

# Summer 2013 e-newsletter



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## The Way We Were

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### **Celebrating the Role of Memory in Jewish Culture**

By Mary Ellen Gabriel

For Jews, looking back is not only useful for understanding the past; it's a way of fortifying oneself for the days to come. Nostalgia for 'the best times' holds out a template for hope, while more somber memorializing cautions, 'never again.'

"In one way, Jewish memorial practices are no different than those of other ethnic groups," says Michael Bernard-Donals, director for the Center for Jewish Studies. "But in another way, they connect Jews to a particular past, one involving exile and return, of living among strangers while making a life of continuity among one's own community."

Two events—one in the spring, one in the summer—celebrated the role of memory and reflection in Jewish culture: "Jewish Madison in the 1960s," a special program for faraway friends in Los Angeles, and "A Biselle KlezKamp," a free, one-day immersion in Yiddish folk culture held at UW-Madison.

More than 85 UW-Madison alumni and friends gathered for "Jewish Madison in the 1960s" at the Hillcrest Country Club in Los Angeles to hear eminent faculty and alumni describe how their lives and careers were shaped by the rich political and intellectual foment of UW-Madison at that historic time. Hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Peter and Julie Weil, the event was moderated by Jim Hirsch (BA '69), film and television writer and producer. Speakers were writer and film director Jim Abrahams (BA '66), professor emeritus of history Stanley Kutler, and composer Ben Sidran (BA '66).

"Many of those attending were in Madison during the 1960s, and some graduated in the decades that followed," said Bernard-Donals, who helped coordinate the event. "All participated in a lively discussion about, as Ben Sidran put it, 'what history feels like,' and about the ways in which Jewish students'

interests, backgrounds, and interactions with their teachers and friends led them to participate in the events of the 1960s in Madison in a range of different ways.”

Looking back on their days at UW-Madison, guests at “Jewish Madison in the 1960s” discovered, and shared, insights that revealed much about where they are now. One speaker revealed that his tendency to process things through music later became a way to think about the Jewish influence on culture. Another admitted that he didn’t really identify as particularly Jewish while he was in Madison; it was this realization, years later that made him curious about his Jewish background.

Nostalgia permeated “A Biselle KlezKamp,” a “12-hour whirlwind tour of Yiddish arts and culture” that drew more than 250 participants to the second annual gathering. Interactive workshops in music and dance, lectures on Yiddish language and letters, and lecture-recitals about Yiddish food celebrated the rich traditions of Yiddish culture with young and old. Evening brought “the big party,” when all joined in for music and dancing. A program of the Mayrent Institute for Yiddish Culture, and brainchild of Mayrent director Henry Sapoznik, “A Biselle KlezKamp” is now the premiere Yiddish folk culture event in the Midwest.

Judith Zukerman Kaufman, who grew up in a household where fluent Yiddish was spoken and traditional music sung and played, brought her grandson and daughter with her to the inaugural KlezKamp. She was transported, she says, “back to my mother’s living room.”

“It’s a warm and loving way to pass on the culture,” she says.

Through events like these, the Center for Jewish Studies plays a unique role on campus.

“The Center is here to ensure that UW students not only understand the continuity of the Jewish cultural past, but the many ways in which that culture plays out in the present, and can have consequences for the future,” says Bernard-Donals.

*To read more from Michael Bernard-Donals on memory, reflection, and nostalgia, click [here](#).*

Image of Martin Luther King crowd on Bascom Hill courtesy of UW Archives, #S00502

## Bringing Immigrant History to Life

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### **Annie Polland (BA, '95) Leads Education at New York's Tenement Museum**

By Laurie Silverberg



In 1994, the Center for Jewish Studies began offering an undergraduate certificate in Jewish Studies. One member of this pioneering class of certificate students is Milwaukee native Annie Polland (BA, '95). After graduating from UW–Madison, she earned a PhD in History from Columbia University. Today, Polland is one of the nation's leading public historians and a highly respected scholar of American Jewish history. Since 2008, she has served as Vice President of Education at the **Tenement Museum** in New York City's Lower East Side.

I recently spoke with Annie to learn more about her education, research, and work at the museum.



### **What led you to pursue museum work?**

While still in graduate school, I got a job as a guide for Big Onion Walking Tours, started by another Columbia history graduate student who began giving walking tours in the neighborhood based on his research. I loved being out in the streets teaching and being able to use buildings and the environment in addition to more traditional primary sources. Later, when I was finishing my dissertation, a job opened up with the Eldridge Street Project, a non-for-profit that was restoring the [Eldridge Street Synagogue](#). I had always taken my tours there: people loved learning there, and I loved teaching in there. So I started working there, and I really liked that.

### **Describe a typical day at work at the Tenement Museum.**

I don't have a typical day. Even when it's project-based, my job involves connecting dots between research, scholarship, teachers, and community groups that can benefit from that research—and then funders who can fund our projects. I also manage 10 full-time staff and about 50 part-time educators. The other element is the building: meetings with architects and preservationists.

### **How much do you interact with museum visitors?**

I still lead tours—thank goodness! Sometimes I'll have a day of meetings, and then I'll get to give a tour, and it reminds me why I do what I do.

