



“My grandmother knew and taught me that everyone had some story.”

Barbara Myerhoff, Anthropologist

Photo © Jim Webber

Early in the life of the Jewish Women's Archive, it became clear that the materials being collected would not be stored in a climate controlled vault but on disks and hard drives and distant servers. The collections would not be physical objects but digitized copies of photographs, letters, oral histories, and, in more recent years, email, blogs, and other objects that are “born digital.”

Some of the Archive's earliest efforts were community oral history projects designed to recognize and increase public awareness of the experiences of 20th-century Jewish women. Oral historians collected the stories of “ordinary” Jewish women in Boston, Baltimore, and Seattle; photographers and artists used them to create exhibits that began in galleries and live today on the Jewish Women's Archive website ([jwa.org/stories](http://jwa.org/stories)).

“Chief Justice Allen and I stood with our hands raised, he robed in black, I dressed in white. We created a startling image: gubernatorial power was being transferred to a woman. I was the same, and I was different. This had always happened, and it had never happened. Tradition had been continued, and it was being broken.”

Madeleine Kunin, *Living a Political Life*



Suit worn by Madeleine Kunin at her first inauguration as Governor of Vermont, January 10, 1985. Courtesy of Madeleine Kunin.

A few years later, JWA decided to undertake a collecting project that would lead directly to an online exhibit. The topic? The impact of Jewish women on feminism and the [\[continued on page 2\]](#)

Dear Sweeties, only  
4% of Foundation  
money goes to women...  
Well that just doesn't  
cut it, so we'll have  
to do it ourselves,  
just like always.

Love Sylvia



Sylvia cartoon from JWA's online exhibit *Jewish Women and the Feminist Revolution*. Copyright Nicole Hollander.

[continued from page 1] American Jewish community. The Jewish Women's Archive asked 74 Jewish feminists each to share an object from their private collection that illuminated the contributions Jewish women made to the feminist movement, along with a short statement about the object's significance. Digital copies of these objects and statements were used to create the online exhibit *Jewish Women and the Feminist Revolution* ([jwa.org/feminism](http://jwa.org/feminism)).

In a field as new as digital archiving, one experiment invariably leads to another. A year after Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast, the Jewish Women's Archive launched *Katrina's Jewish*

## BRINGING IT HOME

"The Jewish Women's Archive is an inspiration to Jewish Women like me."

Alex Glancy, Age 16



Alex Glancy recently wrote to the Jewish Women's Archive on the occasion of her 16th birthday. She had first learned about JWA from her mother, Jennifer, who suggested using the Archive's *Women of Valor* place cards at the Shabbat dinner for Alex's Bat Mitzvah. Three years later, the young woman from Tarzana, CA, told us that

she thought it was "fitting because my Bat Mitzvah marked my entrance into Jewish womanhood, and I could now identify with each of these heroines on a deeper level."

Since then, Alex has "found a more meaningful connection to Judaism" and developed "an even stronger appreciation for [JWA], which recognizes so many important, courageous Jewish women."

In planning her Sweet Sixteen celebration, Alex decided that in lieu of party favors she would make a small donation in honor of each of her friends. Other charities came to mind at first, but then she remembered the Jewish Women's Archive and knew she "wanted to contribute once again." She explained to her guests, not all of whom were Jewish, that JWA "is empowering to women in general because many of the women [we] recognize have changed the world forever."

Alex also asked each of her guests to create a scrapbook page. She told her friends that "the scrapbook they were crafting would be like my own Women's Archive, the pages filled with strong women important in my life." }

*Voices* to collect oral histories and digital objects related to the Jewish community's experience of the storm. Oral historians interviewed 44 women and 41 men directly affected by the hurricane. Meanwhile, an online collection was created and seeded with a few dozen objects; over the next 18 months, the collection grew to more than 2,700 digital artifacts, including photographs, videos, emails, journals, blog postings, Web pages, and news and feature articles.

