

Revson Grant for Outreach

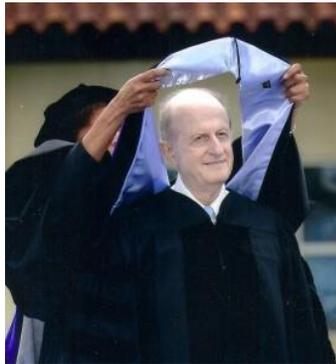
2004

Revson Foundation honors alumnus Eli Evans with gift to Carolina Center for Jewish Studies



The Charles H. Revson Foundation of New York has honored its president emeritus, Eli N. Evans, with a \$250,000 gift to the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The gift will establish a program in Evans' name that supports outreach activities on campus and in communities across North Carolina. Among the program's features will be an annual scholar-in-residence to present a public lecture and meet with students, faculty and the community; other visiting speakers; and lectures by UNC-Chapel Hill faculty to public groups in N.C. urban and rural communities, ranging in subject from the origins of the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Holocaust and the history of Jews in the American South.



“We are extraordinarily proud of the many contributions Eli has made to the betterment of our common life, and we are delighted that the Revson Foundation has chosen to honor his many years of service in this fashion,” said UNC Chancellor James Moeser. “As an undergraduate, he served as president of the student body, and he has been a loyal son of Carolina, following in his father’s distinguished footsteps.”

Evans’ father was E.J. Evans a 1928 UNC graduate, who was Durham’s mayor from 1951 to 1963 and president of Carolina’s General Alumni Association in 1972-73. He received the university’s Distinguished Alumnus Award in 1972.

Eli Evans, who graduated from Carolina in 1958 and Yale Law School in 1963, chairs the advisory board for the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies, established in the College of Arts and Sciences in 2003. A Durham native, Evans was a speechwriter on the staff of President Lyndon B. Johnson and directed former N.C. Gov. Terry Sanford’s “Study of American States.” The nationwide study, funded by the Ford and Carnegie foundations, focused on the future of state government.

Evans joined the Carnegie Corp., a national education foundation, in 1968. In 1978, he became the first president of the Revson Foundation. He oversaw grants totaling more than \$147 million to Jewish causes, urban affairs, education and biomedical research. He retired in 2003 after 25 years at the foundation.

Evans’ books include “The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South,” widely considered a classic after 30 years in print; “Judah P. Benjamin: The Jewish Confederate,” a biography of the Confederacy’s Secretary of State; and “The Lonely Days Were Sundays: Reflections of a Jewish Southerner,” a collection of essays.

Evans lives in New York City with his wife Judith; his son Josh is a freshman at UNC.

“Often called the poet laureate of Southern Jews, Eli has had an enormous influence on all of us who engage in Jewish studies,” said Dr. Jonathan M. Hess, director of the UNC center and a Germanic languages professor. “Eli has been involved with the center since its inception, sharing his time, his vision and his deep love for Carolina. It is a great honor for us that the Revson Foundation has made this gift to recognize him.”

The center engages in teaching and research to explore Jewish history, culture and religion in the United States and abroad. Last fall the center launched a public lecture series that has drawn hundreds to campus to hear speakers including Stuart Eizenstat, former Deputy Secretary of the Treasury and Undersecretary of State in the Clinton administration, and author Emily Bingham.

Carolina gave the study of Judaism a prominent role in its curriculum in 1947 when creating its department of religious studies, one of the first at an American public university. Today, the university offers nearly 30 courses in Jewish studies across five departments:: English, Germanic languages, history, religious studies and Slavic languages and literatures. More than 700 students enroll in these courses each year. The university began offering an undergraduate minor in Jewish studies in fall 2003.

“It is inspiring to witness Jewish studies for all faiths coming alive at UNC,” said Evans. “The center is a consequential idea, and this is the right time and place in history to launch it. What our flagship university does will radiate across the South and the nation.”

The gift counts toward the Carolina First campaign goal of \$1.8 billion. Carolina First is a multi-year, private fund-raising campaign to support Carolina’s vision of becoming the nation’s leading public university. Jewish studies’ campaign goal is \$24 million. UNC aspires to become the leading campus in this field in the South.

