

# FEATURED ARTICLE

## A LABOR OF LOVE: THE FLORA HOMMEL STORY

by SUSAN BROHMAN

*Flora Hommel, a native Detroiter, is the founder of the Detroit-based, non-profit organization Childbirth Without Pain Education Association, which espouses and teaches the Lamaze method of natural childbirth, which Flora learned and brought to the United States from France.*

GIVING birth to her only child Claudia, in January 1950, did more than change Flora Nadine Suhd Hommel's life. Her pain-free delivery inspired this Detroit native to transform the childbirth experience for thousands of expectant parents.

Today, we take for granted the myriad options available – from a home birth with a midwife to a hospital surrounded by the latest medical bells and whistles. However, in the 1950s, the mostly male school of American doctors preferred to sedate patients to eliminate childbirth pain, giving women little control in how their babies arrived in this world. As the founder of the Detroit-based, non-profit organization Childbirth Without Pain Education Association (CWPEA), Flora Hommel struggled to change our attitudes toward childbirth.



*Flora Suhd Hommel is credited with introducing the Lamaze method of pain-free natural childbirth to the Detroit area.*

She championed childbirth rights for more than five decades, believing that women should be able to prepare emotionally and physically for labor so the process could be a relaxed, relatively painless experience requiring little or no medication. She fought tirelessly for the rights of pregnant women and their families to give birth on their own terms.

### IN THE BEGINNING

Flora's dedication to pain-free delivery possibilities began in Paris. She was born in 1928 to Morris and Rae Albaum Suhd, who raised their daughter and son, Melvin, at Congregation B'nai David in Detroit. At age

15, Flora met a friend of her brother, Bernard Hommel, a senior at Central High School. They developed a close friendship and corresponded while he served in the World War II. In August 1946, when she was 18, the couple married. They sailed to France where he studied music, courtesy of French government scholarships and the GI Bill. Flora found odd jobs, furthered her study of French and translated and taught English. While living the bohemian lifestyle of ex-patriots in the City of Lights, Flora became pregnant.

Flora's only knowledge of childbirth came from classic novels and movies, and plenty of family stories about the pain of delivery. Her fears were furthered by a religious slant that claimed labor pain was payment for Eve's sin. "My mother told me she was 'on the table' for 18 hours with both my brother and me," Flora recounted in the handwritten manuscript she had hoped to publish. "My aunt told me how marvelous it was to be knocked out completely. So it was only natural that I sought a doctor who would knock me out," Flora wrote.

Each time she tried asking her doctor a question, she would find a tongue depressor in her mouth or some equal obstruction to communication, she wrote. Being a woman intolerant of such treatment, Flora sought an alternative. Through friends, she discovered British nurse-midwife, Mrs. McNulty, who taught prenatal classes at the American hospital. Luckily, no one told Flora that McNulty focused on natural childbirth methods.

"Had I known she was teaching natural childbirth, I would have run the other way so frightened was I," Flora recounted.

In addition to answers, Mrs. McNulty provided books, including *Revelations of Childbirth* by Grantly Dick-Read (later reissued as *Childbirth Without Fear*). The book, although not easy reading for someone without a medical background, left an impression on the expectant mother. "By the time I labored through it two or three times I was totally convinced that childbirth should be a painless experience," she wrote. "I wasn't too sure I would be in that fortunate majority, but I was going to give this method a try. What could I lose?"

She formulated a plan, waiting until the last minute to arrive at the hospital to avoid medication before delivery. It worked flawlessly, although she later admitted that giving birth in the hospital wheelchair was not part of her strategy. Later that day while hearing the painful cries of other women in labor, Flora wondered why her delivery was so much easier.

That's when she decided to dedicate her life to help other women experience pain-free childbirth as opposed to the "horrendous undignified animal-like experience that I felt these women were undergoing. From my birth experience was born a new strength. The feeling of 'I can conquer the world' was to serve me well in years to come."

