



Family Legacies

Linking the past with the present and the future

Jewish Genealogy Society
of Southern Nevada - West

Vol.4, No.3 Summer 2001

My Friendship With Alex Haley

By Gil Shaw

I thought "Roots" was a great story, even before it was written and during the time it was being written. How is this possible? Alex Haley and I worked together when we were in the Coast Guard, and the idea was just in incubation form.

I first met Alex Haley in about 1950 when I was an instructor at the Navy's Journalist School. We always had one or two Coast Guard students in each class, and since there was no one on staff from that Service I was assigned as liaison. Alex was the Coast Guard's only Chief Petty Officer in that specialty and was always interested in how his "kids" were doing, so we discussed the students every couple of weeks.

When my enlistment was running out toward the end of 1953, I was unhappy teaching and wanted to be out in the Fleet as a reporter and correspondent again, but the Navy did not see it this way. I mentioned it to our Coast Guard student at the time, and very soon thereafter I got a call from Alex. He suggested that a move to the Coast Guard might be the answer to my problem. He also told me he could arrange that I be assigned to New York working with him, or to either St. Louis or New Orleans. He added that although he'd be happy to have me, in either of the other two places, I would be in charge of the office. I chose New Orleans and this led to a very satisfying career, adding up to a total of 27 years service in the two seagoing armed forces.

About 15 years later when Alex was retired and I had advanced through the enlisted and warrant officer ranks and into the regular officer corps, I was stationed in San Francisco as the Public Affairs Officer, and Alex lived in an apartment about a block from our headquarters. We had kept in touch and he had mentioned he was researching a book about his ancestors. Now we were close enough that we easily kept closer contact. The Chief Journalist (who was one of Alex's "kids") who was working in my office, and the two of us, had lunch on a monthly basis. He always invited us to his apartment to see how the book was coming.

The absence of all furniture and carpeting the living room in the Haley apartment made it ideal for his "system." Papers were lined up in neat piles. How he remembered what was in each of the over 50 piles remains a mystery to me to this day.

Alex started making speeches about his research and we attended one at University of California (Berkeley). Even knowing what he was doing, his talk was interesting and exciting. I thought it would be rewarding to know about my family, but had no idea of where or how to start.

A few years later I was stationed at Coast Guard Headquarters in the nation's capital and Alex was going to be in town. I suggested that his talk to an audience of Coast Guardsmen would be a good way to conjure up old memories. He agreed, as did the man with the four stars on his collar, the Commandant, and Alex filled the hall at the Library of Congress. It was that night that I told Alex I was joining him in adding the word "Retired" after my rank, and moving to Las Vegas.

One day, after a few years and no contact with the now author of a best selling book and TV miniseries, I got a call from the Black Social Workers of Las Vegas. I couldn't imagine how I got on their contribution list. But that was not the case. It seems that Alex Haley was speaking at University of Nevada Las Vegas and wanted to ensure that I was invited to that and a cocktail party afterward.

That was the last time I saw Alex, but we corresponded on an occasional basis until his death. He was not only a great shipmate, but also a gentleman and a gentle man.



1964 State of Israel Bonds

In 1964 members of Hadassah, Las Vegas Chapter volunteered to assist at the Las Vegas Israeli Bond Dinner. Many Hadassah members attended with their husbands. Many prominent Las Vegas, Jewish and non-Jewish attended the dinner. The Hadassah scrapbook contains a program for the dinner which lists the following names:

Battley, Joseph F.
Bible, Alan
Binion, Benny
Bliss, Sidney
Boyd, Sam A.
Bramlet, Al
Brookman, Mrs. George
Cannon, Howard W.
Canter, David
Chason, Max
Chenin, Mrs. Joseph
Coblentz, Alexander
Cohen, Carl
Cohen, Mrs. Carl
Cohen, Robert
Couthard, G. William
Dalitz, Moe
Denton, Ralph L.
Deskin, Ruthe
Dickerson, Harvey
Entratter, Jack
Exber, Mel
Feinberg, Preston
Feinberg, Mrs. Preston
Fields, Jackie
Flippin, Roy B.
Foy, Jack M.
Friedkin, Mrs. Richard
Gold, Aaron S.
Goldwater, David
Goodman, J. Dee
Goot, Max
Gordon, Jerry
Gould, Earl
Gragson, Oran K.
Greenspun, Mrs. Hank

