

CEMETERY TOURS

Cemetery Tours have continued to be a popular way for families, friends, supporters, and historians to visit the cemetery, as well as a wonderful opportunity to locate the graves of loved ones and visit them with relatives. We have been honored to be able to share these reunions with you. Recent family reunions have included the **Isenbergs, Shers, Shores, Margaretts, Sacarnys, Rosenbergs, Belafskys, Golubs, Frankels, Goldsmiths, and Shangolds**. We are looking forward to hosting the Davidson Family Reunion at our October 26 Tour, with family members planning to visit from both local and distant locations.

Our remaining 2008 tours are scheduled for **Sunday, September 21** and **October 26**.

All tours begin at noon at the Hebrew Fraternity Cemetery entry gate on New Brunswick Avenue in Hopelawn. After a 1-hour tour of the Hebrew Fraternity Cemetery, we drive to the Congregation Shaarey Tefilah Cemetery on Florida Grove Road and Bingle Street for a 1-hour tour of that cemetery. **WEAR VERY COMFORTABLE CLOTHES AND SHOES** appropriate for standing and walking outdoors for 2 hours, and please wear a head cover too. All tours are followed by an optional visit to a local, casual restaurant for continued socializing with old friends.

Although all tours are free, advance registration is recommended so that we can notify you of any weather-related cancellations and can locate any family graves of special interest to you.

Please register through our Web site at:
www.friendsofjewishcemeteries.org

by phone to
856-222-1418

or by e-mail to

friends@friendsofjewishcemeteries.org

Check our Web site frequently for more information about the tours, including any schedule changes.



VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I don't remember the first time I saw our cemeteries. Like most children of my generation I was shielded from the Facts of Death – terminal illnesses, funerals, and burials. While my family certainly visited graves of loved ones, given their well-meaning protect-the-child philosophy I doubt I was ever included. When I eventually was old enough to come on my own I found it a more comforting than sorrowful place. I loved the old monuments, the pebble calling cards, the decades old plantings, the sense of history. Perhaps it became a place of meaning to me because it had been a place of meaning to the people buried there. And because I knew it would always be there.

The realization that it might not always be there, the possibility of its deterioration and eventual disappearance -- when no one would remain who remembered a vital Perth Amboy Jewish community, a full shul, the pickles at Cohen's Delicatessen – was what led to my commitment to this organization to find a way to ensure the cemeteries' now-and-future security.

Were we able to commune with them, I think our deceased relatives and friends, whether buried in these cemeteries or not, would be proud of what we've accomplished in a few years thanks to Mona's vision and leadership and your enthusiasm and ideas.

Besides the physical rehabilitation and maintenance of the cemeteries, we've handled exigent repairs (see following article as one example). We've built a virtual community of former area residents through our monthly **Cemetery Tours, Genealogy Network, and Family Research Assistance**. We've provided opportunities for **Bar and Bat Mitzvah projects** and **Student Community Service Projects** for our youth. Sharing your concerns about the plight of other area cemeteries, we are working on ways to reach out to them and will let you know of our plans in the near future. We are assisting Friends of Perth Amboy Jewish History, Inc. with the preparation of a book about the **History of the Perth Amboy Jewish Community**. (These and other programs are described in more detail in earlier newsletters and are available on our Web site.)

But none of our activities would be possible without your interest, encouragement, and –not to be too blunt – your financial support. We still have a very long way to go to feel confident that we can achieve our primary goal of raising enough funds to maintain our cemeteries forever. If your name isn't already on our Honor Roll we hope you will stand up to be counted among those whose names are. We're depending on you to give as generously and often as you can, to publicize our efforts to those with any connections to the community, and to make our ancestors kvell.

Norma Jacobson Messing



Left - Hebrew Fraternity Cemetery in Hopelawn, NJ

Right - Congregation Shaarey Tefilah Cemetery in Perth Amboy, NJ

RECENT CEMETERY DAMAGE

Major spring storms uprooted and toppled a healthy 60-foot evergreen at the Hebrew Fraternity Cemetery (as shown in photos), damaging several graves but narrowly and miraculously avoiding major destruction to a large number of monuments as would have occurred had the tree fallen a few feet away. We worked together with Leo Gursky of the Congregation Shaarey Tefilah Presidium, sharing the costs, and we are happy to report the tree has been removed and the final stages of repair have been completed. This event reminds us that our mission must be not only to provide regular maintenance for the cemeteries -- now and in perpetuity -- but also to be able to manage such unexpected (and unbudgeted) events and disasters.



DONATIONS

We remain very appreciative of your past support and hope we can count on your continued generosity to achieve both our immediate goal of maintaining these cemeteries now and our long-term goal of maintaining them forever. We are especially grateful to all of you who have given at our Honor Roll levels – \$1,000 or more annually – and hope many more of you will donate at this level, remembering that honoring the deceased constitutes the highest level of mitzvah. All those who donate at least \$1,000 during calendar year 2008 will be listed in our 2008 Annual Honor Roll, which will be published in our Spring 2009 newsletter.

Because we are a federally tax-exempt organization as determined by the IRS under Section 501(c)(13), all contributions are tax-deductible as provided by law – and are mitzvot too! We hope you can find it in your hearts to reach even more deeply into your pockets! We also urge you to continue supporting Shaarey Tefilah, Beth Mordecai, and your local synagogues as well, since these synagogues depend on your ongoing generosity.