She started preaching the gospel of her newfound revelation to her friends. Still, she could not understand why some women experienced a painless delivery and others did not. Then, when she heard about Dr. Fernard Lamaze's work in the Soviet Union to help women give birth without pain, Flora became determined to learn more.



July 1952, Flora, Claudia and  
Bernard Hommel

## STUDYING WITH DR. LAMAZE

By a magnificent set of circumstances, Flora made contact with a doctor at the Metal Workers' Hospital in Paris where Dr. Lamaze and his assistant, Dr. Pierre Vellay, worked.

"Perhaps because I was an American, and perhaps because the people involved in the program were so eager to spread the word, I was allowed to attend the course given by Dr. Lamaze, Dr. Vellay and the entire team," she wrote. The training involved a method called psychoprophylaxis, which translates to mind (psycho) and prevention

of pain (prophylaxis), but referred to by French women as *l'accouchement sans douleur* - Childbirth Without Pain (CWP).

Based on conditioning of the mind and changing attitudes about labor pains, Flora wrote, "I could see that this method of birth would be far more effective for more people. It could work for any woman who was interested and who would work for it."



*Dr. Pierre Vellay trained with Dr. Lamaze and helped to train Flora Hommel. The two remained friends for many years.*

In 1951, under the direction of Dr. Lamaze, Flora attended and assisted in some 40 deliveries at the Metal Workers Hospital, according to an early CWPEA brochure. Sixty years later, struggling with Alzheimer's, Flora still recalls Lamaze as "a very nice man who was very bright. I listened to everything he said and I got to learn things that were very helpful."

## BRINGING LAMAZE'S METHODS HOME

Flora's determination to help women deliver without pain did not disappear when she and Bernard returned to Detroit in 1953. While Bernard taught piano, Flora set her sights on sharing her new-found skills.

After talking to doctors, nurses and educators, Flora decided she needed medical credentials before tackling her goal. "It would be necessary to have some letters after my name," she recalled. Although she would have preferred "M.D." as two of those letters, she thought going to medical school while raising her own child on a limited income was too daunting a task. So Flora opted for a nursing degree at Wayne State University.

"It turned out to be my best advantage," Flora wrote. "I could reach more people, both professional and lay, as a nurse, than I probably would have been able to do as a doctor."

She graduated in 1958 with a B.S. degree in nursing, earning top scores on her state nursing board exams. From her home on Pierson St. in Detroit, in 1958, Flora finally began teaching Lamaze. In creating a curriculum, Flora adapted the material she learned in France to meet American education and delivery situations while keeping the essence and principles intact.

"I don't know quite how I got started, but pupils did begin coming to me. They came to my home and I held classes, encouraging husbands to come whenever possible. Most husbands did, though how much a part of it they were I am not sure," she wrote, recalling one husband who read a newspaper the whole time.

One of the first deliveries she assisted in was Marilyn Foley's eldest child in July 1958. Marilyn and Flora met in 1954 as Wayne nursing students.

"She was older than most of us and we all knew that her intentions were to start the Lamaze method here in Michigan," said Foley, who now lives in Farmington Hills, Michigan. "She was always kind of reserved and very focused on what she wanted to do."



*Flora Hommel was never short on words when it came to enlightening others about her natural birth methods.*

Although she appreciated Flora's pleasant demeanor while coaching her through her first delivery, it was rougher than expected, Foley said, explaining she needed Demerol® to relax her uterus since labor was not progressing as planned. Still, it did not deter her from trying natural childbirth again.

"She was with me during that delivery and the next," said Foley who eventually had five children using the techniques she learned from Flora. "She taught me to relax and to focus on my breathing and that all would turn out well. Everyone who went through the process was very happy with it. It certainly helped because most of us wouldn't have known what to do."

By the end of her first year, Flora had taught the Lamaze method to about 80 couples. Each time it required a battle with hospital administrators, but she often assisted the mothers as a monitrice (coach) during birth, and fought for husbands to be allowed in the delivery room.

