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Ritz, Esther Leah, 1988-1989.

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Commissioner Contact SheetName Esther Leah Ritz Assigned to AHMailing Address 929 N. Astor St. #2107-8 Off. phone sameMilwaukee, WI 53202Home phone 414-291-9220Fax 414-291-0207 Telex _____Comments Community Leader, leader in informal education
previous president of W.B. interested in informal
ed, education world wide Israel/Diaspora

Date	Nature of Contact/Status	Next Steps/Action Needed
7/7/88	AH Visit - Pre 8/1 interview	
8/3/88	AH Phonecall - Follow up on 8/1	
10/19/88	AH Visit - Pre 12/13 discussion	
11/10/88	ARotman Call - Pre 12/13 discussion	
2/6/89	AH Visit (NY) - Follow up on 12/13	
4/15/89	AH visit (NY) - Li	→

COMMISSIONER CONTACT SHEET

Name Esther Leah Ritz Assigned to AH
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Address Milwaukee, WI 53202 Home phone 414-291-9220
Fax 414-291-0207 Telex _____

Comments Community leader, leader in informal education, previous president of
JWB, interested in informal education, Jewish education worldwide, Israel/Diaspora
relations

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11/10/88	A. Rotman call - Pre 12/13 discussion	
2/6/88	AH Visit (NY) - Follow up on 12/13	
4/5/89	AH Visit (NY)	ii

**Mandel
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1750 Euclid Avenue • Cleveland, Ohio 44115 • (216) 566-9200

Jack N. and Lilyan Mandel Fund
Joseph C. and Florence Mandel Fund
Morton L. and Barbara Mandel Fund

June 10, 1988

Dear Esther Leah:

I am delighted that you will join the North American Commission on Jewish Education. The Commission will suggest practical steps and concrete recommendations for the improvement of Jewish education in North America in all its forms and settings.

We anticipate that the Commission will meet three or four times over a period of 18 months. Our first meeting will be held on August 1, 10:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., at the offices of JWB, 15 East 26th Street, New York, New York. Please mark your calendar.

The Commission will oversee the activities of Commission Director Arthur Naparstek and appropriate supporting staff, whose responsibilities will include gathering and organizing data, preparing background papers and reports, consulting with scholars, educators and policy makers, and coordinating the ongoing participation of important Jewish publics.

The Commission will start its work with some already established benefits. It has begun its planning stage in cooperation with JWB and the Jewish Education Service of North America (JESNA), and has held discussions with the Council of Jewish Federations (CJF). A number of national educational organizations and foundation leaders have also been consulted.

Enclosed is a paper describing our concept of the work of the Commission. It reflects the thinking of a small group that has worked to describe the idea behind the Commission. I am also enclosing a list of those who have agreed to serve on the Commission, thus far.

Prior to our first meeting, a member of the Commission staff will contact you to schedule a meeting to discuss your views with respect to the Commission and Jewish education in North America.

I hope to see you at our first Commission meeting. An agenda, background material and particulars will be sent well in advance.

I look forward, with pleasure, to working with you.

Cordially,



MORTON L. MANDEL

Ms. Esther Leah Ritz
4130 N. Lake Drive
Milwaukee, WI 53211

Enclosures





THE JEWISH EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE JEWISH AGENCY
REGIONAL SUB-COMMITTEE OF NORTH AMERICA

June 17, 1988

Ms. Esther Leah Ritz
4130 North Lake Drive
Milwaukee, WI 53211

Dear Esther Leah:

I'm writing you for two purposes: first, to bring you up to date on developments affecting the North American Regional Subcommittee of the Jewish Agency Jewish Education Committee; and second, to thank you for your participation in the Subcommittee's work.

As you may know, the Jewish Agency will, in conjunction with the World Zionist Organization, soon be entering a new phase in its activities in support of Jewish education. As a result of the impending reorganization, there will no longer be a Jewish Agency Jewish Education Committee. Hence, the North American Regional Subcommittee will have completed its mandate as well.

As chairman of the Jewish Agency Jewish Education Committee, I want you to know how helpful the North American Regional Subcommittee has been to the larger Committee in its work. I thank you personally for your commitment of time and energy.

I'm pleased to let you know as well that one of our major projects, the encouragement of community-wide planning initiatives for Jewish continuity, will be continued under the aegis of a new Council of Jewish Federations committee on Jewish Continuity, Identity, and Affiliation.

Clearly, the work we began is far from finished, and I look forward to continuing to work with you in this vital area of common interest for years to come.

