SA-SIG

The journal of the Southern African Jewish Genealogy Special Interest Group

In this Issue

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I'm writing this from the Paris conference of the IAJGS.

The conference is bilingual, with simultaneous translation, when needed, into French or vice versa. It's very well organised, people are very friendly, and there is a lot going on. Many new interesting topics were presented. There were 850 participants from 30 countries represented.

There is a small, but significant South African presence at the conference. The Latvia SIG, founded by Mike Getz from Woodstock, was well represented by South Africans. The SIG is currently run by Mike Eliastam, before whom Henry Blumberg ran it, and Arlene Beare before that. Mike (Eliastam) and Arlene both come from Springs. Henry is from Port Elizabeth, as I am. The Latvia SIG is one of the more efficiently run SIG's, as was pointed out to me by the IAJGS president, Michael Goldstein!

SA-SIG now has around 530 members, just marginally fewer than Litvak SIG. If each SA-SIG member got one other person to enrol, we could easily be the largest!

Next year the conference will be held in Boston, August 4-9. Consult the IAJGS website (*www.iajgs.org*) for more details. Consider planning to attend.

The August 2012 issue of *Shemot* is devoted to South Africa. With permission from the Editor, Bernard Valman, the PDF is now available on the SA-SIG web site. It's well worth reading! (See more detail of this later in this Newsletter.)

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EDITORIAL

In the course of several conversations, two of our regular readers Maurice Skikne and Stan Hart offered to write articles for this Newsletter. They felt that not enough is known about the businessmen of Jewish descent who were responsible for developing business in South Africa before World War II and immediately afterwards. They sent me their copy and I was amazed at the amount of information about successful business that they had gleaned in a short time.

I am very pleased that we have been receiving an increasing number of letters to the Editor, and a larger number than usual are published in this issue. If anyone would like to respond to any of the letters, please send me your response and I'll forward it to the writer.

During World War II, as the Nazis advanced they became "art collectors" through forceful means, sending the items they acquired back to Germany for safekeeping until after the War. A group of art experts was convened by the American Army with the job to prepare a list of the treasures accumulated, and to locate the treasures as the Allies advanced into Germany. The luck on their side was that a secretary of the Louvre had been ordered by the Nazis to annotate and list the goods, and she was able to hand this list to the group of so-called "Monuments Men". A huge number of the artefacts were put for safekeeping into a mine in Austria. We have a resume of the book about the story in this Newsletter.

The phrases "Two Gun Cohen," "General Cohen" seem like oxymorons! However, I found the story of a Jew named Morris Cohen to whom these phrases do apply. Morris was made a bodyguard to the Chinese, living an exciting life. He was originally a problem child and was sent by his parents from Eastern Europe to England. The English relatives could not control him any better than his parents could, and they sent him to Canada. In Canada, Morris befriended many Chinese labourers and was introduced to Sun Yat Sen, a Chinese revolutionary who became the first president and founding father of the Republic of China Morris eventually became Sun Yat Sen's security and then his right-hand man.

This issue also features an article on a community of Jewish immigrants from once-thriving communities in Cape Town and Johannesburg who have built their new lives in the town of Houston, Texas. You should find their stories interesting and illuminating.

Southern African Jewry suffered a sad loss in April when Harold Pupkewitz passed away. We have included his obituary in this issue.

Please communicate with me about any issues we raise or do not raise in the Newsletter. I look forward to hearing from you.

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MORRIS "TWO-GUN" COHEN

Chinese Spy Master and a Second Moishe!

Joe King

This article was originally published on the Museum of the Jewish Soldier in World War 2 web site, and is republished here with permission. The Museum web site can be found at www.jwmww2.org.

Morris "Two-Gun" Cohen was the one and only Jewish Chinese General and, for a time, was head of the Chinese Secret Service! One of his colleagues was Dr. Moses Schwarzberg, a Russian Jew who helped save China, for a time, from the Communists.

The official languages (in order of importance) in the Chinese Secret Service, during the time of the Two Moishes, were Chinese, Yiddish and English.

Born in Poland to a large (eight children) observant Jewish family, Abraham Morris Cohen was a handful almost from the time he could walk. His father beat him when he was three years old for wandering away from his East London home. A sturdy lad, he responded to Christian boys' bantering by – at age eight – knocking out a 12-year-old. A boxing promoter signed him to fight professionally. He called himself "Fat Moisha" or "Cockney Cohen," but would never enter the ring on a Friday – the Jewish Sabbath. He feared his father's wrath.

He was often hungry; his family was poor – so he earned pocket change by picking pockets. Ultimately, he was recruited by a man known as "Harry the *Gonof*" (the Yiddish word for "thief" – a Fagin-like creature right out of a Charles Dickens novel.) Arrested, he was sent, at age 12, to a variety of reform schools. His angry parents borrowed the money and sent him, aged 16, to a friend farming in Wappala, then in the Assiniboia territory – later part of Saskatchewan [in Canada].

Morris Cohen in a Canadian regiment during World War I

Cohen's life changed drastically one evening in Saskatoon. He delighted, on Sunday evenings, to dig into a large Chinese dinner and then gamble in the back of the café. But, when he turned up one night at one of his favorite haunts, he found the aged Chinese restaurant owner, Mah Sam, being held up by a hoodlum. Cohen wasn't going to have his plans for the evening interrupted – so he sidled up to the thug, whacked him in the head – disarmed him – and then threw him bodily out of the restaurant.

To the Chinese, he became a hero at a time when anti-Asiatic feeling in Canada was even greater than its anti-Semitism. Cohen became the only white man admitted to the ranks of the secret Chinese Tong.

Ultimately, Morris Cohen journeyed to China – now being led into modernity by Dr. Sun Yat Sen, and he became commander of the President's 250-man bodyguard.

Several attempts were made to assassinate the President. On one occasion, Cohen fought off three assailants attacking Sun on a train. He was nicked in his left hand. The wound made him think. "Supposing it had been my right arm. As soon as we

got back to Canton, I got me a second gun, another Smith and Wesson revolver."

Journalists thus dubbed him "Two-Gun" Cohen.

Two-Gun was of great service to the Chinese. A veteran of World War I, he taught his new friends boxing and the use of weapons. He became a military adviser, and an arms dealer. In 1922, he was named Director of the Chinese secret service.

Morris Cohen had a very limited knowledge of Chinese, but in his new post, he was able to use Yiddish quite a bit. One of his confreres was interpreter Moishe Schwarzberg, and the two would chat in Yiddish!
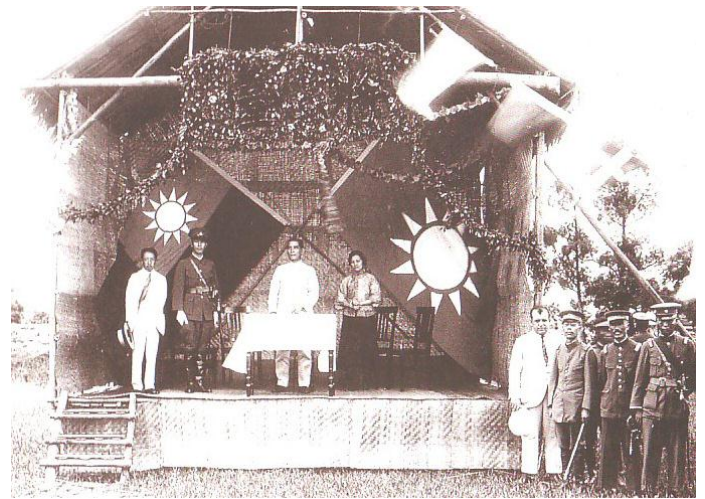
Morris Cohen, at the right in the white suit, with Chinese President Sun Yat-Sen and future President Chiang Kai-Shek

The Schwarzberg story is stunning in itself.

