



*Janice Rothschild Blumberg*

Janice Rothschild Blumberg's life has touched virtually every aspect of southern Jewish life for more than six decades. She has been an active participant as a student, wife, confidant, and community activist for many of the iconic events that have marked Atlanta and American Jewish life from the 1940's through today.

Today, at 96 years old, she continues her indefatigable involvement in Atlanta Jewish life, arts and culture, as she anticipates publication next Spring of her memoirs, "What's Next? Southern Dreams, Jewish Deeds and the Challenge of Looking Back While Moving Forward."

She was born Janice Oettinger in Atlanta on Feb. 13, 1924 and was an only child to Carolyn Goldberg and Waldo Edouard Oettinger. Janice attended public schools and attended Sunday school at the Temple. She entered the University of Georgia at the age of 15, graduating three years later during World War II.

During the war, Janice worked for the Army Corps of Engineers in the Panama Canal Zone, engaged in efforts combating malaria, and in Washington, D.C. for the Signal Corps, among other jobs. When she

returned in 1946 to Atlanta she met and married Jacob Rothschild, the new rabbi at the Temple. Rabbi and Mrs. Rothschild made a formidable team during the next 27 years, standing as leaders during numerous landmark cultural and societal developments that resonate today.

On October 12, 1958 the Temple was bombed by white supremacists. While Rabbi Rothschild was thrust into the international spotlight amid the ensuing chaos of events, Janice moved as adeptly to maintain normalcy insofar as possible in their home and in the lives of their children.

Janice's eye for detail, her ability to analyze events with an historian's perspective, are evident as she retells the story of the bombing – indeed her life with her husband and their two children, daughter Marcia and son, Bill – in the book, "One Voice: Rabbi Jacob M. Rothschild and the Troubled South."

While Janice and Rabbi Rothschild expeditiously moved past the events of 1958, their lives would continue to intersect with iconic events and influential leaders of the times, none more so than Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and his wife, Coretta Scott King. Janice became involved as Rabbi Rothschild led the task of planning a dinner honoring the civil rights leader in 1965 after he had won the Nobel Prize, despite community-wide threats to boycott and protest the event that the Rothschild's – and others – determined to hold. It was the city's first public dinner at which both blacks and whites dined together. She and

Mrs. King became life-long friends.

During that period of her life, Janice also helped to start Theatre Atlanta, a forerunner of the Alliance, one of the finest community-based professional theater groups in the United States. Her wit always ever-present, Janice recounts the early work with a friend to establish a theatre presence in the growing community:

"Our immediate duties consisted of taking our director ... to morning parlor meetings in which he tried to convince Atlanta matrons that sustaining theater with annual subscriptions, whether or not every play pleased them, was comparable to their husbands' continuing to support the Georgia Bulldogs or Tech Yellow Jackets after a losing streak. We nearly drowned him in coffee, but the strategy worked."

Her indomitable spirit, if not patience, was continually tested as she supported her husband's stand against segregation, and confronted her own challenges with racism as part of her community duties. She became president of the Theater Atlanta Women's Guild in 1967. In her words:

"The ladies considered me a safe bet ... I tried to warn them ... that I believed in defeating Jim Crow. I let them know that I intended to invite all who cared to support Theatre Atlanta through the Women's Guild to join, regardless of race."

And she did, without issue.

After Rabbi Rothschild died suddenly of a heart attack in 1973, Janice's life shifted two years later from Atlanta to Washington, D.C.,

with her marriage to insurance executive David Blumberg of Knoxville. He had become president of B'nai B'rith International in 1971, and would continue to serve until 1978, the couple traveling the world, intersecting with contemporary leaders, on behalf of Jewish causes. After Mr. Blumberg's death in 1989, Janice remained in Washington, D.C. until she returned to Atlanta in 2009.

Her life has been one of involvement, including leadership positions in the B'nai B'rith Klutznick Museum, American Jewish Historical Society, and the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington. She served as President of the Southern Jewish Historical Society and received one of the society's highest honors, the Sam Proctor Award for Outstanding Career Scholarship.

In addition to her upcoming memoir and "One Voice", she has authored: *Prophet in a Time of Priests: Rabbi Alphet Browne 1845-1929*; two histories of the Temple: *As But a Day: The First Hundred Years (1867-1967)* and *As But a Day: To a Hundred and Twenty (1867-1987)*. She has contributed to publications including the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, the Southern Israelite, Encyclopedia Judaica, Education for One World, and the Jewish Georgian.