

HISTORY-----BACKGROUND

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF  
ETTA GITTELMAN KARSON

MEMORIES OF MY LIFE –By Etta Gittelman Karson  
For My Children, Grandchildren, Grandchildren by marriage, Greatgrandchildren,  
and other interested relatives

On April 21, 1999, Syd and I came up from Florida to stay with our children, Dolores and Martin Meyerson to celebrate the Bat Mitzvah event of their granddaughter and our great-granddaughter, Alison Rebecca Shilling. Alison is the daughter of our granddaughter Wendy and Larry Shilling.

It was a delightful week-end. Alison was a pride and joy to all. She was an excellent Bat-Mitzvah, conducting herself with maturity and grace. She was just beautiful. An elegant party followed, given by our hosts, Wendy and Larry Shilling, complete to the last detail. Syd and I were overwhelmed with the honors and respect. We enjoyed the Ultimate in "Nachas". We are truly blessed.

May 14, 1999. We're back again, for Bed&Board with our children, Dolores and Martin. This time we'll be staying for a month to attend three "Simchas". The Bat- Mitzvah of Samantha Weisman, daughter of Lenny and Lynn Weisman, and granddaughter of my late sister and brother- in law Anne and Jack Weisman.

On May 27, we will look forward to the celebration of the marriage of our grandson, David Karson to Rebecca Flaste. David is the son of Barry Karson and the late Myra Karson. Rebecca is the daughter of Dale and Richard Flaste.

On June 12, we hope to attend the wedding of Susan Schwartz, daughter of Myra Schwartz and the late Marvin Schwartz. Susan is the granddaughter of my late sister and brother-in law Shirley and Sol Schwartz.

We were so pleased to share Samantha's Bat Mitzvah with our niece, Elaine, who came in from Los Angeles, along with her family and extended family. Samantha was a pride and joy as she performed, at a very interesting service. We enjoyed the lavish party, given by our hosts Lenny and Lynn Weisman. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to visit with nieces, nephews, great-nieces and relatives.

At Samantha's party, Laurie Weisman, the daughter of Lenny Weisman, approached me and asked about our family roots. Our nephew, Elliott Wilk was questioning me as to information at the time of the Holocaust. Since I had been thinking for some time to relate the incidents and information for my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren regarding the background of my parents and grandparents, I lost no time and began writing the knowledge stored in my memory.

David and Rebecca were married at the palm house at Brooklyn Botanic Gardens on May 27 a picture perfect day. The bride was elegant in her billowing gown, attended by her lovely bridesmaids and flower girl Jennifer, our adorable and delightful great-granddaughter.

David, a very handsome groom and Rebecca, a stunning bride, were married in the beautiful Botanic Gardens. Judge Elliot Wilk, a member of our family officiated, offering an informal and personal touch to the ceremony. Cocktail hour took place in the gardens, followed by dinner and dancing in the magnificent domed atrium. Syd and I were delighted to be part of the bridal party, and the joy and thrill as we walked down the aisle is indescribable. "Our cup runneth over".

As the only so called family "historian", I'll go back in time and impart the knowledge in my memory. The following information is based on facts that I acquired during my childhood from my mother and father, as well as during the 20 years after marriage, when we lived in the house my parents owned at 385 E. 95th Street in Brooklyn N.Y.

I'll begin with my father, David Gittelman. He was born during the month of August, 1877. He was the first born son of Chantsha and Moische Baer Gittelman and was called "Dovid". Moische Baer was previously married. After 10 years of childless marriage, the marriage was automatically annulled.

Dovid was born in a small village called "Kozine" in the Ukraine in Russia. The second son was "Fyvish (Philip), then Yankel, Freidle, Etsel, Chunnah (Charlie) and Dena. Twins were born, but did not survive. Incidentally, Moische's first wife also remarried and bore children.

When Dovid was 3 years old, his father carried him on his shoulders each morning, to attend services at the "Shull". It was customary for male children very early on, to be taught the "Aleph Base" (Alphabet) and learn the Hebrew prayers. He attended "Chader" (Hebrew School) and that was the extent of education for Jewish Children in Russia, at that time. However, Dovid did speak, read and write the Russian language, which was probably self taught. Female children were not required to attend "Chadar".

As a young man Dovid served as a soldier in the Russian Army. After completing his service he worked with his father, traveling by horse and wagon to outlying countryside selling products, barley, grains, sugar and flour. One day as he was about to visit his girlfriend, he overheard her mother tell her daughter that Dovid was a poor man and she deserved better. He left and never returned.

Now, about my mother Vellia Wuhrer. She was the second daughter of Yossel and Surah Whurer. The eldest daughter was Raisal, then D'vorah and the youngest daughter was Inda. They lived in a town called Kremenitz, in Russia.