At the beginning of the 1920s, Moses Schwartzberg was fleeing the newly-born Soviet Union. He had been a member of a revolutionary group at the University of Moscow, whose members, were marked for death after they tried to kill Soviet Union founder Lenin in 1918 (a plot devised by yet another Jew, Shlomo ben Hirsch Rozenblum – known to the British Secret Service as Sidney Reilly – and whose career was fictionalized as James Bond. But that's another story.)

Schwartzberg's flight took him to Siberia, then a lawless region. As he crossed over the border into China, then locked into a Civil War between a democratic party headed by Sun Yat-Sen and a

swath of powerful war lords, he stumbled across the near-frozen body of an elderly Chinese man. The man still had a faint pulse, and Schwartzberg dragged him to a nearby Russian Cossack village, and brought him back to consciousness. To the Jewish doctor's surprise, the Chinese man spoke Russian and after a time, feeling that he was dying, he turned over to Schwartzberg a message from the Soviet Union's leaders to Dr. Sun (plus gold coins to bribe his way).

The doctor made his way to Shanghai but found his way to the President barred by a highly-protective bodyguard. Schwartzberg gathered that the "huge man with a shaved head and two pistols in his belt" was in charge but when he tried pleading his case, in Chinese and Russian, the chief bodyguard responded, in English, "Who the hell are you and what the hell do you want?"

When he learned who he was, Cohen switched to Yiddish. A collaboration of the two Moishes was born. When Schartzberg made his presentation to Doctor Sun, it became apparent that the Chinese President couldn't read Russian. The multilingual Jewish doctor was immediately offered a job as an interpreter. Two-Gun put it this way: "Listen, kid, how would you like to stay on as Dr. Sun's confidential secretary. He likes you." And so Chinese spies worked in Chinese, Yiddish and English!

(Dr. Schwartzberg completed his medical degree in Berlin, practiced medicine in Hong Kong and Peking, but fled with his wife and daughter to Chungking when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour in 1941. After the war, he organized the Shanghai Regiment with 1,200 Jewish volunteers to fight for newborn Israel.)

Two-Gun becomes a General

Two-Gun was named to command the Chinese 19th field army. Time Magazine, in 1931, reported that Cohen "was gazetted by the Canton government a Brigadier General." He led Nationalist troops in fighting against both the Japanese and communist Chinese.

When the Japanese entered World War II, in 1941, Cohen was captured in Hong Kong. The Japanese now had a great enemy – but they didn't know it. By identifying himself as a Canadian businessman, he fooled the Japanese.

This picture of the "upper echelon" showing Two-Gun Cohen, in the white suit, seated with President Chiang Kai-Shek on his right, verifies his importance in Chinese leadership.

Ultimately, Morris Cohen was among a small number of prisoners released in exchange for important Japanese officials held in the US. He returned to Canada. "When we pulled into Montreal," he said. "I picked up my parcels and stepped down on the platform – a free man."

On Friday, Dec. 3rd, 1943, the Montreal Gazette reported "A few dozen men and women met early yesterday at Bonaventure station for the sole purpose of meeting the fairytale Chinese general, a Jew by birth a Canadian Citizen, Gen. Morrice Cohen a former aide-de-camp to the famous rebuilder of China, Dr. Sun Yat sen."

Cohen married a Montreal woman but the affair didn't last. He planned to return to England – but he had one great service to offer to the Jewish people.

In 1945, the United Nations was being formed in San Francisco. And a resolution proposing the partitioning of Palestine into two states – one Jewish and the other Arabic – was to be submitted to the new organization. The international Jewish community was on hand to do what it could to see that the Resolution was passed.

Two-Gun flew to San Francisco and convinced the head of the Chinese delegation to abstain from voting when he learned they planned to oppose partition. That abstention ultimately helped ensure passage of the measure partitioning Palestine – and allowing the creation of Israel.

He died in Manchester and was buried there with a trilingual headstone – in English, traditional Hebrew and in Chinese (a tribute from the people he served so well.) The tribute identified him as "Mah Sam" –

as close as the Chinese could get to Morris Cohen. It means "clenched fist."

Two Gun's gravestone in Manchester

Editor's Note: See also the following web site for a personal recollection of Morris Cohen by his cousin, Dr Cyril Sherer:

www.jewisheastend.com/twoguncohen.html

SOUTH AFRICA'S EXODUS

Adam Chandler

After a rocky transition, Jewish immigrants from once-thriving communities in Cape Town and Johannesburg have built their promised land in Texas
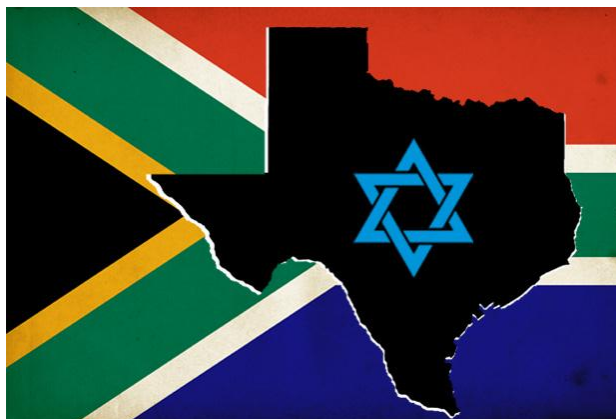
This article was originally published in Tablet Magazine on April 5, 2012, and is republished here with permission.

This week, as tables across the globe become the gathering point for Passover Seders, one implicit note will be the regenerating narrative of exodus in Jewish history. But often overlooked in this narrative is the way that exoduses, either forced or self-motivated, give birth to new Jewish communities in our own day. And few American cities are more emblematic of this, I'd argue, than my hometown of Houston, Texas, where roughly 400 South African Jewish families have settled, stayed, and grown from the late 1970s to the present. Although, as often happens, their assimilation process was not without its hitches—as the story of one of their early experiences reveals.

"We went to each of the synagogues and they each said, 'Unless you become a member of the synagogue, you can't come to the synagogue,' " Dr. Les Nowitz recalled, of his first holiday in town. "We said, 'We just arrived, we came here in June, we don't know where we want to join and what we want to do.' There wasn't one synagogue that would allow us to come into the synagogue for services. So, we sat on the Katy Freeway near the swimming pool in the apartments where we were living. We came from an environment where there was no such thing as needing a ticket to get into synagogue."

Of course that environment, though perhaps less formal or demanding, had also grown precarious. By the time a 1980 census estimated that the Jewish population of South Africa had reached its apogee at 119,000, a significant number of the country's Jews had already left. With myriad political crises, including the battles to end apartheid, deepening, the South African Jewish community had begun scattering across the globe by the late 1970s, settling in Europe, Australia, Israel, Canada, and America. For a group that traces itself mostly—80 percent by conservative estimates—back to Lithuania or the Baltics, this dispersal began to reduce one of the most historically singular groups in modern Jewish history. Today the Jewish community in South Africa numbers around 70,000, with an average reduction of nearly 2,000 each year.