With my sincere thanks and warmest regards.

Cordially,

Morton L. Mandel

THE COMMISSION ON JEWISH EDUCATION EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA
FOLLOWING-UP ON THE FIRST MEETING:

PHONE CALLS WITH COMMISSIONERS.

1.COMMISSIONER: ESTHER LEAH RITZ

2.PHONER: ANNETTE HOCHSTEIN

3.DATE: AUGUST 3, 1988

4.SPIRIT: VERY INVOLVED. VERY COMPLIMENTARY.

5.THE CALL:

THE MEETING: "THIS IS VERY EXCITING TO ME. THE CALIBER OF THE PEOPLE WHO CAME. THE FACT THAT THE PRINCIPALS THEMSELVES CAME WAS VERY IMPORTANT. FASCINATING. THE PLANNING WAS EXTRAORDINARY. THE FIRST MEETING HAS TO BE VERY WELL DONE AND THIS ONE WAS. MORT APPEARED AS A ROLE MODEL FOR THE ATTENDANTS BY INVESTING HIMSELF. I THOUGHT IT WAS A GREAT MEETING.

WE NEED NOW:

1.A CAREFUL SUMMARY OF THE FIRST MEETING
2.CONCRETE ALTERNATIVES SHOULD BE OFFERED FOR BOTH CONTENT AND PROCESS. THE INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS SHOULD PROBABLY NOT BE THE CONTINUOUS MEANS FOR INTERACTION WITH THE COMMISSIONERS, THOUGH THEY MAY STILL BE USED TOWARDS THE SECOND MEETING. THE REASON NOT TO CONTINUE IS THAT THE COMMISSION MUST LEARN TO MAKE DECISIONS AS A GROUP.

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15 EAST 26th STREET • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10010-1578

November 10, 1988

Commission on Jewish Education in North AmericaTowards the Second Meeting of the CommissionInterview of Commissioners

Commissioner: Esther Leah Ritz

Interviewer: Art Rotman

Date: November 10, 1988

Setting: Phone call

Duration: 40 minutes

Spirit: Positive, thoughtful, logical

December 13 meeting:

Will not attend because of recuperation from surgery on that date.

Commissioner's opinions:

Reaction to August 1 meeting: ELR found the method of having interviews in advance and the results of the interviews put on the table at the beginning of the meeting very helpful. It moved us forward quickly as we didn't need to "begin from scratch". The Commission recognized her own contributions made in the interview in the summaries presented.

The first meeting served the purpose of getting people to know one another, for individual commissioners to "see who the other players were" and to "find themselves". As a result the plan of having the group identify the elements of a consensus rather than to come to a final conclusion worked out well.

The problem before the Commission will be to "walk a tightrope". Many of the commissioners are identified with individual points of view. However, the Commission cannot possibly address all these directions. A consensus has to be achieved which would include many of the elements raised at the Commission meeting but would, at the same time, provide a coherent whole. As an example of the tightrope, ELR identified this supplementary education. "Everybody knows that supplementary education is not effective." On the other hand, "that's where the kids are". The low quality has apparently not discouraged the parents. The reasons for this are apparently that any alternative would be more expensive and probably would provide more of a Jewish experience than the parents consider to be desirable. Many of parents are also identified philosophically with the public school system and the need to support it. Because of the large number of pupils in the system, it should not be ignored by the Commission. On the other hand, it need not and should not be a major thrust.

Priorities. ELR is of the opinion that no single element in and of itself is the answer, whether it be personnel or community or finance. However there are several elements which should be attacked simultaneously. These are:

- Senior professional personnel
- Finance and subsidies, and lay involvement
- Parent education

There is an inter-relationship between each of these elements. While an improvement in one will not do the trick, an improvement in all of the above will have a synergistic effect one on the other. In elaboration of the above, ELR pointed out that the senior professional personnel needs to be "beefed up" both in the formal and informal settings. The financing depends on considerable increased support by community leaders and givers; the education of parents needs to provide the parents with enough of an education so that they will themselves see the need for more education for their children and, at the same time, they need education which will parallel their children's experience. The more learned outside the homes than can be reinforced within the home, the better.

Modality. The informal approach is valid in and of itself as a method of learning. The approach used in informal settings stands on its own. However the informal approaches have been very successful in the classroom and schools should be using such approaches to a greater extent.

