

BENJAMIN (BENNIE) WEINSTEIN

(Written by Leon Chonin - August 2021)

Benjamin known to his family as Bennie, the only son of Lipi and Hannah Weinstein was born in 1925 in Wolamin located in the outskirts of Warsaw, Poland. His father Lipi emigrated from Poland in 1928 to join his father Louis. Bennie together with his mother and his four sisters, Pauline, Geheli (Chaya), Sarah and Joyce emigrated a year later on board the Watussi arriving in Cape Town on 29 March, 1929. They settled in Kimberley where his father had opened a tailoring business. Bennie and his family only spoke Yiddish which may have confused the immigration officials who seemed to have recorded their landing incorrectly as none of the children names, ages and in the case of Bennie sex were documented correctly.

Bennie attended Kimberley Boys High School but it could not be verified whether or not he matriculated as many students in those days left school in Standard 8 to enter the workforce. Bennie like his older sisters Pauline and Sarah left Kimberley after completing their schooling to live in Johannesburg. I am uncertain where Bennie worked in Johannesburg but I believe he did bookkeeping training.

Bennie dated and married Marcia Haskel the elder daughter of Hetty and Barney. Soon after their marriage Bennie joined the Haskel family business where they operated a concession store on the manganese mine in Glosam near Postmasburg in the Northern Cape. Because Glosam was close to Kimberley Bennie and Marcia frequently visited Kimberley for the Jewish holidays. Bennie and Marcia had three children Mervyn, Sabrina and Hilton. Both Mervyn and Sabrina were born while Bennie and Marcia lived in Glosam while Hilton was born in Johannesburg after they decided to leave Glosam to return to Johannesburg for the benefit of their children's education.

Instead of continuing with his bookkeeping experience Bennie chose to open a men's outfitting retail shop just off Jeppe Street across the way from the Post Office called "Simpsons". This venture unfortunately proved to be a bad investment and perhaps was the start of the family's misfortunes in life. When Bennie closed the business, he joined the Sarkin family who operated a leather goods manufacturing facility in Johannesburg as their bookkeeper. It was during this period on 17 February, 1965 at the age of 40 years that Bennie sadly had an untimely tragic death that devastated his family leaving his wife and three children to manage on their own. It was heartbreaking for his parents as he was their only son and the role model to whom his whole family looked to for guidance and support. His youngest sister Joyce who was born with a hearing impairment and was partially deaf relied heavily on Bennie.

However, the tragic story of this family did not end with Bennie's death. Marcia remarried a childhood friend, Maurice Spark who did not have any children and adopted the three children. Marcia and her children moved to Gatooma, Southern Rhodesia (as it was known then) where Maurice also owned a general dealers store. During a return visit to the City of Salisbury on 27 August 1972 both Marcia and Maurice were tragically killed in a horrific motor vehicle accident.

Marcia sister, Ethel then took care of the children and they then went back to Johannesburg to complete their schooling. Mervyn the eldest was first to leave South Africa on Aliyah to Israel where he joined the kibbutz known as Kfar Blum near the Golan Heights. He was followed by Sabrina who also went to live on the same kibbutz. Yet another tragic accident in Johannesburg where Hilton the youngest of the three was badly injured forced the two siblings to arrange for Hilton to also join them on the kibbutz. While the three siblings were united as a family Hilton unfortunately left behind his two children who remained with their mother.

Mervyn married Elyse whose family originated from Morocco and they had two boys. The younger son Cori during his military training contracted an infectious disease and because of negligence by the military commanders he did not receive immediate treatment that led to his untimely death due to a collapsed lung. It was yet another tragedy for the family that has followed them ever since the death of their father.

As their cousin I felt it was important to memorialize their father Bennie and to express my deepest sympathy to them for the hardships they have had to experience during their lifetime. May the Spark family know no more sorrow, and may they find continued happiness in Israel on one of the most beautiful Kibbutzim I have visited.



The actual house in Tapscott Street of the Weinstein family that has been altered since they lived there.



Figure 1 Bennie during his school days



Figure 2 Marcia and Bennie in Glosam



Figure 3 Marcia, Bennie and Mervyn



Figure 4 Barney Haskel, Bennie and Sabrina



Figure 5 Joyce, Bennie, Marcia, Geheli (Chaya), Sarah in front Leon and Felicia



Figure 6 Sabrina, Leon, Mervyn, Hilton



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Detailed Records

Surname	Weinstein
First Names	Berch
Ship's Name	Watussi
Sex	f
Origin: Town	Warsaw
Origin: Country	Poland
Age	5
Date of Arrival	1929-03-27
To: First Name	N
To: Surname	Weinstein
Relation	Father
Town in SA	Kimberley
Address in SA	17 Ebdn Str
Listing	Arrival list 1929

Search results for surname: Weinstein Data source: Arrival list 1929 Matching your criteria: 6

	ID	Surname	First Names	Sex	Age	Origin: Town	Origin: Country	Address in SA	Town in SA	Ship Name	Date of Arrival
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7958	Weinstein	Berch BENJAHN M	f	5	Warsaw	Poland	17 Ebdn Str	Kimberley	Watussi	1929-03-27
<input type="checkbox"/>	7953	Weinstein	Chana HANNAH	f	40	Warsaw	Poland	17 Ebdn Str	Kimberley	Watussi	1929-03-27
<input type="checkbox"/>	7956	Weinstein	Chana CHAYA	f	4	Warsaw	Poland	17 Ebdn Str	Kimberley	Watussi	1929-03-27
<input type="checkbox"/>	7957	Weinstein	Jachot JOYCE	f	3	Warsaw	Poland	17 Ebdn Str	Kimberley	Watussi	1929-03-27
<input type="checkbox"/>	7955	Weinstein	Lura SARAH	f	6	Warsaw	Poland	17 Ebdn Str	Kimberley	Watussi	1929-03-27
<input type="checkbox"/>	7954	Weinstein	Pesa PAULINE	f	11	Warsaw	Poland	17 Ebdn Str	Kimberley	Watussi	1929-03-27

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