Although the circumstances are different now, South African Jews are still choosing Houston. The community remains a distinctive fixture in the city's Jewish collective, active and prominent in the Jewish and civic leadership—a beneficiary, like countless other places, of the Jewish experience of exodus.

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The timeline of Jewish history is stocked with stories of communities that, fleeing persecution, arrived in strange lands and immediately became agents of social change in their new milieus. South African Jews were no different. The community traces its history in South Africa to the late 18th century, when Pale of Settlement pogroms prompted the Jews of Lithuania to seek refuge elsewhere. As the situation deteriorated, many in the community considered moving to places like Brazil and Argentina—until news of a mineral boom in South Africa compelled many to consider moving south.

"Word got back to Lithuania that South Africa was a land of opportunity, and the Lithuanian Jews came to South Africa in droves," Ian Kavin, a pediatrician in his 60s, explained. "The community itself, as I understand it, was not a terribly religious community, although they were Orthodox, they tended to be Zionistic on the one hand and socialistic at the same time. They really were up against the tsar, and they wanted things to change. Because of that, a lot of South African Jews tended to be liberal in those days. That changed eventually to some extent but remains true."

Guided by their experiences, South African Jews became prominent leaders in equality movements and social-justice initiatives within the country. Meanwhile, nearly all of those who stayed behind in Lithuania were trampled underfoot by the invasion of Lithuania during World War II, which busted in chaff over 90 percent of Lithuania's prewar Jewish community of 220,000. The Litvaks advanced in South African society, eventually taking on lead roles in the anti-apartheid movement. Nat Levy, an attorney who also moved to Houston in the late 1970s, represented a number of civil-rights activists in South African courts in the 1960s, including Nelson Mandela. He and the others spoke of the eventual toll that apartheid, as well as the prospects of violence and South Africa's border war with Angola, took on the community, prompting many to move away.

"There was the political situation, one part of why the immigrants from South Africa left—and this is generalizing—is that they thought the blacks were going to take over, and it was going to be dangerous, and they didn't want their kids to go to the army to fight against them," Levy said. "And another part of the Jewish community left because they thought apartheid wouldn't change, and they thought that it should. There were many different reasons for leaving."

Like many American cities, Houston became a destination for this influx of South Africans, both Jewish and non-Jewish alike. How Houston became a hub for South African émigrés in the late 1970s as well as a settling point for many from the Northeast had largely to do with the economic success the city was enjoying. To serve its booming population and to staff its growing medical center, the city actively recruited doctors from South Africa and elsewhere to relocate to Houston, guaranteeing them salaries and easing their transitions into medical professions by accepting their South African medical degrees.

"They basically guaranteed you were going to make a living. The point of matter from a medical point of view, it was open," Nowitz said. "You could get a license and you could start practicing right away. Houston was great, the oil boom was on. Very few have left to go back to South Africa or moved away to different places."

While the professional transition was easy for some, culminating in the realized dreams of being Jewish doctors, the social aspect of the transition to

Houston was less fluid. Like the Litvak Jews who had first clashed culturally with the original Anglo Jews in South Africa in the 1880s, the South African Jews clashed culturally with the Jews of Houston in the 1980s.

"We were immigrants, we didn't know how to find our feet. Quite honestly, I didn't find people to be very hospitable," one noted. "The reality is that they showed us their friendship—I hate to say it, but I'm going to say it—and then dropped us after we bought our houses through them. We were used, I think, by the community somewhat. We came from a very warm, close community, and it was a big adjustment."

When I ask if anyone minds if I scribble down some notes despite the Sabbath, the group immediately gave their blessing, before jokingly suggesting that I might want to ask my mother for permission instead. The remark reveals a hallmark of South African Jewry: While nearly 90 percent of South African Jews align with Orthodox Judaism, their affiliation, in large part, does not necessarily match their practice.

"It's purely by happenstance that our affiliation in South Africa was Orthodox," said Nowitz. "There were only two choices. You had the Orthodox, which were our parents and grandparents, and then they started a Reform movement only around about the 1940s in South Africa, and it didn't take off. And there was no Conservative movement, so there was no middle ground."

In Houston, which is not a city whose design or weather is conducive to walking, it's not uncommon for members of the Orthodox community who live beyond the eruv to drive to shul or elsewhere in Houston on Jewish holidays or the Sabbath. A nickname sometimes used for this dynamic in the South African community is the acronym NOOJ—Non Observant Orthodox Jews—which when said aloud has a slight aural timber of Afrikaans. This particular hybrid in some ways harks back to the initial practice of Litvak Jews who arrived in South Africa during the first wave of emigration from Lithuania. Many of the 40,000 Litvaks in this initial movement arrived with little money, the economy having been stymied the repressive tsarist regime.

"Our forefathers who came from Lithuania were intent on making a living," said Kavin. "They were very busy, and they didn't have the time or means to devote to erecting shuls and temples, etc. They tended to let the next generation do their own thing to an extent, so they were Orthodox in my day more by affiliation than by observance."

"Did Houston give us a chance? Yes," another said, before adding: "It took 20 years."

After a quick digression about whether these stories should be told aloud or not, the group went on to talk about others who had been lucky in meeting Americans who were open to them. Some also placed the intra-community friction partly at their own feet, admitting the crew could be cliquish.

"It's the commonality of experience," said Leora Nowitz. "People are people everywhere. But just like we did in South Africa, our kids adjusted. They became Americanized while the parents stuck together."

A few members of the Houston Jewish community who were not South African reinforced this idea when I spoke to them but ultimately cited the dynamic as something that went away with time. Since then, the South African community continues to grow, drawing still from the old country as its troubles persist. South African émigrés in Houston now boast many leadership positions within and beyond the Jewish purview, from heading the Jewish Federation and becoming presidents of Houston synagogues to being on the vanguard of medical development and integral parts of the arts community.

Perhaps the greatest proof of acculturation to life in Houston came in a mention of why the community had chosen to move there: "It seemed to be a better place than Dallas," Levy noted.

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JEWISH ACHIEVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Maurice Skikne

The Whites who came to settle in South Africa first arrived here about 300 years ago, and with them after some years, came adventurous Jews seeking their fortunes. However, with time the first Jewish Hawkers, or *smouses*, became the proper first pioneers or "Traders in the *Veld*." A number of these eventually set up their own trading stores, and thereby established some of the first small towns countrywide. Places such as De Aar, Theunissen, Trompsburg, and Middelburg spring to mind.

It was the greater immigration of Jews, which started with the Kimberley Diamond Rush in the 1880s, that brought among them men with the entrepreneurial spirit. This was followed by the discovery of gold, first in Pilgrim's Rest (in the Eastern Transvaal), and later on what was to become the Witwatersrand at the latter end of the 19th century. It was the latter event that made the Jews in the Eastern European countries, like Germany and later on the Lithuanians, realize that their destiny could mean they would manifest themselves at the southern tip of Africa. Not only was the attraction of Gold an influence, but these pioneers saw their relief from oppression and religious devotion suddenly becoming a freedom from the pressures of tyrannical reign in their former lands. It was then their opportunity to try other means of making good. Thus, it was the close of the 19th and start of the 20th centuries that witnessed the massive contribution made by these immigrant "Peoples of the Book" in this land of opportunity.