### **Your research has shown that Jewish immigrants maintained a *mélange* of practices that defy easy categorization as “orthodox” or “secular.” Can you offer an example of this?**

Many immigrants who worked on Saturdays [the Jewish Sabbath] tried to justify their work through Jewish law by saying it was Pikuach Nefesh, or saving a life, because they were saving the lives of their families, whom they were supporting. That points to how complicated their lives were... [Today] people are still balancing their secular lives with their religious lives. And it's exactly where it becomes blurry that it becomes the most insightful.

### **What was it like to be part of the first group of Jewish Studies certificate students at UW?**

It was exciting, institutionally, that this certificate had been created. Faculty and students were excited about where [Jewish Studies] was going.

Photos: David Rosenzweig, Paula McDermid

# The Making of a Biblical Archaeologist

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By Allison Bloom



Geoffrey Ludvik's passion for archaeology began when he was a dinosaur-obsessed boy in Minneapolis. The summer after sixth grade, his parents sent him to volunteer at a paleontological dig, then to archaeological digs at UW-LaCrosse. By the time he was a UW senior in 2012, Ludvik had made it to the ancient kingdom of Judah and the Philistines, where he was involved with excavating and studying objects from a small Bronze Age house.

That summer, Ludvik was one of six students who received funding from the Center for Jewish Studies **Coleman Undergraduate Learning Enhancement Fund** to participate in an archaeological dig at Khribet Summeily, Israel. At the time, he had an interest in ancient Greek civilization. But the experience at the dig, directed by adjunct professor Jeff Blakeley, proved life-changing.

"I came to Israel as an aspiring classical archaeologist," Ludvik says, "but after conversations with Dr. Blakely, I came home an aspiring biblical archaeologist."

Though many students report profound experiences on study trips funded by the Center for Jewish Studies, Ludvik came away from the dig with more than a new area of interest. He also returned with data gained from his study of stone beads found in the house, which were used in ancient civilizations as trade currency. By using a new technique introduced to him by UW-Madison Anthropology professor Mark Kenoyer, Ludvik makes detailed casts of the beads, then studies them under a scanning electron microscope. Because different types of drills left different markings as the beads were manufactured, it is possible to trace the location and time period in which the beads originated. By comparing the beads found at various dig sites around the Eastern Mediterranean, Ludvik has given archaeologists new insights into the trade routes and craft processes of biblical civilizations and their neighbors.

At this fall's national meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR), a prestigious venue where biblical archaeologists present their findings, Ludvik will present a paper (coauthored by Kenoyer) on the significance of both the trade-currency beads and the new method he is using to study them. Ludvik is one of the youngest presenters ever to have a paper accepted by ASOR, and he is using funds he received from the Center for Jewish Studies Mazursky Student Support Fund to attend the meeting in November 2013.

His ASOR opportunity comes as no surprise to those who know him; Blakely notes that he is an "exceptionally talented and hard-working student" whose enthusiasm for archaeology distinguishes him. Ludvik will be carrying on his study of the beads this fall as a graduate student in the UW-Madison Anthropology program.

Photo: Jeffrey Blakley

## Quiz Yourself: How's Your Yiddish? (By Mark Loudon)

Match the terms on the right to their matching definitions on the left. Answers below!

homemaker	ekht
low-quality merchandise	farklemt
real	feh
expression of disgust	nasheray
folksy, friendly	heymish
bigshot	shnorer
beggar	kvel
choked up	drek
snack food	balabusta
beam, be proud	makher

### ANSWERS

homemaker | balabusta

low-quality merchandise | drek

real | ekht

expression of disgust | feh

folksy, friendly | heymish

bigshot | makher

beggar | shnorer

choked up | farklemt

snack food | nasheray

beam, be proud | kvel

## From the Dean's Desk

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As the new dean of UW-Madison's College of Letters & Science, I am delighted to introduce myself and share with you some of the many reasons I am honored and excited to serve the College.

As an economist, I have devoted my scholarly career to studying the ways in which human beings respond to the world's complexity. We are increasingly interconnected through technology and economic growth. I believe our students must graduate as engaged global citizens in order to successfully navigate through work and life.

The Center for Jewish Studies is critical in this effort. Nearly half of the program's undergraduates study abroad at some point, and not only in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, but also in places as diverse as Sydney, Rome, Capetown, and Prague. Thanks to the generosity of alumni and friends, the Center has awarded over \$10,000 in study abroad scholarships and grants this past year. The Center's major and certificate programs attract students not only from related disciplines such as Hebrew, History, and Political Science, but also from fields as diverse as Genetics, Real Estate, Global Health, and Journalism. Faculty from over a dozen disciplines across several colleges offer students a diverse set of methodologies and ways of looking at, and making sense of, the world.

As alumni, you have many reasons to be proud and to continue your support of the Center for Jewish Studies. Perhaps the most valuable skill a liberal arts graduate can bring to our knowledge-based economy is the passion to keep learning. The Center fosters curiosity and creativity in unique and innovative ways, strengthening campus and the community at large and preparing students to become active and involved members of society.

Please stay in touch with your alma mater. I welcome your feedback and appreciate all that you do for the university.

Thank you and On, Wisconsin!

John Karl Scholz