

## Federation recognizes pioneer Jewish families

By David A. Schwartz  
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*Susan Goldner Schwartz, Hope Curson Blinski, Rita Curson and Barbara Eller are members of the Jewish families who founded the Sophy Curson dress shop in 1943 on Fort Lauderdale's Las Olas Boulevard. (Staff photo/Janeris Marte / November 10, 2011)*

Jewish families who moved to Fort Lauderdale more than 50 years ago braved an overt anti-Semitism that prevented them from living east of Federal Highway and saw some of their children ostracized in the classroom.

But despite these conditions, the descendants of Fort Lauderdale's pioneer Jewish families who gathered at the Jewish Federation of Broward County's centennial celebration of the city's Jewish community remembered idyllic childhoods and spoke fondly of the times they spent at Temple Emanu-El on South Andrews Avenue.

"This is a celebration of you, your parents and your grandparents," event committee chair Elissa Mogilefsky told the representatives of about 40 pioneer families during the Nov. 10 program at the Tower Club in downtown Fort Lauderdale.

"We have first, second and third generations here," said Mogilefsky. "They laid a foundation for a Jewish community in Fort Lauderdale and Broward County."

The tight-knit Jewish community braved hard times — the 1926 hurricane, the Depression, World War II, the Korean War and anti-Semitism ("a lot of anti-Semitism") — Mogilefsky said. Yet they built synagogues and made sure that their children had a Jewish education, she added.

Mogilefsky, who lives with her husband in Fort Lauderdale, said the committee used Broward Genealogical Society materials to document about 90 pioneer Jewish families and located descendants from 65 families. "Everybody knew somebody who knew somebody," she said.

Susan Goldner Schwartz, who came to Fort Lauderdale from Philadelphia, said she was the only Jew in the Pine Crest School.

Schwartz, who lives in Philadelphia, said the high fashion Sophy Curson dress shop, a Las Olas Boulevard mainstay to this day, was opened in 1943 by her mother Pearl Curson Goldner and aunts Sophy Curson and Rosemond Price.

Pearl Curson Goldner was over 100 years old when she died in April, her daughter said.

Alyne Wrubel Kaplan's grandparents came to Fort Lauderdale in the 1920s from New York. Her grandfather Mack Katz and great uncle Moe Katz donated the land and founded Temple Emanu-El, the city's first synagogue, she said.

Sadye Katz, Kaplan's grandmother, opened the first ladies store on Las Olas Boulevard, Kaplan said.

Kaplan, 59, who lives in North Miami Beach, recalled growing up in Hollywood when the city had 5,000 people and a large Jewish population. "It was a very quiet, different way of life," she said.

Michael David, 71, of Deerfield Beach, was born in Broward General Hospital in 1939, the year the hospital opened. David grew up in Pompano where his parents owned a dry goods store. The family attended Temple Emanu-El and his mother started the Jewish Circle, which became Temple Sholom, David said.

Many of his neighbors were farmers, David said. "I didn't really feel any prejudice," he said. "You pretty much knew everybody."

Roz Karneol, 88, married David's uncle Herman Karneol in Pompano on Dec. 22, 1944, more than two years after she met him on a blind date when he was on military leave in Chelsea, Mass.

Herman Karneol opened a show store in Pompano.

"Herman was the only Jewish boy in town," Roz Karneol said. "Everyone accepted us as a married couple."