THANKING OUR DONORS

The following list includes all donations received and processed between February 1, 2008 and August 1, 2008. All donations received prior to February 1, 2008 were listed in previous issues of THE ETERNAL VINE. All donations received after August 1, 2008 will be listed in the next issue of THE ETERNAL VINE. We gratefully acknowledge generous donations from the following individuals:

Anonymous (1)

Rita Arky Aber – *in memory of family and friends buried in Beth Mordecai Cemetery*

Al Alster

Sherman and Jean Ancier – *in memory of Max and Sarah Sacarny and Jacob Gaier*

Malvina Perlman Becker

Mark Belafsky

Ronald and Roni Goss Berkowitz

Davia Berlfein

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Zalma and Bernard Gelber

Pearl and Hank Glass

Marilyn Millet Goldberg – *in memory of Abraham and Sadie Millet, on their Yahrzeits*

William Goldberger – *in memory of Ruth and Nathan Goldberger*

Leona Weiss Goldsmith – *in honor of Todd's marriage to Ebby Lang*

Susan Griffis

Anellen and Murray Guth – *in memory of Maureen Doctofsky*

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Joanne and Murray Kaplan – *in honor of Jay's graduation from George Washington University*

Joan Fishkoff Kasner

Martin Kesselhaut – *in memory of grandparents Max and Sarah Sacarny*

Helene Korb Kogos – *in memory of Cora and Abe Korb*

Shirley Jacobson Laiks – *in memory of the Jacobson Family*

Roz Levine

Norma Jacobson Messing

Nancy Rosengarten Metzendorf

Ted Metzendorf

Suzy Goldman Muller – *in memory of Phyllis and George Goldman*

Seymour Nowicki

Michael and Rissa Spivack Ratner – *in memory of Bernard and Minerva Spivack*

Barry Rosengarten

Powell Saks – *in memory of Harriet Saks*

Sam Sandler – *in memory of the Sandler Family*

Hannah Miller Sarnoff – *in memory of Sarah and Morris Miller*

Sheila Stess Schechtman – *in memory of Rebecca Davidson*

Sheila Stess Schechtman and Diane Stess-Kirschner – *in memory of Leo Stess, on his Yahrzeit*

Sarah Schlesinger – *in memory of Joseph Schlesinger*

Deborah Sewitch – *in memory of Barbara and Myron Sewitch*

Mona Shangold – *in memory of James Bogdanoff*

Harold Sher

Melvin Silverman

Becca Parnes Singer – *in memory of the Parnes Family*

Lydia Singer – *in honor of grandson Jay Singer Kaplan's graduation from George Washington University magna cum laude*

Robert and Marian Stern

Richard and Judi Stess – *in memory of Robert & Eleanor Stess*

Murray Toborowsky – *in memory of the Toborowsky and Sher Families*

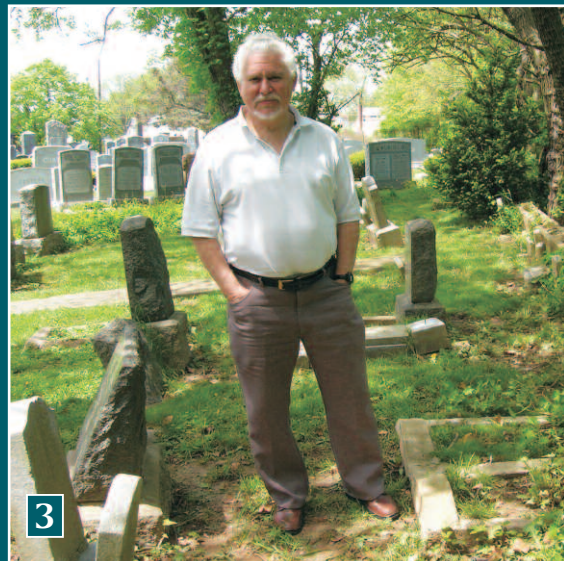
Arnold Weiss

Ida Berman Whitman – *in memory of the Berman Family*

Beryl Toborowsky Wild

Nathan and Norma Witkin

Elaine Sacarny Zack



**Friends for Preservation of
Middlesex County Jewish Cemeteries, Inc.**

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PHOTO CAPTIONS *(all photos identified from left to right)*

1. Linda Meistrich Rothenberg, Ruby Herman, Marty Belafsky, Tammy Belafsky, Mark Belafsky, Jackie Belafsky Kandel, Anita Belafsky Krentar, Bob Krentar, Barbara Bell, Scot Bell, Davia Berlfein, Alice Goldsmith Rich
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5. Davia Berlfein, Linda Meistrich Rothenberg, Alice Goldsmith Rich

CHEVRA KADISHA CONFERENCE

We were honored to be invited to present a workshop at the 6th North American Chevra Kadisha Conference held June 1 – 3 in Edison, NJ. Roni Goss Berkowitz, Bardin Levavy, Sheldon Whitman, and Mona Shangold presented information about our organization and accomplishments and had a wonderful opportunity to learn from the other presenters and the audience. The cemetery problems that led to the formation of our organization are certainly not unique and, in fact, are very widespread. Communities are mobile; cemeteries are not. It is common for communities to move and leave their cemeteries behind to face endangerment and abandonment. We intend to incorporate the ideas we learned into our future plans and will present some of these ideas in our next newsletter.