What is remarkable of these Jewish Pioneers was that in most cases, they had very poor education, yet were able to conceive [Yiddish: "*oistrachten*"] novel enterprises. This covered a vast conglomeration of factories, stores, professions, and other activities. The areas were clothing, furniture, glass, bicycles, hoseling, diamonds, hoteliering, farming, insurance, and so on. In most cases, these entrepreneurs started on the literal smell of an oil rag. How they were able to think out these types of business, given that they were mostly an uneducated class of people, is a remarkable achievement.

But think it out they did. It was exciting to me in writing this article to learn how these early pioneers thought out their enterprises. I would like to venture a guess that our backgrounds as followers of the Torah and our Judaic tribal philosophy, Jews have been blessed with this enterprising manner. Be that as it may, here follows some of enterprises these people got into and succeeded with. I am purposely not going to include here any reference to those Jews who became deeply involved in the mining industries as they have been pretty well-written about and discussed. These were part of the so-called Rand Lord Group.

Clothing: Most of the founders had had little or no experience in their chosen factories. In men's apparel, firms like Dugson Clothing, RexTrueform, Monatic Alba, Stirling, and Personality made amongst the best in sports jackets, trousers and suits. Using British cloth mostly, these companies quickly earned an international reputation exporting to the USA, UK, and even to European states. Their assembly and quality of materials set international standards.

Down in Natal, the Frame group made blankets as good as any in Europe. Thereby, they soon began to export. But suits and jackets were not solely made. Monatic Alba also manufactured a top line in shirts, and this was also enjoyed by other firms like Acme clothing from Germiston. Then, there were the small enterprises and my own late father-in-law [Mode de Paris] made ladies' "jeep" coats. Just after WWII, my own father saw and developed denim jeans. I would imagine that he was one of the pioneers in this field, which would soon sweep the world in popularity. So much so that in modern times, denims are worn as almost formal apparel!

Amazingly, and in addition to making clothing during the Great Depression, very many Afrikaner female seamstresses were employed by the Reef clothing factories. However, their employers have never to my knowledge ever been accorded a place of honour as contributors to keeping white and non-white populations alive by providing employment!

By the same token, ladies dress factories and both gender underclothes were also controlled via the Jews of the Reef. To crown it all, even the Garment Workers Union (GWU) was run and organized by a grand-uncle of mine called Henry Lee, who when he became too old, handed over the traces to one "Solly" Sachs. He was not only the secretary, but also a very active socialist (and father of Judge Albie Sachs).

Furniture: In both the fields of wood and steel furniture, Jews figured. One thinks of Hymie Back and Martin Berkman of seating fame. In wooden furniture in and around Doornfontein, numerous small factories sprang up and thrived. However, with time the pioneers aged and retired, but they never produced progeny who would step in and take over, such factories.

Hostellers: Because of the presence of horse drawn vehicles, at the turn of the 20th century, hostellers abounded. One of the most prominent was Gordon and Furman of Diagonal Street in the CBD of Johannesburg. There, one could purchase any riding apparel, as well as accessories.

Glass: The most famous is the Lubner family's "Plate Glass and Beveling" industry. Working hard, they built up an empire which not only supplied glazing for various buildings, but eventually also became famous for automotive glazing in addition.

Milling: This industry became the domain of Tiger Oats [Ernst Frankel] and Premier Milling [Tony Bloom and his uncle].

Bicycle Industry: Here, although Jews did not control manufacture, as wholesalers and distributors they supported Raleigh Industries located in Springs [now in India]. The prominent wholesalers became B. Slotar, Probike (J.H. Slotar), L.K. Hurwitz, and the Abrahams Brothers, whilst in bike racing Basil Cohen's Deale and Huth kept the fires burning.

Diamonds: Cutting and polishing became well-established in Johannesburg. The Cohen and Kagan families were involved here, whilst the Gutkin family are well known in the Diamond City complex. Brian Gutkin is a former King David High School Victory Park protégé, whom I taught!

Farms: The Potato King, Mielie King, Pig King (Theo Eliastam), Cattle "boss" Jankel Lurie and his Brother-in-Law "Bokkie" Nisselow were renowned as well. In ostrich feathers, the Jews of Oudtshoorn dominated the world markets for feather boas.

Motor Industry: Certainly the Johannesburg and Reef Retail motor vehicle sellers also were populated by Jews; firms like Rillstone, Lawsons, Levitts, Imperial [Abelkop], come to mind.

Then there were the Motorcycle distributors such as Rambler Motors (Berman Brothers, started in Brakpan) who distributed a very good small moped (the ITOM); Jacks Motors (Hertzikowitz) who imported Matchless, AJS, Norton, Jawa/CZ; Rex Evans (who was the Lambretta scooter distributor); and Criterion Motors [Aber] who became the main distributor for Mopeds (the DKW),

Pharmaceutical Manufacturers: Alexander Lipworths, Ingrams Pharmacy chains and manufacturers [Tannebaums], SA Druggists [Isaac Kay], Twins Products [Krok Brothers], SB Products [Egdes and another]. The concept of bulk buying for individual shops through a large wholesaler was spearheaded by DL Sakalovsky, just as in ordinary trading, the Spar group's concept came from the Stein brothers.

Retail Chain Stores: OK Bazaars [later became Shoprite/Checkers], Matus [groceries, became Spar], Greatermans [Publix], Ackermans, Pep Stores, Edgars [Sydney Press], Food Town [Cohen Bros].

Wholesalers: Elephant Trading [Levine], Mosenthals, Chipkins, Matus, Cohen Bros.

Finance Houses and Insurance: Liberty Life [Gordon], Sage Unit Trusts [Shill], African Life [Schlesinger's], Sage Life (Julian Schlesinger).

Entertainment: Schlesingers: SA Consolidated Theatres owned cinema chains, South African Broadcasting Company (started in circa 1928 in Commissioner Street, and then taken over by the Government).

Engineering: African Gate and Fence [Green family], Cape Gate [Mendel Kaplan], Sydmore Sieff Brothers], ISCOR [Sammy Marks]

Hotels: Tollmans Group, Carlton [Schlesinger], North Beach Durban Cumberland [Jacobson], Kerzner first Kosher Hotel, the famous M'Nora in Durban, then the Sun International chain. In Durban too, the Kahn brothers Sasha and George ran the K Hotels group of 12 hotels culminating in the Four Seasons. In Muizenberg almost all the hotels were Jewish owned. In fact, Jews owned or ran numerous hotels in almost all the small towns in the rural areas of South Africa. This possibly contributed to many Jewish travelling salesmen doing well in the country districts, especially before and after the World War II.

