chairmen of the Council; and Sen. Robert Dole (D-Kan.).

Lowenberg began his short talk by speaking of the solemnity of the day of remembrance, asserting that by coming together in "this center

of American government...we may all remember and pay homage together."

He talked about being a survivor of Auschwitz. "My presence here today, along with so many other survivors of that atrocity we call the Holocaust, demonstrates that, in an important sense, we won. They did not beat us. We are here; they are not. But the evil of bigotry, anti-Semitism, racial and religious hatred, is still with us.

"To confront and repel these dark forces, we must keep memories alive." Lowenberg noted "how much easier it is for all of us to remember...by gathering as we do here and in similar gatherings across our nation."

The Jewish community leader also outlined the critical need for education, particularly to teach "our children that [what] has occurred once must never happen

again...By understanding the ramifications of hatred and bigotry, we and our children will come to know why we must resist the impulse to inhumanity in ourselves, and which we must fight it in others. It is indeed a cancer that must be excised."

Lowenberg also outlined the work of the council and its plans for the future, including a permanent home and museum in Washington, for which groundbreaking ceremonies took place last year. Opening ceremonies are projected for 1988.

He also praised the government for the support the council has received. "The U.S. is the only country outside the state of Israel to support remembrance of victims of the Holocaust," he said.

Prior to the commemoration, the place of Gypsies on the council was discussed. The Gypsies, who lost some 500,000 people to the Holocaust and are said to number about 250,000 in the United States today, have been campaigning for representation.

A first-time photo exhibit marking Yom Hashoah at the Capitol included a portion on the tragedy of the Gypsy people.

Lowenberg addressed this matter, too, saying, "We seek ways to remember *all* who suffered under the Nazis — the six million Jews including one million children; the Gypsies, who were incarcerated in the ghetto and who perished in gas chambers at Auschwitz; the priests, nuns and patriots of many nations; the millions of others murdered."

Participants in the ceremony stood silently under the Capitol dome as Wiesel awarded the first Eisenhower liberation medal to American soldiers and officers who liberated the concentration camps in 1945. The medal was established, he explained, to recognize "outstanding contributions to human rights and freedom."

Wiesel presented the medal to U.S. Army Chief of Staff John Wickham and to Gen. Lawton Collins and Lt. Gen. William Quinn, officers who played important roles in the liberation of the camps, as well as to Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.), who twice was decorated for heroic achievement as a soldier in World War II.

"I have seen them — American soldiers, officers, came in crying," Wiesel said, recalling the terrible sights that greeted his own liberators at the war's end.

The Jewish novelist-essayist

called the medal an expression of gratitude to "all the officers, all the commanders" who helped bring the nightmare of Hitler's genocide to an end.

Addressing his third Holocaust ceremony since they were initiated in 1979, Bush stressed, as did all the speakers, the imperative of remembrance.

"Forty-one years have passed since that April afternoon. The youngest of the liberators is in his 60s now," Bush observed. "For four decades, these men have served — as have the survivors of the camps — as the bearers of witness. They have testified to the full truth of the Holocaust. We must make sure that their memory survives them."

In another address at the ceremony, Miles Lerman, co-chair of the council, who fought as a resistance leader in Poland during the war, stressed the important role of the resistance fighters. He called for a "concentrated effort to document and record all these acts of bravery, courage and sacrifice" witnessed in the war, as preparations are made for the Holocaust museum.

"The myth that Jews offered no resistance must be debunked," Lerman declared.

Twelve members of Congress participated in the lighting of memorial candles for the Holocaust victims, as Cantor Isaac Goodfriend chanted *Ani Maamin (I Believe)*. And ceremonial music by the U.S. Army Band and U.S. Army Chorus closed the ceremony, as flags of the 10 Army divisions that liberated the camps were displayed.

## Wiesel, Lowenberg get Holocaust posts

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Elie Wiesel, the renowned author and lecturer, will be appointed to a second term as the head of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, the White House announced Monday.

It also was announced that San Francisco Jewish community leader William J. Lowenberg will be vice chairman of the council, succeeding Mark Talisman of Washington, D.C.

The announcements, issued during President Ronald Reagan's visit to Tokyo for the economic summit, came almost a year after Reagan visited the West German military cemetery in Bitburg where members of the SS Waffen are buried.

# Holland's Westerbork Camp: A Way-Station for Genocide



Approximately 104,000 of Holland's 140,000 Jews passed through Westerbork on their way to concentration camps and death camps. Here, men, women and children at Westerbork wait in line with their luggage to board the deportation train.

Fifty years ago, on July 14, 1942, the Germans began the systematic transport of Jews from all over the Netherlands to the Westerbork transit camp, located at a tiny railway spur in Drenthe, the poorest and least populated region of Holland. The next evening, a transport of approximately 1,000 Jews left Westerbork en route to Auschwitz. Mass deportation from Westerbork to Auschwitz had begun, resulting in the death of more than 75 percent of the Dutch Jewish population, including German Jewish refugees.

Approximately 104,000 of Holland's 140,000 Jews passed through Westerbork en route to the death camps at Auschwitz and Sobibor, among them, the young diarist Anne Frank. In July and August 1942, about 11,200 Dutch Jews were deported from Westerbork to Auschwitz.

they were deported to Westerbork. "We were treated fairly well there," she recalled. "We still felt that we were human — we were even able to remain in contact with people outside the camp." But all that changed when she was deported to Bergen-Belsen in January 1944.

