



The "Kinneret Tumblers" of Kinneret club (Palm Beach Council) pose for the camera following their acclaimed performance in a Purim shpiel musical. From left: Iris Kriegsman, Alice James, Libby Morse, Lillian Silver, Dorothy Reinfeld, Marquerite Rosenfield and Sylvia Daken.



Shalom club of South Florida Council hosts fund-raiser at the home of Ann Feldman, bringing in contributions for over 30 Na'amat scholarships. The event featured guest speaker Gloria Elbling, past national president. From left: Ann Feldman, Gert Aaron, Council president, and Gloria Elbling.



Three generations of women gathered to tell the Passover story from a woman's point of view at a pre-seder celebration held by Ma'ayan club of Philadelphia Council and the Women's Rosh Hodesh Group of Beth Ann Israel. From left: Jeannette Johnson, Cathy Cohen, Hanna Hopfinger, Norma Roinick, Rebecca Safeley, Bonnie Hopfinger, Kira Stein and Jennifer Stein.



South Shore club of Long Island/Queens Council enjoys a weekend at the Fallsview Hotel in the Catskill Mountains, a successful fund-raising event. From left: Nat Mandel, Marion Kashner, Natalie Carlow, president Rhoda Orenstein, Sylvia Gelernter, Libby Salinsky and Irene Alterman.



Ilana club of Greater Chicago Council is reunited with its first adviser, Rosalie Grad, national Fund-raising vice president, who was guest speaker at a general meeting. From left: Original club members Laurie Merel, Ann Richman, Rosalie Grad, Sandra Silverglade, Selma Katz and Sharon Behm.

Book Reviews

Walking on Walnuts. Written and illustrated by Nancy Ring. New York: Bantam Books, 356 pages, \$12.95, paper.

"Apple pie. This one is Grandma Rae's."

"And so like my mother's. By the time my mother was my age, she had four children and had been with my father for 17 years. By the time my grandmother was my age, she had two daughters and married for 11 years. I remembered how the spoons and bowls and packages of baking ingredients would take my mother back like a hypnotist waving a watch on a chain in front of her face. The stories, the stories."

"Grandma Rae had two sisters. Dotty and Rae were prim and proper, but Aunt Goldie was full of the devil."

"As my mother told stories, we baked, and as we baked, the stories were told."

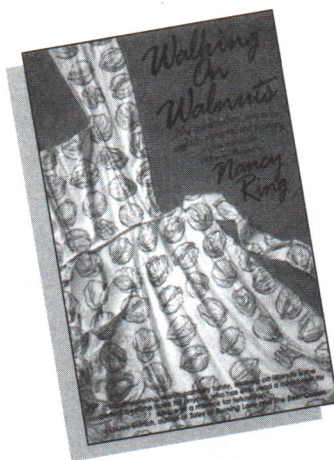
Nancy Ring tells the story of her life through her food. A visual artist, she came to cooking through her memories and those of her grandmothers, and the food the women in her family made for generations. It is an intense and compelling book, unusual in the way Ring creates verbal collages of the past and present, showing the reader how clearly our histories live in our everyday lives.

Ring herself is an honest, serious, driven person, who seems to live most happily when she is using her hands: when she is creating her artwork, making pastry or cooking meals. Of course, all of these are connected, and the reader quickly imagines Ring as a very busy person, with vast amounts of energy, and pictures in her mind of what should be done and how.

She grew up in a big family of relatives who were always eating. The book begins: "I can still hear them. It's as if I could just walk into the next room and see them again, that's how they live in my memory. Each one still impossibly here, stopped in time like a painting...." She ends the chapter saying: "I was taught that to tell a story well, you need a good strong cup of tea and a plate of freshly baked mandel-

brot." Ring then includes a recipe for Grandma Selma's mandelbrot and tells her story.