As word of her work spread, Flora realized she needed help — an organization to promote the ideas she learned from Dr. Lamaze. In 1960, she and supporters founded Childbirth Without Pain Association, which in 1964 was officially incorporated as the non-profit Childbirth Without Pain Education Association (CWPEA). According to its bylaws, CWPEA would establish an educational institution for the instruction and

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Pictured with Dr. Ethelene Crockett

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*Flora Hommel cared for patients through the "Fourth Trimester," after delivery.  
She is pictured here working with a new mom and her baby.*

promulgation of the psychoprophylactic or Lamaze method of painless childbirth and fund research to improve the method. As CWPEA's executive director, Flora supervised and coordinated activities to achieve CWPEA's goals such as the maintenance of quality education, in-service training of teachers and monitrices, programs and workshops.

### PERSONAL SETBACKS

In the midst of getting CWPEA off the ground, Flora separated from Bernard. And while the couple shared a deep dedication to the growing peace and civil rights movements, it wasn't enough to hold their marriage together, which ended in 1967. Bernard, who now lives with his wife Kay in Florida, still has fond memories of his first bride.

After the divorce, the self-determined Flora continued her work and studies, eventually marrying long-time Teamster union leader Jack White, who served as chairman of the Detroit-Wayne County Area Agency on Aging. The couple split in 1982 and Jack died in 1997. Flora still lovingly refers to him as her husband.



*Flora and Jack White (left) hosted an annual summer barbeque at their home. Detroit leaders such as Mayor Coleman A. Young (right) and other local celebrities attended.*

## DELIVERING SUCCESS

Flora's persistence paid off with the growth of CWPEA (also known as the Lamaze Birth Without Pain Education Association). Along with hundreds of dedicated volunteers and professionals, Flora began promoting the benefits of "prepared" childbirth. She connected with others across the country, including Marjorie Karmel, who had written *Thank you Dr. Lamaze*, detailing her birth experiences in Paris with Dr. Lamaze.

In the aftermath of a January 17, 1960, story in the women's section of the *Detroit News* detailing the experience of Mrs. Floyd Abatt of Beverly Hills, Michigan, and her success with the CWPEA classes, the calls started rolling in. Expectant parents began signing up for CWPEA childbirth classes across metro Detroit. Over the course of six sessions, women and their partners learned about pregnancy, the growth of the baby, the three stages of labor and delivery, special relaxation exercises and proper breathing techniques. Expectant parents were encouraged to eliminate unnecessary medical treatments and procedures, bring fathers and others into the birthing room and create



*Flora welcomed both mother and father in small group sessions to practice for delivery.*

homelike alternative settings.

CWPEA members worked closely with similar organizations across the nation and the world, such as the International Childbirth Education Association (ICEA). Flora also served on the National Board of the International Childbirth Education Association (1964 to 1968), often traveling throughout the country promoting the benefits of what she preferred to call "prepared childbirth." A notebook of speaking engagements from 1965 to 1967 shows that Flora spoke at area hospitals, churches and Henry Ford Community College on behalf of CWPEA.

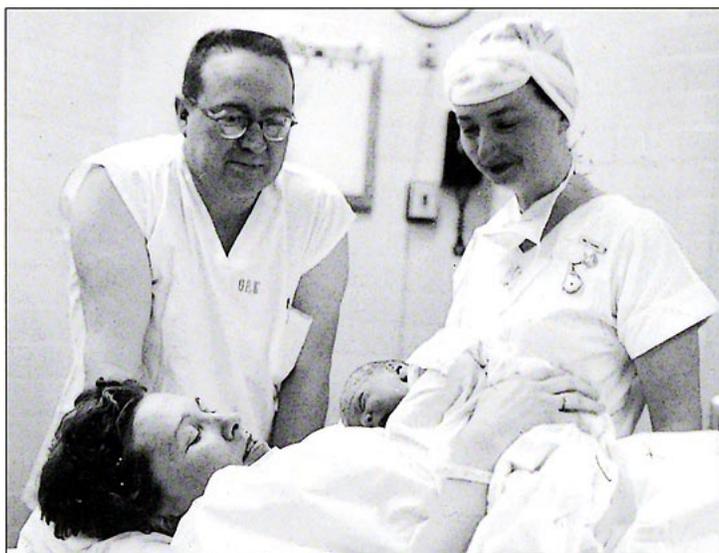
In addition, CWPEA sponsored visits from Dr. Vellay to Detroit in 1963 and 1968, and hosted movies such as the *Triumph of Childbirth*, open houses and seminars. Childbirth With Dignity: A Shared Experience, a 1974 seminar held in Detroit featured national and local experts on how much the father should share, the changing attitudes of doctors, sexism in obstetrics and supporting teen mothers.

