It’s that time of year again! It’s the time when San Diegans come together to honor the people, businesses, organizations, and communities that have made history in their own time! As many members and readers know, the History Center’s Makers of San Diego History gala is the celebratory culmination of a year’s worth of planning, research, design, and execution of our major exhibition for the year, Celebrate San Diego: The History & Heritage of San Diego’s Jewish Community.

For the San Diego region's Jewish community, the year 2017—or 5777 depending on your calendar—is truly one worth celebrating. Jews have been in San Diego since California became a state in 1850 and started some of San Diego’s earliest businesses and devoted their time, energy, and resources to the building of San Diego. Today it’s hard to think where San Diego would be without the Salks, the Prices, and the Jacobses; and who knows what Jewish contributions lie ahead?

This year’s event features a lively and historic reception, live music from klezmer band Hot Pstromi, exquisite food, and an educational and entertaining program emceed by CBS News 8 anchor Dan Cohen. Sponsorship opportunities are still available!

SAVE THE DATE: SATURDAY, JUNE 10, 2017, 6 – 10 PM RECEPTION, DINNER AND PROGRAM AT THE HYATT REGENCY, LA JOLLA AT AVENTINE SANDIEGOHISTORY.ORG/MAKERSOFHISTORY

BY MATTHEW SCHIFF, MARKETING DIRECTOR
Board President’s Message

The San Diego History Center lost a friend this spring, with the sudden passing of Gabe Selak, our History Ambassador, whose role and dedication to the stewardship of the San Diego History Center was exemplary. Stewardship of the History Center is the focus of the Board of Trustees, our staff, members, and donors. Each, in their own way, works on behalf of the organization to leave it in a better position than how we found it. Such is the case with a bequest the History Center received from the estate of long-time member Richard Dyson. In 2013, the History Center received a commercial property in La Mesa from the Dyson estate.

At the time, the tenant, a well-respected firm with a national presence, was in a month-to-month below-market lease. In addition, there was a minority interest in the property. With the help of our Treasurer, Frank Alessi, other trustees, and staff, the History Center purchased the minority interest and renegotiated the lease to a five-year lease with two additional five-year options, a situation that led to a significant increase in the value of the property. As commercial property management is not the mission of the San Diego History Center, the Board has decided to place this asset for sale. The proceeds will be reinvested in the institution, providing for greater financial diversity and stability.

Richard Dyson has provided exemplary stewardship to the San Diego History Center. We invite you to do so as well.

By Tom Fetter, Board President

Tragedy & Triumph

Our region’s history is a compilation of events both tragic and triumphant. Since the last issue of THE TIMES, we have witnessed a significant heart-wrenching loss with the passing of Gabe Selak, History Ambassador. Our hearts have been filled with joy and pride, with the opening of two new exhibitions that examine and celebrate community, and with the knowledge that our members, visitors, and philanthropic investors are noticing the progress that the San Diego History Center is making.

In the space of one week this spring, the History Center was on the cover of the Union-Tribune as well as in four additional articles that week. Our visitor numbers continue to grow under our Give Forward donation-based admissions program. We are also reaffirming the critical role the History Center plays in preserving our region’s history through the acquisition of the Hall of Champions document and photo archives. This progress would not be possible without you. We are grateful that you support the San Diego History Center, through your time, your talent, and your treasure. Each donation, be it large or small, is critical to maintaining our forward momentum. There are many opportunities to succeed, and with your help, we are working to seize each and every one. I hope you will take the time to visit us this summer, both at the History Center in Balboa Park and the Serra Museum in Presidio Park. There is always something new to see!

By Bill Lawrence, Executive Director

From Educator to Curator

Dr. Iris Engstrand retires from 48 years of teaching.