Strangely, Ring says very little about the immediate family she grew up with, although the book includes a family tree and the reader sees that she was one of four children. (Did the others cook? Was the food as large a memory for them?) Her memories are older — of grandmothers and their stories. It is these tales she juxtaposes with her own



struggle to earn a living through food.

Ring was an artist from a very young age, living in New Jersey. She goes to art school before this story begins, and when we meet her in these pages, she's living in New York City, waiting on tables, and painting increasingly angry pictures. Through luck, really, she becomes an apprentice to a pastry chef. Life in a restaurant kitchen, which I've never read about before, seems like sheer hell. The high-pressured atmosphere of a restaurant, particularly an expensive one, where customers pay a lot of money and so expect perfection or something close, is vividly described here. In fact, at dinner in a restaurant the day after I finished this book, I couldn't stop thinking about all the busy hands behind each plate of food.

She tells us that good restaurant jobs are hard to find. And the jobs themselves are hard work, largely underpaid. They are intense self-contained worlds — with god-like chefs,

difficult artists, often at their head, and with the difficult economics of the restaurant business very much a part of the equation.

Ring makes friends at her jobs, but these friends are less important than her memories. She looks for love, has a series of relationships that do not work. It is not easy for her to create her own life. This begins to change, slowly and subtly, towards the book's end when she meets Eric, another chef, and then lives with him. One day, as she makes a wonderful fig apple pie, she somehow links the creation of this pie with her love for Eric and decides to marry him.

Towards the end of the book, Ring skillfully, artfully recreates memories, as though she were rolling out dough. She concludes her story with a recipe for Grandmother Rae's rugelach. Her Grandmother Rae is growing sicker and sicker; her once very animated life fades as Ring's life comes more into focus. Ring continues to bake, remembering her grandmother had told her that if we live long enough, we always come full circle.

The book's final recipe is fig and sun-dried cranberry rugelach, dough rolled out into a perfect circle. As she bakes, she imagines the voices in her head of all those women, giving her advice. She knows she is part of a continuum, messy and memorable, that will endure.

— Esther Cohen

Shadows on the Hudson. By Isaac Bashevis Singer. Translated from Yiddish by Joseph Sherman. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 548 pages, \$28.

"I will fix it," Singer was fond of saying about the original Yiddish versions of his work that he hoped to translate into English.

The Manor and *The Estate*, completed two years before *Shadows on the Hudson*, was a hefty 816 pages long. In Yiddish, *Dar Hoyf*, as the entire work is called, adds up to 1,400 pages. "The book would have been too long,"

Singer said. He fixed it. He cut whole chapters, completely rewrote scenes, labored over sentences, idioms, words. He called it, "My second original."

Years ago, I asked Singer about *Shadows on the Hudson*. The novel, written between January 1957 and January 1958 and published in the Yiddish-language newspaper, *Forward*, had never appeared in translation. This was hardly unusual. To date, half of Singer's work — novels, short stories, memoirs — is still unavailable in English, and totally unknown outside of the Yiddish world. In many cases, this was exactly what the author wanted. "I have written a number of things in my life," he said in the pages of this magazine in 1984, "which I'm not sure should be translated." But *Shadows on the Hudson*, in Singer's interviews, and even in English bibliographies of his work, kept cropping up. So why hadn't it appeared? "The hero is a stockbroker," Singer told me. "About stockbrokers I knew nothing. If God gives me time, I will fix it."

Singer never got around to fixing it. Now the book has been published posthumously, all 548 pages of it. Probably, it was even longer in Yiddish. Alas, it would have been too long at half the size.

Set in Manhattan's Upper West Side in the late 1940s, this is the story of a group of well-to-do Jewish refugees from Hitler. Hertz Dovid Grein is the lead protagonist. As we have come to expect in a Singer novel, the "hero" becomes hopelessly entangled with three women. But Grein is in even worse trouble than usual. He longs desperately to return to the religious certainty and lifestyle of his devout father, but simply can't give up his sexual escapades. He endlessly denounces modern society, yet ardently clings to its wickedness. Worse yet, Singer, as he well knew, has failed to provide him with a life. Naturally, Grein leads an utterly tormented existence. He isn't the only one.