Kaplan Professorship

2005

Carolina Center for Jewish Studies receives \$1 million gift from Leonard and Tobee Kaplan to establish distinguished professorship

Leonard J. and Tobee W. Kaplan of Greensboro have made a \$1 million gift to the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to establish a new distinguished professorship.

Based in the College of Arts and Sciences, the Leonard and Tobee Kaplan Distinguished Professorship will allow the University to create an endowed chair to recruit a teacher and scholar in modern Jewish religious thought. The Kaplan professor will be housed in the religious studies department and chosen through a competitive search process which will begin in fall 2005. Additional funding from the North Carolina Distinguished Professors Endowment Trust Fund brings the Kaplan endowment to \$1,334,000.

Leonard Kaplan, a 1949 Carolina alumnus, and his wife, Tobee, head the Toleo Foundation, a family effort devoted to a variety of philanthropic causes. They were the leaders in helping to build a new building for the North Carolina Hillel chapter at Chapel Hill, and they have since worked with NC Hillel to support the hungry and the homeless in Carrboro and Chapel Hill. They also are deeply committed to the Women's Resource Center of Greensboro (a program that enables women to advance their career paths). In 2004, Leonard and Tobee initiated the Greenbrier Forum, a program to inspire greater generosity among philanthropists.

Leonard Kaplan explains that, "We have been contemplating for a couple of years where we could make the biggest impact with a contribution to UNC-Chapel Hill. We hope this new professorship will bring to the forefront the modern world of Jewish religious practices, culture and social issues that are significant to not only the Jewish world, but people of all faiths."

The Carolina Center for Jewish Studies, created in 2003, offers Jewish Studies courses through a variety of departments across campus. Close to 1,000 undergraduates enroll in these courses each year, studying topics from the Hebrew Bible and the history of the Holocaust to Jews in the South and religion in modern Israel. The Center also offers a number of public programs, including an annual lecture series.

"With a flourishing undergraduate minor and a growing program in Modern Hebrew, the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies is well on its way to becoming one of the leading Jewish Studies programs in the nation," said Jonathan Hess, director of the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies. "The Kaplan professorship represents a dramatic step forward for the Center. It will enable us to recruit one of the foremost scholars in Jewish thought to UNC, giving generations of Carolina students the possibility to study with a national leader in this field."

The Kaplan gift counts toward the university's Carolina First Campaign goal of \$1.8 billion. Carolina First is a comprehensive, multi-year, private fund-raising campaign to support Carolina's vision of becoming the nation's leading public university.



UPDATE: In 2014, the Andrea Cooper joined Carolina as the Leonard and Tobee Kaplan Fellow in Modern Jewish Thought, and assistant professor, Department of Religious Studies.

Heilig Lectureship

2005

Heilig gift creates annual Jewish Studies lectureship

Alan Heilig and his sister, Debra Heilig Schwartz, have given \$125,000 and Alan has pledged an additional \$225,000 to establish an endowed lectureship in Jewish Studies.

The gift goes to the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies, which is a part of UNC's College of Arts and Sciences.

"We are enormously grateful to Alan Heilig and Debra Heilig Schwartz for giving us the opportunity to pay tribute to their family in this manner," said Jonathan Hess, director of the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies and a professor of Germanic languages. "The Morris, Ida and Alan Heilig Lectureship in Jewish Studies will enable us to bring in a major public speaker to campus each year, enriching the intellectual life of students, faculty and the broader community for years to come."

The inaugural lecture, on Dec. 5 at 7:30 p.m. in the Hanes Art Center Auditorium, was given by Ian Lustick, a political science professor at the University of Pennsylvania. Lustick discussed the prospects for Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Alan Heilig, who lives in Aventura, Fla., but grew up in Kinston, N.C., said the gift is a tribute to his late parents. In 1928, Morris Heilig moved from Goldsboro to Kinston to open a furniture store. Morris and Ida were very active in Kinston civic activities and in the local Jewish community, Heilig said. The couple lived in Kinston for 68 years.

"Our father was a lifetime member of Temple Israel, and he was a lifetime director, too. Our mother was a lifetime member, and she was very active in the sisterhood and the Hadassah," he said. "Their lives revolved around the synagogue."