Hardy, Wilbur R.
Harmell, Mrs. Louis
Harmon, Harley E.
Hecht, Chic
Horwitt, Mrs. Max
Houssels, J. K. Sr.
Houssels, J.K. Jr.
Kaye, Robert
Keyser, Robert S.
Kishner, Herman
Kohn, Joseph
Lansburgh, Morris
LaPorta, Lou F.
Lawson, Theo R.
Leonard, Mrs. Jack
Levinson, Edward
Levy, Harry
Levy, Mrs. Harry
Lurie, Arthur C.
Mack, Harry
Mack, Jerome D.
Marshall, Edward G.
Messing, David A.
Messing, Mrs. David A.
Molasky, Irwin A.
Moran, Helen K.
Moss, Edward
Moss, Mel
Mowbray, John
Paley, Louis R.
Peilte, Sidney
Posin, Murray
Posin, Mrs. Murray
Prather, Gaylord K.
Prell, Milton
Rabin, Mrs. Irving

Rick, Robert
Rich, Charles
Richards, Walter E.
Riddle, Major A.
Rosen, Allard
Rudiak, George
Saiger, Morton
Schwartz, Mrs. Sheldon
Silbert, Harvey
Smith, A.M.
Snyder, Mrs. Jack
Stone, Mrs. Louis
Tell, Jack
Thomas, E. Parry
Turk, Arthur
Turner, Charles
Walker, Mrs. Julius
Wallerstein, Harry
Wallerstein, Mrs. Harry
Whipple, Reed
Whitmore, Sidney R.
Wollman, Murray
Zarowitz, Jerome





Researching in Salt Lake City — Finding Aids

This summer the Family History Library in Salt Lake City was a busy, noisy place. Renovations in preparation for visitors to the 2002 Olympics made research in the library a challenge. When remodeling is complete the finding aids on each floor may have been moved to a new place on the floor. No matter what time of year you visit the library there are finding aids available to make your use of the library more efficient.

Finding aids are prepared to help visitors use library records. They are usually available for those records in most demand by patrons and those records where use might present some difficulty to patrons.

Many researchers start working on the United States floor. There are a variety of finding aids here for the heavily used records.

United States Federal Census—one of the handiest aids to census work in the library is found at the information desk on the 2nd floor and also on the counter in the census area. There are five pamphlets designed for census work in the library. The library has prepared these aids with the beginner in mind. If you are working with the 1920 census the pamphlet walks you through the research process with specific, step by step directions. For instance, part of the process tells you to “Go to the census area on the 2nd floor and look on table 6 where the U.S. Census registers are kept.” As you work through the steps you are reminded that if you didn’t find the information you sought, help is available at the reference desk. These aids are available for U.S. Census—1790-1870, U.S. Census—1880, U.S. Census—1900, U.S. Census - 1910, and U.S. Census—1920.

The reference area also has tall counters which house finding aids. Most are in large three ring binders with title labels on the spine. Here you will find well-organized information about specific records and the corresponding microfilm numbers for the library. This can save you time if there are no computers available for use to look up film numbers. With a specific locality in mind the binders are faster than looking up records in the library computers. Some of the most popular binders in this area on the 2nd floor are:

City Directories—this binder lists all the city directories held by the library with corresponding film numbers. If you want to know if the library has city directories for Detroit, Michigan and for what years, this binder

is a quick reference stop.

World War I Draft Records—this binder lists all the World War I Draft Registration boards used in the United States for registration. If you aren’t sure if your great uncle registered in Denver, Colorado or Spokane, Washington, this binder can help you plan your research. A quick look under Denver will tell you the number of draft boards for that city.

The same information will be available for Spokane. Since the records are in alphabetical order under each draft board you can quickly search dozens of draft boards for several cities for your great uncle. The microfilm numbers for each board are in the binder.

United States Passenger Arrival Records—the library has placed a printout from the library computer in several binders on the counters near the census area. In them you can quickly locate film numbers for microfilm records for ships arriving at various U.S. ports. The Soundex microfilm numbers are also included. If you know that your grandmother’s ship arrived at the Port of New York on 1 August 1904 the information in the binder will allow you to quickly locate the correct microfilm number for that date.

Of course the United States floor contains many other aids to library research. There are aids for Researching in New York City, U.S. Passenger Arrival Lists Before 1820, U.S. Naturalization Records, and Canadian National Censuses 1871, 1881, 1891, and 1901. When you visit the library take a moment to ask at the information desk to determine if there is a guide to the records you will be researching.

The European and British research floors also have aids to help researchers. Some of these are also available on the Library website at www.familysearch.org. These guides include one for Hamburg Departure records, which describes how to search both the Direct Index and Indirect Index. There is also a guide for parts of the Hungarian census records held by the library.

If you plan a stop at the library during your Olympic visit or plan to visit Salt Lake City purely to research, the finding aids and guides will help you get the most from the visit to the library.



