

Board brings community together

RHODESIAN Jewry had a feeling of vulnerability during the years of World War Two. This sense of isolation led them to try to have a greater communal unity, writes B A Kosmin in *Majuta* in 1981, with the result that they decided to start formal representative organisations.

Thus in 1943, the Rhodesian Zionist Council and the Council of Rhodesian Jewry, later renamed the Rhodesian Jewish Board of Deputies, were formed to represent the communities of both Rhodesias with links to parent groups in South Africa.

Two well-known Bulawayo men, Samuel Rabinowitz and Cecil Jacobs, OBE, were prime instigators in the formation of the Board of Deputies. It began by campaigning for local needs and went on to become the overseer of Jewish affairs nationwide.

In 1951 the Board proudly announced in the monthly *Rhodesian Jewish Journal*, the forerunner of the *CA Zionist Digest*, that the Jewish community of Northern and Southern Rhodesia was at a peak of 10,000 — more than double for the past five year period.

Unfortunately the Southern Rhodesian Census Board had made a mistake and 12 months later it revised its figures to 4,760 or 3,5 percent of the white population of the two countries.

"The doubling of the Jewish community from 1946 to 1951 had not in fact occurred," the Board stated. "Further, the increase was very moderate and forms a lower percentage of Europeans than it did in 1946." That census had been 3,478 or 4 percent of the population. Thus in 1951 there was an increase of 1,382 in that five year period as compared to 65 percent for the European population as a whole.

The Board went on to give the 1951 breakdown of the figures which were:

	19 & under	
	male	female
Salisbury	295	278
Bulawayo	346	334

	20 & over	
	male	female
Salisbury	622	575
Bulawayo	759	762

	Total	
	male	female
Salisbury	917	853
Bulawayo	1105	1096

and as percentages of the total Jewish community

	1951	1946
Salisbury	37,5	31,2
Bulawayo	46,7	45,9
Gwelo	3,5	4,7
Hartley	1,9	3,2
Umtali	1,5	1,7
Other	8,9	13,3

Still the Board felt that these figures were the "clearest witness to the untroubled civic status of Jews in the Colony" and this brought "increased responsibility to the organisations". Jews could no longer regard themselves as "a small group of pioneers".

However, the drop of Jews in the smaller centres in 1958 led Board president, Mr E Eliasov, to warn delegates at the 12th biennial congress in Bulawayo that if the leaders of Rhodesian Jewry "persisted in closing their eyes to this state of affairs, it would ... lead to the disintegration of the country communities", which then

accounted for 20 percent of all Jews in the Federation.

High among the achievements of the Board during 1957/58 was the foundation of Carmel Day School, the first Jewish day school in Rhodesia. It made sure the school would develop to full primary level. Parallel with this, the Board set up a Rhodesian Board of Jewish Education.

Later that year the Board began to look into ways of starting a Jewish old aged home for Federation residents. There were no funds at this point, but the tentative price for the entire project was estimated at £10,000.

After the Belgium Congo crisis in 1960 in which most Jews of that country fled to Israel with the help of Rhodesian and South African Jewry, the Board reviewed the Jewish African situation. Mr Eliasov said: "We must admit, to our sorrow, that we are losing ground. Our children do not show the same commitment to and knowledge of things Jewish as we do and our own virtues in this field are little enough."

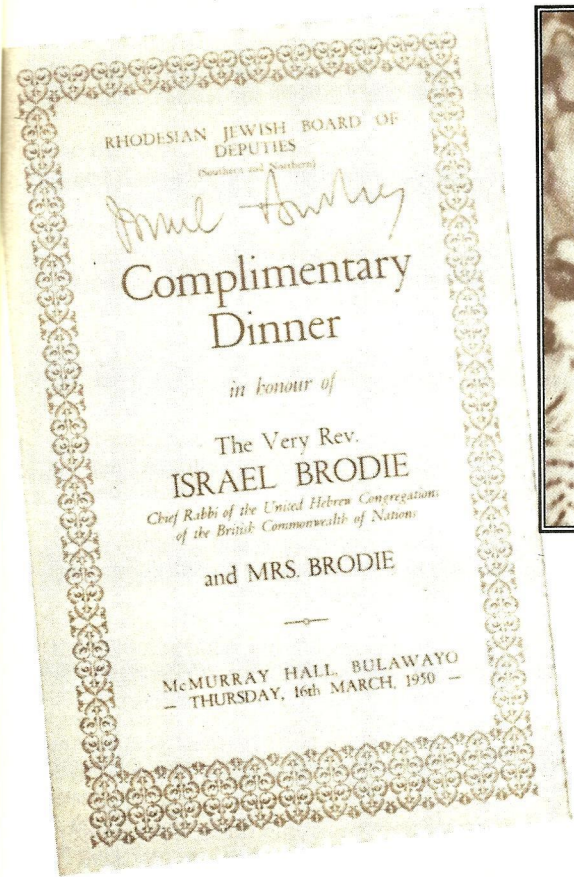
The Board was worried about the future of Jewish education and had, a number of times, clashed with the Zionist Council, the former believing that loyalties lay with the country in which one lived and the latter pushing for youth *aliyah*. "Our foremost duties as a Board are to the Jewish community within the Federation," the



Although the Board did not often become embroiled in politics, it did defend Jews against their critics. During the wars, anti-semites sometimes accused Rhodesian Jewish boys of being "shirkers" and "not doing their bit" for their country. Here Louis, Sydney (who was killed over Burma in 1942) and Herbert Schragger proved otherwise when they posed proudly before going off to war in 1940.