Debra Heilig Schwartz, who lives in Miami Beach, Fla., insisted that Alan also be included in the name of the lectureship because of his involvement in the Jewish community and his love for Carolina. The lectureship has become a real family affair, as Schwartz's children and grandchildren have made gifts in honor of their uncle Alan to the lectureship fund.

Alan Heilig graduated from Carolina in 1953 with a bachelor's degree in business administration. After earning a master's degree in hospital administration from the Medical College of Virginia, he spent 22 years as a hospital administrator. He then worked for 10 years as a synagogue administrator.

"I have a real love for the university and always wanted to do something to promote understanding of Judaism and Jewish history," Heilig said. "The opportunity to promote the university and Judaism at the same time was more than I could resist."

When he was at Carolina, Heilig was very involved with the former Jewish fraternity, Zeta Beta Tau. He was principal trustee of the fraternity's foundation and was instrumental in the construction of the fraternity house on Finley Golf Course Road.

“What made me fall in love with Carolina is what makes everyone else fall in love with Carolina: It's a wonderful place,” he said. “The association with the fraternity was especially significant. I made friends there that I'm still friends with today. I've been to their weddings and bar mitzvahs. The friendships were long-lasting.”

Morris Heilig also had a connection to Carolina — he went to UNC for one year in the 1920s, but couldn't afford to stay, Alan Heilig said. Instead, his father became an entrepreneur. The Heilig furniture store was a fixture in the downtown Kinston community for many years, with a large customer base, particularly in the farming community, he added.

“They provided a means for working people to have up-to-date home furnishings at reasonable prices,” he said.

The Heilig gift counts toward the university's Carolina First Campaign goal of \$2 billion. Carolina First is a comprehensive, multi-year, private fund-raising campaign to support Carolina's vision of becoming the nation's leading public university.

van der Horst Professorship

2006

Holocaust reparation funds support Jewish Studies Professorship



The children of Johannes (Hans) and Sonja van der Horst have established a distinguished professorship in Jewish studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in honor of their parents – and in fulfillment of the wishes of Sonja van der Horst, a Holocaust survivor.

The family used Holocaust reparation funds to establish the JMA and Sonja van der Horst Distinguished Professorship in Jewish Studies; their gift qualifies for matching funds from the state endowment trust funds. UNC's College of Arts and Sciences will conduct a search to fill the position with a scholar whose teaching and research will contribute to the work of the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies.

“My parents were always interested in public education and religious and racial tolerance,” said Dr. Charles van der Horst, a professor of medicine at UNC. “It is fitting to honor them through this distinguished professorship at the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies, where the teaching and study of Jewish history and culture is flourishing at a leading public university committed to providing a first-rate education to a diverse student body.”

Sonja van der Horst was still a teen when the Nazis invaded Poland, executed her father and sister, sent her mother to die at a concentration camp and began the systematic elimination of 18,000 Jews in her hometown of Tarnopol. She survived the Holocaust by assuming false identities and working under Nazi watch in German labor camps.

After the war, Hans and Sonja van der Horst immigrated to the United States and spent their lives supporting organizations that promote public education, civil rights, religious freedom and Jewish culture. Hans van der Horst, a chemical engineer who was fluent in seven languages, died in 1978.

Last fall, Sonja van der Horst, nearly 82 years old at the time, learned that she had a brain tumor. She had received Holocaust reparation funds and had invested them since the early 1960s – and she decided to use them to establish a distinguished professorship at UNC to be filled by an expert in Jewish history and culture, enhancing knowledge of the culture that Hitler had tried to destroy.

In January, as Sonja van der Horst's illness was advancing, her grown children acted quickly to fulfill her wish. Charles van der Horst; Roger van der Horst, the education editor at *The News & Observer* in Raleigh; Jacqueline van der Horst Sergent, a 1982 master of public health graduate of UNC and health promotion coordinator at the Granville Vance District Health Department in Oxford; and Tatjana Schwendinger, chief administrative judge with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in St. Louis, established the professorship.