Over the years, CWPEA's message reached thousands of families. "She taught women they are the central actors in the birth process," commented Vicki Levin, the late wife of U.S. Representative Sander Levin, in an April 1989 *Detroit Free Press* story about CWPEA. Levin gave birth to her second child in 1960 after participating in a CWPEA class. Her sister-in-law Barbara Levin, wife of U.S. Senator Carl Levin, whose first child was born in 1963 after taking a CWPEA class, stated in the same article, "because of Flora's classes, my long labors were manageable." Each couple had three babies using the Lamaze technique.

However, no organization always runs smoothly. Claudia admits her mother was not always easy to work with. "She could be set in her ways," Claudia said, adding that people

she worked with would often say they loved Flora, but couldn't always work with her. In a handwritten letter dated November 1966, CWPEA board member Eula Hoover wrote to Flora complaining that it always seemed to be the CWPEA board versus Flora. "It is as though you panic and try to run off with the organization when you see anyone set to think rather than follow. I suppose it is too much to hope that you can become a board member rather than a matriarch. You ask that we trust you. Why not make it work both ways?"

Flora flatly countered, "I don't intend to sit back and watch my baby get run over." She stated she will continue to supervise carefully until such time that she feels her baby is ready to cross the street alone. "I created this organization, built it, nurtured it and promoted it more than anyone and anyone who doesn't realize it is either not with it or isn't getting straight information somehow," Flora proudly wrote. On a conciliatory note, Flora concluded that she enjoyed working with Eula and the other board members and wanted to continue to work together.



*A new mother and proud father welcome their new baby with Flora Hommel, the monitor or birthing coach, by their side.*

## PUSHING FORWARD

The psychoprophylaxis methods promoted by Dr. Lamaze and his successor, Dr. Vellay, ultimately became accepted practice, but that wasn't the case in the late 1950s and 1960s.

In her unpublished manuscript, Flora recounts a story of a student in the midst of labor: A nurse came into the room and asked about the woman's "labor pains." In Flora Hommel's world there was no such thing as labor pain, only contractions. Flora's well-schooled student told the nurse she was not in any pain. The nurse replied, "You might not call them pains now, but just you wait. They'll be pains later on."

"I could imagine no earthly reason why that nurse made that statement," Flora



*In 1981, Monthly Detroit Magazine profiled Flora Hommel and the Childbirth Without Pain Education Association.*



*Every year CWPEA hosted a picnic for volunteers and families. Flora is shown receiving one of many awards given to her, circa 1964.*

wrote. "What could she have accomplished? Even if her statement had been 100 percent true in all cases, what good would it have done?"

Despite the skepticism of many in the medical field, Flora persisted. One of her biggest obstacles would be getting acceptance of the husbands' participation in the birthing process. In 1975, a Detroit man shared his disappointment to Flora when a Providence Hospital doctor refused him in the delivery room. By 1980, most Detroit hospitals allowed fathers to participate, according to the 1989 *Detroit Free Press* story. In the story, Dr. Milton Goldrath, chief of gynecology at Sinai Hospital in Detroit, admitted he was among Flora's first converts. "There was a lot of opposition from some doctors, but meeting her helped convince me that the mother should be conscious during delivery and that the father should be present," Dr. Goldrath said. "She awakened many doctors and women to the concept of natural childbirth."