(Picture left): Members of the Jewish Board of Deputies, 1958. (From left) Boris Anolick, Cassey Harris and Eli Eliasov at a Congress.



One of the many successful balls, often hosted by the Board, in the Large City Hall, 1950s. This one was in honour of the Israeli Consul visiting Rhodesia.

president said. One of the youngest speakers at the Congress was Eric Bloch, of the Rhodesian Zionist Youth Executive, who said that Jewish youth were utterly spoilt and lazy and parents apathetic to their children's activities.

But the Jewish Board of Deputies carried on as can be seen at the 1962 14th Congress held at Carmel School. Mr Eliasov again stressed that the Board would ensure that a meaningful Jewish life continued in the Federation. "Jews," Mr Eliasov said, "reflected all shades of political opinion and, as Europeans, would follow the same path and share the same aspirations as other Europeans. It was right that this should be so, so that Jews were properly integrated into the social, political

and economic life of the country, not as an ethnic group, but as individuals."

Later, the Hon A E Abrahamson stressed public relations saying that the Jew had more than the normal responsibility of whites in Rhodesia. Another growing problem for the Board was the shortage of communal staff — teachers, ministers and youth leaders.

A change came in 1964 when the Board changed its name to the Central African Jewish Board of Deputies. Mr Abrahamson, MP, was elected president. He said one of the important tasks of the newly constituted Board was to preserve the unity of Jewish communities in the Rhodesias. He also said it was necessary for the Board to expand its cultural and youth work and to nurture day schools, because having established them was not in itself sufficient.

Problems grew in Jewish education and the Board had to work even harder. This was seen in 1969 when the Board noted that there was a general feeling of unease and the community was in an "isolated state". Although local Jews could not disengage themselves from the rest of World Jewry, the outside world seemed to have forgotten about us. The Board hit out at "foreign" Jews saying that although Rhodesian Jewry had no collective political viewpoint, it would defend the right of any individual to express his views. Some within our community felt this was not enough. They felt the Jewish Board of Deputies should take a political stance, both locally and internationally and not be "fence sitters."

However, in 1972/73 the Board did make a stand when the Smith Government tried to introduce the Property Owners' Protection Bill. Ian Smith, the Prime Minister, was under pressure from his extreme right to put forward a Bill which tried to prevent coloured, Indians and especially blacks from "penetrating" white suburbs. The preamble to this Bill said that "aliens" could include people from Israel. The Bill



Having a Ball ...

In the 1950s and 1960s there were many smaller Jewish societies in Bulawayo, such as the Israeli United Appeal, the Jewish National Fund which held annual Blue Box competitions, and Magen David Adom. Although not a very big group, MDA held many successful fund raising affairs which gathered money to benefit medical causes locally and overseas. Its first annual ball was held in Bulawayo in 1952, started under the convenorship of Mrs L Nussbaum and Mrs N I Amato. The first proceeds went to the purchase of an ambulance for Israel. (Standing from left): Marie Berzack, Rose Rubin, Sheila Lowenthal, Gelta Stern, Ilse Goldschmidt, Riva Gordon, Friedel Friedlander, Sadie Kaplan, Beckie Nussbaum and Kay Finkelstein. (Sitting from left): Stephanie —, Mrs Poswell, Joyce Amato, and Diana Hurwitz.



More Rhodesian soldiers, this time World War One. In the middle row, second from the left, is Cecil Jacobs, who joined the paramedic unit and was awarded the Military Medal for bringing in wounded while under fire.

day schools. A bursary had to be set up to train Hebrew teachers for service in Rhodesia. About 40 percent of the Board's budget was set aside for Jewish education.

The 1979 21st Congress of CA Board of Deputies was significant because it was the first congress to be held in the new Zimbabwe Rhodesia and secondly because Mr Abrahamson resigned as president — an office he had filled with great distinction for 17 out of the 31 years he served. He was elected its first Hon life president. Also Maurice Wagner, who was general secretary for 28 years, retired.

The congress had to bring in important changes to its constitution to meet the crisis of the dwindling number of Jews. The treasurer reported that it was running at a heavy yearly loss, and a community chest to fund the major organisations and institutions was suggested.

By now the population stood at 2,000, but despite this, all groups were kept going by the Board under the new presidency of Harold Hillel Gollop.

With the coming of Zimbabwe's independence, the Board reported that these were "worrying times, a period of great changes and uncertainty. We have read and heard the assurances that the new Government has given about freedom of religion, conscience, human rights and liberties." However, the Board regretted that Israel was not included at the Independence celebrations.

With the new era, the Board continued to stand aside from politics. It was not the function of the Jewish community to take part in politics, the Board said. "We are a religious group not a cultural group, perhaps an ethnic group, we are not a political group.

"Individual Jews are entitled to hold whatever political views appeal to them, to join whatever political party they wish. The Jewish community cannot tell its members what they are to do politically. When (a Jew) does take part in politics, he does so

allowed unknown and unsigned people to collect signatures (they were never disclosed) and report this to the Minister who then was enabled to force the offending parties to leave. People had the right to complain of noise or smell or anything that upset them.

Maurice Wagner replied on behalf of the Board condemned this Bill: "It is totally against Jewish religious principle," he wrote. Minister Partridge responded that he was a Catholic and therefore knew nothing about Jewish principles!

Wagner again replied saying, "You as a Catholic should know about Jewish ethics since you stole them from us 2,000 years ago!"

The Bill was dropped and never brought to Parliament. Whether as a result of Jewish protest, we shall not know.