[**Project Coordinator's Note:** The family name was also spelled Vorer, Vurer, Vorir. The name of Velia's father was Duvid, not Yossel. The name of Velia's mother was Sore Ester Korenfeld. Their daughters were Reyzl, Velye, Dvore, and Inda (also known as Rose, Velia, Dora and Anne. The Vurer family originated in Yampol, a town near Kremenets, but they moved to Kremenets where their four daughters were born. ... RDDoctor]

Their father, Yossel died when he was 37 years old. He was marooned during a severe snow storm and was unable to reach home. He slept in a doorway all night and suffered frost bite. He became ill and never recovered. They were quite poor. Their house was tilted on its side, but they had wooden floors and dainty starched curtains on the windows. They were helped by an Aunt and Uncle, who owned a thriving wholesale business, selling grains, sugar and flower.

In those days in Eastern Europe there was class distinction. Although they were poor, my mother and her sisters were considered to have status and class. On Saturday afternoons, they watched from their window, the parade of young boys and girls of the working class, stroll hand in hand, laughing and enjoying a day away from work. My mother and her sisters were not permitted to be in mixed company without a chaperon.

Surah Wuhrer the mother was ill and bedridden, ailing from arthritis and rheumatism. She died at the age of 48. Sisters Raisal and Dvorah sailed to America. Vellia and Inda moved in with their Aunt and Uncle. Vellia was a "lady in waiting", attending to the Aunt's needs. Afternoons when the uncle rested, Vellia attended the store. Inda was about 15 years old at the time and Vellia was about 26 years old and of marriageable age. Marriage was arranged by a "Shatchan"(Marriage Broker).

Inda sailed to America when she was about 19 years old.. She lived with her sister Dvorah, who was married to Abe Mandel. They had a son and daughter, Harry and Rose Mandel and a niece, Bea Doctor living with them. Bea was the daughter of Raisal and Abraham Doctor. When Bea was 3 months old, her mother Raisal died. Apparently, something she swallowed lodged in her throat, causing a scratch which eventually became infected.

Inda had a suitor who courted her. She discouraged him. She was embarrassed to write to the prestigious Aunt and Uncle in Kremenitz that she considered marrying a tailor. She suffered remorse and always appeared ill. I remember as a child, visiting and Inda always had a vinegar dipped towel draped around her head. She remained unhappy and alone until she married for the first time, when she was 55 years old. She also married a second time, when she was well into her 60's. Since she was childless, between Anne Weisman and myself, we looked after her. When Anne Weisman became ill, Inda became my responsibility. She died when she was 89 years old. She fell, fractured her hip, told me she couldn't endure the pain of the surgery.

To continue with the story of Dovid. At the suggestion of the matchmaker, Dovid joined his father to purchase wares at the wholesale grain store. My mother was in attendance. Vellia observes as Dovid enters the establishment he kisses the mazzuzah. This indicates a very pious man. However, as he's about to leave and say good-bye, he shakes her hand. This is hardly customary, for a pious man to touch a strange woman.

Nevertheless, arrangements were made for the couple to become engaged. This entailed signing a contract (T'Noim). This was a legal document, not too easily broken. It was considered binding. The bride's family provided the dowry. In this case the dowry (Nodin) was 250 rubles, the equivalent of \$125.00.

Sometime passed and the couple were married. They believed, "you learned to love each other after the wedding." The wedding was a big event, with festivities lasting for days. A procession walked down the streets, accompanied by "klezmer", musicians), relatives and friends, leading the bride and groom to the "Shul" to take their vows under the "Chupah", Canopy

After their marriage in 1905, Dovid and Vellia, moved to Kozine, a small farm town in Russia, to live with the Gittelman Clan. Vellia describes the house, with earthen floors, chickens and animals walking in and out. Three younger sisters and two and two or three brothers as well as parents to learn to live with.

One day as they strolled through a market place, which merchants set up once a month, similar to a "flea market," Vellia asked Dovid if she may have 10 "groshen," the equivalent of 10 cents. When Dovid asked why she needed 10 cents, she was indignant that he dare ask! (Women's Rights) She never could understand the insensitivity of the male. She never forgot this incident and repeated it to me time and again.

One year passed. On December 10, 1906, Sarah (Shirley) was born. On May 21, 1908, Briandle (Rebecca, Bea) was born. Russia and China were at war. To avoid conscription Dovid was smuggled out of town in a wagon filled with hay and set sail to America.

When Dovid arrived in America, Vellia's sister Raise] was married to Abraham Doctor. They lived on Rivington Street on the east side of New York. This street was a market place with stores and pushcarts. Abraham sold fruits and vegetables from his pushcart. Dovid stayed with them for a short time helping Abraham. Dovid decided this was not for him.

Dovid met a "landsman", a friend, who suggested Dovid join him at his shop and learn to construct men's shirts, which he did. Dovid attended night school to learn the English language and became a citizen.

After the war, David returned to his family in Russia. He had a trial for leaving Russia illegally, defended himself, and was vindicated.. He was unable to readjust to life in Russia and returned to America. He worked hard, saved money and sent for his family. With the help of family and friends, he set up a completely furnished apartment on Pitkin Avenue, in Brooklyn. Shirley was about six years old and Bea was about two and a half years old, when they arrived.