As one of San Diego’s most-noted historians retirement from almost half a century in the University of San Diego’s history department, a celebration of Dr. Iris Engstrand’s legacy in teaching was held at the History Center earlier this month. Hundreds of friends, colleagues, and former students gathered to laud her accomplishments and recognize her contributions to the history of San Diego. While no longer in front of a classroom of students, Engstrand will still impart her knowledge about our shared past in San Diego by curating a completely new exhibition on San Diego’s history. The exhibition will also incorporate newly acquired sports artifacts experience with San Diego’s history. The exhibition will also incorporate newly acquired sports artifacts from the recent Hall of Champions donation as well as introduce new topics that have, in recent years, become major forces in San Diego; specifically, craft beer, biotech, and telecommunications. Stay tuned for updates by subscribing to our e-newsletter. Sign up at sandiegohistory.org.

By Matthew Schiff, Marketing Director

CELEBRATE SAN DIEGO! THE HISTORY & HERITAGE OF SAN DIEGO’S JEWISH COMMUNITY

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Celebrating San Diego!

Opens to Rave Reviews

Visitors to the exhibition share stories, add to exhibition’s richness.

A VISITOR TO THE EXHIBITION SOAKS UP THE INFORMATION ON THE EXHIBITION’S TIMELINE SCROLL.

To say that the History Center is humbled by the public response to the opening of Celebrate San Diego! The History & Heritage of San Diego’s Jewish Community would be an understatement. Numerous editorial pieces have been written about it in local publications, and there’s been a groundswell of interest from various centers of Jewish life, including synagogues, havurot, and retirement communities. To date, the History Center has hosted several private tours with Seacrest Retirement Villages and Temple Beth Israel, with 11 more already on the calendar for the coming year.

The exhibition continues to grow richer and richer each day as visitors from around the world—Jew and Gentile alike—share their “coming to San Diego” stories on a video kiosk, which are then used in the exhibition. These stories provide perspective and appreciation for the rich mosaic of people, cultures, and languages that make up San Diego and add to our diversity.

At the annual Makers of San Diego History event on June 10 this year, we will be screening a preview of a documentary film by Isaac Artenstein titled To the Ends of the Earth: The Jews of San Diego. The film features interviews with San Diego Jews—both public and private figures—that have influenced or shaped San Diego in some way and whose contributions move Jewish culture forward. For those who don’t or can’t attend the annual gala, the film will be screened daily in the History Center’s 80-seat Thornton Theater beginning in August.

The History Center thanks its sponsors of the exhibition and annual gala whose names and organizations are listed on page 11.

Visualizing What Cannot Be Seen

Enhanced access to Serra and Presidio grounds key in coming years.

The newest update to the visitor experience at the Junipero Serra Museum will be deployed in late 2017 and will bring the Presidio—currently buried underground—to life in a virtual reality digital platform. When finished, users of the platform (whether on-site or online) will, while wearing virtual reality goggles, be able to see the Presidio as it was in the year 1769, at the height of its use.

The S.T.E.A.M. Maker Workshop, a local group that takes tech into San Diego schools in order to prepare children for the world ahead with real-life applications, has partnered with the History Center. Taking information from past archaeological excavations and plotting it into software, the Workshop, along with students from High Tech High, have been hard at work creating this environment.

Enhanced access to the Serra Museum and Presidio grounds is a goal of the History Center. Once the Presidio Visualization Project is fully deployed on-site and online, coupled with our new Give Forward admissions policy, the History Center hopes to serve thousands more visitors per year.

Views from Other Perspectives

Though our Education Department has long-standing school programs that explore the change and development of our region over time, temporary exhibitions offer a chance to develop something new. Our latest exhibition on the history and heritage of San Diego’s Jewish community is no different. Jewish schools are among the constituencies that have responded to this exhibition. Education Coordinator Samantha Alberts remarks, “While SDHC educators are the experts in history and change over time, we see this new audience as an opportunity to learn about Jewish life as it is lived today.”

Both the exhibition and its associated programming have had a positive impact in helping all patrons feel included, particularly guests who have experienced anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination. Part of the Patchwork, a new exhibit on African American life in San Diego, and our partnership with the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego, and their changing exhibits, also contribute to the History Center telling the diverse story of San Diego, central to our mission.