“We’re deeply moved that the family has chosen to honor Hans and Sonja van der Horst in this manner,” said Dr. Jonathan Hess, director of the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies. “Close to 1,000 undergraduates enroll in Jewish studies courses at Carolina each year, and student interest in Jewish history and culture is clearly on the rise. The Van der Horst Professorship will enable us to recruit another leader in the field to teach at UNC, bringing us closer to our goal of creating a Jewish studies program with national prominence.”

Sonja van der Horst was born Chaya Eichenbaum Teichholz on Dec. 16, 1923, in Tarnopol, Poland. The Nazis entered the town on July 2, 1941, and killed 5,000 Jews in one week alone. After her family was destroyed, Chaya hid under a series of false identities, the last being Sonja Tarasowa. She eventually boarded a train carrying non-Jewish workers to labor sites in Germany, where she worked at a coal mine, a lumberyard and a farm. At the end of the war, she was a translator for the English forces.

Johannes Martinus Arnold van der Horst was born Sept. 22, 1918, in the Netherlands. He fought the Nazis in the Dutch Army and was a scout with the U.S. Armed Forces invasion of southern France in 1944. At the end of the war, he worked for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration and met his future wife when he took Russian lessons from her.

In the summer of 1945, the Soviets began the forced repatriation of displaced persons to their countries of origin. English friends agreed to hide Sonja. When Sonja told Hans her story, he asked her to marry him. They were wed in the Netherlands that year and left for the United States in 1952, eventually settling in Olean, N.Y.

The Van der Horst gift counts toward the university’s Carolina First Campaign goal of \$2 billion. Carolina First is a comprehensive, multi-year, private fund-raising campaign to support Carolina’s vision of becoming the nation’s leading public university.

Levine-Sklut Professorship

2007

Jewish studies to recruit rising faculty star with \$1 million gift

A \$1 million gift to the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies will allow the center to recruit a rising faculty star in modern Hebrew literature and Israeli culture in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



The gift is from two Charlotte families: Lori and Eric Sklut, and Lori's parents, Leon and Sandra Levine.

With the \$1 million gift, the center will be able to apply for a \$500,000 matching grant from the N.C. Distinguished Professors Endowment Trust Fund, bringing the total endowment to \$1.5 million.

The center expects to begin recruiting for the Levine-Sklut Fellow in Jewish Studies this fall, said director Jonathan Hess. The endowment will support an assistant professor position. Making such awards to early and mid-career faculty is an important recruitment and retention strategy as the market becomes increasingly competitive for assistant and associate professors, he said.



“We have a number of distinguished senior scholars, and it’s also crucial that we bring in new people who can build their careers at UNC, and while doing so, help to build our program in Jewish studies,” said Hess, the Moses M. and Hannah L. Malkin Distinguished Professor in Jewish History and Culture. “With the generous gift from the Sklut and Levine families, we will be able to recruit a rising star in modern Hebrew.”

Courses in modern Hebrew, first introduced four years ago, are popular at Carolina, with 71 students enrolled. Hess called the study of the language a “major linchpin of any Jewish studies program” and is eager for Carolina to develop courses in Hebrew literature and Israeli culture for the general undergraduate population.

“It is especially unique for the university and the Center for Jewish Studies to receive such a pivotal gift from two generations of a family who are major philanthropists in so many outstanding causes in North Carolina,” said Eli N. Evans, chair of the Jewish studies advisory board. “These families have done their homework, and the credibility conferred by this gift will surely inspire others to join the mission of making a first rate Jewish studies program available to every student at the university and every community across the state.”

Eric Sklut, a 1980 Carolina alumnus and member of the center’s advisory board, said he and his wife are impressed by the outreach of the center, which was founded in 2003, across the breadth of the College of Arts and Sciences. More than 1,000 students a year take Jewish studies courses.

“It has been enlightening to absorb all the center has done to bring together the culture, history, lifestyle and other aspects of Jewish life and to attract such a diverse student audience,” said Sklut, whose father and sister also attended UNC – and his daughter is a freshman this year. “We’re thrilled at how well the center has fully entwined itself into university life and how it has drawn from so many parts of the university in doing so.”

Sklut said his time on the center’s advisory board helped him to realize how critical it is to bring top-notch young faculty – in addition to distinguished senior faculty – to Carolina.