German-born William J. Lowenberg of San Francisco, Council vice chairman, also fled to Holland with his family in 1936. In the fall of 1942, they were arrested and taken to Westerbork. "Life was bearable, but we lived in constant fear that we'd find our names on the weekly deportation list; that was all people talked about," he said.

He recalled the eerie tranquility that settled upon the camp each Tuesday immediately after the weekly transport pulled out of the railway yard, his most vivid memory of Westerbork. "It was the calm after the storm," he said. "We were always so depressed then, but at the same time, we never lost hope."

In the spring of 1943, Mr. Lowenberg's worst fears were realized when he found his name among those to be deported. At age 16, he was separated from his family and sent to Auschwitz. "I was frightened to death, but there was nothing I could do," he said. "I was powerless."

Through photographs, film footage, text and artifacts, the permanent exhibition will chronicle how many officials in

West European countries assisted Nazi Germany in carrying out the "Final Solution," particularly in the mass deportations to the East from France, Belgium and the Netherlands that began in July 1942.

Westerbork was initially opened in October 1939 for the internment of German Jewish refugees who had entered the Netherlands illegally. But on July 1, 1942, the camp was transferred from Dutch to German hands.

Through the intercession of Ench Deppner, the first German camp commandant, approximately 80 percent of the inmates, primarily German-Jewish prisoners who had arrived before July 14, 1942, were exempted from the deporta-

tion. Thus, the camp housed two classes of prisoners — permanent residents who led a semi-normal life working for the war effort, and the masses who passed through on their way to Auschwitz — although by late 1943, most of the German Jews were also being deported to the East.

Deportations from Westerbork to Auschwitz ceased in 1944 as the war front approached. When Canadian units liberated Westerbork on April 12, 1945, there were 900 Jewish prisoners in the camp.



William J. Lowenberg, at age 15, outside a friend's home in Holland shortly before being sent to Westerbork. In 1943 he was deported to Auschwitz. Mr. Lowenberg, a San Francisco resident, is Council vice chairman.

## U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council

Harvey M. Meyerhoff, Chairman  
William J. Lowenberg, Vice Chairman  
Sara J. Bloomfield, Executive Director  
Joseph M. Brodecki, Campaign Director  
Joshua H. Weinberg, Museum Director  
Nancy Paine, Director of Communications  
Dora B. Goldberg, Editor

Gerard Leval, General Counsel  
Areni Fox, Kassner, Moulton & Kahn

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council was established by Congress in 1980 to build the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. and to encourage annual nationwide commemorations of the Holocaust known as the Days of Remembrance.

The written contents of this newsletter may be reprinted without permission.

The Act creating the Council stipulates that the Museum be built with private contributions. To find out more about how you can help, or to send a tax-deductible contribution, please contact:

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Among the many Westerbork documents that Ruth (Wiener) Klemens of Storrs, Conn., has donated the Museum is a map she sketched of the transit camp (above), as well as work permits and passes issued to her during her seven-month internment there. Several of these documents will be included in the permanent exhibition.

Almost simultaneously with widespread deportations taking place across Europe the extermination camps went into full-time operation.

Ruth (Wiener) Klemens of Storrs, Conn., has given the Museum a number of documents she collected during her seven-month internment in Westerbork, including a sketch she made of the transit camp, as well as work permits and passes.

Ruth Wiener and her family fled their native Germany to Amsterdam in 1934. In June 1943

# Lowenberg axed from D.C. museum post

DEBORAH KALB  
States News Service

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Just weeks before the scheduled opening of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the White House has asked two Republican political appointees on the museum's council to leave their posts.

San Francisco real estate developer William Lowenberg, who is the museum council's vice president, and Baltimore builder Harvey Meyerhoff, chair of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, have

been asked to step down Friday, April 30.

Dedication ceremonies are scheduled for Thursday, April 22 at the museum, which will open to the public Monday, April 26.

Lowenberg — a prominent Jewish and civic leader who survived Dachau and Auschwitz — was appointed to the council in 1986 by former President Ronald Reagan, and later reappointed by President George Bush. He has been an influential member of the Republican Party for years.

Lowenberg declined to comment on

being asked to resign.

The council serves as a fund-raising arm of the museum, which was constructed with more than \$150 million in private donations. The museum, which is in the process of being transferred to U.S. govern-

ment control, was built on public land.

Sources said Meyerhoff contributed approximately \$6 million toward the effort.

"Mr. Lowenberg and I fully understand and respect the president's desire to appoint new council leadership," Meyerhoff said in a statement Sunday. "We will continue to work with the White House and the new leadership to ensure a smooth transition and successful start-up of museum operations."

Meyerhoff said he and Lowenberg were asked to remain on the council after they

step down from their posts.

Many of the other 50-plus members of the council, who were presidential appointees by previous Republican

administrations, are expected to be replaced under the Clinton administration.

But the idea of dismissing the two officials just weeks before the museum's opening struck some officials as peculiar.