The 1970s saw an exodus of Rhodesian youth. The Board was saddened that most teenagers left to study or work in other countries and did not return. It called on adults to try to get the youngsters, particularly young marrieds, involved. The Board continued to deal with Jewish education but was "disturbed" as many Jewish children were not receiving any Jewish education after primary school.

The number of Rhodesian Jews continued to shrink and new figures in 1973 showed a drop over the past 12 years from a high of 7,000 in 1968 to about 4,800. Ages were also changing. There was a big decrease in people between the ages of 20 to 44 but a heavy increase in the 45 to 70 year age group. Two things emerged — the Board felt it would have to concentrate mainly on the education of the young which was more than a third of the population and on the aged. In view of this, Mr Abrahamson stressed the need for communal planning. He cautioned against starting schemes which might prove too heavy a commitment for a declining community.

Throughout the UDI period of Rhodesia, except for that one time, the Board maintained an apolitical stance. On public relations, it said there could be "no collective Jewish view on any political or social issue". This was to remain the policy of the Board — the "only viable policy", it said.

There were two exceptions to this rule: When the leadership felt sure it was in fact representing collectively an unchallengeable majority Jewish viewpoint; and when it supported statements arising from the teachings of Judaism.

The Board's view not to take a political stand in public often led to lively debates with the Youth Council which insisted that it was not enough to talk generally about Jewish ethics. They wanted the Board to apply those teaching in a practical way in Rhodesia and later Zimbabwe.

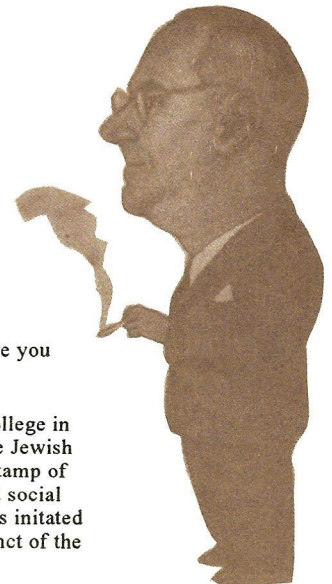
In money matters, by the late 1970s the Board reported rising costs, greater debts and more funds to give bigger grants to the

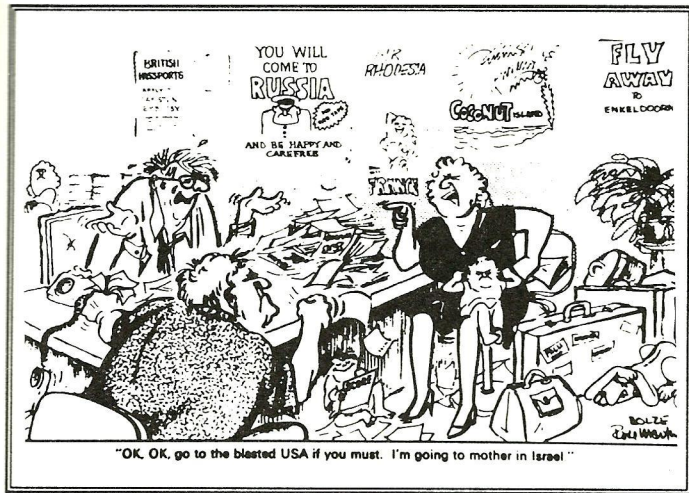
Monetary Matters

In 1959, Cecil Jacobs, president of the Board, had this advice to give to newcomers to Rhodesia (translated from the Yiddish):

1. If you have money, go back.
2. If you have no money, don't tell anyone.
3. Go into a shop and buy 'shmattes' to your heart's content; you don't have to pay.
4. When the shop where you bought the 'shmattes' asks for money, ignore it. They have enough money without you.
5. If a shop refuses to give you more goods, take from another. (There are enough suckers in the country.)
6. When you have made enough money, go back to where you came from.

Cecil Isadore Jacobs — OBE. Attended St George's College in the 1900s. He spent many years of devoted service to the Jewish Board of Deputies. The Guild of the 1940/50s bore his stamp of leadership and his many contributions to the cultural and social life of Bulawayo Jewry. The Hebrew Nursery School was initiated and formed by his father in the late 1930s as an adjunct of the Hebrew Congregation.





One of the typical cartoons which appeared in the 1970s when people began to leave the country. This one by Bolze and Martin read: "OK, OK, go to the blasted USA if you must. I'm going to mother in Israel." (From "The Whenwes of Rhodesia.")

as a Zimbabwean. We do not have, and never have had, separate representation as Jews, either in Parliament or in any other governmental machinery. If it is necessary for Jews as a body to communicate with Government, the Board of Deputies does so, acting as the elected mouth-piece of the community."

There came anxious times in the early 1980s when the Zimbabwean Government decried Zionism equating it with racism. Now the Board acted. It defended Zimbabwean Jewish rights saying: "If, as has happened in the past, some Government proposal is contrary to basic ethical principles of Judaism, or if anything is done which threatens our religious and cultural life, the Board will see that it is raised in the right quarters. Our rabbis and ministers have had, and must continue to have, freedom in the pulpit, freedom to expound and take the ethical principles of Judaism upon any topic of the day. In doing so they are not necessarily representing the views of their community, they are carrying out their duty to teach our religious laws, which include all the great moral laws of

the *Torah* ... Our laws obligate us to be loyal to the state in which we live. This loyalty to Zimbabwe is not diminished by our special attachment and feelings for the state of Israel ...

"We Jews have practised Zionism for two-and-a-half millenium. We know that Zionism is the very opposite of racism. The UN, the PLO, the Arab states can invent something and label it Zionism and then condemn what they have themselves created,

but this cannot alter our belief in and hope for the establishment to G-d's law in Zion."