For adult audiences, we are offering special “on-demand tours” of the Jewish exhibition, as well as standing tours.
The San Diego History Center is dedicated to preserving all aspects of San Diego's history, with the goal of sharing its struggles and achievements with current and future generations. San Diego has a tremendous sporting heritage, which is not only reflected in the history of its professional teams, such as the Padres and the Gulls, but in all the achievements of the amazing student athletes in our local schools. With the closing of the Hall of Champions museum in Balboa Park, the History Center has proudly taken on the responsibility of preserving many of its important local sporting collections that cover a wide range of sports, including baseball, football, ice hockey, wrestling, and golf.

Photographs, documents, scrapbook collections, and an extensive array of local sporting ephemera have recently been transferred to the History Center. Also included is a treasure trove of information on local sporting events and personalities as well as an outstanding collection that documents the certificates of achievement awarded by the Breitbard Hall of Fame to local high school students since 1933. Not only does this expand the History Center's existing collections pertaining to the sporting achievements of our region, but it will enable us to make available and share the many incredible stories that have significantly impacted our city. We look forward to showcasing some of these items in our upcoming new permanent exhibition on San Diego history, which will open in early 2018.

We have welcomed many new visitors through our doors at both the History Center and the Junipero Serra Museum since launching the Give Forward admissions model in October 2016. Allowing visitors to donate based on their experience or to help cover the entry of future visitors, versus paying a set fee, has increased our admissions. This change grew out of a study in which UCSD Rady School of Management faculty worked with the History Center to gauge participation and analyze results. The Rady School distributed a press release to national media titled “UC San Diego Rady School Professors’ Research is Having an Impact: Attending the History Center Boosts SDHC attendance by 225%!”, highlighting the success of the launch. Since implementing Give Forward, History Center general attendance has increased by 225% compared to last year. For many visitors, it is their first time engaging with our organization. Give Forward is helping us reach underserved audiences as well, visitation by zip codes in those areas is up 44% since the start of the program.

In addition to new visitors, we’ve also welcomed new volunteers to engage with museum guests as Gallery Guides and Docents during the run of our current exhibition Celebrate San Diego! The History & Heritage of San Diego’s Jewish Community. To find out more about volunteer opportunities, please visit sandiegohistory.org/volunteer.

We promise to continue engaging new audiences and providing them with accessible, enriching experiences!
Eight-Foot-Tall Surprise
Zajd family sees self in exhibit.

The History Center’s promotional materials for Celebrate San Diego! include a photograph of the Zajd family celebrating Hanukkah in 1960. Not sure if it was on display in the exhibit, the children featured in the photograph—Ida, Ava, and Henry—made a special trip to the History Center to find out. Much to their surprise, the image was part of an eight-foot-tall feature!

The photograph came to the History Center by way of The San Diego Union (later Union-Tribune) and few details had been passed along with it, but the siblings were gracious enough to share. Their parents, Josek and Sari, met and married in Sweden after World War II, where Ida was born. In 1954, HAIS, a resettlement agency, helped the family relocate to the U.S. After flying to New York, they traveled to San Diego by train. The agency also found them a place to live and had a job lined up for Josek. He eventually opened his own tailoring shop, where his wife assisted him. In San Diego, the family grew to include Ava and Henry. The Zajds also participated in San Diego’s religious and cultural life, joining Beth Jacob Congregation and the New Life Club, and fondly remember activities at the House of Israel cottage in Balboa Park.

The exhibit has uncovered many stories—the fascinating, memorable, and everyday stories that make a community. The Zajd family is just one more example of a family that moved to San Diego, made a home, and contributed to society.

(LEFT TO RIGHT) IDA EPSTEIN, HENRY ZAJD, AND AVA SARKISIAN SIT IN FRONT OF A FAMILY PORTRAIT ON DISPLAY AT THE HISTORY CENTER.

BY SARAH MATTESON, CONTENT & INTERPRETIVE SPECIALIST

New Archives Research Services!
The San Diego History Center announces new research services! Expanding public access and the ability to research using our collections, we now offer one-on-one research appointments, document copy orders, and remote research in which one of our staff members can do specified research for a fee.

With the new services that we are providing, we also enhance the ability to digitize, preserve, and interpret much of the yet-unprocessed collections we have taken in over the years. For more information on the specifics of the new services, visit sandiegohistory.org/research_library. We look forward to helping you expand your search options!