“Being able to recruit and retain these rising young stars will give the center an added dimension and creative freedom, and we believe it will help attract additional faculty to the university,” Sklut said.

“As a university of and for the people of North Carolina, this institution has made great strides to broaden its student and faculty community and to reach out to so many,” added Leon and Sandra Levine. “It is a wonderful asset to the state of North Carolina and its people. The Carolina Center for Jewish Studies has accomplished so much in just a few short years, and with its leadership and strong faculty base, we are hopeful this growth will continue.”

Eric Sklut, who formerly ran his own executive search business, is the founder of Perfection Automotive Inc., which develops and markets products for Porsche and other vehicles. Leon Levine is the founder and chairman emeritus of Family Dollar Stores.

Eizenstat Professorship

2008

Jewish Studies Professorship Named for Stuart Eizenstat

A \$1.5 million distinguished professorship in Jewish studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill will be named in honor of alumnus Stuart E. Eizenstat, lead negotiator for Holocaust reparation agreements and deputy secretary of the treasury during the Clinton administration.

The Ambassador Stuart E. Eizenstat Distinguished Professorship in Jewish history and culture will be in the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies in UNC's College of Arts and Sciences.



Eizenstat, who was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa as a Carolina student, graduated cum laude in 1964 with a degree in political science. He received an honorary degree from the University and was commencement speaker in 2000. He is a partner at the Washington, D.C., law firm of Covington and Burling LLP. David M. Rubenstein, co-founder and managing director of The Carlyle Group in Washington, D.C., one of the world's largest private equity groups, has pledged \$500,000 to help establish the UNC professorship.

Besides the Rubenstein gift, the professorship is being funded by additional contributions totaling more than \$500,000 from many private donors and also will be eligible for \$500,000 in matching funds from the N.C. Distinguished Professors Endowment Trust Fund.

Rubenstein was deputy assistant to the president for domestic policy during the Carter administration, when Eizenstat was chief domestic policy adviser and executive director of the White House domestic policy staff.

“Stu’s service to our country and to the Jewish community are without parallel,” said Rubenstein. “I had the privilege of working with him for four years, and I have observed his dedication to humanity. It’s appropriate that he be recognized in this way by the University he loves and the community he has served so well.”

Eizenstat helped acquire more than \$8 billion in compensation from European companies for victims of the Holocaust and Nazi era. His book, “Imperfect Justice: Looted Assets, Slave Labor and the Unfinished Business of World War II,” tells about securing property restitution, insurance payments and reclamation of looted art and bank accounts. Eizenstat has held high-level positions during the last three Democratic presidencies.

When the Eizenstat professorship endowment is fully funded, the college will search for a rising scholar in modern Jewish history to fill the position.

“We are so grateful to David Rubenstein and the many friends who have contributed generously to this effort to honor Stuart Eizenstat, an extraordinary alumnus, leader and humanitarian,” said Holden Thorp, Ph.D. dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. “The Eizenstat Distinguished Professorship will enhance the vitality and growth of Jewish studies at UNC for generations to come.”

Established in 2003, the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies unites the public and UNC students and faculty who share a common passion for a deeper understanding of Jewish history, culture and thought. Drawing on college faculty from many disciplines, the center provides undergraduate academic minors in Jewish studies and modern Hebrew and sponsors a lecture series by leading experts in Jewish studies. Eizenstat serves on the center’s advisory board.

Levin Professorship

2010

A Love for Carolina Prompts Levin Family to Create New Endowment for Jewish Studies Faculty

Seymour M. Levin, '48 and Carol Cole Levin of Greensboro, N.C., have recently expanded their support of the Center by establishing a new faculty endowed chair in Jewish Studies.



“Our love for Carolina and a dream for a Jewish Studies major led us to create the new endowment,” said Seymour Levin. “I want this university to be the very best, and I think the Center and the Jewish Studies program are doing great work for the campus and its students.”

The Seymour and Carol Levin Distinguished Professorship Fund in Jewish Studies is the seventh endowed faculty chair for the Center. When fully funded, the endowment will help the Center recruit or retain an outstanding Jewish Studies faculty member.