Concession Stores: These businesses were located on the mine properties, and were bought from the

Mineral Mining Office of the Government Mining Commissioner as erven, i.e. as a "concession". They usually consisted of a Drapery Store, an eating house [a "Kaffrita"], which was in essence a type of café cum butchery and trinket store. Here the Black miners could purchase extra rations and eat there, and while away their leisure time. There was usually a bicycle/record store attached as well. These stores were staffed by what were called "Griener" workers [in reality, destitute Jews, newly immigrated into South Africa, needing work desperately]. Be that as it may, it did give these men a start in this "*Goldene Medina*" [Yiddish: Golden Land]. Thereby they were able to start their own businesses, send for family, and even find a wife either locally or imported from their home *shtetl*, back in Lithuania or wherever.

Jews in the pioneering days did not become bankers as this was a kind of "club", effectively closed to Jews. It was only in later years, mostly after World War II, that via finance houses and the insurance industry, Jews began to make inroads into banking.

Altogether the progeny of these great pioneers, for the most part entered the "Big Five" professions, viz. medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, accountancy, and law. Such professions had been denied to their parents and forebears in Europe. Thus it was here, with the help of their pioneering parents and families, that the first generation born here were able to indulge themselves in a more leisurely means to living. As far this writer is concerned, we, the children of these Jewish adventurers, owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude both as parents and as provenders of our life styles!

Obituary

HAROLD PUPKEWITZ

(14 July 1915 – 27 April 2012)

This obituary was taken in part from the article published by the Jewish Board of Deputies on 4 May 2012, and in part from the Wikipedia article at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Pupkewitz. The material has been republished with permission.

Namibian Jewry and Southern African Jewry suffered a sad loss with the passing of Harold Pupkewitz in Windhoek on 27 April 2012. Harold was a business leader second to none, pioneering some of Namibia's most important industries, a giant in the philanthropic field, a leader within civil society and a stalwart member of the Namibian Jewish community. It is a measure of the tremendous stature he enjoyed that the Namibian President and Prime Minister were amongst those attending his funeral.

Space does not permit detailing Harold's many extraordinary accomplishments. Suffice it to say that, in the words of Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, who as spiritual leader to the African Jewish Congress (AJC) was closely associated with him, he epitomised the very best of Jewish citizenship, having devoted his life to contributing to his society, without this in any way diminishing his admirable commitment to building and maintaining Judaism, Jewish life and Zionism in his country. He was fully involved in Jewish communal affairs until the end and as the foremost representative of Namibian Jewry to the wider society, brought honour and credit to the Jewish people. With the establishment of the AJC in 1993 and his election as

one of its vice-presidents, his influence came to encompass Southern African Jewry as a whole.

Harold Pupkewitz was born in Vilna, Lithuania, on 14 July 1915. He moved to South West Africa in 1925 together with his mother Anna and his two brothers, Morris and Julius. After completing secondary school at Windhoek High School in 1932 he went to Cape Town for further studies. He graduated from University of Cape Town in 1935 with a Bachelor of Commerce and stayed to work in Cape Town for two more years. While on a holiday in Windhoek in 1937 he decided to join the management of the family business, which at that time had developed from an ox wagon manufacturing enterprise to that of a general dealer, selling household wares and groceries. Pupkewitz has thus managed the Pupkewitz group of companies for 75 years, from 1937 to 2012.

The Pupkewitz family business was founded by Harold's father Max in 1902 as an ox wagon building and repair enterprise. In 1904 at the onset of the Herero and Namaqua War he opened a shop in Okahandja, strategically situated between Windhoek and the coastal towns of Walvis Bay and Swakopmund. Max Pupkewitz travelled to Europe in 1912, was jailed for his support of the German colonialists, and only returned in 1920. By that time, railways had been constructed and the era of ox wagon transportation in South-West Africa was over. Max Pupkewitz opened a general dealer business in Windhoek in 1925, the year the rest of the family resettled here.

In July 1946, Harold Pupkewitz co-founded *M. Pupkewitz and Sons*. The portfolio at first mainly consisted of building material and farm supplies but was expanded in 1954 with the addition of a furniture shop and a motor car sale business

When Volvo discontinued their engagement in Southern Africa because of concerns about the apartheid system, Pupkewitz acquired the Toyota franchise in 1975. Later, Hino trucks and the Nissan franchise were added. In 2002 the car sales branch had grown to be the largest in Namibia. Apart from Windhoek, the Pupkewitz group has outlets in many other places in Namibia, among them Walvis Bay, Keetmanshoop, Grootfontein, Otjiwarongo, Gobabis, and Aranos. In 1981, Pupkewitz Holdings was founded as umbrella organisation for the different companies. In 2005

this group of companies, which is a well-known brand in Namibia, employed 848 people nationally.

Pupkewitz served on the boards of different companies and organisations for much of his life. Before Namibian independence he was member of the Foreign Exchange Liaison Committee (1948–1954), the Administrator-General's Advisory Council (1979–1990), president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industries of South-West Africa (1981/82), the Institute of Economic Affairs of South-West Africa, the South African Institute of International Affairs (1982–1990), and director of Namib Air and Namib Airlines (the predecessor of Air Namibia).

In Namibia, he served as director on the boards of NamPost (1992–2000), City Savings and Investment Bank (1994–2002), MTC Namibia (1996–2000), Telecom Namibia (1992–2007), chairman of NamPower (1996–2000), and president of the Namibia Employers' Federation (1998–2007). He is a member of the President's Economic Advisory Council since 1997.

Harold Pupkewitz married Ethel née Meyerovitz in 1952. They had two children. He was a workaholic until an advanced age, and in 2011, he still worked full-time six days a week as Executive Chairman of Pupkewitz Holdings.

Apart from his activities in the family business, Pupkewitz was farming on farm *Us* on the banks of Kuiseb River from 1946 to 1985. He was an active rugby player, horse rider, and horse trainer between 1942 and 1962 and has won several trophies.

Pupkewitz was a member of Windhoek's small Jewish community, the Windhoek Hebrew Congregation, and has attended its *shul* for almost its entire time of existence. He was the congregation's Honorary Vice President. He also served as Vice Chairman of the African Jewish Congress and actively fought anti-Semitism in the past.

Pupkewitz died in Windhoek on 27 April 2012 from a heart attack. He was buried in Windhoek.

JEWISH BUSINESSMEN IN NATAL

Stan Hart

We have written on previous occasions for the SA-SIG Newsletter [most recently in the October 2011 issue] about our interest in the Lithuanian *shtetl* of Plungyan. Our activities in the town, known in Lithuania as Plunge, have been varied, from leading a Levitt family group of 43 in 2001, to refurbishing the site of the Mass graves where 1800 Jews were murdered in July 1941, and to help in establishing a Tolerance Education Centre in the local Gymnasia, the Sauleis High School. Our establishing the Ronald Harwood Competition for works of the arts, takes us to Plunge nearly every year for the Prize-giving of the impressive work of Lithuanian children.

The histories of the first colonists reveal Jews as being the first traders with the Zulus at Port Natal. Men such as Nathaniel Isaacs and Benjamin Norden were colleagues of Francis Farewell, Fynn, and Ogle. Bergtheil and Norden were among the first to try to colonize Natal. The De Pass family brought capital and know-how from the Cape Colony to build the sugar industry.

Bergtheil was one of the first directors of the Colonial Bank, and he and Albert Coqui were promoters of the company which built the first railway line in South Africa from the town of Durban to the Point where the harbour was located.

In 1884, William Adler became the first Chairman of the Natal Chamber of Commerce, where he had previously served two terms as Director.