One year later June 21, 1911, Anna was born. Everyone was betting a "boy". David was disappointed. Vellia (Fannie) said, "come look at the child. It's not her fault. We both went shopping together." She was a beautiful baby and later became David's favorite daughter.

I was born on April 7, 1914, on Glenmore Avenue, Brooklyn. The birth of course, took place in the home. When the doctor was about to approach my father with the news, my father said, "I know, it's a girl." Four daughters; he was resigned.

Eventually, my father went into business, contracting men's and boy's shirts. His partner, Willie Stein, who was barely able to sign his name, owned property in Manhattan. Mr. Stein was known as the "Outside" man. He dealt with the manufacturers, Manhattan Shirt Co., Arrow Shirt Co., etc. My father was the "inside man", overseeing the employees in the factory, keeping records and books. I remember, during the early years of the I.R.S., an agent called upon my father to check on his business operation. My father produced a ledger which appeared to confuse the agent. The agent left and never bothered my father again.

My father purchased a three family, attached frame house on Hinsdale Street, in the East New York section of Brooklyn. I was about three years old. His brother Fayvish (Philip) was his partner. His wife was Bena. My mother wasn't too happy, having experienced Bena as difficult to get along with. Our cousins, Fannie, Joseph, Frieda and Morris, were within our age range and we got along. Bena however, remained difficult. She screamed at her children, threw things at us and chased us when we played in the back yard. Uncle Fayvish was a gentle man and was unable to control his wife.

Life was simple. Children attended school. Played baseball and punchball on the streetways. Traffic was minimal. A horse and wagon came by every now and then. We played stoopball, jacks, hopscotch and jumped rope, johnny on the pony, etc.

One day, my mother had to visit her sick sister. Anne was in charge of turning the light off on the pot roast my mother left cooking. We were engrossed in our games out of doors and by the time Anne remembered, the dinner burned. When my mother returned, she found us both in tears. She was sweet and gentle. Not to worry, she consoled us, the family will eat salmon salad and sour cream for dinner..

When I was four, a polio epidemic was rampant in New York. My father arranged for the family to leave the city for the summer months. We were driven by "Hack" to the Delaware & Lackawanna Railroad in Hoboken, N.J. I remember, what seemed to be an endless train ride to Mountindale, Sullivan County, in the Catskill mountains, in New York. Mr. Pomerantz, the farmer, was waiting for us and drove us to his rooming house, in his horse and buggy with a surrey on the top. We traveled through beautiful acres of country, with delicious smelling air. This too, seemed to take hours.

I loved being in the country. I recall picking wild blue berries in the woods and having them for lunch with sour cream. My mother baked blueberry pies, in the kitchen she shared with other women. It was called "Koch-A-Lain", (do your own cooking.) When families left to return to the city, the people remaining cheered them on by clanging their pots and pans, as they said goodbye, probably never to see them again.

We also enjoyed days at the beach during the summer months. We traveled by train and open air trolley car to Coney Island. Our mother packed a lunch, fried hamburgers, fresh rolls, sour pickles, and we ate with relish. I'm still salivating at the memory. The food was delicious, the beach refreshing, we never wanted to leave. On Sundays, we rode the trolleys to Highland Park, with a picnic basket. We also enjoyed the dramatic Jewish Theater. We were permitted to view the performance by sitting on the steps for 25 cents. I remember laughing at the humor and crying at many of the over-dramatic productions.

My father's brother, Chunnah (Uncle Charlie) arrived from Russia. He was a young man in his twenties when he came to live with us. Now, we were seven people living in a 3 bedroom apartment. There was always room for another person.

During the flu epidemic, I believe in 1919, my mother, sister Bea and I, became ill. I was very sick with pneumonia. During what was called the "Crises," with the room filled with sunshine, I said, "Papa, it's getting dark, put the light on." My father thought I was dying and became hysterical. There was no penicillin, no antibiotics; just suction cups, called 'Bonkus" and some kind of bromide powder, taken by the spoonful. But, we survived.

My mother decided to become a matchmaker. She liked the looks of a young women who passed by our house daily. She made inquiries and learned that her name was Henrietta Chizzak. She introduced Uncle Charlie to Henrietta, who was American born. He was "smitten." They had some disagreement and Uncle Charlie was devastated. They finally worked out their problems and arrangements were made for the wedding to take place in our apartment. Frieda (Debby) and I were flower girls. My mother sewed beautiful accordion pleated chiffon dresses for us. Aunt Henrietta made attractive ribbon streamered garters for our socks. It was a very exciting time for seven year olds.

When Uncle Charlie left, Aunt Dina arrived from Russia and came to live with us. She stayed with us until she met and married Harry Malamud. The other sisters and brothers remained in Russia.

