

Local woman helps keep the music playing

By Abigail Schade Gary *New Jersey Jewish Standard*

WAYNE, N.J. – Wayne resident Mimi Lakind knew about the Judaica Sound Archives (JSA) from an article she read in *The Jewish Standard* some time ago. But she did not contact them until this past February, when she found herself in possession of eight or nine Yiddish and cantorial records.

Cleaning out the household of her husband's recently deceased 99-year-old aunt, Lakind found the collection of old recordings and, at first, was not sure what to do with them. Then she remembered the piece about the JSA at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton.

"It said they were actively seeking such recordings, to preserve them," Lakind said. "I thought that was a wonderful idea, much better than trying to sell them, and I delivered them personally on my trip to Florida."

What started as a casual recycling project turned into something of great interest for Lakind, who was surprised by the size and scope of JSA. Housed on half a floor of the Wimberly Library at Florida Atlantic University, the non-profit archives are directed by Nathan Tinanoff, assisted by a staff of eight part-time workers and 30 volunteers.



Mimi Lakind donates an old recording to Nathan Tinanoff, director of Judaica Sound Archives.

Together, said Tinanoff, they work to preserve the recorded Jewish music of the past for future generations. Using digital technology, JSA has transferred over 2,000 songs from vinyl to electronic format.

Director Tinanoff, then a recently retired senior manager from IBM, stumbled onto the project when he began volunteering at the library several years ago and assisted a cantor who was cataloguing the collection of 1,000 Jewish sound recordings. When the cantor died, Tinanoff realized that the project would be lost if he didn't take it over.

"I felt that this was the cultural heritage for my children and grandchildren, and I wanted to keep it going," Tinanoff remembers. "We got organized and got the word out, [and] we've received about 10,000 records a year since then."

Tinanoff purposely named the collection "Judaica" rather than "Jewish," looking to include not only Yiddish, cantorial, Hebrew, and Ladino music but also music by Jewish artists and composers such as Al Jolson and Irving Berlin. This accounts for the presence in the collection of "White Christmas" and "Ave Maria," which were recorded by many Jewish artists. Duplicate records are welcome, and the best copies are preserved.

According to Tinanoff, JSA has become one of the largest collections of vintage Jewish sound recordings in the world. The collection includes LP albums, cassettes tapes, and 45 and 78 rpm records, totaling over 60,000 audio tracks. Recordings from every decade of the 20th century are included, and some are even older.

JSA also maintains a website, www.fsu.edu/jsa, where more than 1000 songs (76 LP albums) can be heard. The group has formed an alliance with the Robert and Molly Freedman Archive of Jewish Music at the University of Pennsylvania, enabling users of each to link to the other collection.

Judaica Sound Archives solicits donations from individuals, who may discover old Jewish musical recordings in relatives' homes, and from institutions, said Tinanoff, who added that the organization is working actively to encourage donations. JSA has 60 zamlers (Yiddish for

someone who passionately collects scattered things) throughout the U.S. and Canada, who seek out and rescue recordings wherever they find them.

"Young people should be aware, if and when they have to clean out an older relative's house," said Lakind, "that they shouldn't throw away these old Jewish records. There's a place for them, a place that wants them and will preserve this part of our culture."

Walk-in donors like Mimi Lakind are welcomed at the Archives office at Florida Atlantic University. Other donations may be mailed; directions for packing them securely, along with a printable mailing label, are on the Website. The mailing address is Judaica Sound Archives, Florida Atlantic University, Wimberly Library, 777 Glades Road, Boca Raton, FL 33431-0992.

May 4, 2007