Grein's mistress, Esther, doesn't stop raving. She endlessly subjects her hapless lover (and the reader) to long harangues about her past and her needs (mostly for Grein) that never vary in content. Anna, the daughter of Grein's friend, for whom he leaves his wife Leah, teeters on the brink of hysteria throughout the novel. The pair rent a room in Brooklyn, and the first thought

that crosses her mind is to throw herself out the window. The pint-sized comedian, Yasha Kotik, whose specialty on stage is ridiculing Jews, is Anna's first husband. A loud and libertine, his grossness, on which he prides himself, knows no bounds. Shown the moon, he says he would like to piss on it. It is one of his milder pronouncements.

This is a mere sampling of the distraught and half-crazed characters who people this novel. Some appear briefly only to surface again, hundreds of pages later. All labor under the shadow (note the title) of the Holocaust, which has to varying degrees deranged most,



but not all, of them. Boris Makaver, a pious Jew, is one of the exceptions. His warm relationship with his childhood friend, the stern rationalist, Dr. Solomon Margolin, stands out as unique in this otherwise bleak novel. The characters turn out to be long-winded spokesmen of various philosophical positions, delivering monologues denouncing modern man, gentile society, and themselves at the drop of a hat. Because ideas rather than character fuel *Shadows on the Hudson*, some of its twists and turns seem less than convincing.

How would Singer have fixed it? First of all, he would have drastically abridged the manuscript. This book was initially published in serial form. Plot summations, meant to remind the *Forward* reader of what happened three months ago, abound. They would go. Scenes and monologues that make the same point repeatedly would be excised, reducing the length of the book by more than half. The translation would be polished, in typical Singer

fashion, to a high gleam. The author told me he wished to make Hertz Dovid Grein a writer. Other character changes would no doubt follow, vastly improving this work.

Not everything is a disaster here. The abundant comic scenes, while extremely bitter, are truly funny. The anti-Communist stance, for which Singer was pilloried in the forties by leftist colleagues, is right on the mark. The characters each speak in their own unique voice — and their voices stay with the reader. Had Singer not delayed translating and editing this book it could have been a triumph. As it now stands, it is a muddle, offering only intermittent moments of pleasure.

I used to believe that most of Singer's work still in Yiddish merited translation. Having read *Shadows on the Hudson* bereft of the Master's final touch, I see, sadly, that I was wrong.

— Isidore Haiblum

Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia. Edited by Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore. New York and London: Routledge, 1,770 pages, \$250.

Jewish history immortalizes many women ranging from queens and saints to heroines and martyrs, from judges and prophetesses to scholars and writers. The list of Jewish women who have made notable contributions to the epic story of the rise of America from a colonial dependency to a leading world power is a long and glorious one.

Despite the recent proliferation of books about American Jewish women, particularly since the American bicentennial celebration of 1976, nothing approaching the scope and depth of Paula E. Hyman's and Deborah Dash Moore's two-volume set has been published. Sponsored by the American Jewish Historical Society, *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia* combines social history, biography, private lives and public issues, revealing the complexity and diversity of the lives of Jewish women in America. It offers the life stories of more than 800 American Jewish women who have contributed significantly to American life in ways religious and secular. It includes well-



Wish Your Friends and Family **"Shana Tova"** With NA'AMAT USA New Year Cards

Our attractive, colorful, made-in-Israel New Year cards for 1998 are now available!

The inside message reads: Happy New Year. May the New Year bring you the blessings of health, happiness and prosperity in a world at peace.

Cards cost \$5.50 for a package of 10. Orders (10-package minimum) must be placed through your council office. Non-council clubs may order through tribute card chairwomen or presidents.

known and recently discovered women to show that a history of Jewish women in America is woven of many threads.