In 1933, a cousin Paula, who was about 19, wrote to the family in America, requesting a sponsor. She said there was nothing for her in Kozin. The Uncles and Aunt discussed the matter. They had their own young children, no room in their homes and it appeared too much of a responsibility to invite a young women into their homes. My mother was angry at them and accused them of being like "stones." Uncle Charlie was so upset, he didn't visit us for about six months. Of course at that time, no one could ever imagine a situation called the "Holocaust" In later years, a landsman reported to my father, that the families in Kozine, were wiped out by the townspeople.

My parents purchased a piano for Shirley and Bea. The piano was hoisted up to the second floor. It was an event. All the kids on the street gathered around. Shirley and Bea were given piano lessons and learned to play. Anne and I took lessons as we grew older. I learned to dance the charleston, watching my sisters and their friends. Of course, I was always in their way.

By the time I was 10 years old, we were living at 385 E. 95th Street, in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, N.Y. My mother would have preferred a house she saw in Borough Park, with a three bedroom apartment, for her four daughters. My father opted for the two bedroom apartment on 95<sup>th</sup> Street. The three garages in the rear of the building would bring in an income, and help pay the mortgage. So, four daughters were crowded into a small 10 x 10 bedroom. One bed, one dresser, a love seat, opening into a bed.

I shared the love seat bed with Anne and as she turned during the night, her arm struck me in the face. My destiny was determined by the house my father purchased.

I remember walking to P. S. 165 on Hopkinson Ave. in Brownsville, at least one and half miles. I walked through abandoned farm houses. It was a new neighborhood. No buses or trolley cars. I was never fearful. I always felt secure, cared for and protected. I graduated from the 8th grade and attended Thomas Jefferson High School in East New York. I traveled by train and bus. I made wonderful friends and enjoyed my teen-age and High School years.

I made my best friend, Adele Ingerman in my freshman year. She lived more than a mile away. She lived near Pitkin Avenue, a busy area with lots of action. There were movies, restaurants, soda fountains hang outs, where boys and girls congregated. Like an open air mall. It was Adele who introduced me to Syd Karson. We traveled in groups, enjoying Steeplechase and the beaches at Coney Island.

The Three and Four family homes in East Flatbush had what was called, "finished basements". Many owners rented these facilities to young boys who formed clubs. They were called "cellar clubs". The boys played cards, arranged dances and parties and just hung out.

Those were the days when people were concerned about their reputation and what their neighbors would think. I met Syd when I was 14. He walked me home one summer evening, and we were chatting in front of my house, our neighbor came along. The next day he reported to my father that his little girl Ettie was out with a boy at 10:30 P.M. My father was embarrassed and scolded me. I remember crying and being given a curfew of 10:00 P.M. I was always the first to leave the party.

When I graduated from High School at 17, I told my father I would like to apply to Brooklyn College. He said he had expected Anne to go to college and become a teacher. She changed her mind and decided to go to business school and be in the business world. It cost him \$145.00 to send her to business school. Besides, as an educated woman, no one would be good enough for me. In any case, I would surely wind up as a housewife in the kitchen. Had I been a boy it would be different. I couldn't convince him.

I did get to City College in the evening for a year and a half. I worked at a real estate office at 136 East Street in Manhattan. The firm sold plots of land in Hicksville L. I. It was a scam of sorts. They employed salesmen, who were given names, that were called "Leads". These were names of low income people. They approached these people, informed them that they won a lot in Hicksville. L.I. They drove them out to see the land and advised them that one lot would be useless. If they planned to build a house they would need a minimum of 3 lots. They sold additional lots on the installment plan, with interest. Many of these people were unable to maintain these payments and eventually lost their money. If I had vision, I could have purchased these defaulted contracts, and owned valuable property in Hicksville, L.I.

I met my dear friends, Ruth Cantor Pelcyger and Zenith Rosenberg Horn, who also worked in this building and we became lifelong friends

My good friends, Adele Ingerman, Harold Leimsider, Syd Karson and I would double date on weekends. We went to the Lowe's Pitkin, the Chocolate Shop for frappes and sodas, and parties at the Cellar Clubs. We traveled by subway to the Paramount Theater to see vaudeville shows and movies. On New Year's Eve, we attended theaters on Broadway and watched the silver ball descend at 12.00 Midnight, to bring in the New Year.

On my 18th birthday, Syd presented me with a wrist watch. This was considered a commitment, meaning "going steady" and not dating anyone else. I consulted my parents before accepting. My mother was silent. When I told my father that all my friends have steady boyfriends, he was not inclined to be responsible for my future. His answer was, one cannot predict the future. You can marry a rich man one day and the next day things can go wrong. Syd seemed to be a respectable person. Character is important and the decision remained mine alone.