“Our program has grown at such an impressive rate thanks largely to our generous donors who have made it possible for the Center to bring talented, distinguished faculty to Carolina. Both our students and the general community benefit from the caliber of faculty here in Chapel Hill, and this endowed professorship will expand our efforts on campus,” said Jonathan Hess, director. “We are thankful to Seymour and Carol Levin for their generous gift and their ongoing enthusiasm for the Center.

“The growth of the Jewish Studies program is a good thing for the entire campus,” Levin added. “It’s important to have so many students learning about different cultures and faiths from such wonderful faculty members.”

Seymour Levin was born in Burlington, North Carolina. After starting his education at Carolina, he left to serve in the United States Navy and then returned to campus and graduated with a B.S. degree in Commerce. He has three children and six grandchildren. Carol Cole Levin, a native of Mississippi, is an artist with two sons, one of whom is a Carolina alumnus (John Hand, 1991). She has two grandchildren with a third due this spring.

State funds provide basic faculty salaries for Carolina’s distinguished scholars while permanent endowed chair funds, created by philanthropic gifts, further support teaching and research. By creating a reliable source of annual support, endowed faculty chairs provide a powerful incentive to come to, and stay at, Carolina.

Levine Student Fund

2011

Carolina Students to Benefit from Howard R. Levine Student Excellence Fund



Howard R. Levine, '81, business major, Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of Family Dollar Stores, Inc., has created an endowment to support Carolina's undergraduate and graduate students pursuing academic studies and scholarly research in the field of Jewish Studies.

“Through this gift, I hope students will have a more enriching college experience and perhaps have the means to take advantage of learning opportunities that otherwise might not be within their financial reach,” said Levine.

The Howard R. Levine Student Excellence Fund in Jewish Studies was created through a \$500,000 pledge. When fully funded, the endowment will provide the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies with a permanent source of funding to further the teaching mission of the Center. The endowment will support student research inside and outside of the classroom, including student travel and study abroad during the academic year and the summer months; it will support academic field trips to extend the classroom experience into the community; it will enable the Center to bring in visitors to campus to meet with students and deliver unique programs; and finally, it will ensure that the Center is in a position to expand its course offerings to meet rising student demand.

“We are so thankful to Howard and his family for this generous and inspiring gift to the Center and to Carolina's students,” said Jonathan Hess, director. “The level of study and the quality of the research conducted by UNC students is truly impressive. Now, thanks to the Levine family, our students can participate in more projects and programs than ever before.”

“I've been following the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies for a few years now and I've heard nothing but positive things about the program and its growth. Furthermore, I like that the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies program attracts students with different backgrounds and a range of interests,” added Levine. “As a Carolina alumnus with interest in supporting Jewish organizations and causes, I thought this was the perfect opportunity for me to support my alma mater in a way that was personal to me. I was born and raised in Charlotte, I'm a Tar Heel fan, and I'm delighted that I can give back to Carolina's students.”

Tanenbaum Professorship

Tanenbaums Endow Professorship in Jewish History and Culture



Babette and Jay Tanenbaum have established a new distinguished professorship in Jewish Studies, providing an endowment that will support a tenure track faculty member who specializes in Jewish history and culture.

“We are very grateful to Babette and Jay Tanenbaum for their support of Jewish Studies at Carolina,” said Jonathan Hess, director. “Their support of our faculty will not only help us hire, or retain, an outstanding teacher and researcher, it will also have a lasting impact on Carolina’s future students.”

Jay Tanenbaum, founder and president of Primus Capital LLC, a structured finance and investment company based in Atlanta, is former chair and current executive committee member of the The Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL). “My work with ISJL has fueled my interest in preserving the legacy and history of Jews in the American south and in developing programs and opportunities for Jewish communities throughout the south,” said Tanenbaum. “Having a strong Jewish Studies program at a leading public university, that just happens to be in the south, further strengthens this effort. It is my hope that our endowed chair helps Carolina continue to build its outstanding academic and community programs in Jewish Studies.”

Jay Tanenbaum’s great-grandfather immigrated from Sejny, Poland to Dumas, Arkansas in the 1890s, and three subsequent generations grew up in the small southern town. Babette’s family similarly made its way from Alsace to Mandeville, Louisiana. “My family’s story is repeated in countless other families throughout the south. I think it’s important that Jews settled across the country and became an important thread throughout the American tapestry,” added Tanenbaum. “We’re not alumni of Carolina, and we have no strong link to the campus, but when I learned of the Jewish Studies program, I thought it was doing vital work in contributing to this ongoing study of the Jewish experience in the American south.”