By 2007, the Jewish Women's Archive had accumulated the most comprehensive and diverse collection of stories in existence about the Jewish community's experiences of Katrina. }

## DO YOU

**Wonder what happened today in Jewish women's history?** Sign up to receive the weekly *This Week in History* email at [jwa.org/this\\_week](http://jwa.org/this_week)

**Want to see *Making Trouble*, JWA's film about three generations of funny Jewish women?** Information is at [jwa.org/makingtrouble](http://jwa.org/makingtrouble)

**Belong to a Jewish historical society, Sisterhood, or other group interested in doing an oral history project?** Get started with JWA's oral history guide at [jwa.org/oralhistory](http://jwa.org/oralhistory)

**Recognize the name Sarah Aaronsohn? Krystyna Zywulska?** Learn about these and 2,000 other women in the new online edition of *Jewish Women: Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia* at [jwa.org/encyclopedia](http://jwa.org/encyclopedia)

**SUPPORT  
JEWISH  
WOMEN'S  
ARCHIVE  
TODAY ▶**

**Want to support the work of the Jewish Women's Archive?** Donate online at [jwa.org/donate](http://jwa.org/donate) or send a check to the address on the back. Thank you!

**In addition to the features listed here, the Jewish Women's Archive website ([jwa.org](http://jwa.org)) has a variety of resources for you to explore and enjoy. }**

## COMMUNITY AND COMMITMENT

### adDRESSING women's lives

In 2002, humanities and Bible teacher Barbara Rosenblit and conceptual artist Sheila Miller, both members of the faculty at the Weber School in Atlanta, conceived of an innovative, interdisciplinary project for high school juniors and seniors taking a seminar on the history of Jewish women in America.

Every year since then, each student in the class has interviewed a Jewish woman aged 75 or older, sometimes a family member, sometimes a total stranger. Rosenblit uses *In Our Own Voices: A Guide to Conducting Life History Interviews with American Jewish Women*, developed by the Jewish Women's Archive, to help the students become oral historians.

Meanwhile, the two teachers choose an object — ceramic dinner place setting, vintage handbags, shadow boxes, and, for the last two years, dress forms — that will provide the artistic framework for the students' work. Over a two-month period, the students work with Miller to create a mixed-media work that uses the object to reveal something important that they have learned about each woman's character and life experiences.

At the end of the semester, Weber sponsors a public exhibition in the school gallery; each work is accompanied by a short biography of the woman and an artist's statement. At the opening night reception, the students and the women they interviewed participate in a panel discussion.

To see the students' work, visit [jwa.org/weberschool](http://jwa.org/weberschool) }



Photo of Simon Ludwig with his artwork.

## (RE)SOURCE

JWA has begun a project to preserve the legacy of American Jewish women who lived through World War II. You can be a part of this project by collecting and sharing stories of women you know.



A good place to start is by sitting down with an older woman and asking her:

1. What do you remember about the day Pearl Harbor was bombed?
2. What (if anything) did you know about the war in Europe before December 7, 1941?
3. What role (if any) did you play in the war effort on the homefront or elsewhere (for example, collecting tin cans; factory work; military service)?
4. How did the war affect your daily life? How did it affect the opportunities that you had and the choices that you made during this period of your life?
5. How did the war affect the way you thought about your future (for example, education, work, marriage)?
6. What were your feelings about Franklin Roosevelt? Eleanor Roosevelt? How did other members of your family feel about the Roosevelts?
7. How did the war change your ideas about the roles of women and men?
8. What is your reaction when you hear World War II called "the good war"? How about "the greatest generation"?
9. How did being Jewish affect your feelings about the war?
10. When and how did you first become aware of what was happening/had happened to the Jews of Europe? What were your feelings about it? What impact did it have on your life?

You can upload your interviewee's answers in written or audio form along with any photographs she is willing to share at [jwa.org/ww2/share](http://jwa.org/ww2/share) }

## VOICES

**Celia Fever, a student at the Weber School in Atlanta, wrote:**

*"Although I had done other interviews in the past, I always seemed to dread the idea of sitting someone*

*down and asking intrusive questions. However, this interview was entirely different. My aunt suddenly ... knocked on my door, ran into my room and begged me to begin the interview right away because she was just so excited ... The interview began, and I truly enjoyed it. I didn't want it to end. She kept telling me all of these wondrous*

*stories about my family and her life which I had never even imagined. ... I learned so much from her and the experience that now when she or any other relatives come to visit, I make it a priority to sit with them and listen to all their stories, and even dig deeper, ask further questions to grasp all I can from their vivid and incredible lives."* }

## WE REMEMBER

*We Remember* is a permanent online collection of reminiscences about recently deceased American Jewish women. If you would like to “nominate” a woman who has died since 2000, use the form at [jwa.org/weremember](http://jwa.org/weremember) or call 617.232.2258 and we'll send you one.