Syd's parents invited me to their home for dinner for the first time when I was 19. I met his grandmother and his brothers, Jackie who was about 13 and Herbie who was about 7. His Aunt Frieda and Aunt Miriam were present as well. At the dinner table, Syd handed me a box of chocolates to pass around. When I opened it, to my surprise, there was a beautiful oblong diamond ring with various shaped stones, marquise, baguette's and several small stones. This was known as a "friendship ring". A solitaire stone was called an engagement ring. I'm still wearing this ring which has since been reset. Now, we were engaged.. Courting was a sweet and loving time. Sex before marriage was unheard of. Kissing and fondling was called "Necking". "Making Out" was another term, whose meaning I'm still not too sure of. Men looked forward and were anxious to be married. I remember telling Syd, we'd talk about marriage when he earned \$25.00 per week. I was earning \$23.00 per week.

Finally, when we were ready to set the date, there was another problem. My mother said "Anne married Jack Weisman before Bea, and now you?. "Wait for Bea". Bea was dating Louis Wilk, a law clerck in Bea's office. In those days, law clerks were earning less than secretaries I urged Bea, who was earning a good salary and had savings in the bank to convince "Wilkie", as he was called, that marriage was the way to go.

Bea and Louis were married on June 8, 1935 in the Bronx, where Louis's family lived. Syd and I were married September 14 1935, at the Chateau D'or in Brooklyn. The weddings were beautiful, at the best catering establishments, in good taste, for over 100 guests. All gratuities were taken care of by my father. In those days, it was customary for waiters to pass plates among the guests for \$1.00 tip.

We left for a two week honeymoon and traveled by train in the sleeping compartment, to the Thousand Islands and then to the Adirondack Mountains. It was a beautiful time of the year and a very enjoyable trip. We hoped to return some day, but we never did.

When we returned, we moved in with our parents. We worked and tried to save money. Ten months passed. On July 4th, 1936, we were blessed with our daughter, Dolores Carole Karson. She was named for my Aunt Dora (Dvorah), whom I always loved and Shaina Chia, Syd's grandmother, who died six weeks before our wedding. Dolores was a lovely and delightful child, loved and spoiled by relatives and grandparents. When Dolores was two years old, an apartment became available in my parents house. We moved. It was great having our own space and privacy.

Syd worked as a photographer for Otis Elevator Co. from 9:00 to 5:00. He also did candid photos at relative's weddings and placed them into albums. He developed a following and was one of the first candid photographers. He set up a dark room in the basement of our house. He would work till 1:00 A.M. nights, developing black and white photos. When candid photography became popular, portrait studios called on Syd Karson to photograph weddings and Bar Mitzvahs.

When a two bedroom apartment became available in the same building, we moved again. On July 20, 1942, Barry was born. We named him "Moisha Baer" after my grandfather and planned to call him Michael Barry. When Syd's brothers were calling this child "Mike", I decided on Barry Michael.

America was at war. Syd was declared "4F", because of a punctured ear drum and was excused from service. His job status improved. In 1943, he accepted a job in the Art Department at McGraw Hill Publishing Co, as a Photographer. He always enjoyed his work which he found interesting and creative. After 35 years, he took early retirement.

During the summer months, we rented cottages in Lake Mohegan, Peekskill, N.Y. We visited our cousins, Fannie and Louis Tobias, who owned a summer cottage in a community called Beechwood Lake, in Peekskill N.Y. We were impressed. We discussed the idea of building a summer cottage, with our brother in law Jack Weisman, who was in the lumber business. He suggested we purchase land in Beechwood Lake. He offered to extend credit for the purchase of building supplies and would recommend a builder to erect a cottage. We signed notes for the extended credit. Syd was extremely enthusiastic and excited. I suffered "agita" at the thought of this obligation. The Wilk's and Schwartz's were interested as well. When we were about to purchase the land, the Schwartz's decided against it.

Two summer cottages were built side by side, in a community called Beechwood Lake, Peekskill, N.Y.; 50 years later, these cottages are still there but have been converted to all year round homes.

Syd continued to work hard and many hours to pay off our debts. We enjoyed wonderful summers and weekends, spring and fall in our country house. Our children enjoyed their childhood and teenage years. We all had a great social life and made many friends.

Twenty years of married life at 385 E. 95th`" Street, Brooklyn, N.Y., where Dolores and Barry were born and grew up. Like a ritual, every Saturday afternoon the nuclear family, four daughters, at times sons in law and nine grandchildren, with a twelve year age span, arrived to visit my parents. If someone missed a Saturday, it was almost catastrophic as far as my folks were concerned. By the end of the day however, with a sigh of relief, my mother would say "Thank God, let them go home in good health."

Mama served lunch. Home baked chalah, cinnamon "Kichel", poppy seed cookies, salmon salad, borsht, etc. The younger children scampered in and out of the house, always ending in some one crying, usually being "picked on" or hurt,. The teenagers enjoyed each other,. To this day, they look back with nostalgia at their memories.

The adults discussed politics, religion and religious practices with my father. Whenever they disagreed and the discussion got out of hand, my father concluded, "That's the way it is." End of discussion.

