

FANNY GOLDSTEIN MERIT AWARD REMARKS

BY LIBBY K. WHITE

Award Committee members, meeting co-chairpersons, AJL members, friends, and family, I really cannot tell you how much this means to me. If I was to try, I would surely embarrass myself, and my blubbering would be unintelligible to you. You will just have to take my word and accept my heartfelt thanks.

Fanny Goldstein, for whom this award is named, is not unfamiliar to me. I was born and grew up in Boston, the city to which the young Fanny immigrated from Russia with her family in the early 1900's. I can assure you that in the community she served so nobly and creatively for many years, her legacy lives on and continues to inspire. At this point, I wish to put to rest a persistent urban legend, which has been repeated since the award was announced. It has been bruited about that I knew Fanny Goldstein in life and that she trained me in Judaic Librarianship. Well, Fanny assembled her exhibit of Jewish books, the forerunner of Jewish Book Month, at the Boston Public Library in 1925. Sorry, I was not around then. Although Fanny and I were not contemporaries, I like to think that there is a lot of Fanny, the determined and caring person and librarian in me.

I was raised in a home where books, culture, and scholarship of all varieties were venerated, and Jewish tradition honored. Like many second generation Jewish Americans, for a long time, I was torn between synthesizing or compartmentalizing my deepest Jewish and non-Jewish interests. I didn't start out to be a librarian. After I had failed to save the world through social work, librarianship, eventually Judaic Librarianship, became my second choice and a perfect fit. I have worked in many library settings. Today at Baltimore Hebrew University, I am able to indulge my passion for the great saga of the Jewish people, my people, to whom I am intensely connected emotionally and intellectually. I am able to employ my skills to make that saga accessible to others. There is no greater gift that I could have received.

It may be a cliché, but it's nevertheless true that no task is accomplished by a single individual. Therefore, I wish to thank my co-workers on the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee and the staff of the *AJL Newsletter*, two major projects with which I have been involved. I also want to thank my husband, Dr Gerald White, who is here this afternoon.. Jerry deserves a certificate of commendation for his patience in instructing me in the mysteries of the internet and email so that I could do proficiently what AJL asked of me. Actually, it wasn't half as bad as his effort to teach me to drive years ago, an experience we have agreed never to discuss.

AJL changed my life, and this is my testimonial! I became aware of AJL when I was seeking a new direction. My library job at the time gave me little sense of satisfaction. AJL opened up possibilities, introducing me to a field which I had not seriously considered. As I explored these possibilities, my world expanded. I have always enjoyed learning and challenge. My AJL activities provided both. Perhaps there were moments

when I feared madness, but I was never bored. Most of all, working for AJL had meaning far beyond my mundane, everyday concerns. I also developed a network of supportive colleagues, with varied talents and perspectives, who became both professional resources and close friends. This is probably the time to tell you that the first AJL member who introduced herself to me was Ellen Cole, who so graciously introduced me this afternoon.

The Fanny Goldstein Award recognizes loyalty to AJL and contributions to the profession. In accepting this honor, I look toward the future. I make a commitment to continue to serve AJL and librarianship to the best of my ability. As for the past, my profound hope is that I have given to the organization and the profession at least a partial measure of what both have given to me. Many thanks to all of you. Libby K. White