Rep. Sidney Yates (D-Ill.), who is on the Holocaust council and also serves as chair of the subcommittee that appropriates money for the museum, said he had heard there was pressure to replace Meyerhoff as chair.

"I anticipated he'd be replaced but I didn't think it would happen so soon," said Yates, adding that he did not know the source of the pressure. "There was no need for this kind of immediate replacement."

According to unnamed sources, the White House also delayed a search to find a new museum director.

The council had set up a search committee and hired an executive search firm to replace Jeshajahu Weinberg, who came out of retirement to serve as director and is not expected to stay in the post.

"Regardless of what the White House says, the search should continue," said Yates, who is on the search committee.

Malcolm MacKay, managing director of Russell Reynolds Associates, the firm retained by the museum to search for a director, called the search committee "totally non-partisan" in its attitudes.

He said he was not sure why the White House would call the search to a halt at this point. "We have several very good candidates," he said Monday. "I'd hate to see it lost."

Yates said one of the candidates being considered for the post was Washington-based scholar Walter Reich.

*Jewish Bulletin reporter Leslie Katz contributed to this report.*

## Defending Lowenberg

How could you be so cruel to publish a story with the screaming headline "Lowenberg axed from D.C. museum post" (April 9 *Bulletin*)?

Billy Lowenberg and his associate Harvey Meyerhoff have devoted enormous time, energy and money to the successful development of this marvelous building as a testimony to the Jewish experience in the Holocaust. They are the victims of a thoughtless political act which I find impossible to understand. Clearly, the museum should go far beyond the reach of political maneuvering.

However, I do not understand or sanction your decision to blast this story in such a heartless manner on the front page of the

*Bulletin*. It smacks of yellow journalism of the worst kind. You should have handled this story in a more considerate and compassionate manner in view of Billy Lowenberg's contributions to the Jewish community, San Francisco, Israel and the Jewish world.

At the very least, you should find a way to reduce the anger and hurt caused by your thoughtless exaggeration of this event.

GEORGE FOOS  
 San Francisco

*EDITOR'S NOTE: We felt it was a Page One story because President Clinton unceremoniously announced William Lowenberg's removal from office just three weeks before the opening of the museum. We also understand some readers may be upset that we used the word "axed" in the headline; that, however, is purely a journalistic headline word often substituted for a longer one that won't fit in the allotted space. In no way did the Bulletin mean to impugn Bill Lowenberg, who has been a tireless benefactor to the Jewish community here and abroad.*

June 1984

LOWENBERG COMPLETES TERM AS JCF PRESIDENT

To Bill Lowenberg, JCF President, the new Jewish Community Federation building symbolizes the full circle of his personal Jewish experiences - in Holland, Poland, Germany, Israel, and San Francisco.

"It's still hard sometimes for me to believe that I, who was lucky enough to live through the Holocaust, would become president of one of the most dynamic Jewish Federations in America," he says. "And, even more, that during my presidency, I would have the honor of helping dedicate the new JCF building, which is a testament to our community's strength, caring, growth, and promise of continued vitality."

As a teenager, the Dutch born Lowenberg "grew up" in Nazi concentration camps and witnessed the destruction of Eastern Europe's Jewish life - the people, the culture and the buildings.

As a young man, 40 years ago, he made a new home in San Francisco. The assistance he received from the Jewish community revived his faith in Jews caring for and helping each other.

Today, as a respected and mature Jewish leader, Lowenberg has served at the helm of various general as well as Jewish communal organizations including the Jewish Home for the Aged and the Bureau of Jewish Education. When asked why he keeps up such a fast pace of volunteering, his answer is simple, "I am fulfilling my dream and my obligation to help rebuild the Jewish world after the Holocaust."

Lowenberg -2-

Under the leadership of Lowenberg, the '83 Campaign was the most successful (\$15.5 million) in JCF history. JCF's other record accomplishments include: attracting a substantial number of new givers; expanding existing programs (like opportunities for young people to go to Israel); creating new programs (like JEAN, Jewish Emergency Aid Network); enhancing the Jewish Bulletin; conducting first time "confederation" fundraising events; and initiating the largest number of capital investments.

The capital investments, assisted by the Jewish Community Endowment Fund, include the Albert L. Schultz Jewish Community Center, the Gauss Wing of the Brandeis Hillel Day School (at Brotherhood Way JCC site); and the new Koret wing of the Jewish Home for the Aged.

On the topic of Confederation, a concept he helped pioneer nearly five years ago, Lowenberg says, "It's beneficial to all four participating northern California Federations - for raising more money and also for sharing information, resources and adding vitality to our respective communities.

All these and many other achievements, he says, attest to JCF's ability to understand and respond to contemporary Jewish life and its shifting patterns of lifestyles, family structures, demographics, and relationships with Israel.

As the JCF representative on the Jewish Agency's Board of Governors, Lowenberg has met and worked with worldwide Jewish leadership and is proud of the way San Francisco is viewed globally. We're looked upon as innovative, as a community that



Lowenberg -3-

is politically astute and extremely caring to Israel - physically, morally, and politically."

Lowenberg, who has a reputation for always saying "yes" when asked to speak, especially likes meeting with young people.

"They are our hope and our security for the Jewish future. They represent new involvement and the continuity of leadership. As a veteran leader I felt so good to see our ranks being filled by young, intelligent men and women who care and who want to create a Jewish life for themselves and for their families."