My mother anxiously awaited sundown when my father left for Shul. She could hardly wait to share the nonsense she coped with all week. Thinking he had already left, she said "Did he leave the "mishugana?", "No, I'm still here," he answered. They never lost their sense of humor. Supper for the younger children was in my apartment. Noodles and cheese, spaghetti or potatoes and sour cream was the bill of fare.

We still marvel at the memory of our parent's beautiful Seders for more than 20 people that took place in crowded quarters. My father helped set up the "Kosher for Pesach" kitchen. Change over of pots, dishes, glasses and silverware. Mama did all the cooking. I was there to help her with the home made gefilte fish, sponge cakes, potato muffins, matzo balls and chicken soup. I learned to cook. In later years, Anne Weisman and I continued to carry on this tradition. Now, for many years, Dolores and Martin Meyerson have been continuing to observe two seders, "Kosher for Pesach," for their children, grandchildren and loving family members. Hopefully, this beautiful tradition will remain unbroken for many more years to come.

Shortly after we were married, my father suggested we join the Joseph Levy Lodge. He was an active member of this Society. For a fee of \$12.00 per year, the family would be assured of burial plots. This was a must. Like insurance. The Weisman and Schwartz families were members. The Wilks were members of Lumzar Gaberna Society, with Louis' father's Lodge.

At one of the Saturday gatherings , my father announced he purchased a family plot of eight graves for the eight members of the Lodge. Jack Weisman, a business man asked if my father had a deed to this plot and if so why should he continue paying dues. This annoyed my father. The conditions of this offering was based upon the fact that the Lodge was obligated to provide graves for its members. Jack discontinued paying dues, which at the time was \$15.00 per year.

My mother was the first to be buried in the family plot. At the grave site, my father argued with the grave diggers to place the casket away from the railing. They objected, but did as he wished. Later, when we asked what was going on he explained that he converted the 8 graves to 6 graves for the six members of the Lodge. I asked how this would work out and he said, "Foist come, "Foist Serve." That's just the way it was.

Through the years, it was always special for our children to spend time at the Weisman home in Belle Harbor with their cousins. They enjoyed the beach, Sunday barbeques, and holidays. Aunt Anna was a great cook, baker and hostess. She loved her nieces and nephews and they loved her.

In 1955, we reluctantly sold our summer cottage at Beechwood Lake to purchase a home in Baldwin, L.I. It took 18 months for the house to be completed. In the interim, Barry became a Bar Mitzvah and Dolores became engaged to Martin Meyerson. Now, we were looking forward to a Bar Mitzvah party, a wedding celebration and moving into our new home.

Barry's Bar Mitzvah was at Rishon L'zion, on East 95<sup>th</sup> Street in Brooklyn. The party was at the Park Inn Hotel, in Far Rockaway, Queens, N.Y. We noted the engagement of Dolores and Martin, as well as our 20th Wedding Anniversary. All the grandparents were present.

During the summer of 1957, my mother who was frail, came to stay at our house while my father was having their apartment painted. Unfortunately, she suffered a heart attack. The doctor said she won't make it through the night. My father arrived immediately. After a week or two, her condition remained stable and my father decided to take her home. He took care of her until she died, four months later.

At that time, Syd had a photographic assignment in Jacksonville, Florida. He suggested we meet in Miami and vacation for a week. In view of my mother's lethargic condition, I consulted my father as to the wisdom of making this trip. He suggested I meet my husband in Miami "One cannot anticipate or wait for death." I took his advice and flew to Miami. This was my first plane trip. Unfortunately, the day after we arrived, we received the bad news that my mother died. She died on December 15, 1957, at the age of 82.

Time passed and my father managed to take care of himself. He kept in touch with his friend, Rabbi Schneerson, a revered member of the Labavecher. The Rabbi suggested it would be best for my father to marry. He convinced my father that a man needs a wife, and it would extend his life and well-being, if he were married.

One day my father said he placed an "ad" in the Jewish Morning Journal. He was interested in meeting a "respectable Jewish woman, who keeps a "kosher home." The responses were numerous. He went to Borough Park via the Church Avenue trolley car, and met a very nice woman. "Sounds good to me I replied." "No, he answered, "she has five grown sons, I'm not looking for trouble." My sister Shirley, suggested her best friend's mother, Tillie Natbony.

He did marry Tillie and she was a match for him. She requested a new refrigerator for their apartment and a honeymoon at Miami Beach. Since he was never on a plane, we were betting against the idea of a honeymoon in Miami Beach. He complied with the conditions. Honeymooned in Miami Beach, purchased a new refrigerator and suggested they sign a pre-nuptial agreement to protect their interests.

After a year and a half, my father became ill. He had a benign tumor in his stomach for many years and refused surgery. The tumor grew and invaded other organs, causing him to lose desire for food. He complained of no pain, but was listless and after a few months, on June 5, 1960, he died, at the age of 83.