This had the desired effect and in 1981 the Board, under the leadership of Mr Gollop, had its first meeting with the Zimbabwean Prime Minister, the Hon Robert Mugabe. Their relationship was "cordial" and "friendly discussions" were held on matters affecting the Jewish community.

Nevertheless, the Board walked a tightrope and relations were strained in 1982. It had to remind Jews of the need to reflect before speaking one's mind or rushing into print. "We are aware that the provocation to do so is a constant irritant in the face of all the repetitions of the big lie. Better to resist the urge in the belief that enlightenment will ultimately prevail."

The Board continued to make many decisions about Jewish life and Zionism in the new Zimbabwe. It advised Cazo and Wizo to keep their names and said they should continue working as before because to do "otherwise would be to accept the classification of Zionism as undesirable".

Relations between the Board and Cazo remained cordial, yet agonising decisions were made, some of them "unpalatable" but done in the hope that in time they would help portray a more positive and correct image of Israel. This was the political reality of the day.

Again in 1983 the Board met with Mr Mugabe to try to ease the tension and to look into the question of visas for Israeli passport holders. With those talks the situation was revised.

In Bulawayo, as in Harare, the community continued to age. There were fewer delegates to conferences and this reflected

Dr Leslie Abeles

Born in Hungary, he was one of the last doctors with a foreign degree permitted to practise in Rhodesia, where he arrived in 1938. He worked as a Government Medical Officer, a post he held for 10 years, mainly in the rural areas where he dealt with the locals and learnt most African languages.

Rabbi Moshe Henech Bernstein

Revered father of Mrs W Yesorsky. Born 1871 in Grondo, he was one of the most prominent *shochtim* in England for more than 50 years. Rabbi Bernstein came to Rhodesia in 1952. He was the author of a number of learned works. His learning, piety, wisdom and modesty made a lasting impression.

how small the community had become. Most of Zimbabwe's Jews were over the age of 55. It is interesting to note that out of the 48 souls who served the Zionist leadership in the years leading to 1980, more than 50 percent were now living in Israel. Board members and other Jewish "civil servants" were becoming harder to find and virtually no younger people were available to step in.

The Board recently released its estimation of the Jewish population in Zimbabwe as

Silver Lining

At the inaugural conference of the the African Jewish Congress held in Harare in May 1994, the Jewish Board of Deputies made its first presentation of "Jewish Personality of the Year". Here Wendi Lepar, National President of the Union of Jewish Women, is presented with a silver plate by Elan Steinberg (left) of the World Jewish Congress, while Stan Harris, president of the Board and vice-president of the Congress, looks on. Mrs Lepar was honoured for her outstanding contribution to society on behalf of the Jewish community of Zimbabwe in the Makhaza project. During the presentation she said that "without soldiers, a good general is nothing, and so it is with many organisations. Without the support of my fellow committee workers in the operation, feeding and clothing of the malnourished children and elderly, (Makhaza) would not have been the success story that it is."



of May 31 1994. The figures for Bulawayo are depressing. There are a total of 84 couples, 60 single men including widowers, 70 single women including widows and 46 children, infants and scholars, giving a total of 344 souls. In Harare there is a total of 604 souls which includes 105 children. There are only 15 Jews living elsewhere in the country. The grand total for Zimbabwe as a whole is 963 Jews.

In 1994 the Board now admits it will have to change, and will have to show a different point of view. Zimbabwe was recently visited by Mervyn Smith, chairman of the Jewish Board of Deputies of South Africa. He came singing the praises of the new democratic South Africa, the inspiration of Nelson Mandela who sat on the steps of a Cape Town *shul* and offered a hand of friendship to South African Jewry. "We are a new people," Mr Smith said, "and new Jews."

The Zimbabwe Board hopes it is already leading the way in new African democracies. Jews will have representation, as this Board has already proven, and cordial relationships have developed. Zimbabwe is to have an Israeli Embassy by the end of 1994, the Jewish voice is being heard and Jews are playing a positive part in building this nation. ☆

Flying High

For only £45 per person in 1967 you could have a nine-day study tour to Israel which included full board and accommodation, guides, lectures, medical insurance, transportation on tours ... And air fare was £190 return!

Letter Bombs

The *Central African Zionist Digest* would issue regular warnings to its readers to "Beware of Suspicious Mail" in the 1970s. Letter bombs were a threat. One was addressed to Sonia Orkin at the box number of the Cazo offices. Another was intercepted at the Post Office addressed to Colin Raizon. Both were dismantled in time.