The informal setting "means mass education". It's possible for camps, Centers, etc. to reach out to those who are "marginally or tangentially involved". These settings need to see themselves not only as ends in and of themselves but they need to see themselves as having a responsibility to move their members or users from the informal setting to the more formal setting of the synagogue and the school.

While many of these users will happily make use of the synagogue or school, there are many who will not. For those the informal settings should offer the more formal type of schooling. As an example, the Hebraica Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires has developed a successful Jewish school.

Target Populations. In addition to the parents, the target population should be preschool and elementary school children. Adolescents and young adults are too preoccupied with "growing up" for them to devote much energy to their Jewishness. However, if the adolescent or young adult had a good Jewish foundation in the preschool and elementary school years, then it will be possible to break through the barrier of the bar mitzvah age so that in adolescence they can maintain their interest at a time when they are old enough to be able to deal with concepts.

The community is spending considerable sums at this point in integrating the new immigrants and in particular the Russians. Many are being subsidized in day schools. ELR is of the opinion that we have probably not been successful in integrating them into the community in this way nor in making them more Jewishly committed. We should review this to see whether the impact is what the community had in mind and if not use our resources elsewhere.

elr/2MN-W

THE COMMISSION ON JEWISH EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA
TOWARDS THE THIRD MEETING OF THE COMMISSION

INTERVIEW OF COMMISSIONER

1. COMMISSIONER: ESTHER LEAH RITZ
2. INTERVIEWER: ANNETTE HOCHSTEIN
3. DATE: MAY 26, 1989
4. SETTING: TELEPHONE FROM JERUSALEM TO MILWAUKEE

Summary:

Mrs. Ritz did not attend the second meeting - however this was our third opportunity to speak about it, (the first two conversations were brief). We reviewed what happened at the second meeting and the staff thinking since then. I related the idea of demonstrations and asked for her response.

ELR views very positively the notion of moving towards practical outcomes and implementation in the work with the Commission. She says that this has to happen, and it has to happen soon because the members of the Commission are mostly action-oriented people. They are not so much interested in studies and projections as in producing change. that is after all the purpose of the Commission: to take cognizance of the problems and produce change.

In the discussion on community action sites, Mrs. Ritz pointed to the fact that it is possible to identify and recruit people locally; it is possible to upgrade them through resources such as local colleges in the regions or communities where there are such colleges but a national element will have to be introduced if we want to be effective. Indeed, personnel training is largely done at the national level and in Israel. The Commission will have to think of solutions to the shortage of personnel in terms of the training resources available continentally in North America and in Israel.

As far as effecting the community nationally or continentally is concerned, ELR thinks that endorsement of the topic of education by this Commission is in itself, a message that might affect the climate in the community. She believes community building should be both local and national.

In her view, CFJ is at this point still largely paying lip-service to the topic of education. "It's table is so full!"

On the other hand, federations can certainly take leadership for the local coordination of formal and informal educational efforts. The federations should be the conveners, leaders, staffers of such efforts.

Mrs Ritz views positively the fact of dealing with both formal and informal education. This is a positive evolution since the report on Maximizing the Jewish Educational Effectiveness of Community Centers: a new dialogue between formal and informal

education is going on. That trend moved from the "Maximizing" report to the Jewish Education Committee, to the North American regional effort of that committee, to this Commission on Jewish Education in North America - and this is very positive.

Returning to the topic of training, she pointed to the fact that even the national denominational programs are weak and need strengthening. She suggested that one might want to consider a consortium of training programs.

The potential pool of educators in the Judaic departments of universities have never been approached in a systematic way to join Jewish education - this should be looked at.

COMMISSION
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IN NORTH AMERICA

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May 30, 1989

Mrs. Esther Leah Ritz
929 N. Astor Street
#2107-8
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

Dear Esther Leah:

I am pleased that you have agreed to chair a group discussion at the June 14 Commission meeting. Several hours will be devoted to these groups, making them the principle setting for the day. Each group will be asked to discuss the enabling options agreed upon at the December 13 Commission meeting: community and personnel. From these groups we expect to generate some concrete proposals upon which to base the future work of the Commission.

There will be a discussion guide prepared for you to follow, and you will have the assistance of a co-chair, staff members to serve as resources in the areas of community and personnel, and a recorder. I have asked Annette Hochstein to meet with you prior to June 14 to fill you in on our general plans for the day, and to review the discussion guide currently being prepared for your use.

I look forward to seeing you on June 14, and send my warmest regards.

Mort

Morton L. Mandel
Chairman