Commenting on the value of being a volunteer in the Jewish community, Lowenberg says he has met wonderful people and made lifelong friends. One 'side benefit' was, he says, having the opportunity to stand up and talk. "I used to be a Nervous Nellie," he laughs, "but now I'm a much more confident public speaker."

Lowenberg -4-

Lowenberg's pride in becoming a community leader is sometimes tinged by sadness. "What a terrible loss the Six Million represent," he says with a quiet voice and a far-away cast to his eyes.

"Look at the remnant of Jewish survivors and notice how many have chosen to do work that in some way helps improve the world. Imagine how much more good might have been accomplished if those others -- those lost ones -- would have had a chance to share themselves and their abilities...as I have."

# Exodus blitz here seeks \$11.8 million in 3 months

**SUZAN BERNIS**  
Bulletin Correspondent

**A** three-month blitz to raise funds for Operation Exodus, to rescue Jews from the former Soviet Union and resettle them in Israel and the United States, has started throughout the Bay Area.

The goal of the San Francisco-based Jewish Community Federation is to raise \$10 million between April 1 and June 30, said William J. Lowenberg, past JCF president who will chair the drive.

Mort Friedkin, president of the Jewish Federation of the Greater East Bay, which also plans to complete its campaign by the end of June, said he's seeking an additional \$1.8 million.

Lowenberg, noting that he and Friedkin and other campaign leaders will be asking for second and sometimes third Operation Exodus gifts, acknowledged that "it's going to be tough, but I'm confident that our donors will rise to the challenge when they

see how serious the situation is in the former Soviet Union, and how much is being accomplished in Israel as well as here in our own community."

A Holocaust survivor, Lowenberg noted that Operation Exodus is funding "an orderly exit, which we have the luxury of having now, but which could change at any time. I recall vividly that 60 years ago we did not have this luxury."

Since glasnost began in 1989, when Mikhail Gorbachev allowed Soviet Jews the freedom to emigrate, more than 700,000 have left. Some 500,000 settled in Israel, with the remainder coming to the United States.

Operation Exodus was established by the United Jewish Appeal and local Jewish



Operation Exodus chair William J. Lowenberg discusses the Jewish population remaining in the former Soviet republics.

federations to fund the massive emigration. Since the campaign's inception in 1990, donations from American Jewish communities have paid for transportation costs out of the former Soviet Union as well as absorption services in the United States and Israel that include language classes, counseling, job retraining and Jewish acculturation activities.

With \$30 million already pledged by JCF donors in the four-year Operation Exodus

campaign, the final push will fulfill a commitment to contribute \$40 million to the nationwide United Jewish Appeal total of \$1.25 billion.

A successful campaign in the East Bay will bring that federation's Operation Exodus four-year total to \$6 million.

Meanwhile, throughout the 15 republics of the former USSR, more than 1 million Jews have initiated the immigration. *See OPERATION, Page 21*

# Operation Exodus seeks \$11.8 million locally by June 30

**Continued from Page 1**

process in the midst of political and economic turmoil and rising anti-Semitism, often in the form of rampant nationalism.

"It's not a matter of if [they'll leave], it's when. Everyone we met — in Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent — said we're OK here but we know we have to leave," said John Goldman, who last month, along with his wife Marcia, led a group of eight JCF leaders on a fact-finding trip to Moscow and Uzbekistan. "Even as they get their affairs in order, they feel the pain of being wrenched from their ancestral homeland."

When "you see for yourself the unraveling of a community [such as in Uzbekistan], it hits you right between the eyes," Goldman said.

Wayne Feinstein, JCF executive vice president, who visited the area last October, added that "in mixed neighborhoods, where Muslims and Jews have always had cordial, friendly relationships, conditions have become uncomfortable. One father told us that his neighbors' kids, who are now attending an Islamic day school financed by outside money from Iran, won't play with his kids anymore. Tensions are high, and things have vis-

ibly worsened."

At least 10 of the 15 states of the former Soviet Union reportedly are politically unstable — or worse. Civil wars are raging in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Tajikistan.

Russia, the largest state with as many as 1 million Jews, may be the most volatile. In southwestern Russia near the Georgia border, inter-ethnic conflict has so seriously threatened the 30,000 Jewish residents that Jewish Agency officials have set up an infrastructure similar to the one utilized in Ethiopia to enable immediate evacuation should the need arise.

Equally problematic are the economic disasters ravaging many of the states. In Ukraine, where more than half a million Jews remain, the economy has reached rock-bottom. "It's a basket case, much worse than Russia," reported David Waksberg, executive director of the Bay Area Council for Soviet Jews.

In the meantime, Israel has coped with its 500,000 immigrants more quickly and far better than was expected. "Two years ago, people were saying that Israel would take forever to build housing for the new immigrants and even longer to create jobs for them. Today, there are no homeless olim,



JCF Operation Exodus campaign chair William Lowenberg chats with two emigres from the former Soviet Union now working in San Francisco's Jewish community, Galina Svyatenko (right) and Slava Sotopova.

and unemployment in Israel is projected to drop to 9.6 percent this year," said Lowenberg.