## BEYOND CHILDBIRTH

Flora's organization helped more than 18,000 students, trained hundreds of instructors across the nation and encouraged the creation of similar organizations. As more hospitals, clinics and community groups began holding childbirth preparation classes, CWPEA began winding down, going from 3,000 students a year in 1969 to about 600 in 1989.

As with many organizations founded in the 1950s and 1960s, the Women's Liberation Movement and the increasing numbers of women staying in the workforce after childbirth, depleted the CWPEA of volunteers. By the mid-1990s, CWPEA lost its base and dissolved as an organization.

Flora's passion to change the world, however, extends well beyond the boundaries of CWPEA. Throughout her life, she actively promoted civil and women's rights. Early in her adult years, after her return from Paris, she became active in the civil rights organization Michigan Friends of the South and followed the writings and movements of Ernest Goodman, George Crockett, John Conyers and other notable activists of the day. She marched for peace, participating in organizations such as Women's Strike for Peace,

the New Jewish Agenda and the Women's Conference of Concerns.

From 1973 to 1990, Flora served on the Detroit Health Commission and as city representative to the State of Michigan Health Commission. As a national board member of the Gray Panthers, she served on its local and national Health Task Forces to protect and improve social security, Medicare and Medicaid and campaigned for a single-payer health care system. In recognition of her dedication to keeping the Paul Robeson legacy alive, Flora's name is on the "Wall of Tolerance" sponsored by the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama. Her home on Snowden Drive in northwest Detroit remains filled with posters and mementos of her activist days.

In 1994, Flora was inducted into the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame for her passionate dedication. Although CWPEA has faded into the past, the principle of giving women a greater say in their childbirth experience remains.

"My mother's work had less to do with medicine and everything to do with helping women take control of their own destiny and their lives," Claudia states.



Mother and daughter, Flora Suhd Hommel and Claudia Hommel.



**Susan Brohman** is a freelance writer who writes and edits *Congregation B'nai Moshe's* bulletin. She spent more than 20 years as a corporate communications writer and community journalist, including a stint at the *Detroit Jewish News*.

## NOTES

Much of the content for this article came from Flora Hommel in her handwritten unpublished autobiographical manuscript, written around 1975 and now part of the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University. Flora, 83, suffers from Alzheimer's Disease. While her delicate beauty continues to shine through, the disease has limited not only her memory but her verbal capacity. Today, while she knows she played an important role to many women giving birth, Flora's memory of what she accomplished has sadly dimmed despite repeated reminders from her daughter. Claudia, who tours the country as a French cabaret singer and actress, is the central source for this article. In fact, Claudia continues to tirelessly promote her mother's story so her work and philosophy about painless childbirth will not be forgotten by this or future generations.

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# TIMELINE

A timeline of significant dates in Michigan Jewish history mentioned in this year's journal.

*The latter half of the 19th century was a busy time for Michigan's Jewish residents. Besides working very hard to establish themselves as part of the fabric of American culture, they were also hard at work creating cohesive religious communities.*

## 19th Century

- 1850: Isaac and Sarah Cozens open their home to Detroit's first Jewish minyan, then help organize the Beth El Society.
- 1851: Emil Heineman emigrates from Bavaria to the U.S. He would go on to establish Heineman, Butzel & Company, a wholesale clothing business with his brother-in-law Martin Butzel.
- 1862: Isaac Wertheimer and sixteen other trustees officially found Shaarey Zedek so they and their families could continue their observance of traditional Judaism in Detroit.
- 1864: Shaarey Zedek purchases its first building at Congress and St. Antoine Streets. On the Fourth of July in 1877, they replaced this structure with a new enlarged synagogue built on the same location.
- 1865: Detroit Jewish statesman, philanthropist, artist and historian, David Emil Heineman (1865-1935) is born to Emil and Fanny (Butzel) Heineman.
- 1878: Congregation Beth Jacob is founded by former members of Congregation Shaarey Zedek.
- 1881: B'nai Israel is organized by former members of Congregation Shaarey Zedek.
- 1885: Twenty-one year old Max Jacob establishes M. Jacob Company, a bottle manufacturing company, which would later become M. Jacob & Sons.
- 1895: Shaarey Zedek members Joseph Beisman, Michael Davis and Jacob Levin form the Hebrew Free Loan Association to help the thousands of Jewish immigrants arriving in Detroit.
- 1899: Representative David Heineman introduces and gets passed a civic-minded bill to the Michigan Legislature to allocate \$150,000 to improve Belle Isle Park and erect an Aquarium and Horticultural building.

