A Finding Aid to the

Solomon S. Simonson Papers

Manuscript Collection No. 697
Collection Summary

Title: Solomon S. Simonson Papers
Dates: 1934-1991
Collection Number: MS-697
Repository: The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
Extent: 0.8 linear feet (2 Hollinger boxes)
Language of the Material: English

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch
Solomon S. Simonson was born in Brooklyn, N.Y. on April 19, 1914. Raised in a Yiddish speaking home, Simonson's early education was both religious and secular. At age five he began studying at a yeshiva, studies which he continued into his high school years even after entering public schools. Simonson then entered Brooklyn College and received his B.A. in 1935. From there he earned an LL.B (J.D.) from Northwestern University in 1938, an M.A. from Brooklyn College in 1939, and in 1943 a Ph.D. in philosophy from Northwestern. In 1939 he received rabbinic ordination at the Hebrew Theological College in Chicago.

As the New York Times reported in his obituary, the main themes of Simonson's life were education, mass communication, and Jewish religion and culture. Yet, Simonson lived a diverse and active life, utilizing his talents and education in many and varied ways. As a young man he performed with the Civic Repertory Theater in New York, producing and directing plays on radio while studying at Brooklyn College. As an educator he held many posts. He worked as a speech clinician and instructor in speech at Brooklyn College from 1935-1941 and was a professor in many fields (speech, law, communications, media and semantics, among others) at Iowa State Teacher's College, the University of Denver, the State University of New York at Fredonia, Yeshiva University (where he chaired the Speech and Communication Department), Hebrew Theological College, Borough of Manhattan Community College, and Hunter College. In the latter stages of his career Simonson was Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at Touro College.

In addition to his other duties, Simonson served as a pulpit rabbi throughout the bulk of his career. He founded the United Hebrew Center in Pueblo, Colorado and served as its rabbi from 1946-1949. From 1949-1960 he was rabbi at Temple Beth El in Dunkirk, N.Y., and from 1960-1965 led Temple Beth Shalom in Park Ridge, N.J. Simonson was also a prolific author with numerous publications in the areas of logic, mass communication, the impact and cultural changes of television, and violence in the media. He authored two books: Crisis in Television: A Study of the Private Judgment and the Public Interest (New York: Living Books, 1966), a study of television's contributions to American civilization and its effects on American culture; and To the Earthmen: Reflections at Sunset (New York: Sheingold Publishers, 1989), a collection of his poetry. Simonson was also a noted orator and taught many classes on public speaking. In another example of his many talents, Simonson served as president of the American Jewish Museum of Art and Culture.

Simonson married Hana Gutwillig on January 27, 1957. Hana was born April 10, 1929 in the Lower East Side of New York City. She was raised in a poor religious home, and her father died when she was 11. Hana graduated from Brooklyn College in 1953 and taught English at Ramaz High School in Manhattan. After a short courtship and engagement Hana and Solomon were married. They quickly had three children: Shai (1958), Rayze (1959) and Alex (1962). After many years of part-time study and full-time child rearing, Hana completed her Ph.D. in special education and psychology at York College, CUNY. Hana was a popular teacher, full of empathy for her students. She also published many scholarly works in her field. Hana Gutwillig Simonson died in April 2001, ten years after her husband, for whom she grieved deeply and whose loss she felt was irreplaceable.

Solomon S. Simonson died on October 15, 1991 at the age of 76.


Scope and Content
The collection documents the life of a rabbi, educator, scholar, and author. It consists of writings, speeches, tributes, newscippings and miscellaneous. Also included is a plaque and a recording featuring Simonson and Jacob Javits speaking at a dedication service for Temple Beth El in Dunkirk, N.Y.

The collection is arranged alphabetically by topic. The topics reveal the diversity of Simonson's
learning and interests, from his student years to his post as Provost at Touro College. The writings, which are interspersed throughout the collection, reveal the depth and scope of Simonson's interests and research. The writings range from his personal poetry to studies in logic and mass communication, together with an essay on the artist Raban. Included also is a copy of Simonson's book, Crisis in Television: A Study of the Private Judgment and the Public Interest. This book was called by one reviewer "the most thought-provoking book on the television industry." Another critic said Crisis in Television "reveals a far deeper understanding of the functions of the mass media than any book in our time, including those of McLuhan."


This is a rich collection, full of information about Solomon S. Simonson and his work. Though spanning the years 1934-1991, the bulk of the collection falls within the years 1945-1970.

Arrangement
The collection is arranged in one (1) series: A. General.

Terms of Access
The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.

Preferred Citation
Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Solomon S. Simonson Papers and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:

[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-697. Solomon S. Simonson Papers. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Provenance
Received from Shai Simonson, North Easton, Mass., 2003.

Processing Information
Processed by Kevin Proffitt, May 2003.

Index Terms
Subjects Jewish educators / Rabbis
Media Sound recordings

Series A. General, 1934-1991

Arrangement
The series is arranged alphabetically by title or subject.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 1. Announcements, speeches, editorials, and letters, 1945-1991
Box 1. Folder 2. Biographical material.
Box 1. Folder 3. Chicago, Illinois - related materials (brochures, programs, clippings, etc.), 1940-1950
Box 1. Folder 4. Crisis in Television: A Study of the Private Judgment and the Public Interest, 1966
Box 1. Folder 5. Journal articles, 1944-1968
Box 1. Folder 6. Obituaries and tributes (assorted), 1991
Box 1. Folder 7. Remembrances of Raban, in Raban Remembered: Jerusalem's Forgotten Master, essays and catalogue of an exhibition at the Yeshiva University Museum, 1982 December-1983 June
Box 2. Folder 1. A Restatement of Fallacies, in Summaries of Doctoral Dissertations submitted to Northwestern University, 1943 June-August
Box 2. Folder 2. To the Earthmen: Reflections at Sunset (Poetry by Simonson), 1989
Box 2. Folder 3. Young Israel of Brownsville (Brooklyn, N.Y.), 1934-1939

Box 2. Folder 4. Plaque from Temple Beth El (Dunkirk, N.Y.) received "in recognition of continued spiritual leadership and guidance in Jewish culture.", 1955

Box 2. Folder Phonograph recording of dedication service for Temple Beth El (Dunkirk, N.Y.) featuring Simonson and Jacob Javits [10 discs], undated