More than 80 percent of the immigrants are now working, government statistics show. And while many are working at jobs for which they are overqualified, Operation Exodus has funded new programs to rectify that situation through job retraining, language classes and job creation.

In the Bay Area, 12,500 Soviet Jews have been reunited with their families at a rate of 2,500 per year since 1989. About 25 percent of the JCF's Operation Exodus funding goes directly to the community to support services provided by a consortium of resettlement agencies, guided by Jewish Family and Children's Services.

In the East Bay, according to Friedkin, \$400,000 from the next months' campaign will be returned to the community.

As the result of local programs, 85 percent of the newcomers are self-sufficient and require no social services within two years of arrival.

"Our Bay Area resettlement program is one of the nation's most successful, and has been used as a model [in the U.S.] and even in Israel," Lowenberg commented.

To launch the final phase of the campaign, Lowenberg issued a call to action to former presidents and campaign chairs at a March 25 meeting. Across the bay, a leadership group met Wednesday of last week for an update on the urgent need to continue rescuing Jews, said F.riedkin.

"If only there could have been an Operation Exodus in the 1930s as there is today," Lowenberg said, "millions of lives would have been saved."

**Donations to the Operation Exodus campaign can be made either to the Jewish Community Federation, 121 Stewart St., San Francisco, CA 94105, or the Jewish Federation of the Greater East Bay, 401 Grand Ave., Oakland, CA 94610.**

# Holocaust memories stir 430 at dinner lauding Lowenberg

By NADINE JOSEPH  
Special to the Bulletin

Bill Lowenberg's rise from the ashes of the Holocaust came alive Saturday in a dramatic narration of his life that detailed his isolation to the rear bench of the class as a 7-year-old Jew in Ochtrup, Germany; his bar mitzvah in Holland five years after his family was smuggled out by a farmer; living hell in Auschwitz where he was forced to burn the bodies of other Jews; his success in real estate; and his devotion to building San Francisco's Jewish community.

It could have been simply a moving ceremony, as 10 survivors each lit a candle to honor the six million Jews of 10 nations murdered in Nazi concentration camps, and to mark the 47th anniversary of *Krystallnacht*, the beginning of the darkness of the Holocaust.

It could have been simply an elegant two-*napkin*, kosher dinner with edible centerpieces and Tofutti dessert for 430 guests in the grand ballroom of San Francisco's Fairmont Hotel, raising approximately \$35,000 for a permanent William J. Lowenberg fund for Holocaust education and research for the Holocaust Library and Research Center in San Francisco, and selling more than \$3.5 million in Israel Bonds.

It could have been simply the most personal, best-planned tribute to Lowenberg, complete with a surprise visit from his friend and fellow Auschwitz survivor, Jackie Handell, who was flown in from Israel for the occasion.

And, finally, it could have been a bitter reminder by speaker David Wyman that American politicians and Jewish leaders knew about the Holocaust but did little to save Europe's Jews. The message from Wyman, the non-Jewish author of *The Abandonment of the Jews*, was clear — that the state of Israel was an absolute necessity, and that that Jews must fight anti-Semitism as soon as it appears.

But the New Life dinner was more than all of that.

Speaker after speaker illuminated Lowenberg's life through a different lens. At the end of the evening, visibly moved, Lowenberg reminded the audience that anti-Semitism was on the rise again, that hundreds of books were being burned, and that bogus historians were claiming that the Holocaust never took place.

"I believe it is urgent to confront bigotry and hate," he said. "We must teach youth to look darkness in the face, that no one is immune to inhumanity. It is vital to keep the memories alive.

"We must tell the world that Jews will never again be silent. Jews will never again abandon Jews anywhere. Never."

Most of the narrators set the scene historically before recounting personal anecdotes. Dr. Michael Thaler, president of the Holocaust Library and Research Center and a survivor, described Lowenberg as "a fighter for our *nechama*," the Jewish soul.

"In a visceral sense, all Jews are survivors of the Holocaust," he said. "The Jewish people are no longer satisfied with mere survival."

Lowenberg was characterized as a Sgt. Bilko when he taught American history to other recruits in the U.S. Army; as a young bachelor who joined the Buffalo club in San Francisco; as a fighter for San Francisco's Holocaust memorial; and as a Republican named to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Commission by President Reagan.

In a telling anecdote, Lowenberg's daughter, Susan, described her father's reaction to her trip to Auschwitz last year. Lowenberg told his daughter not to sink into depression at the sight of the death camp. "You have to remember that we won," he told her. "They didn't beat us."

Handell, who was born in Salonika, Greece, and met Lowenberg in Auschwitz, described the dramatic meeting of two young boys, one Ashkenazi, one Sephardic, torn away from their loving families. "Jack and Willy became brothers," he said. "We never lost hope in one another."

The miracle, said Handell, was that he was able to come out of Auschwitz to go to Israel, and that Lowenberg had helped build a Jewish community in San Francisco.

The evening also included tributes from the two couples who chaired the event, Annette and Harold Dobbs and Thelma and Kenneth Colvin; Israeli Consul Yaakov Sella; Lowenberg's son, David; and Jerome Braun, former president of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties — as well as the reading of telegrams from San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein, the heads of major Jewish organizations, and President Reagan.