The Durban Chamber of Commerce had the following Jewish Presidents:

- 1895 – Max Pincus
- 1912 – Karl Gundelfinger
- 1963 – Raoul Goldman
- 1971 – R. Levitt
- 1973 – Louis Gower
- 1978 – Alec Rogoff

The Natal Chamber of Industries had two Jewish Presidents, viz. Karl Gundelfinger in 1908, and Hector Hart in 1948.

Hector Hart became President of the SA Federated Chamber of Industries and was also Honorary Life President of the Natal Chamber.

The firm Hart Limited was founded in 1897 and managed by the sons and grandsons of the founder until 1963 when it was sold to large corporate. The company introduced acetylene mining lamps into South Africa, then manufactured plastic and aluminium kitchenware.

Phillip Frame was also an honorary Life President of the Natal Chamber of Industries and was a member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council. Frame had developed a range of weaving companies which produced several kinds of cloth and blankets.

Beacon Sweets, South Africa's largest confectionery manufacturer, was started by Hyman Zulman who moved from Vryheid to start a small business which grew into a huge operation under the control of Arnold Zulman.

Len Tannenbaum and his brother started a pharmaceutical manufacturer and retailer, which ultimately became Adcock-Ingram.

SA Clothing Manufacturers, started by Abe Dubin, became a prominent firm in the textile field. Others in that industry were Charles Kluk, Frank Falowitz and Mr S. Berman.

Non-Ferrous Metals Works was started by Eugen Lazarus as a scrap metal business and was transformed by his sons Bernhard and Gunter Lazarus into refiners of non-ferrous metals, and is currently managed by Eugen's grandsons, Sidney and Ronald.

The Perling and the Strous families separately were instrumental in combining family butcheries into large meat packaging industries which provided meat for supermarkets. The companies were respectively Orchid and Wholesome.

Moshal Gevisser Ltd began as a bottle exchange and Messrs Sol Moshal, I. Gevisser and M. Gevisser, built it into one of South Africa's leading wholesale merchants. Later, together with Colin Sternberg, the firm established Acme Timber Industries which became a big player in the timber milling industry.

John Moshal started Conlog, an electronics manufacturer, which was subsequently sold to a large corporate.

David Aronowsky established a large textile manufacturing concern in Hammarsdale.

Edgar Baden Isaacs and Israel Geshen started a real estate agency which became a major concern.

Martin Sternberg built shipping and forwarding firm into a business specializing in the container traffic.

Aaron Beare built a huge retail business, starting with furniture, and then became a philanthropist.

Around the beginning of the 20th century, Moritz and Zander Plen started a fertiliser factory in Sarnia, Pinetown, and introduced such innovations as a crop spraying Lysander aircraft and plastic bags to hold the fertiliser. Their business was taken over by their respective sons, Leon and Harry, and was later sold to a large fertiliser conglomerate.

NEW ITEMS OF INTEREST ON THE INTERNET

Roy Ogus

The section describes some interesting new resources relating to Southern African genealogical research that are available on-line.

Shemot Special Issue on South Africa

The entire August 2012 issue of *Shemot*, the journal of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain for August 2012 is devoted to South Africa. The issue's main article is entitled *Researching SA Jewish Genealogy*, and there are many other articles covering a wide variety of topics. The issue can be found on the Articles & Commentaries page on the SA-SIG web site at:

http://www.jewishgen.org/safrica/index-a&c.htm#SHEMOT

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FamilySearch database record collections for Southern Africa

FamilySearch has added new searchable and browsable collections for South Africa and Zimbabwe to its online database. FamilySearch is a nonprofit, volunteer-driven organization sponsored by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. All records in their database are available free of charge from the search page at: *www.familysearch.org.*

To navigate directly to the South African collections, click on "Africa" in the section "Browse by Location" on the home page, and then select "South Africa" or "Zimbabwe" in the "Place" section.

The following collections of records are currently available:

Title	No. of Records	Searchable or browsable
South Africa		
Cape Province, Civil Deaths, 1895-1972	2,216,270	Browsable
Church of the Province of South Africa, Parish Registers, 1850-2004	355,157	Browsable
Dutch Reformed Church Records, 1690-2007	412,266	Browsable
Dutch Reformed Church Registers, 1660-1970	220,122	Searchable
Free State Dutch Reformed Church Records, 1848-1956	22,920	Searchable
Methodist Parish Registers, 1822-1996	18,726	Browsable
Orange Free State, Estate Files, 1951-2006	15,879	Searchable
Reformed Church Records, 1856-1988	40,337	Browsable
Western Cape, Various Records	204,841	Browsable
Zimbabwe		
Death Registers, 1890-1977 Index to Death Registers, 1892-1977	74,045	Browsable
Death notices, 1904-1976	328,546	Browsable

Note that the record group titled "Western Cape" also contains records from towns in the Eastern and Northern Cape. The following towns are included in this collection: Albany, Albertinia, Aliwal North, Athlone, Barkley East, Beaufort West, Bellville, Bonnievale, Burgersdorp, Caledon, Calitzdorp, Cape Town, Carnarvon, Cathcart, Clanwilliam,

Colesberg, Cradock, De Aar, Douglas, East London, Elliot, George, Goodwood, Graaff-Reinet, Grabouw, Griekwastad, Groblershoop, Hanover, Hartswater, Heidelberg, Hermanus, Hofmeyr, Hopefield, Hopetown, Humansdorp, Kakamas, Keimoes, Kimberley, Knysna, Kuilsrivier, Kuruman, Laaiplek, Mafeking, Malmesbury, Montagu, Moorreesburg, Mossel Bay, Noupoort, Olifantshoek, Oudtshoorn, Paarl, Philipstown, Piketberg, Port Elizabeth, Port Nolloth, Porterville, Postmasburg, Prieska, Richmond, Riversdal, Seymour, Simonstown, Somerset West, Springbok, Stellenbosch, Steynsburg, Strand, Stutterheim, Swellendam, Tarkastad, Tulbagh, Uitenhage, Uniondale, Upington, Van Rhynsdorp, Various towns, Vredendal, Vryburg, Warrenton, Wellington, Wolseley, Worcester, and Wynberg.

As the browsable collections become indexed, the web page will be updated to provide the appropriate search form for the records.

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South African Judicial Integrated Case Management System

The South African Judicial system has created an Integrated Case Management System (ICMS) web portal at:

https://icmsweb.justice.gov.za/mastersinformation

The system contains an index to trusts, liquidations, curators, and deceased people as of 2000. A user needs to register to use the databases.

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Major updates to the RootsBank database

Web site: *http://www.tinyurl.com/rootsbank*

Key updates include:

- Germiston Marriage Register
- Johannesburg: Braamfontein Cemetery, 4284 entries
- Johannesburg: Brixton Cemetery, 7954 entries
- Johannesburg Westpark Cemetery, 42,506 entries
- Queenstown Cemetery 182 entries

Cape Town has an additional searchable database for city burials at: *http://www.jewishcemetery.co.za.*

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Avotaynu Back Issues

You now can have access to all articles about South African research – more than 20 – that have appeared in past issues of *Avotaynu, the Journal of Jewish Genealogy*. All back issues of *Avotaynu* from 1985-2011 – 105 issues, 27 years, more than 7,000 pages – are now available on the Internet as a fee-based service.