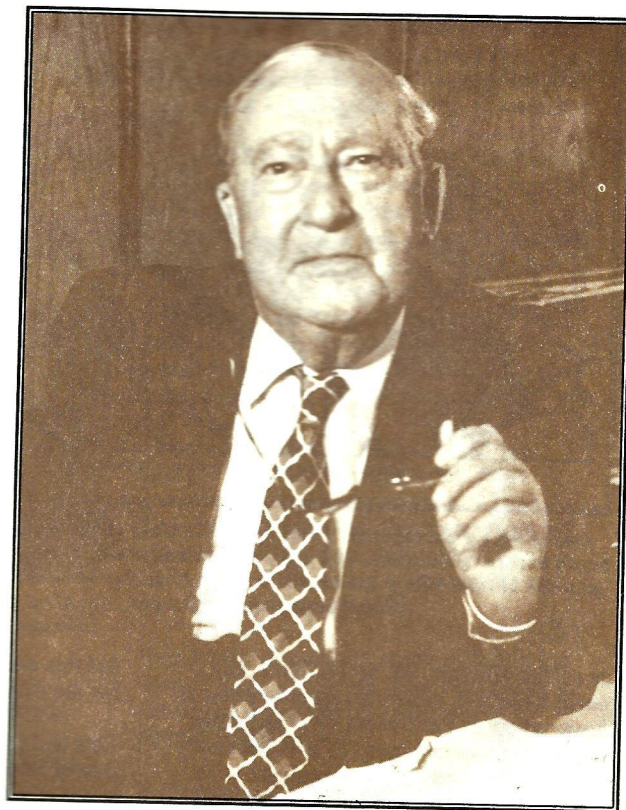
Remarkable Record

ALL who knew Samuel Rabinovitz agreed with one of the statements made on his death ... that he had a "remarkable record of public service". One of Bulawayo Jewry's early pioneers, he died in 1972 at the age of 78.

Born in Rumania, he was educated in England at a Jewish day school, which led to his keen interest in the Jewish day school as an institution, resulting in his becoming one of the founders of Carmel. He came to Bulawayo in 1902 and attended St George's School, but went to *cheder* under Rev Cohen and sang in the *shul* choir. In 1907, he worked for 12/6d a week, saying: "The pay was not good but the experience was." To further his education he went to night school and studied accountancy and shorthand. A keen sportsman, he still found time to play rugby, cricket and tennis, and got his Matabeleland junior colours.

In 1910 he began in communal affairs as an "assistant to the assistant" secretary of the Chovevei Zion Society. He helped form Cazo and the Jewish Board of Deputies, and was elected chairman of both. He also became the first Honorary life president of the Rhodesian Zionist Council. He played an active role in the Congregation and was its president for a number of years. As if this were not enough, Mr Rabinovitz then helped set up the Weizmann Country Club.

He was also well-known in industry and commerce. Many wondered how he

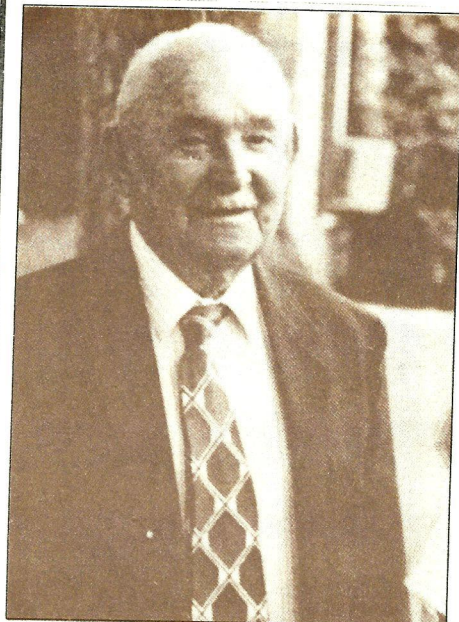


managed to devote so much time to these as well as to Zionism and Israel.

In 1963 he was elected president of the Bulawayo Chamber of Commerce. Other achievements of his include: Honorary life president of the RZC, before that for 14 years he was president of Council; past president of Congregation and a trustee; president of the Board of Deputies; national president; president of the Jewish Guild; chairman of the Chovevei Zion; chairman of the Board of Governors of Carmel School.

In 1973, the Jewish Board of Deputies established the Samuel Rabinovitz Scholarship for undergraduate and post-graduate Jewish students valued then at \$500 a year. ☆

Leading Legal Beagle ...



(Left) Ben Baron in 1988. Mr Baron was born in Bulawayo in 1904, son of Dora and Max Baron from Lithuania, the eldest of eight children. Sadly, at the time of going to Press, Mr Baron passed away after being ill for many years. He was one of Bulawayo's, if not the country's, leading lawyers and was a prominent member of the Jewish Board of Deputies and the Free Masons. Although a keen Zionist, he nevertheless threw his lot into this country and went out of his way to better the lot of blacks. In the days of Rhodesia, his was one of the first legal firms to employ a black clerk, a move which caused many narrow-minded people to shun him. Strength in his belief of supporting the disenfranchised classes led him to become a member of Garfield Todd's government for five years. He retired in 1990 after 66 years of practice. Ben left behind a touching legacy for his children — his memoirs which make delightful reading. He tells of Bulawayo as a muddy or dusty town depending on the weather. The family was poor yet his father struggled to put the children through university. From an early age Ben helped his dad in the shop, wrote his father's letters, prepared accounts and even ran the shop when his dad was away. Of himself he wrote, "I was very shy and retiring so perhaps it was just as well I became an attorney which made me think and act for myself."

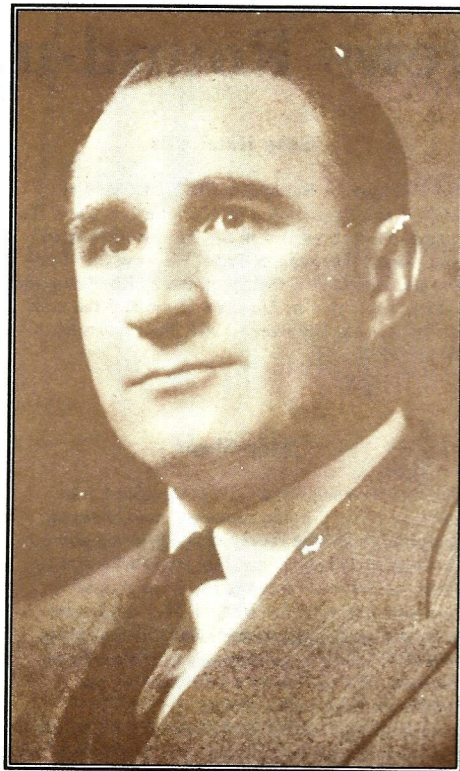
In one instance he described how his studies were interrupted by his father who insisted Ben come home from university as Max could not afford to have all his sons studying at the same time. When Max realised he had interfered with Ben's career, he tried to get him articled at Webb & Low. "Mr Low said they had no opening for me, so Max sat down and wept, so Mr Low said, 'Alright, send him along and we'll try him out.'" That try-out led to the country gaining one of its best lawyers!