The survivors who lit candles for the Jews executed or murdered in death camps included Frances Gage, for 4.5 million Polish Jews; Eda Pell, for 125,000 Germans; Emil Knop, for 65,000 Austrians; Andrew Stern, for 277,000 Czechs; Gloria Lyon, for 402,000 Hungarians; David Galant, for 83,000 French Jews; Renee Duerling, for 106,000 Dutch Jews; Tauba Weiss, for 60,000 Yugoslavs; and Isaac Sevi, for 65,000 Greek Jews. Two children of survivors, Ingrid Tauber and Darlene Basch, also lit candles.

In his speech, Wyman explained that because of disunity in the Jewish community during World War II, it took Jewish leaders 14 months to organize and push to allow refugees entry into the United States.

Only 10 percent of the usual quota of European refugees were allowed entry by U.S. immigration officials — 21,000 Jews came in, and 189,000 quota places were never used. "One phone call from the White House would have allowed the full quota," said Wyman.

He emphasized the importance of the state of Israel. "Now there is a Jewish voice and a Jewish influence in the United States. Jewish leaders don't have to stand hat in hand, begging for a chance to be heard," he said.

After his speech, Wyman told the *Jewish Bulletin* that he was happy to see a rise in Jewish activism. "Activism shows that Jews have learned," he said.

## WILLIAM J. LOWENBERG

If ever the title "Jewish Community Leader" was designed to be a natural fit with a man's mind and heart, William Lowenberg is that man. Many claim it was inevitable that he, a survivor of the Nazi Holocaust, should become a leader of the Jewish community. That is a limited view of a man who, from his first day of freedom, pledged his entire life to the Jewish people, to the State of Israel and to the nation which gave him refuge, the United States. And he has fulfilled that pledge.

No one has a more fervent passion for the creative survival of the Jewish world than Bill Lowenberg. No effort, no organization, no need has ever been insignificant in his eyes; nor has he ever been less than responsive to any of them. His current portfolio of leadership posts is but a taste of the multitude of activities to which he has given time, thought and his resources. He is Vice Chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, National Vice Chairman for the State of Israel Bonds, a member of the Board of Governors of the Jewish Agency for Israel, President of San Franciscans for Good Government, Vice Chairman of AIPAC and a respected member of the Board of Directors of the American Jewish Committee's San Francisco Bay Area Chapter. In recent years, Bill served as President of the Jewish Community Federation, the Jewish Home for the Aged and the Bureau of Jewish Education. He was the Western Regional Chairman for the United Jewish Appeal and General Chairman of the State of Israel Bonds. His enormous capacity to give freely of his counsel extends into the general community. He now serves as a Board member of the San Francisco Institute on Aging and the Rose Institute of Claremont McKenna College. He has been a commissioner of San Francisco's Commission on Aging and a member of the Mayor's Special Commission on Redevelopment.

Bill Lowenberg constantly seeks out men and women to join him in what he considers a sacred quest: the search for a strong, connected and flourishing Jewish world. He is truly a rare and relentless explorer. The American Jewish Committee is particularly proud to join with his friends and community leaders to honor him.

By JEREMY GORDIN  
Special to the Bulletin

"How could I not be involved?" Susan Lowenberg asked a hushed audience at the Jewish Community Federation's annual dinner last week.

Accepting the 1991 Lloyd W. Dinkelspiel Award for outstanding young Jewish leadership, Lowenberg reviewed the issues in her life that drove her toward ever-increasing involvement in the Jewish community.

Often returning to the refrain, "How could I not be involved?" she recalled growing up looking at the number tattooed by the Nazis on the arm of her father, William Lowenberg, who would later become president of the JCF.

Another inspiration in Lowenberg's Jewish life was Avital Sharansky (wife of former Soviet prisoner of conscience Natan Sharansky), whom she met while a teenager at Camp Swig in Saratoga.

"I'd known before about the power of numbers — the importance of demonstrating en masse for the release of Soviet Jews," Lowenberg said. "But from that woman I learned for the first time about the power of one."

In an interview last week following her speech at Congregation Sherith Israel, Lowenberg said her personal hands-on involvement with the community began in the summer of 1983, when she joined the Young Adults Division, of which she later became president.

"Making a difference is what makes a difference to Susan Lowenberg," she explained. "Judaism is going to be safe with my generation. It may be different, but it's going to be safe."

Lowenberg, 31, who is vice president of the Lowenberg Corp., a property leasing company owned by her father, is the youngest recipient of the award.



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## *Jerusalem Award Dinner to Honor Fern & Bill Lowenberg*

# THE 1992 JERUSALEM AWARD

Fern and Bill Lowenberg will be the honored guests at the Northwest Region's 1992 Jerusalem Award Dinner Saturday evening, December 5, at the Fairmont Hotel, announced the Region's Chairman Martin S. Gans. The Lowenbergs will receive the Jerusalem Award in recognition of their exemplary leadership throughout the Jewish and secular communities. Long-time members of Shaare Zedek in San Francisco, the Lowenberg name has become synonymous with Jewish philanthropy, leadership and activism. Neal Sher, Director of the Office of Special Investigations, U.S. Justice Department and an internationally recognized expert in the prosecution of Nazi war criminals, will be the evening's guest speaker. Chairing the evening is an illustrious group of friends and admirers of the Lowenbergs'. Ambassador Zalman Shoval serves as the International Honorary Chairman, Governor Pete Wilson is the California State Honorary Chairman and Mayor Frank Jordan is the San Francisco Honorary Chairman. Dinner Co-Chairmen are close friends Donald Kahn, Alvin T. Levitt and Bertram M. Tonkin.