State funds provide basic faculty salaries for Carolina’s distinguished scholars while permanent endowed chair funds, created by philanthropic gifts, further support teaching and research. By creating a reliable source of annual support, endowed faculty chairs provide a powerful incentive to come to, and stay at, Carolina. This gift, in excess of \$1 million, qualifies for a matching \$500,000 grant from the State of North Carolina’s Distinguished Professors Endowment Trust Fund.

Oberdorfer Planned Gift

2012

On September 22, 1951, Carolina junior Saralyn Bonowitz attended a party at the Zeta Beta Tau fraternity house after the first football game of the season. That day, Carolina beat N.C. State – and Saralyn met



ZBT Gene Oberdorfer, who shared her class year and a Southern Jewish heritage. In 2012, as Gene and Saralyn Oberdorfer celebrated 59 years of marriage, they committed to contribute a deferred gift to the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies. This gift will provide a versatile source of funding for the growing program and give Carolina students opportunities unavailable to the Oberdorfers in the 1950s. Jonathan Hess, director of the Center, says this fund will provide crucial support to Jewish studies at Carolina. “The Oberdorfers have been great friends to the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies, and their generous

planned gift will have a major impact on Carolina students for generations to come,” said Hess, Moses M. and Hannah L. Malkin Distinguished Professor of Jewish History and Culture. The couple has also supported the Ambassador Stuart E. Eizenstat Professorship in Jewish History and Culture. “As an unrestricted gift to Jewish Studies, the Oberdorfer endowment will give us tremendous flexibility in addressing the Center’s most pressing needs on a year-to-year basis—whether this means funding student research and travel, enabling faculty to develop new courses or supporting graduate students working in the field of Jewish studies.”

Gene was also inspired by his parents’ commitment to Jewish causes. His father, Donald, traveled the U.S. in the post-WWII era raising money as chairman of the Joint Defense Appeal for the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League. He was a Jewish community leader in Atlanta throughout his lifetime, also serving in leadership positions with the USO and the American Red Cross. Gene’s mother Dorothy was president of the Southeast Region for the National Council of Jewish Women, and active in the American Red Cross Gray Ladies Service and the Red Cross Motor Corps. During World War II, the Oberdorfer family hosted many Jewish soldiers in their home for meals.

The Oberdorfers were motivated to give not only by the examples of their family but also by their unique experiences as out-of-state Jewish students at Carolina. Gene, born and raised in Atlanta, was impressed with the quality of the UNC programs and chose Carolina in 1949 for its location in the South, and business school faculty and curriculum. Saralyn, originally from California, transferred to Carolina in 1951 after two years at Stephens College in Columbia, Mo., for the outstanding programs and faculty in the English department.

Little or no community existed for Jewish women. “Since UNC only enrolled female students in their junior year, with the exception of a few majors, there were not very many girls on campus, and very few were Jewish,” Saralyn said. “I was something of a rarity.”

However, Gene and Saralyn took advantage of the opportunities available. Both served on the cabinet of Hillel, the Jewish student activity center, led by Rabbi Perlman and later Rabbi Rosenzweig. Gene described the group as loose-knit at the time. Saralyn became its president during her senior year. Though there was no academic program for Jewish studies, Gene and Saralyn took an Old Testament course with Bernard Boyd, first professor and chair of the brand-new department of religious studies.

Both Gene and Saralyn became leaders at UNC; Gene as president of ZBT fraternity, delegata of the Order of the Grail, and inducted into the Golden Fleece and Phi Beta Kappa. Saralyn became Women’s Orientation Chairman, secretary of Chi Omega sorority, president of Valkyries, president of Hillel and 1953 UNC May Queen.