Our Trip To The Past—Part Three

By Joan Adler and Bobby Furst

Kamenetz Podolski was nearby so we decided to at least drive through it and stop off at the archives. We wanted to know if the archives would be open the next day and the hours of its operation. Both of these may seem like unusual questions, but we had learned that Ukrainians take unannounced holidays and that offices are not always open regular hours. We would plan our day in Kamenetz Podolski according to the schedule of the archives.

Bobby had been corresponding via e.mail with a man named Marco Weinman who had been in Kamenetz Podolski the previous summer. He was encouraging about his experiences. When Joan was in California, we visited Marco. He told us about his trip, a very different trip than the one we expected to make, and about how wonderful Zena, the archivist in Kamenetz Podolski, was.

Marco is a young man who has lived all over Europe. He learned about his Ukrainian ancestry while in Israel, during a visit to Yad Vashem. Among other things, he has a facility with languages and is fluent in Ukrainian. He backpacked to Kamenetz Podolski, determining he would stay until he found material in the archives. At one point early in his stay, the hotel asked him to leave because they expected some businessmen to be coming and needed his room. The archivist, Zena, invited him to stay at her house. They would walk the three miles to the archives every day and return every night. He commented that she would not take any money and fed him dinner every night, even though he felt money was tight. He told us the archives did not turn on their lights. He would take the books outside to read them. He walked up the block to a local shop that had a photocopy machine if he needed a copy made. Zena permitted him access to all her material without restriction. After being in two Khmel'nitskij archives, we found this to be amazing.

The Smotrych River runs through Kamenetz Podolski and, at one place, makes a circle. The center

of the circle has a 13th century fortress and the area near the fortress includes many restored buildings. It is very different from anything we had seen.

On the other side of the river, over one of the two bridges to the fortress, this part of the city is very old. Many different ethnic groups have lived here and the buildings in the area represent some of these groups in style. The town is high above the river. There are deep gorges and sheer cliffs down to the water. The Jewish houses used to be at the bottom of the cliffs alongside the river. The fortress is accessible by crossing one of two bridges. There are high stone walls, solid buildings, turrets and all the prerequisite fortress kinds of things. We walked around the fortress for awhile and then crossed back to the old city.

We also walked around in the old city while Alex went into the archives to check on their schedule. The large functionary buildings seem well cared for and are beautifully restored. They are painted in shades of pink, coral, yellow, blue and tan with white trim around the windows and doors. Some of them almost looked Roman in style. The following day, when we returned, we entered the archives through the back door. Zena explained that the front door was only for show.



Archives building

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Our Trip To The Past—Part Three

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Our guide, Alex, knew of a restaurant in Kamenetz Podolski so we decided to eat dinner before heading back to the hotel. The restaurant is in a building that used to be the old synagogue. He wanted us to see it. It is now a restaurant/ discotheque/bar. We ate outside on a patio overlooking the steep cliffs. They are completely covered with greenery so we couldn't see much of the river below. We ate a very mediocre dinner accompanied by the sounds of cows, goats, geese, ducks, chickens, cars and trucks. Strangely, there was a Ferris wheel poking out of the trees on the other side of the river, high up on the cliffs. We could see no other evidence of human activity.

A general comment: Everywhere we've been, there are statues and monuments to Lenin, to Soviet times, to soldiers, tanks, etc. Many are very large and very ornate. They seem out of place among the farms, countryside and sleepy little villages. In this quiet, peaceful, poor county, it is surprising to us that so much money has gone to this and not to the people or to the infrastructure. Strangely, the people don't see anything wrong with this. As we've already mentioned, wedding photographs are often taken with the monuments as backdrops.

Another comment: The condition of the roads is poor. The largest highway we saw was one lane in each direction with either a dirt or grass shoulder. In the villages, the roads are often unpaved, with deep ruts that remain for years. When we asked the villagers why they don't get a shovel and at least fill in the holes in front of their own house, they told us the ruts would just reappear and so it didn't pay to fix them. We found few signs giving directions and very few gas stations. Some looked as though they had been built in the 1920's and were still functioning. There is evidence of new gas station construction. Alex told us he feared there would soon be too many gas stations. We were surprised to learn that gas cost pretty much what it does in the states.

We returned to Krasilov very tired and happy. We planned to return to Kamenetz Podolski the following day. We would spend time in the archives and tour the city. Alex suggested that we visit Khotin (pronounced HO-TIN with the HO pronounced as though one was clearing one's throat and the emphasis on the TIN), another fortress town that used to be in Bessarabia. Now it is in Ukraine. We agreed that we would enjoy it if there were enough time.