An inspiration to us all, Bill is the best example of determination and a fighting spirit. Having survived eight concentration camps during the Holocaust, he has built a

successful real estate business in San Francisco, gained national recognition as a Jewish and political leader, nurtured a 35-year marriage and been a loving father and role model to children David and Susan and grandchildren Alison and



*Honorees Fern and Bill Lowenberg.  
Photo: Jo Fielder*

Daniella. Most recently, Bill has been instrumental in the building of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. slated to open April, 1993. He serves as the Museum's Vice Chairman having been appointed by both Presidents Reagan and Bush. Born in Germany and raised in Holland, Bill is truly a self-made man.

In addition to raising a family and supporting Bill throughout all his endeavors, Fern has played an active role

in community life as well. A graduate of Stanford University, she is a native San Franciscan and has been involved with numerous organizations throughout the years. She is a past president of San Francisco Hillel, former board member of the Jewish Home for the Aged, past board member of State of Israel Bonds Women's Division, past board member of Mt. Zion Auxillary, formerly active in the sisterhood of Temple Emanu-El and in the Women's Division of the Jewish Community Federation.

The Jerusalem Award is presented annually to exceptional men and women, such as the Lowenbergs, in Jewish communities around the globe. The event this year is even more auspicious as it coincides with the 90th anniversary of Shaare Zedek and the building of the Comprehensive Heart Institute, now underway. All proceeds from the event will be dedicated to endowing a special project in the Lowenbergs' name in the state-of-the-art Heart Institute, expected to open October 1993.

It is with great pride and admiration that the Northwest Region pays tribute to Fern and Bill Lowenberg at the 1992 Jerusalem Award Dinner.

*American Committee for Shaare Zedek*



### Shaare Zedek names 2 to board

Two S.F. Bay Area Jewish activists, Martin S. Gans (left), northwest regional chair of the American Committee for Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem, and William J. Lowenberg, past chair and a 25-year board member of the region, have been named to the International Board of Governors for the medical center. The region is headquartered in San Francisco.



### Gets global award

Susan Lowenberg, 33, has been given the Harry Rosen Young Leadership Award, one of three international citations presented young leaders by the United Israel Appeal, Keren Hayesod and the World Zionist Organization. Lowenberg has served on the S.F.-based Jewish Community Federation board, is a member of the UJA Young Leadership Cabinet, and has served on San Francisco's Planning Commission.

"Lowenberg Takes over from Linker as Israel PAC Chairman," Northern California Jewish Bulletin, July 25, 1986

By PEGGY ISAAK GLUCK  
Of the Bulletin Staff

Businessman William J. Lowenberg has been elected chairman of San Franciscans for Good Government, the local 350-member pro-Israel political action committee. Lowenberg, who will begin his tenure Friday, Aug. 1, succeeds Dr. Donald Linker, who served as chairman since 1984.

SFGG, which was founded in 1981 following the Election Reform Act, gives monetary support to candidates seeking federal office who back strong U.S.-Israel policies and ties.

The San Francisco-based SFGG, the eighth largest pro-Israel PAC in the United States, is one of 75 Jewish PACs among the approximately 4,500 special interest groups across the country.

The non-partisan SFGG, with members from San Francisco, Marin County and the North Peninsula, has given hundreds of thousands of dollars to pro-Israel candidates across the country. Under its by-laws, the PAC does not give funds to candidates from California but encourages its members to contribute to those campaigns as individuals.

Under the law, PACs, defined as affinity or interest groups, can give candidates \$5,000 per primary or general election. Individuals can give \$1,000 per election. Often, candidates will get money from PACs, and from individuals as well, during their campaign swings.

Thus far in the '86 campaign, SFGG has contributed \$70,000 to candidates, and when the group's allocations committee meets this September, "there will be a large allocation" for candidates in the November election, according to Debra Trubowitch, recently named director of SFGG.

"Contributions were almost equally divided between Republicans and Democrats," she added. This phenomenon "is a fascinating thing, to see Democrats and Republicans work together on a single political issue. Party politics are really put to the side."

Lowenberg comes to his new position with years of experience in the Jewish community and party politics. Chairman of the Committee of Remembrance of the Jewish Community Relations Council of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma, he is past president of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Pe-

ninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties, a member of the board of governors of the Jewish Agency, vice chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, and chairman of the Israel Bonds Organization in Northern California.

The new SFGG chairman said his main aim is to expand the PAC's influence through increased membership and candidate contribution. "Since this is an Israel PAC, our record has shown influence of honest caring, and that the Jewish community has influence on the legislature as long as it benefits both the United States and Israel."

It is essential that besides maintaining strong U.S.-Israel ties, American Jews have an obligation "as Jews and as American citizens that we have to be vocal because we are entitled to use our political rights to do what we believe is good for the Jewish world," Lowenberg said.

Linker described SFGG as "one of the strongest pro-Israel PACs in the country in terms of dollars, national publicity and national support. Candidates are willing to make personal appearances," which shows the group's effectiveness, he said.

