



THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MISSOURI RESEARCH CENTER-KANSAS CITY

K1048

Leonard Belove (1916-1985) Papers

[Jewish Community Archives]

1933-1970

9 folders, 1 oversize box

Scrapbooks, photos, correspondence, memorabilia, and a plaque related to Belove's work with B'nai B'rith, Aleph Zadik Aleph (AZA), and the Resident Theater.

BIOGRAPHY:

Born on November 20, 1916 in Kansas City, Leonard Belove attended Central High School, where he quickly distinguished himself in theater and was voted “Best Boy Actor” by the Senior Ballot in 1933. Along with crystallizing his love of acting, this year was also significant whereby he became involved in another lifelong passion: his initiation into AZA by his older brother Caleb. Plunging into AZA activities with the same zeal and dedication with which he invested in theater, Belove became aleph godol of AZA No. 2 in 1937, won numerous awards at the national convention, and became highly respected by his colleagues for his modesty and generosity. Having married, relocated to Detroit, and become a full-time AZA employee the following year, Belove rapidly rose through the ranks and gained his first administrative experience as the director of AZA activities first locally in Detroit before expanding to include the state of Michigan and then all of District 6 in 1939. During World War II, Belove parlayed his productivity to promoting war bonds, most notably in an AZA paper drive which proved to be so successful that the mayor of Detroit had to send a fleet of trucks to collect all the papers elicited by the AZA appeal.

Despite Belove’s subsequent success as financial secretary of Pisgah Lodge enabling it to grow from 1400 to 3600 members and thereby become the then largest lodge in the world, this progress did not correspondingly impact his income, and after eight years in Michigan (1946), he returned to Kansas City and worked alternately as a restaurateur and a manufacturer’s representative while remaining active in the local B’nai B’rith district into the next decade. However, in 1958 his long-term community duties were rewarded with his election as annual president of Grand Lodge No. 2. During his brief but standard one-year

term, Belove organized numerous conferences and events, the most significant being the creation of the Eddie Jacobson Lodge named after Harry Truman's close acquaintance (with Belove playing a key role in installing its officers) and its opening celebrated in a lavish ceremony attended by Truman himself.

As the Leonard Belove Papers contain few materials on ensuing events, the remainder of his biography on this fragmentarily documented period will be accordingly brief: following the conclusion of his presidential term (1959), Belove continued his old love of theater with renewed dedication and amassed an extensive resume of credits as an actor and director, particularly with the Resident Theater, a project affiliated with the Jewish Community Center of Kansas City. Indicative of his high visibility, his capsule biography in the program of a 1968 production of Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* describes him as "one of the most accomplished and versatile actors on the Kansas City scene..." Remaining in Kansas City for the rest of his life, he died in August 1985 at the age of 78.

PROVENANCE:

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DESCRIPTION:

This collection consists of scrapbooks, photos, correspondence, memorabilia, and a plaque related to Leonard Belove's work with B'nai B'rith, AZA, and the Resident Theater, with particular emphasis on his tenure as president of Grand Lodge No. 2 (1958-1959).

INVENTORY:**BOX 001**

- Folder 1. AZA medals/keys, ca. 1930s-1950s
- Folder 2. B'nai B'rith materials relating to Leonard Belowe's presidency- bulletin, Leonard Belowe correspondence, event programs, newsletters, 1958-1959
- Folder 3. *The Centralian*- KC Central High School yearbook, 1933
- Folder 4. Miscellaneous programs of plays and musicals directed by Belowe, 1968-1970
- Folder 5. News clippings- B'nai B'rith, Belowe becoming president, 1958
- Folder 6. Photographs- AZA staffs, young Leonard Belowe, 1941-1956
- Folder 7. Photographs- Belowe with family and friends, ca. 1950s
- Folder 8. Photographs- Belowe with family, presidential speeches, at Eddie Jacobson lodge installation with Harry Truman, 1958-ca. 1960s
- Folder 9. Scrapbook: "Leonard Belowe, President"- cards, telegrams, letters, pictures, 1958

Oversize Flat BoxBound Scrapbooks

- 1. Leonard Belowe, December 14, 1958: The Big Record- a lasting record of the evening of Sunday, December 14, 1958
- 2. Our Director, ca. 1958

Plaques:

Resolution: February 19, 1946- noting Belowe's relocation from Detroit, MI to KC, MO

Presented to Leonard Belowe on December 14, 1958 and honoring his presidential election, Greater Kansas City B'nai B'rith Council.

Photograph

12th International Aleph Zadik Aleph Convention, July, 1935