Articles about South African research are listed at:

http://www.avotaynu.com/subindex/indexs.htm

These are in addition to the nearly 100 articles about the Russian Empire and USSR. Listing for all other countries and topics can be found at:

http://www.avotaynu.com/indexsum.htm

The system uses the powerful Google search engine to search the back issues.

Selecting a particular result brings up a PDF file that contains the search request. Using the browser's search ability identifies the specific page that contains the keywords. The relevant article can then be read and/or printed.

Additional information is available at:

http://www.avotaynu.com/journal.htm

EDITOR'S MUSINGS

Colin Plen

Names again

When my mother in law came to South Africa before World War II, she and her mother knew no English. As the train bore them along the way to their destination they saw signs advertising Lion Beer and they concluded that Mr Lion Beer must be a very rich man to own so much land.

By the same token, whenever I see a container on the highway and printed on the side are the words "Max Gross," I wonder if Mr Max Gross is rich as he owns so many containers! Of course, we all know that Max Gross means the largest mass that can be carried in the container, but who is there to translate?

In Durban, more so than in other towns, it seems, people have opted to buy personalised number plates for their vehicles. I have seen a few cross pollinations. Like a car with ALIYAH for a person who does not appear to be Jewish. Today I saw ES. Of course, if that was a Jewish car, it would have read ESS ESS.

We went to buy avocadoes and the avocadoes were sold in cartons marked Mehadren. Now you may be aware that food made according to Mehadren *kashrut* is much more kosher than ordinary kosher. But growing avocadoes?? It turns out that this Mehadren is a foreign, i.e. not ordinary South African, and not Jewish. Maybe Urdu? Or Arabic?

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Potash the Surname

What is the origin of the surname Potash? Some people believe that the original owner worked with the chemical which is used in soap making and the manufacture of glass. Others believe that the surname comes from a town's name. I asked Martha Lev-Zion and she replied:

> The little settlement of Potashi is located at the southern end of an area called "Abrene" that was annexed by the Soviets in June of 1940. It is located by the Ritupe River. It is due north of Grebneva and of Ludza and NE of Karsava. Less than 100 people live in Potashi.

The forests of Russia were, and still are, a major source of Potash and Jews were probably involved in the extraction of the material – hence the name.

This brought about another discussion: since when are people named after chemicals?

What about Kupfer, as in Kupferburger, and Kupferstein, meaning copper, and Galena meaning Lead? The commonest metal surnames relate to Gold, Silver and Iron (Eisen).

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Westpark cemetery gravestone

This person must be quite famous – he even had a large city named after him!!

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Israel Zangwill

Have you ever read anything by Zangwill? Zangwill was an English author born in London of Russian parents. I think his work is very funny. I

have been known to raucously awaken my wife at midnight to read her a particularly funny bit.

My mother, of blessed memory, was a Cockney by birth and to her, Zangwill was a hero. My mother-in-law is German by birth and education, and she read the translations of Zangwill, so she thinks his name is Tzankveel. But she does not know that Zangwill/Tzankveel is a humorous author because in Germany, the teachers did not tell their students that he wrote humorously or that he should be read humorously.

That reminds me that I lent my copy of Spud to a lady who worked with me at Momentum while I was there. One story in Spud concerns his arrival at Michaelhouse School (a very upmarket school), where he had won an education scholarship, even though he came from a poor family. They arrive in time for a tea laid out on the lawns and they are in their old crock Vauxhall amid all the Rolls Royces. Then they go for tea, and after a while something makes Spud's mom trip, and as she falls, all the sausage rolls that she stole and put into her handbag fall out onto the lawn.

So anyway, after Nadia (the woman at Momentum) had read Spud I asked her if she enjoyed the comic scenes in the book and she looked at me and said, "Comical? You didn't tell me the book was funny? I didn't know I had to laugh!"

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Obituary: Boris Senior

Thank you to all the readers who sent on to me the information regarding the passing of Dr Boris Senior in the USA. Dr Senior was South African-born and became a doctor. He specialised in Endocrinology in Boston. We extend our sympathies to his family.

Many South Africans confused him with the other Boris Senior who was a fighter pilot in the RAF and later was one of the founders of the Israeli Air Force. He died in 2004 and Dr Senior died in 2012. They were in fact cousins.

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Beware of the Colin!

I don't know how to "Photoshop" images, but when I do, I am going to put my photograph in place of the dog's face on this sign which I saw in Jerusalem in April, and put a new sign up outside our house.

For those who do not know, my Hebrew name is Calev (which also means "dog" in Hebrew), and the sign states "Caution – Dog".
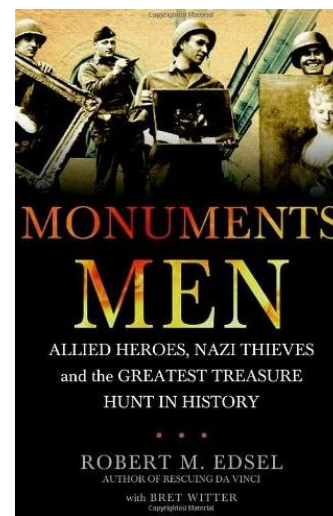

Book Report

THE MONUMENTS MEN: ALLIED HEROES, NAZI THIEVES AND THE GREATEST TREASURE HUNT IN HISTORY

by Robert M. Edsel

Colin Plen

I have just finished reading this book and heartily recommend it.

Early in the Second World War it became known to people in the West that amongst the other crimes being committed by the Germans was that they were

stealing artworks and sending them back to Germany. Hitler himself had made it known that he wanted a museum to himself and wanted the best of art from Europe to be collected for the museum. With this example, Bormann, Goebbels, and subsequently most of the other leaders, began collecting art. The complete collections of the Rothschilds, David-Weill, and Paul Rosenberg, as three examples of huge magnificent and very valuable collections, were taken over in terms of the German laws, and shipped to Germany.

Fortunately for the French, the curators of the Louvre and other galleries were able to convince the conquerors that while there was the chance of fighting taking place in France, their artworks should be kept in bombproof cellars in France, and this was to a large extent, done. But the private collections, including jewellery, cutlery and other silverware, documents and other valuable and invaluable items were carried away by trains specially commissioned by the German leaders. One train was so heavily laden that it was kept behind in a goods yard, waiting for clear traffic, while most other trainloads were given preference in the system, taking precedence over troop carriers or ammunition.

A sub-curator in the Louvre was asked by the Resistance to work with the Germans, which she did, and she helped them to catalogue all the artwork both stored away in the Louvre's bombproof shelter, as well as much of the material that was sent to Germany. Later this information from her helped to find much of the missing works.

Roosevelt's advisors got him to set up the preparations for a force which would follow up confiscated goods after the War, and by 1943, a small 7-man force was in fact in operation, learning the aspects of care for damaged art, and learning about valuable art that had already been reported stolen.

A Michaelangelo statue, the Bruges Madonna had been removed from a cathedral in Bruges in Belgium. The Bayeux Tapestry was taken to Germany.