Robert Lepar (1909-1994)

BULAWAYO recently lost another of its stalwart Jewish members. A jovial, unassuming man, Mr Lepar was one never to seek the limelight. If you asked for his list of credentials you would receive none. Yet if you asked who he was, every one agreed he was possibly one of the most kind-hearted and generous men to have lived in the city.

Leaving Kruikai, Lithuania in 1927 on his own, he first came to southern Africa where he decided to "dig for diamonds" in Lichtenberg. He was only 12-years-old when he already had his papers in Europe to leave for Africa. He sought adventure and dreamed of being a king of sorts. He wanted to help people and see the undiscovered world. At 19 he made the trek north and found himself on a rural concession working with Abe Bernstein, a merchant. Later he went into partnership with him. Well versed in the teachings of the Talmud and educated by tutors in Lithuania before he left, Robert still did not know English or any of the African languages. Yet within six months he knew five local dialects. Moving on to Que Que as a merchant he finally settled in Bulawayo where he worked for the Chitrit family.

In the early 1930s Robert decided to pander to his sweet tooth. Through trial and error, working in a little back room for a few months, he churned out sweets on two small machines he had bought for 5/- on an auction. His toffee and suckers were greedily bought, and before he knew it, he was in business. In 1946 he married Hilda Golombik and within 18 months had his factory going. From those small beginnings he built up Arenel Sweets into the large firm it is today, now run by his youngest son Rodney.



Sweets were his mark and sweetness is what he brought to the lives of others. Retiring when it came to speaking about his doings, others spoke out for him. One could not put a finger on exactly what it was he did, yet many repeat often how he helped them with advice, gave them the means to start that business or purchase that home, or simply went away feeling better after spending an hour with him. It was his charisma rather than his titles which won him love and respect from all colours and creeds. His inner personality, his knowledge, warmth and understanding made him more than the man with letters behind his name. He was among the founders of the King George VI Rehabilitation Centre, along with Sir Humphrey Gibbs; was a backbencher in the

Lions Service Club; and was a admirer and supporter of Jairo Jiri in his efforts for the handicapped. The Sacred Heart Mission, the Sunshine Club for poor children and St Francis Home were only some of the charities which benefited from Mr Lepar's generosity.

No one ever left him empty handed. He did not head any committees within the Jewish community, but quietly always gave and was there when needed. Among the accolades bestowed at his funeral were messages from Government ministers and men-in-the-street alike. The Hon S K Moyo, MP, Deputy Minister of Industry and Commerce said of him: "(Zimbabwe has) been robbed of a man of superlative wisdom, unequalled humility, impeccable integrity and outstanding kindness. Mankind is poorer by his absence."

Deeds maketh this man. ☆

Henry Elkin Lazarus

Respected legal practitioner. He set up practice with Arthur Sarif. He had wide interests in the Jewish communal field. He was Hon sec of congregation, president of Board and founder of Parkview and Weizmann. He assisted many Jewish families who came as refugees from Europe to make their home in S Rhodesia. Born 1902 in England, he came few years later with his father to Bulawayo. He won a Beit Scholarship, studied law at Rhodes University, and did articles under Sir Cuthbert Whiteside of Grahamstown. During university holidays, young Lazarus would visit Bulawayo and help his father in the bakery with bread deliveries on the back of an old cart pulled by a horse, oddly called Cuthbert. Mr Lazarus told his children that it seemed Cuthbert knew where all the customers were and the animal would stop outside each buyer's store.

Fond Farewell

Another group of boys make ready to leave to fight in World War Two. Many did not make it home. The Guild held a special farewell dance for them in 1940. (Back from left) 1. Louis Herschovitz, 3. Ronald Sheen, 4. Issy Bernstein, 5. Haig Kaplan, 6. Solly Sarif, 10. Basil Thal (who was the first casualty in the war, killed in Somaliland by the Italians.). (Middle): 1. Issy Loewnstein, 2. Issy Rubenstein, 7. Willie Lobel, 8. Bennie Lobel, 9. Leslie Thal, 10. Harold Susman. (Front) 2. Bennie Raizon, 3. Goodman Lewis, 4. Moshe Evenary, 6. Issy Gruber. These were only part of the Bulawayo contingent. An equal number left from Salisbury and the smaller centres of the country. If you can identify the other boys, please let us know.



News Round-up

If the Shoe fits

In 1957 Esme Schay's husband, to her distress, was very critical of the then-rabbi and the *shul* committee. Mrs Schay suggested that he air his grievances by getting on to the committee rather than moan about it at home. He agreed but doubted that he could ever be elected on to the austere committee. In fact he did not even want to try. Taking the bull by the horns, Esme bet him a pair of shoes that he would be elected and he accepted in jest. Unknown to him, and determined to get her shoes, Esme approached Marshall Baron, the Hon secretary, and Issy Hurwitz to propose and second him at the next AGM. They agreed. Soon Mrs Schay's feet were bedecked in a pair of new high-heels and the committee got itself Egon Schay, who remained on the committee until 1990 — a 33 year old bet!