My father had a Will that was prepared by his son-in-law and attorney, Louis Wilk. Louis was the Executor of the Will. We all knew that Louis was completely trustworthy. Nevertheless, my father gave each of his daughters a listing of the banks and the exact amount in each account. I believe I still have the scrap of paper he wrote this listing. When he handed it to me, he said in Yiddish, "z'patternisht de gelt" Don't squander the money! I never did.

On February 9, 1959, our first granddaughter was born and named Wendy Sue Meyerson, after my mother "Vellia" and Martin's grandmother "Susha". Two and a half years later, Amy Hope Meyerson was born on September 29, 1961 and named for Syd's mother "Tsirel" and Hadassah, for Syd's father, "Hershel."

Dolores and Martin purchased a house in Baldwin Harbor, a mile from our house. We were delighted. It was wonderful watching our granddaughters as they grew and sharing life with our children in this pleasant community.

At the time we moved to our home in Baldwin Harbor, L.I., there were 48 families in the development. With vision and determination, this group founded South Baldwin Jewish Center. A store in the area was converted into a temporary synagogue. Property was purchased within walking distance from our homes. Bank loans were obtained, signed guarantees by its members and a beautiful Temple was erected. I was coerced into accepting and being the first Sisterhood president. Syd and I were proud to be among these founders, whose accomplishments seemed miraculous at the time. The area developed rapidly and it became a very desirable neighborhood. Eventually, we had a membership of 450 families. Our grand-daughters Wendy and Amy attended Hebrew School and celebrated their Bat Mitzvahs at this Temple. Although Dolores and Martin no longer live in Baldwin, they still maintain their membership. We are still members as well, and look forward to sharing holidays together with our children, family and friends.

Syd's brother Herbie and his wife Lovey, purchased a house around the corner from us and moved in with their two sons. Our nephew, Lenny and his wife Pearl and two daughters moved very close by. Niece Elaine and husband Mike with their children moved near Dolores and Martin. Life was very pleasant.

After 20 years, of the best times in Baldwin Harbor, Syd was offered early retirement, by McGraw Hill. An offer he couldn't refuse. Florida beckoned. Again we were reluctant to selling the home we loved. On December 17, 1977 we moved to Florida, leaving our children and grandchildren and loved ones behind. We always missed our family and our life up north. Nevertheless, life in Florida had many advantages for us. Many of our friends were here and the life of leisure and "enjoy yourself" was the order of the day.

On February 2, 1989, tragedy struck our family. Our daughter-in-law Myra Karson died. After having been diagnosed with inoperable lung cancer, she fought a valiant battle for two years. Our son Barry was completely supportive and devoted. Life was difficult and painful. David and Steven, would miss their mother forever. But for the living, "Life must go on", and so it did. David and Steven completed their college education, They are wonderful men with successful careers. As was previously mentioned David married Becky. They own a home in Cos Cob, Connecticut and share it with three dogs and are happy.

Our son Barry, married Kathy Hegleman, a lovely and beautiful lady, on June 5, 1993. Kathy has two children, Joe and Jane Hegleman, who are beautiful and loving people. The families love one another and get along happily. We are most grateful. We love them all; we are family.

I am the only one left in our family with history of our ancestors and I'm passing along the memory of incidents as told to me, some humorous, some sad, to our children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nephews, nieces, grand and great and relatives. We are now five generations since the story of "Dovid and Vellia began." I hope you enjoyed reading this "Bird's Eye View" of the past and somehow, it may enrich the lives of you and your children.

Syd and I remain the oldest surviving members in our family. Syd officially makes the "Brucha" over the chalah at every joyous occasion. We're both reasonably well and productive. I was blessed with a secure childhood. We have wonderful caring children, beautiful and respectful grandchildren, grandchildren by marriage, great-grandchildren and each other. We have a good life in Florida. We still golf, play bridge, socialize with friends of long standing. I try to keep fit by swimming and doing aerobics regularly. We look forward to sharing joyous family occasions and holidays with our loving family.

We'll be celebrating our 64th Wedding Anniversary on September 14, 1999. I can't figure how we got to be so lucky. Is it "Mazel or "Saichel?" "Luck or Brains?" Whatever, we're grateful and thankful that we've been blessed.

We wish all of you and your families, a long and joyful life with much "Nachas." May you enjoy the blessings of "Luck and "Brains."

Hope you enjoyed going back in time with me, to learn something about your ancestors and roots.  
Love and Kisses ----- Etta Gittelman Karson

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to my husband, Syd Karson for standing by and helping me make corrections while I was typing this account on the computer keyboard. Since I have no experience in handling the "computer mouse, I needed help whenever I was in trouble. Syd spent many hours helping me. I could not have completed this project without his help.

P.S. Forty-five years ago, Syd promised our friends a "Big Bash", if we all survived the end of the millennium. Of course, with "tongue in cheek," never envisioning such a possibility. But, we're still here and we may make it. Unfortunately, so many of our friends are no longer here to share with us.

