

THE OJC

The Ohio Jewish Chronicle
Serving Columbus and the Central Ohio
Jewish Community since 1922

VOLUME 87 OCTOBER 22, 2009

ISSUE 42 4 CHESHVAN 5770

DEVOTED TO AMERICAN AND JEWISH IDEALS

Rabbis cancel certification limits of female advisors

page 2

Unions link Israel and Palestine in solidarity

page 2

UN HR council endorses Gaza war crimes report

page 3

Senior citizens celebrate rite-of-passage at Kotel

page 3

'Coolooloosh' to play free concert at Hillel

page 6

ABOUT THE COVER

Gertrude Berg portrayed a quintessential Yiddishe Momma, Molly Goldberg, in the 1950's. Berg was a beloved Jewish radio and TV icon at time when anti-Semitism was rife in the USA. A documentary about this remarkable media star will be screened at the Drexel, with proceeds going to support CTA.

In The Chronicle

At The JCC	9
Bowling	10
Community	5-6
Federation	8
Front Page	2
Lifecycle	10
Marketplace	12
New Generation	7-8
Synagogues	11
Viewpoint	4
World News	3



YOO HOO, MRS GOLDBERG! 'Positively Jewish' in the 1950's

By Michael Elkin

A one-woman TV titan with her own sit-down, stand-up for what matters series; millions of fans and even more millions in the bank; apostles who appropriated anything she recommended at the drop of a cup of Sanka; the nation's social conscience and inarguably the country's No. 1 minority star ...

Oprah-Shmoprah! We're talking Gertrude Berg here.

In the here and now, that name may not mean much to many. But then and there—the nascent media in the 1950s—Berg was the iceberg no one wanted to run into, while all were trying to chip a piece of their own life from the Brooklyn block she and her TV Goldberg family famously inhabited.

All this from leaning on a windowsill and crying out, "Yoo-Hoo, Mrs. Bloom?"

Aviva Kempner offers a shout-out of her own to Berg as the medium's magical Molly Goldberg in "Yoo-Hoo, Mrs. Goldberg," a compelling new documentary about the plump Jewish woman with a fat influence on the nation at a time when anti-Semitism cemented many an Americans' feelings for its Jews.

But not for Gertrude. Here was a woman who couldn't speak Yiddish but had the accent down right. She couldn't cook, but she wrote a cookbook that caused a blitz on blintze ingredients at local delis.

The nation may have been Molly-coddled, but the actress who played her was anything but: This prime-time progenitor of Lucille

Ball, Bette Midler, Madonna and Oprah—strong women with gristle, muscle and money—built her strength out of portraying the quintessential cuddly Yiddishe Momma.

Yoo-Hoo? Berg had enough money to buy Yahoo, too—had it been around then.

Kempner goes a round with Berg (and Bergs), using interviews (Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg; producer Gary David Goldberg) and archival footage in footnoting history at its most hysterical: it was the Red Scare and blacklisting that abetted the fade to black facing the Goldberg TV brownstone, which ended in 1956, decades after first making waves on the radio airwaves.

Kempner knows a thing or two about documenting the lives of heavy hitters, going to bat for a baseball big in her honored film of *The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg*, following on the heels and hellish existence of *Partisans of Vilna*.

Participating in this project was a natural for Kempner, committed over the past three decades "to make documentaries about underknown Jewish heroes that counter negative stereotypes," as she writes in her notes.

And who kept a counter cleaner than Molly Goldberg? "She was very positively Jewish at a time of great anti-Semitism in our history," says Kempner.

Berg was an energized Jewish feminist, entrepreneur and mover/shaker of a mogul who motivated others with unmitigated

moxie. She co-opted co-star Philip Loeb's battle when he was laid low by those who wanted him off the show when he was colored "Red."

But even Berg couldn't broker a deal without being broken. Loeb's even-

audience and their dwindling aging state.

But bang the drumstick—and *poulka*—slowly; seeing this film revives the senses. Why was this series different from all others?

"Gertrude was the only one on TV who had a Pass-over episode, with a ceremony celebrating the seder. She was the only one [on TV] who would talk about the Holocaust."

Berg wouldn't go gentle into the night although non-Jews were a mainstay of her evening viewing audience. But Berg wasn't without her pettiness.

Near death, she whispered of her wishes—and demands:

Whatever you do, she told one and all, says Kempner, "if they make a movie about my life, don't let Molly Picon"—the legendary star of Yiddish theater and film—"play me."

No one played Gertrude Berg—for a fool or folly. So, who better to bring her life to the screen these days than a filmmaker whose love of baseball and bintel brief bonhomie proves her a clean-up hitter and hit-maker?

Town without pity? Aviva Kempner lives in her own little burg of Bergs without bathos, a triple play of perfection from Greenberg to Goldberg to ...

"I'd make a film about Mo Berg," she says of the legendary baseball catcher/American spy on the on-deck circle, "in a minute."

Michael Elkin is the Arts and Entertainment Editor The Jewish Exponent; reprinted with permission

Movie will benefit CTA

"Yoo-Hoo! Mrs. Goldberg!" about radio icon Gertrude Berg will be screened at 7 p.m. Oct. 26 at the Drexel Theatre, 2254 E. Main St. Filmmaker Aviva Kempner will introduce the film. Proceeds for this special event benefit CTA. For tickets, contact Betsey at 236-1492 or EBetsey@yahoo.com.

This event is made possible with support from Value City Furniture.



tual departure after a contract settlement and his ultimate suicide left the sing-song lilt of Molly Goldberg with a forever flat note of an aftermath.

Certainly, celebrating her 60th birthday this year as a TV tour de force, Molly Goldberg has her senior moments: "Every day I'm losing audience members," concedes Kempner of Berg/Molly's original