## 20th Century

- 1903: With seating for 750, Congregation Shaarey Zedek moves into its second location on Brush and Winder Streets.

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# TIMELINE

- August 1904:* The "Aquarium" on Belle Isle opens to the public.
- 1910:* Julius Chajes is born in Lemberg, Galicia, now Lvov in the Ukraine and would become a world-famous conductor and pianist.
- January 1911:* Hank Greenberg is born (1911-1986).
- 1912:* First established in 1889 as an Orthodox synagogue, Congregation of Israel, commonly called Temple Jacob in Hancock, builds its first building. In the 1920s, the congregation affiliates with the Reform movement.
- 1913:* Congregation Shaarey Zedek's Rabbis Hershman and Levin, joined by Rabbi Franklin of Temple Beth El, participate in a cornerstone laying ceremony as construction begins on the congregation's new Brush and Willis location.
- 1914:* Willard Cohodas is born in Menominee, Michigan, the second child of Harry and Lillian.
- 1915:* Samuel P. Baker spent two years driving a horse and buggy for a small laundry before opening The Queen Quality Laundry Company in Detroit.
- 1915:* Max Jacob builds an Italian Renaissance style home in Detroit. Today that home is on the campus of Wayne State University and is the residence of the University President.
- 1915:* Congregation Shaarey Zedek moves into its new temple with seating for 1,400.
- 1919:* Harry Schumer, who immigrated to Detroit from Poland at age 13, and his friend Leo Gold open General Linen Supply.
- 1924:* Brothers Nate and Barney Dalitz purchase Varsity Linens, which opened in 1905 in Ann Arbor.
- 1928:* Flora Suhd Hommel is born to Morris and Rae Albaum Suhd.
- 1932:* Congregation Shaarey Zedek relocates to a new building on Chicago Boulevard at Lawton, designed by Albert Kahn, the classic Italian Renaissance style building, with seating for 2,500 to 3,000, would serve as the congregation's home until 1962.
- 1933:* The Jewish Community Center building on Woodward and Holbrook opens as the first Jewish Center in Detroit. In 1939, the building is enlarged.

# TIMELINE

- 1938:* Rabbi Morris Adler joins Congregation Shaarey Zedek as assistant rabbi and quickly becomes an active leader throughout the state of Michigan. He would serve as rabbi for more than 25 years.
- 1939:* Valter Poole, a violist and assistant conductor of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, forms the fledgling Jewish Center Orchestra.
- 1940:* Prominent Jewish philanthropists Abraham and Rose Cooper, Fred Butzel, and Cantor Jason Tickton and his wife Mimi hire Julius Chajes to conduct the Jewish Center Orchestra.
- 1945:* After serving in the war for four-and-a-half seasons, Captain Hank Greenberg returned to the Tigers on July 2. Nearly 48,000 fans came to welcome the baseball and war hero back home.
- 1947:* Detroit Tigers' owner, Walter O. Briggs, "sells" Hank Greenberg to the Pittsburgh Pirates.
- 1950:* After giving birth to her daughter, Claudia, Flora Hommel decides to dedicate her life to help other women experience pain-free childbirth. She began studying with Dr. Fernard Lamaze in 1951.
- June 1953:* After years of conducting services out of various buildings, members of Temple Beth Sholom in Marquette dedicate their own building.
- 1956:* Camp Tavor, formerly Midwest Camp Habonim, was founded in 1956 on the site of Cooper's Lodge in Three Rivers, Michigan.
- 1958:* Flora Hommel begins teaching Lamaze classes in her Detroit home.
- 1959:* The Aaron De Roy Building, the home of the Jewish Community Center, located on Meyers Avenue in Detroit, opens with a beautiful and acoustically-sound theater with seating for 500. The opening concert features Mischa Mischakoff (a Detroit Symphony member) performing the Overture to "The Marriage of Figaro."
- 1959:* Rabbi Irwin Groner joins Shaarey Zedek as Assistant Rabbi. In 1967, he is appointed head Rabbi.
- 1960:* Once numbering in the hundreds, only 50 or 60 Jewish laundry companies remained in business. Most had closed or had been sold to larger companies.
- 1960:* Flora Hommel and fellow supporters found the Childbirth Without Pain Association, officially incorporated as the non-profit Childbirth Without Pain Education Association (CWPEA) in 1964.