FAMILY TREE:---- ETTA G. & SYD KARSON

DOLORES & MARTIN MEYERSON

Children: Wendy and Larry Shilling Grandchildren:  
Alison Shilling and Jason Shilling

Amy and Bryan Cole

Grandchildren: Hallie and Jennifer Cole

BARRY & KATHERINE KARSON

Children: Rebecca & David Karson  
Steven R. Karson  
Joseph Hegelman  
Jane Hegelman



Chantsha Gittelman & grandchildren, early 1900s



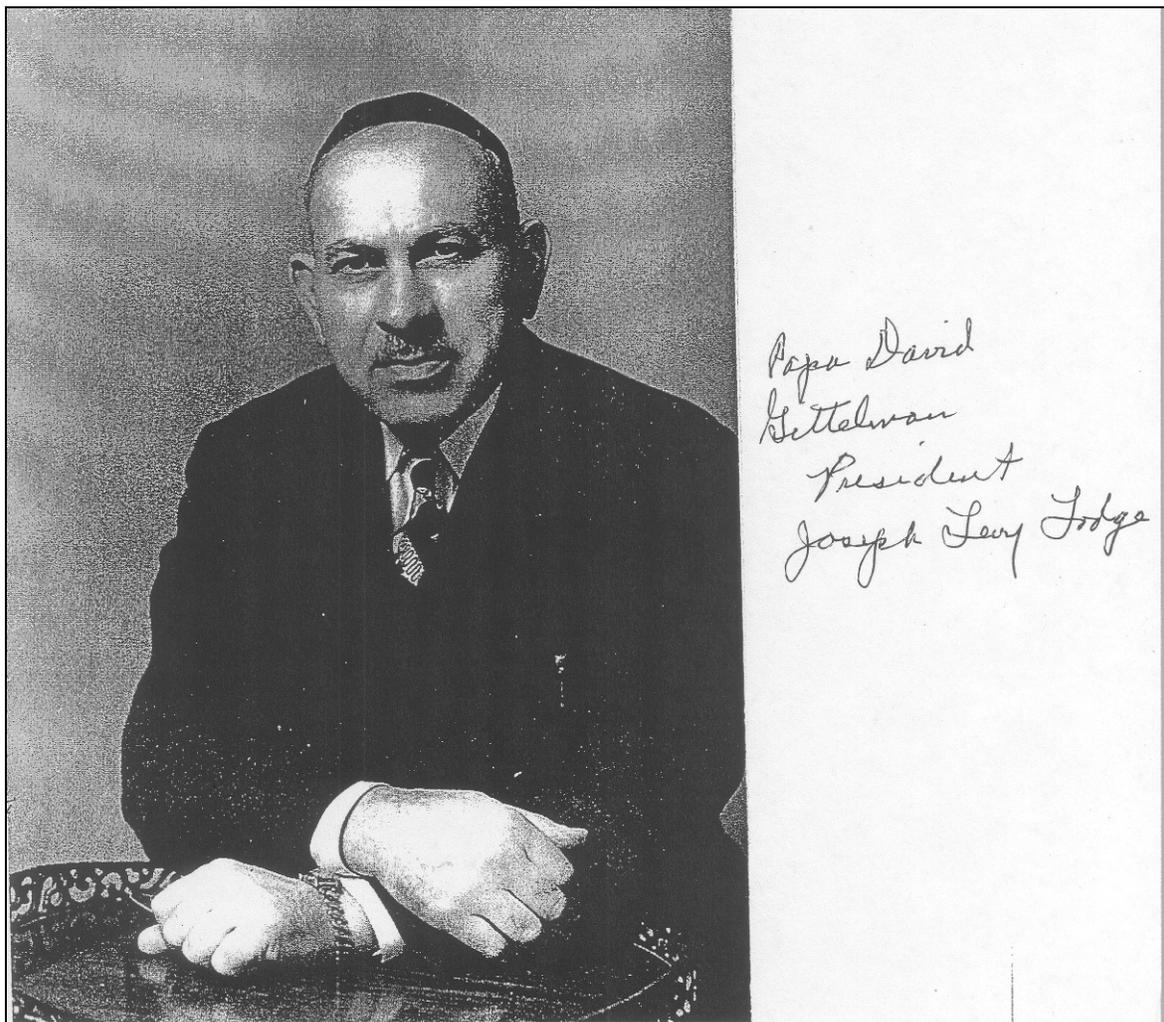
Velia Vorir & David Gittelman, about 1902-1903



Velia & David Gittelman and daughters, early 1920s



Gittelman Family at Wedding of Etta Gittelman and Syd Karson, 14 September 1935



**David Gittelman, President of Joseph Levy Lodge, 1930s**

## Personal Name Index

*NOTE: This Personal Name Index was added to the original document by Ronald D. Doctor, Project Coordinator for the Kremenets Shtetl CO-OP, an activity of the Kremenets District Research Group (KDRG). An asterisk following a surname indicates that the surname is the woman's married name. Otherwise, all surnames are birth surnames.*

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