Dave Broomberg

Lion for 12 years, district chairman, executive for the Council for the Blind, chairman of the Matabeleland Aids Council and deputy director of Suicide Prevention Service, he is dearly loved for his humanitarian work.

A Big Hello

The first issue of the *Bulawayo Chronicle* appeared on Friday October 12 1894. It consisted of four pages of eight columns each. The lead article was "We make our bow".

Gaby Haimovitz

He was born in Bulawayo 1927, educated at Milton and conscripted into Rhodesian army. He was actively involved in the Zionist movement and joined Habomin in 1936. He went on *aliyah* for six years 1951, then returned to Rhodesia and was again active in Zionism. He joined the staff of the RZC in Bulawayo 1961, then returned to Israel 1977.

Ship Shape

Thelma Katzenberg, a Chitrin daughter, tells how, in 1937, the first recorded ship-to-shore telephone call was received in Rhodesia and put through to Lonely Mine. Her sister who was living at the mine managed to have a clear conversation with her mother, Mrs H Chitrin who was on board a vessel near London. Have you tried lately to get through to Harare from Bulawayo? Can this be a reflection on our telephone lines in the 1990s!

Pioneers

Among the 32 portraits selected for the Pioneers Gallery in Tredgold House are those of Aaron Jacobs and Abraham Grossberg. Mr Jacobs was member of the congregation and for many years pushed for the advancement of local Hebrew education. He settled in Rhodesia in 1894. His son, Cecil Jacobs, OBE, was a prominent communal leader in Bulawayo. Mr Grossberg arrived in 1893. He also helped found the *shul*

and Chevra Kadisha. His son Solomon Grossberg MBE was also well-known.

Abe Bernstein

Born in London 1893, he moved to Bulawayo 1902, was educated at St George's and took an active part in the First League Rugby team. He played a prominent role in the Guild as Hon secretary, running gymnastic and physical cultural classes.

Charles Lazarus

Attorney and human rights advocate, he learned to care for others from his mother who ran a soup kitchen in Makokoba. He took his belief in human rights to the legal establishment. He says he doesn't consider he has done anything "illustrious". But he became The Man who defended the ANC in Rhodesia, 1959. He joined his father's firm, Lazarus and Sarif, in 1952, and made himself unpopular by engaging the first black articulated clerk in a white firm. During the 1959 ANC trials, he defended detainees in Khami Prison, and hired black lawyer Herbert Chitepo as a junior member. Later he helped form the Centre Party to opposed Smith's RF. At the first CP meeting, he said that as a member of an oppressed race it was his duty as a Jew to oppose RF racial policies. He raised funds to build the Barbara Burrell Home for the Blind, is chairman of the Zimcare Farm Project, Bulawayo, for intellectually handicapped, deaf and dumb people; chairman SPCA, chairman Hebrew English Nursery School, chairman Carmel. He is one of the first non-South Africans to be elected to the South African Institute of Race Relations. ☆

Rags

REAL AMAZING
GENUINE SAVINGS

We wish the
BULAWAYO HEBREW CONGREGATION
many happy returns of the day
for their
100th BIRTHDAY
and hope they have many more.

Elderly find loving haven

SAVYON Lodge, the Jewish old aged home, is probably the apple of the Jewish community's eye. At a public meeting in the Guild Hall in December 1960, it was decided to establish a home for elderly residents of the Federation.

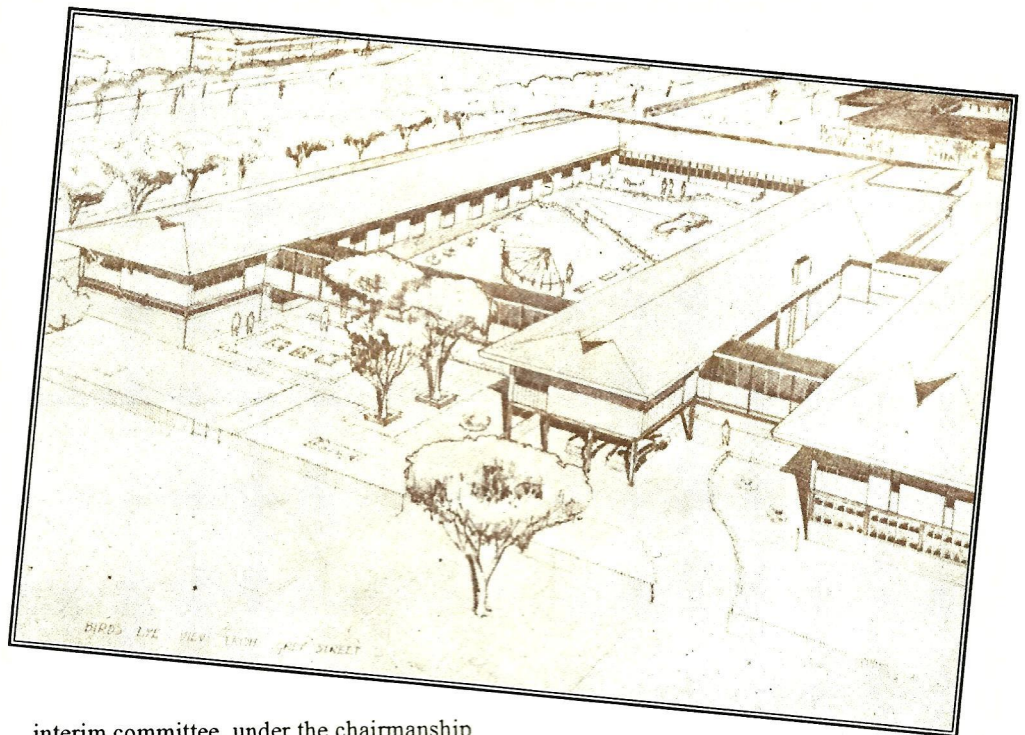
A plot of land on the corner of Kings Avenue and Grey Street was allocated by the City Council of Bulawayo in co-operation with the trustees and executive councils of the Ralstein Home and Coronation Cottages Trust. Financial aid had been received from the Government Social Welfare Department, the State Lottery Trustees and the Co-ordination Committee for the Care of the Aged.