Some 500 unpaid contributors wrote the entries, which along with the biographies include numerous major essays on subjects ranging from assimilation to the religious evolution of American Jewish women, the development of Jewish women's voluntaristic organizations, the participation of Jewish women in the American Labor movement, in the American feminist movement, in American politics and in social reform that mention the work of other contemporary women.

This well-designed, large format publication with its hundreds of illustrations, portrait paintings and especially photographs, is enriched by bibliographies at the end of each entry, appendices and a comprehensive index. The volumes have begun to gain recognition. The American Library Association recently honored it with its Dartmouth Medal Award as the "best new reference work of 1997."

The volumes spirited prose style fit the charmingly adulatory description of American Jewish women who run the

gamut from the famous first ladies of American Jewish history such as Rebecca Gratz, leading social worker of her day; Ernestine Rose, pioneer fighter for women's rights and suffrage; Emma Lazarus whose sonnet is engraved on the interior of the Statue of Liberty; Lillian Wald, creator of the profession of public health nursing, to Golda Meir, the Milwaukee school teacher who served as the prime minister of Israel from 1969 to 1973.

Although this encyclopedia purports to cover a period which extends from the arrival of the first Jewish women in New Amsterdam in 1654 to the present, the focus of interest is on the 19th and 20th centuries. As indicated, although the 19th century was a man's world, some cultural opportunities were open to women. Among the personalities described are Fannie Bloomfield Zeisler, the country's best known pianist; Julia Richman, a district superintendent of public schools in Manhattan who influenced the destinies of some 23,000 school children; and Annie Nathan Meyer, who helped establish Barnard College, to name a few.

The vote granted to women in 1920

opened new vistas for Jewish women. Shifting rapidly to the 20th century, but perhaps of historical necessity, the selections do reflect the occupational structure of the Jewish community. The subjects include academics, activists, artists, athletes, authors, comedians, dancers, doctors, entertainers, entrepreneurs, fashion designers, filmmakers, lawyers, nurses, playwrights, politicians, scientists and more: three Nobel Prize winners, one United States Supreme Court justice and one astronaut.

The encyclopedia has its share of actresses, too: important figures in the lively arts from the theatrical brilliance of the Yiddish theater — Bessie Thomashefsky, Jennie Goldstein and Molly Picon to vaudeville entertainers, Louise Dresser and Sophie Tucker, to movie stars — Judy Holiday, Bette Midler and Barbra Streisand, to name a few. As might be expected, the most extensive category is writers: poets Babette Deutsch, Muriel Rukeyser and Adrienne Rich; playwrights Lillian Hellman, Bella Spewack and Wendy Wasserstein; screenwriters Elaine May, Nora Ephron and Joan Miklin Silver; journalists Ruth Gruber, Ann Landers and Sylvia Field Porter; literary critics Midge Decter, Susan Sontag and Vivian Gornick; novelists Laura Z. Hobson, Judith Krantz and Cynthia Ozick, to cite some diverse entries. Other lengthy categories are activists such as Clara Lemlich Shavelson (who led the first successful large-scale strike in the garment industry), Rose Schneiderman, union organizer, and Gloria Steinam, icon of the women's movement and founder of *Ms.* magazine; entrepreneurs Hattie Carnegie (née Henrietta Kanengeiser), Heléna Rubinstein and Estée Lauder.

There are biographies about philanthropists Adele Rosenwald Levy, Carrie Bamberger Frank Fuld, Peggy Guggenheim and many others who were patrons of the arts, sciences, endowed chairs at universities and underwrote civic institutions.

Beyond the famous names, however, are many biographical entries on women long or partly forgotten such as Mrs. Selina Greenbaum, founder of the Jewish Working Girls Vacation Society, one of the "lost girls" of history and little known examples of devoted organizational women; or