In 1953, Gene graduated with a major in business administration and a concentration in insurance, and Saralyn with a major in English and minor in education. Then, as Gene said, “Saralyn did a good thing for me: she married me.” Gene enjoyed a successful career at his family’s firm, Oberdorfer

Insurance Agency in Atlanta, and eventually became its owner and CEO. Saralyn worked as an elementary school teacher and professional model, eventually joining the insurance firm. Both have served on the boards of multiple civic organizations in Georgia and at UNC. They also raised three children, Michael, Julie and Robin (business administration '81).

Now, looking back on long careers of service and giving to education and the Jewish community, the Oberdorfers consider this gift to be a fitting continuation of their legacy at UNC.

“This is a way for Jewish and non-Jewish students to gain knowledge of Jewish studies,” Gene said. “I think it’s a great thing, because years ago there wasn’t this kind of program. We hope we’ll get a chance to continue our relationship with UNC Jewish studies and see that program grow.”

By Brittany Darst '14

Transformative Gift for Graduate Student Recruitment and Support

2013

In the previous edition of this newsletter, the Center announced that an anonymous donor had committed \$250,000 to create an endowment for graduate student support in Jewish Studies in the name of the Tau Epsilon Phi fraternity (TEP). A group of former TEP members from recent decades has now added \$675,000 to this fund, bringing the total committed to \$875,000. This generous gift was made from the proceeds of the sale of the former TEP fraternity house on Rosemary Street, and reflects the commitment of these TEP brothers to the continued success of the Center. The ultimate goal of the TEP brothers is to bring the value of the graduate support fund to \$1.2 million so that it can support a new Tau Epsilon Phi graduate student fellow each year in perpetuity.

“These gifts will have a tremendous impact on Carolina’s ability to recruit the most promising graduate students and also give the Center wonderful opportunities to provide ongoing support for their research efforts,” said Jonathan Hess, director. “In the years to come, these funds will support outstanding scholars who will go on to become faculty at leading institutions worldwide, where they will in turn inspire future students and contribute important research to the field of Jewish Studies. It is simply awe-inspiring to ponder the long-term impact of these gifts, and I am very thankful to the TEP fraternity brothers.”



Carolina’s ability to recruit and support the best and brightest graduate students will further its reputation as a university that produces up-and-coming teacher-scholars in the field. Carolina routinely competes with leading universities worldwide for top graduate students in the humanities, and the TEP fellowship will help give a competitive edge. The new Tau Epsilon Phi Fund for Jewish Studies will support graduate students working on topics in Jewish Studies in varying stages of their academic careers.

“Securing graduate student support is one of our main goals for the next 10 years, and the TEP gifts certainly give this goal a fantastic jump start. We have more to do in this area, but having this support now will have an immediate positive impact on our academic program and a lasting impact on the field of Jewish Studies,” added Hess.

Major Gift Supports Academics, Research and Community Outreach

2016

In 2012, the Center created a capstone course in Jewish Studies as a required component for the undergraduate degree in Religious Studies/Jewish Studies. The capstone course is an upper-level research seminar—for undergraduate and graduate students—that explores various topics in the diverse field of Jewish Studies. The course is offered each academic year with a different topic, led by a different professor. Through the years, the course has focused on Jewish literature, Jewish-Christian relations, Jewish humor, and Jewish folklore and material life.

A new endowment, funded by anonymous donors, was established last academic year to support the capstone course in Jewish Studies. Funds will be utilized to assist faculty in developing new course content, to provide the financial means to arrange for class field trips and visits to historical and cultural sites, to cover expenses with the professor’s academic department, and to bring in visiting lecturers to enhance the course curriculum. The same donors also provided two other new endowment funds—to support a lectureship for the campus community and general public focused on Sephardic Judaism, and to provide support for faculty and student research and projects in Jewish Studies and Sephardic Judaism.



“There are many costs associated with creating new course content and providing a truly unique learning opportunity for our students in the capstone course and we are very grateful to have this fund provide the necessary support for the long-term,” said Ruth von Bernuth, director. “We are also very grateful for this new lectureship and the research support, which will enrich the learning experiences for our students and the community as well as provide new scholarly opportunities.”

Photo Students in Professor Berlinger’s JWST 697 “The Material Life of Jewish America” capstone course curated the exhibition “From T-Shirts to Tattoos: Jewish Material Culture at UNC-Chapel Hill”. The exhibition is housed in the Center’s office, first floor of Pettigrew Hall.