The project was also well supported by Jews throughout the country in bequests, donations and endowments. It was hoped that the maintenance could be sustained by subscriptions.

Offers for support came pouring and even before it was built there were nine people in Bulawayo alone who were in desperate need of accommodation.

The overall plan provided for 30 residents but because of limited funds and the need to get the home going as soon as possible, it was decided to proceed with a reduced plan which provided for 13 bedrooms, rooms for a matron and staff, an administration section, kosher kitchen, dining room, large enclosed verandahs and the usual outbuildings.

The proposed first stage was estimated to cost £46,000, while a further £5,000 was needed for furniture and equipment. An



interim committee, under the chairmanship of Ellie Zacks, who was a major promoter of the project, was appointed and given the authority to proceed.

However, work on the home only commenced in 1966, with the foundation stone being laid by Mr Zacks, who was by then president of the home. It was completed in 1968 after 13 hectic months of activity.

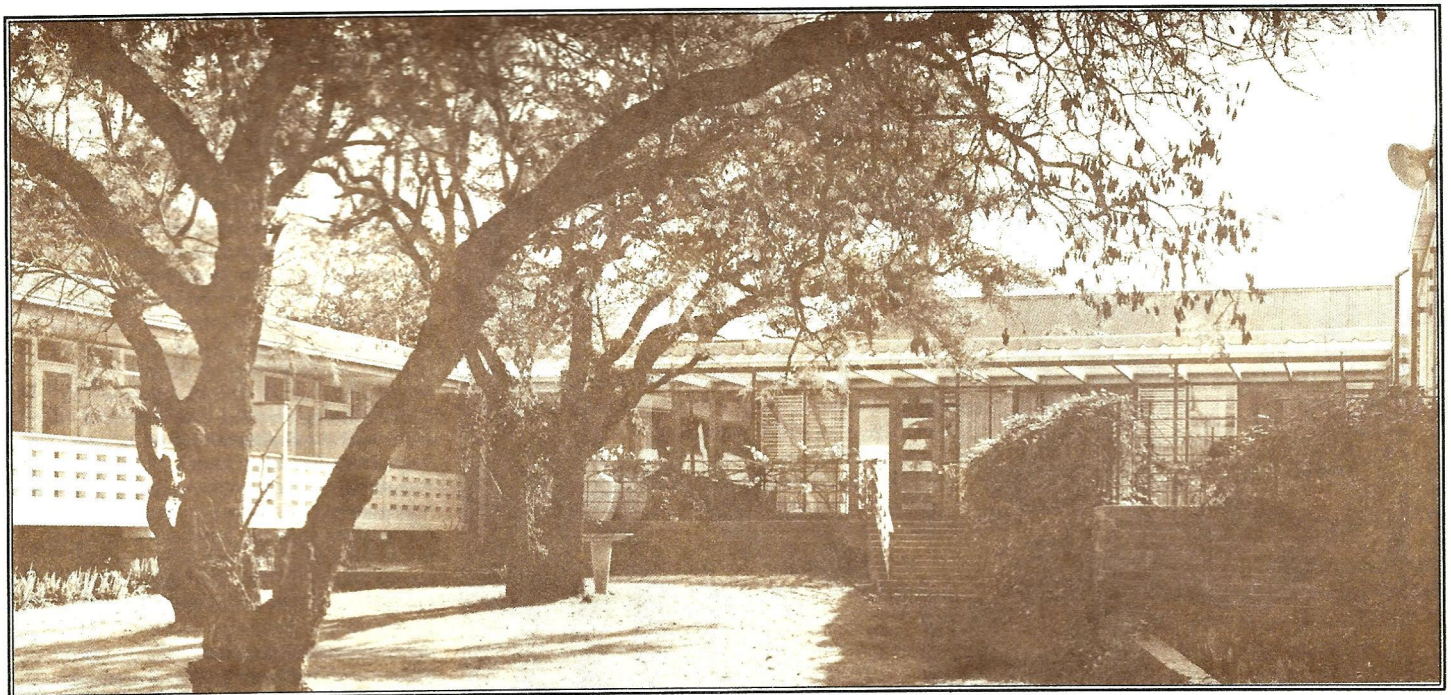
Ironically in 1970, the same committee which four years earlier had felt there was no justification for embarking on a full building project due to lack of funds and the uncertainty of the need for such a project, decided to bulldoze ahead with phase two.

Savyon by now had more than justified the vision of those who felt provision should

be made for the elder members of the Jewish community. The home was full and there was in fact a waiting list. So the committee decided to complete the building, by adding on more bedrooms, both double and single, another lounge, an assistant matron's bed-sitting room and more bathrooms.

People lavished their praise on the progress made in the home's four years of active operation. It was fully occupied and the extensions for 17 more people was completed in 1972.

The third and final stage was reached in 1976, when room was made for a further 26 persons. When Savyon opened its doors in July 1967 it could accommodate only 13 people. By 1976 it had risen to 45, 41



The centre courtyard of Savyon Lodge before the drought!