## REMEMBERING JUDY FRANKEL

*Acclaimed Singer of Judeo-Spanish (Ladino) Music, 1942 – 2008*

*Dr. Judith Cohen remembers:* Many musicians talk about “collecting” songs. Judy didn’t. She talked, with never-failing appreciation and affection, of “harvesting” songs, and always credited the people from whom she learned them. ... Judy was one of the first (and still, regrettably, one of the few) singers of Sephardic songs who, from the

beginning, learned songs directly from the people whose tradition it was. Judy did good background research, but understood that, unlike early music, where all we have are manuscripts, traditional singing is really only properly learned from traditional singers. Working with these Sephardic women meant ... that she sang mostly their repertoire, the majority of which was the lyric song repertoire, rather than the old narrative ballads and wedding songs which this generation of women rarely sang by this time. She sang the songs in the style they used, which by then was mostly Western tempered intervals, rarely if ever in the old *maqam* (Middle Eastern scales) style. Judy made this style her own, in an artistically admirable but never pretentious way, which appealed to and inspired both the Sephardim themselves and people who had rarely or never heard the songs before. Women in Sephardic communities, especially in California where she lived, welcomed her as a friend and adopted her as family — as “Sephardic by choice.” For more about Judy Frankel, go to [jwa.org/weremember/frankel](http://jwa.org/weremember/frankel) }

## THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

*This Week in History* offers a unique calendar of American Jewish experience — connecting specific dates throughout the year to events related to American Jewish women. To receive TWIH via email every week, go to [jwa.org/this\\_week](http://jwa.org/this_week).

## “THE AMERICAN JEWESS” BEGINS PUBLICATION

First published on April 1, 1895, *The American Jewess* was the first English-language publication directed at American Jewish women. Created and edited by Hungarian immigrant Rose Sonneschein, it covered a wide range of topics, from demands for synagogue membership for women, to Zionism, to health and fashion tips, to the propriety of women riding bicycles.

The publication’s sense of possibility was captured in its title. Though strange and archaic to contemporary ears, in the 1890s, the phrase “American Jewess” described a new type of Jewish woman, one who could fully embrace the possibilities of both the religious and national aspects of her identity. *The American Jewess* set out to explore the challenges and possibilities inherent in this new identity. At its height, the magazine claimed a circulation of 31,000.

Sonneschein recognized that the progress of American Jewish women needed to be preserved in writing. As she observed in the first issue of *The American Jewess*, “Not what has happened, but what is recorded makes history.”

No one existing library collection comes close to containing a full run of the magazine. The digitized searchable text of all but one of the 46 issues published between 1895 and August 1899 is accessible at no cost at [jwa.org/amjewess](http://jwa.org/amjewess) }

## VITAL STAT

With **2,756** digital objects collected, JWA is the single largest repository of data related to the Jewish experience of Hurricane Katrina.

## JEWISH WOMEN'S ARCHIVE

Michele Rosen  
*Board Chair*

Barbara B. Dobkin  
*Founding Chair*

Joyce Antler  
*Chair*  
*Academic Advisory Council*

Gail Twersky Reimer  
*Executive Director*

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Susan Asher Calechman  
Gloria Feldt  
Roz Garber

Judith Ginsberg  
Penina Migdal Glazer  
Lynda Goldstein  
Felicia D. Herman

Carol M. Joseph  
Ann Kirschner  
Karen Secunda Levy  
Anne H. Meyer

Linda K. Morse  
Beth W. Newburger  
Sarah Perry

Barbara Ellison Rosenblit  
Susan Levin Schlechter  
Carol Shalita Smokler  
Marian Scheuer Sofaer

Prudence Steiner  
Nancy Schwartz Sternoff  
Nicki Newman Tanner

Jeane Ungerleider  
Carol Wise  
Diane Wohl  
Rose Zoltek-Jick

THE MISSION OF THE  
JEWISH WOMEN'S  
ARCHIVE IS TO UNCOVER,  
CHRONICLE, AND  
TRANSMIT TO A BROAD  
PUBLIC THE RICH  
HISTORY OF AMERICAN  
JEWISH WOMEN.

Jewish  
Women's  
Archive }

138 Harvard Street Brookline, MA 02446  
TEL 617.232.2258 FAX 617.975.0109

WEB [jwa.org](http://jwa.org)

The Jewish Women's Archive publishes IN ACTION three times a year. Please contact Rachel King at 617.232.2258, ext. 207, or [RKing@jwa.org](mailto:RKing@jwa.org) if you have comments, questions, or suggestions.