During Linker's tenure, SFGG, the biggest of the four Israel-oriented PACs in Northern California, has become "more educational in terms of newsletters and disseminating articles from magazines and newspapers from across the country," he added. This has dramatically increased membership and the number of givers, showing that it is as important to educate members as solicit them for funds, Linker said in an interview.

"Most people can't keep up with the national races," he observed.

The Bay Area, according to Trubowitch, has become recognized nationally as an area that has strong political involvements. For each election, more and more candidates — both incumbents and those seeking office for the first time — are campaigning here "almost more than any other city."

Trubowitch said her job will be three-fold: "to track the political records of incumbents and candidates from across the country to see their views on U.S.-Israel relations; fund

raising; and administration." She began her post in the spring, shortly after SFGG's leaders saw the need to increase membership and to raise more funds for candidates.

A native of San Mateo, she holds a degree in political science from U.C. Berkeley and a double master's degree from Hebrew Union College and University of Southern California in Jewish communal service and public administration. While studying for her master's degree, she spent a year working at the American Jewish Congress' Washington, D.C., office. Previously Trubowitch worked for the Community Relations Council of the Los Angeles Jewish Federation-Council.

"For me, this job is the perfect melding of two concerns — love of Israel and interest in politics," she said.

SFGG's headquarters are at 220 Montgomery St., Suite 415, S.F., and information can be obtained by calling 788-5386.

# GOP Jews forgive abortion plank, focus on Israel

By GARTH WOLKOFF  
Of the Bulletin Staff

Despite a strong anti-abortion platform, most Jews who attended the Republican National Convention support a woman's right to choose an abortion, according to a Jewish delegate from San Francisco.

But the issue is not important enough to drive them from the party, said William J. Lowenberg, former S.F. Jewish Community Federation president.

On the contrary, Republican support for Israel during the past two weeks has led him and other Jewish party members once again to vigorously support the GOP.

Lowenberg, a Holocaust survivor and vice chair of the Washington, D.C.-based U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, said the combination of President Bush's agreement to guarantee \$10 billion in loans to Israel and a "strong pro-Israel" convention plank made Jews in Houston "feel very good."

In a telephone interview from the Adams Mark Hotel, where he was staying along with the California delegation, Lowenberg described "a very large Jewish contingent" at the convention wearing buttons on their clothes proclaiming "I'm a pro-Israel Republican."

Most of those people, Lowenberg learned in conversations, consider themselves pro-choice. In fact, "I would say that the abortion issue is the foremost discussion of all the people

is the president's apparent turnaround on U.S.-Israel relations. His year-long refusal to grant Israel the loan guarantees — which ended last week with a verbal agreement to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin — and his caustic comments about the American Israel Public Affairs Committee last September did not deter Republican Jews this week, Lowenberg said.

American Jewish organizations have criticized the Bush administration on numerous occasions during the last year and many pundits believe the president will receive far less than the 30 percent of Jewish votes he garnered four years ago.

Nonetheless, the GOP's Mideast platform plank has been universally cheered by Republican Jews.

Listening to speeches by members of Congress and the Bush administration, and in several discussions with Republican leaders, Lowenberg became convinced there will be cross-the-board support for loan guarantees and stronger U.S.-Israel ties should Bush win a second term.

Lowenberg said cocktail-party comments made to him by Newt Gingrich, the influential seven-term representative from Georgia, and Vin Weber, a six-term congressman from Minnesota, led him to believe there is more support for Israel than ever.

The Republican Party belief in a strong national defense, Lowenberg added, will "keep strong-arm dictators in line,

which is what we saw in the Iraq situation."

Lowenberg said he hadn't read the entire Republican Party platform and therefore declined to comment on various elements of the plank, such as the call for prayer in public schools — something the organized American Jewish community has traditionally opposed.

He blamed the media for exaggerating the influence religious Christian organizations have on the party, saying there was little sense at the convention that Christian right-wing politics affected any of the platform

planks.

Lowenberg said former presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan, who has a history of anti-Zionist comments and is considered anti-Semitic by many Jewish organizations, was not well-received on the convention floor — not just by Jews, but also by most Republicans.

But he compared Buchanan to the Rev. Jesse Jackson, who spoke at July's Democratic convention and who has been accused in the past of making anti-Semitic remarks, and said Buchanan had every right to speak to the convention.

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Eleanor K. Glaser

Raised and educated in the Middle West. During World War II, spent two years in the U.S. Marine Corps Women's Reserve.

Senior year of college was taken in New Zealand, consequently A.B. degree in sociology from University of Michigan was granted in absentia. Study in New Zealand was followed by a year in Sydney, Australia, working for Caltex Oil Company.

Work experience includes such non-profit organizations as Community Service Society, New York City; National Society for Crippled Children and Adults and National Congress of Parents and Teachers in Chicago.

After moving to California in 1966, joined the staff of a local weekly newspaper, did volunteer publicity for the Judah Magnes Museum and the Moraga Historical Society, and was the Bay Area correspondent for a national weekly newspaper. Also served as a history docent for the Oakland Museum.

Additional travel includes Great Britain, Europe, Israel, Mexico, and the Far East.











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