# TIMELINE

- 1962: More than 1,000 members of Congregation Shaarey Zedek celebrate the congregation's 100th anniversary and ground breaking ceremony for the new building located on Bell Road in Southfield.
- 1969: The University Archives at Michigan State University are founded to manage the official records of MSU.
- 1977: Willard Cohodas launches the first Interfaith Holocaust Memorial Service, held at Marquette's St. Peter Cathedral, with Northern Michigan University. The service continues to be held annually.
- 1986: Wayne State University benefits from the estate of Emma Lazaroff Schaver, the fifth recipient of the JHSM's Leonard H. Simons History Award and a renowned concert soprano. The school names the music building in her honor.
- 1998: Robert Sklar becomes editor of the *Detroit Jewish News*, a position he will hold until his retirement in March 2011.
- 21st Century
- 2000: Charlotte Dubin retires after twenty-four years on the staff of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit. In 2011, Charlotte became the 21st recipient of the JHSM Leonard N. Simons History Award.
- August 2000: The Jewish Academy of Metropolitan Detroit (JAMD) opens its doors, the largest start-up school of its kind in the U.S. and quickly makes its presence on the high school educational scene known.
- January 2002: Fire destroys the *Jewish News* building in Southfield. The paper came out that week, only one day late.
- 2005: After more than 100 years of enjoyment and delight, the Belle Isle Aquarium closes.
- 2005: The Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit releases its population study of Detroit Jewry, revealing dramatic shrinkage and aging while simultaneously boasting a strong adolescent and teen base.
- 2007: Thanks to a generous gift from the Frankel family, JAMD is renamed the Jean and Samuel Frankel Jewish Academy of Metropolitan Detroit (Frankel Jewish Academy, or FJA) and relocates to its new 50,000 square foot facility housed on the upper level of the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield.
- April 2011: The personal papers of Emma Lazaroff Schaver are deposited at the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University.

# MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY



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THE MISSION OF THE  
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IS TO EDUCATE, CELEBRATE AND PROMOTE  
AWARENESS OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS  
OF THE JEWS OF MICHIGAN TO OUR STATE,  
OUR NATION AND THE WORLD.



# MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY

*is dedicated to the memory of Sarah and Ralph Davidson  
and Bessie and Joseph Wetsman, the parents and grandparents  
of William Davidson, of blessed memory, and Dorothy Davidson Gerson.*

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### COVER PHOTO

*Interior and exterior of the Belle Isle Aquarium. These postcards of the Belle Isle Aquarium, both dated around 1910, read: "The Aquarium on Belle Isle is one of the most interesting attractions on the island.*

*During the summer months it is visited by thousands of people daily. The Parks & Boulevards Commission spared no expense to make it the finest of its kind in the country."*

*"The Aquarium on Belle Isle is one of the most popular attractions on the Island. In it will be found all kinds of fresh and salt water fish. The Commission brings the water from the ocean for the latter."*

See The Belle Isle Aquarium, pg. 5

# MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY

אשר ישאלון בניכם מחר את אבותם... יהושע ד:כא

When your children shall ask their parents in time to come...

Joshua 4:21

## THE JOURNAL OF THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN

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