Another view of the "Jewish" houses in Kamenetz Podolski tucked into a crook formed by a bend in the river at the base of the cliff. This is probably where our relatives lived. You can see the fortress high on the top of the cliff above the Jewish houses on the right.



Being Non-Jewish in a Jewish Genealogy Society

What is a genealogy society? My thought is that it is a group of individuals who have an obsession to learn their roots - beginning with their own records, their parents, grandparents and back as far as possible in their ancestry. The "obsessed" decide to get together on a regular basis to learn about available sources, pitfalls to avoid, methodology, "brick walls" which challenge every researcher, and to share the excitement and rewards of their diligent detective work.

What is a "Jewish" genealogy society? Other than research connected with synagogue or church records, and the possible factor of genetic traits particular to a nationality which may be predominantly of one belief or another (important for recording health history), religious beliefs of any faith should not limit a genealogy society. How our ancestors' lives were affected by where they lived (occupations, etc.), as well as when they lived there (historical and natural events), and when they emigrated, whether in the 1600s or the 1900s, all have a bearing on any researcher's strategy. When we research at the (LDS) Family History Centers or attend their monthly genealogy classes, we aren't persuaded to become believers in the Mormon faith. Their doors are open to all races and religions, and we add to their database while gleaning their information for our purposes.

It is obvious that our Society is a group of researchers from beginners to experienced, active and inactive, obsessed and those who may think they'll find their roots by osmosis, but it is not a social or religious club. Sociable--yes; believers--probably; goal-oriented, open-minded and flexible--hopefully. The desire to learn about and share with others our successes and methods encourages and motivates. Even sharing the frustrations unites us.

My admiration is for our members who take time from their families and busy schedules to help others, not because we are of one faith or another, but because we are united by one goal--to find all our roots and help others to find theirs. Having had a Jewish great grandfather and some distant cousins of Jewish faith (a fact I discovered after beginning my search ten years ago) should allow me at least one foot inside our Society. Even though I know very little of the Jewish religion, I do have some genealogical knowledge which may help to teach while I continue to learn.

By—Janet Farino, a JGS member and a DAR with some East European roots.

IAJGS News

At the 11 July 2001 annual meeting, the following were elected as IAJGS officers and directors:

Officers

Hal Bookbinder, President, Oak Park, CA, USA
Anne Feder Lee, Vice President, Honolulu, HI, USA
Joel Spector, Secretary, Cherry Hill, NJ, USA
Michael Posnick, Treasurer, Minneapolis, MN, USA

Directors

Michael Brenner, Teaneck, NJ, USA
Judith Frazin, Northbrook, IL, USA
Anthony Joseph, M.B., Birmingham, England
Howard Margol, Atlanta, GA, USA (Past President)
Dan Schlyter, A.G., Salt Lake City, UT, USA
Garry Stein, Toronto, ON, Canada
Arnold Tolkin, Palm Beach Gardens, FL, USA



Seeking...

Adrienne **ADAMS**, Box 70373, Las Vegas, NV 89170-0373, researching Abraham **FRANCK**, born c. 1830 Raczki, Russia (Poland), d 1908 Paris; son Joseph, b.1852 Suwalki, (m. Rebecca **KOSKY**); sons Jacques, Henri, Maurice with 2nd wife, Rachel **DINER**; Solomon **LESCHENSKY MICHAELS** and Rachel **SHERUTZKY MICHAEL**, b. Poland, emigrated London c. 1885.

New on the Shelf At the Sahara West Library

By Myrna Adler

Two new books about genealogy are now on the shelf at the Sahara West Library. The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy—3rd Edition by Val D. Greenwood covers all aspects of genealogy. It is very thorough and well written.

Locating Lost Family Members and Friends

Written by Kathleen W. Hinckley reminds us of the usual tools a genealogist needs to use. The author shows how using clues helps complete the picture of our ancestors.

New In Our Library

Thanks to Mike and Marilyn Brenner who donated a carton of books for our library which included:

Eleven Generation of the Gerstle Family

by Karen Spiegel Franklin

A Genealogical History of an Extended Family

edited by Naomi Schublin Greenberg

The Oreckovsky Family From Russia to America

published by the Oreck Foundation

Toledot Littman, The Littman Generations

by Marilyn Brenner

Olschwanger Journal 5745 Anna Olswanger/Editor

The Ancestors of Our Children (and Cousins too)

by Maynard Abrams

Ayleh Toldoth by Rolf Lederer

The Browns, a Family Genealogy by Norman Brown

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Calendar 2001
JGSSN-West Meeting Schedule
Sahara West Library 9600 W. Sahara 1pm

October 21st–The History of Ellis Island and
November 18th–Canadian Border Crossings
December 16th–Me and My Genealogy

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