As the Americans advanced against the Germans, the Monuments Men, a group of initially only 7 men, without rank or equipment, followed up clues, questioned captured enemy troops, and gradually found caches of much of the treasure. In a town

called Merkers, inside a salt mine, huge cellars were found packed with artwork. A castle in Bavaria had so much art in it that it took 6 weeks to empty it. Two of the Monuments men were killed in fighting, so close were they to the Front.

Of course once much of the material had been brought to light there was a difficulty in returning it to its owners as so many had been murdered.

I read this book initially as a history book but it actually is so exciting that there were several nights when I could not put it down, and read until midnight. If you can get, read it, it is worth the while.

Book Review

JEWISH MEMORIES OF MANDELA

David Saks, Editor

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) and the Umoja Foundation have published the book *Jewish Memories of Mandela*, edited by David Saks. This is a magnificently illustrated 272-page coffee table book that chronicles the impact and involvement of a remarkable array of South African Jewish individuals - lawyers and laymen, communists and communal leaders, businessmen and bankers, physicians and philanthropists, rabbis and rabble-rousers - in the life and career of Nelson Mandela, and by extension, in building a democratic South Africa.

Further information about the book can be found at the following links:

Book details:

  http://www.myshtetl.co.za/files/JEWISH%20MEM ORIES%20OF%20MANDELA%20-%20Book%20info.pdf

Video:

  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgDzpUrkq1o

SAJBD page:

  http://www.jewishsa.co.za/category/media/books/j ewish-memories-of-mandela/

To obtain further information or to find out how to purchase the book, please contact Shirley Beagle at *beagle@beyachad.co.za* .

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ochberg's Orphans

Greetings from Western Australia, and thank you for sending me the March 2012 SA-SIG Newsletter.

You can also find the postcard you have on page 16 of the [March 2012] Newsletter on pages 202 and 203 of *The Ochberg Orphans and the horrors from whence they came,* a 640 page book which I compiled and published in 2011. The 1920 post card was in fact an appeal to the Jewish Community and they responded generously. Isaac Ochberg, who was the President of the Cape Jewish Orphanage (later called Oranjia), sits in the middle of the children and he, as the representative of the SA Jewish community and financed by them left Cape Town on 18th March 1921 for the Pale of Settlement and returned to Cape Town on 21st September 1921 with 181 Orphans, half of whom were placed in the care of Oranjia and half in the care of Arcadia, the South African Jewish Orphanage in Johannesburg.

There are an estimated 3,000 descendants of the so called Ochberg Orphans now worldwide and a ceremony was held in July last year in Israel and a beautiful park at Ramat Menashe was dedicated (by the JNF) to Isaac Ochberg and the 181 children he rescued. In the park, there is a monument to him and plaques for the 181 children, and no doubt in time this will become not only a place of pilgrimage to the descendants, but also a popular tourist attraction.

The Ochberg Orphan books are for sale with all proceeds going to Arcadia and Oranjia and I will be happy to send you a complimentary copy for the library of your organisations.

David Sandler
sedsand@iinet.net.au

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Yacovas Bunka, Plunge

Last night we received the following e-mail from Eugenijus Bunka, the son of the famous father.

"After three years of discussion, today the Plunge District Council awarded to Yacovas Bunka the title Honorary Citizen of the city. I think that it is not only an evaluation of his life and his work, but a symbolic sign of memory of the former Jewish Community here."

The award will be made at a ceremony in Plunge in June

Congratulations may be sent by e-mail to *eugenijusbunka@gmail.com*, and Eugenijus will pass on the messages to his father.

Abel and Glenda Levitt
Israel

[*Editor's Note: See the article about Yacovas Bunka in the March 2012 SA-SIG Newsletter.*]

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Sam Helfer

I'm a member of the SA-SIG. My name is Harold Mark Helfer, and I use Mark as my given name.

My grandfather was Sam Helfer *aka* Sachne Bahelfer, who immigrated to Johannesburg, South Africa. His brother, David Bahelfer, immigrated to Johannesburg from Lithuania in the early 1900's. He became a violinist in the Symphony orchestra there. He died in 1947. I have a picture of his tombstone in Johannesburg. I'm interested in obtaining any personal information anyone might have on him. As far as I know, he had no family.

Mark Helfer
hmhelfer@comcast.net

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East London Names

For quite a while now I have been trying to obtain some biographical details and photographs of the individuals who are commemorated on the war memorials here in East London. Within the new Synagogue is a memorial to:

- Morris Hyman Myers
  16th July 1916 (Delville Wood)

- Frederick Hyam Posener
  20th July 1940 (Battle of Britain pilot)

- Harry Toyk, 4 April 1942

- Maurice Isenberg, 1 August 1943

- Solomon Radomsky, 12 December 1941

Not included is Harold Liebowitz who was killed in action in Israel during the Six Day War.

I have some details of F. H. Posener and a photo of him. I now need to find the relatives of the other honoured chaps so as to also collect their photographs etc. I would be grateful to learn if perhaps you may have something in your archives or be able to point me in the right direction.

Your help will be much appreciated.

Alan Harris
Kwelera, South Africa

[Editor's Note: Please contact me at colplen@iafrica.com if you have any information for Alan.]

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Kwekwe or Que Que

Just to let everyone know that I have created a KehilaLinks page for the town of Que Que [Zimbabwe].

http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Kwekwe/

It is my first attempt at a page like this and it is very much a work in progress. I still have lots more information to add. If anyone has any photos or stories to share that I can put on the page, this would be most appreciated. Even general photos of Que Que would be welcome as they seem to be hard to find.

Ed Goldberg
rhodesia@gmail.com

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Harold Rosofsky – Pilot

On behalf of AJEX, the Association of Jewish ex-Servicemen and Women, I'm looking for information about Harold Rosofsky, a pilot who was the first South African killed in World War II. There is a press report in the JTA.

  Rank: Pilot Officer
  Service no: 40022
  Date of Death: 08/09/1939

  Regiment/Service: Royal Air Force 9 Sqdn.
  Grave Reference: Row A. Grave 4.
  Cemetery: Honington (All Saints) Churchyard, Suffolk

He is buried with a cross and AJEX is investigating his Jewish origins.

Saul Issroff
London
saul65@gmail.com

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Mike Getz retiring from the Latvia SIG

The Treasurer of the Latvia SIG, Mike Getz is retiring. He has held the position since he started the SIG many years ago. Mike has worked indefatigably to get Latvia SIG going. He has always been cheerful and helpful to all who have had the pleasure of working with him. I for one salute him as the founder of Latvia SIG, and one who is responsible for any success we have achieved as a group.

I wish him good health and many happy years with his family. He has earned our respect and thanks.

Arlene Beare
UK
A Past President of Latvia SIG

[Editor's Note: Mike will continue in the role of Treasurer of the SA-SIG for the time being, but he is planning to retire from this position as well in the near future. If anyone is interested in taking over the role of SA-SIG Treasurer, please contact Roy Ogus, at r_ogus@hotmail.com .]

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Bloemfontein Old Cemetery

Thank you – I enjoyed reading your latest Newsletter and will re-read!!

Did you know tombstones in the Bloemfontein Old Cemetery were destroyed, and Rabbi Silberhaft is helping Leah Chabas and (I think it is) Solly Kroll repair same?

Selma Jackson
Australia

SURNAMES APPEARING IN THIS NEWSLETTER

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The numbers in brackets refer to the page numbers where the surname appears:

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