



Perth Jewish Roots

*Newsletter of the Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society of
Western Australia Inc*

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Newsletter

Vol.18 No.3 August 2016



"Picture Palaces Of the Golden West"

Cinemas and Picture Theatres

Vyonne Geneve OAM with Ron Facius will be the Society's Key-note Speaker on **Sunday 31st July 2016.**

They, with the National Trust Western Australia contributing to the publication, have brought out a book. *Picture Palaces of the Golden West* focuses on the built form and exotic décor of the picture theatres in the Art Deco era in WA, while placing them in the continuum of the earliest advent of film to the present time.



Based on seminal research by Vyonne Geneve at the UWA, this book draws on long-held memories and well-remembered incidents brought to life by the drawings of designer Ron Facius, which capture the ambience of the buildings and the excitement they brought to Western Australia. The publication also documents the changing attitudes to architectural form and societal expectations, due in no small part to the influence of the movies in this isolated Australian state.

The Book is available for purchase on the day or you can Order it through the National Trust WA. By purchasing this book, you are supporting the National Trust, which works to raise knowledge, awareness, understanding and commitment to Western Australian's natural, Aboriginal and historic heritage.

Art Deco Society : www.artdecowa.org.au

National Trust : <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/wa/>

NATIONAL FAMILY HISTORY MONTH AUGUST 2016

Presented by Western Australian Genealogical Society (WAGS) and the State Library of Western Australia. National Family History Month is celebrated during August each year. There are programmes on Wednesday 3rd August through to Sunday 28th August.

State Library of WA, 25 Francis St, Perth WA
Slaw.wa.gov.au (click Whats On-Family History)

Check out the sessions and book which ones you wish to attend. Email : nfhm@slwa.wa.gov.au or telephone on : (08) 9427 3111.

For more information :
WAGS, Units 4-6, 48 May Street,
Bayswater : wags.org.au - (click event calendar)

For events Australia-wide and a chance to win some fabulous prizes visit : www.familyhistorymonth.org.au



NFHM
National Family History Month



State Library
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



IAJGS 36th International Conference on Jewish Genealogy to be held in Seattle from 7—12 August 2016.

If you cannot attend this

Conference, there are two options that permit you to benefit from the more than 235 sessions.

LIVE ! This provides live streaming of sessions by some of the more popular speakers—but not all. You can watch the sessions live on your own computer as they are being presented. If you subscribe to LIVE!, after the conference is over, you will have 90 days to access the session "on demand".

Audio Recordings : Purchase the audio/slides recording of almost all the sessions.

Nu? What's New? nuwhatsnew@earthlink.net
Vol.17, No.29 July 24, 2016

MyHeritage Adds SuperSearch Alerts Feature



MyHeritage continues to demonstrate that it is the most technically innovative of the large genealogy companies. Its latest feature is called SuperSearch Alerts. Additional information is at : <http://blog.myheritage.com/2016/07/new-supersearch-alerts>.

A TRAGIC ROMANCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES : FROM ONE PHOTO TO JOURNEYS OF RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY

by Eli Rabinowitz

All I ever have known is that I am named after my great uncle Moshe; Moshe died in a motor accident, six weeks before his planned wedding; the date of his death is unknown, but is sometime between the late 1920s and early 1930s. Then, a photo given to me in 2011 changed everything !

I first became interested in genealogy in 1992 when a cousin jots down, on a piece of scrap paper, the seven names of my paternal ancestors. The result is the discovery of my connection to the Katzellenbogen rabbinic family tree through my great-great-grandmother, who appears in Neil Rosenstein's book, *The Unbroken Chain*.

My second boost comes in 2001 when a Hungarian politician makes contact via Saul Issroff in London resulting in some unusual revelations on my maternal side, including two secular Muslim second cousins, who are actually halachically Jewish living in Istanbul.

In 1887 my *zaida*, Nachum Mendel, is born in Orla a small village in Northeast Poland near Bialystok in the Grodno district. His original family name is Skarasjewski, but he changes it to Rabinowitz to escape being drafted into the Russian army. In the early 1900s my *zaida* leaves for Brest-Litovsk where he studies at the Brisk Yeshiva under Rav Chaim Soloveichik. Nachum Mendel then travels to Palestine, marries Chana Cheshe Miriam Herison in 1905 and migrates in 1911 to Volksrust, a *dorp* (small town) in Transvaal, South Africa. My dad, Zvi Hersh (Harry) is the first of his family to be born in South Africa in 1914. His two older brothers were born in Palestine. By 1919 the family has moved to Cape Town, where his two sisters Rachel and Sarah, are born, with Sarah, the youngest, in 1927. The family is joined by Nachum Mendel's younger brother, Moshe Zalman in 1921, and later by his sister, Chana.

On 8 November 2010, a Polish researcher, Wojciech Kononczuk of Warsaw, makes contact after seeing my post on JewishGen's Family Finder. His family also comes from Orla, the same *shtetl* as my grandfather. Although not Jewish himself, Wojciech is writing a book on the Jews of Orla. There is no Yizkor book for Orla, so I volunteer to write and manage the Orla KehilaLink page for JewishGen, the first of my 57 pages!

In May 2011, I visited Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary and Turkey, all for the first time.

On my way home to Australia, I visited my last surviving aunt, Sarah Stepansky, in Jerusalem. Sarah presents me with the following photo as a "reward" for my enthusiastic interest in our family history. I was the first of my family to make the journey back to Orla in over 90 years. The school photo contains the following information : Orla Folk School II in Yiddish on the front, and 1920 written on the back. My great uncle, Moshe is identified by my aunt Sarah as the teacher in the bottom left of the photo.



Photo of Orla School from Wojciech Kononczuk

I scan the photo on 7 June 2011 and email it to my family as well as to Wojciech. On 25 July 2011, Wojciech emails me that he has received a photo from "Mary", a researcher in London. Mary is researching the Lacki and Lichtzier families, also from Orla. She sends him the photo as it has Orla on a banner in the photo. Mary doesn't know the names of the people in the photo but on seeing it, Wojciech immediately recognizes the teacher in the top left as the same person in the photo I



Photo of Orla School from Sarah Stepansky

had sent him in June, namely Moshe Rabinowitz.

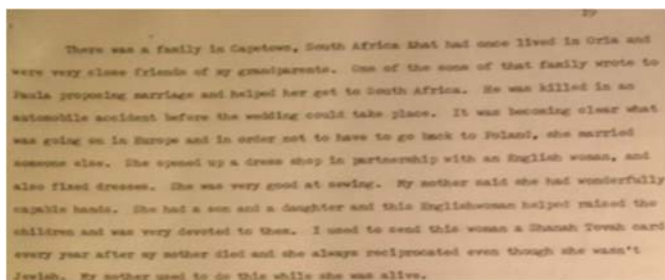
The puzzle starts falling into place when Wojciech tells Mary that the man's name is Moshe Rabinowitz. She responds that a Moshe Rabinowitz from Orla was engaged in South Africa to Paula (Polly) Lichtzier from Orla, a member of the families she is researching. Mary adds that Moshe was killed in a motor accident six weeks before his planned wedding to Paula.

On making contact with Mary, she provides me with the name and address of Ray Hengy who lives in Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany. Ray is the daughter of Paula and Joe Pinn, the man whom Paula subsequently married, sometime after the tragedy.

Ray also sends me a series of photos including several of Paula with her late fiancé's family. It is somewhat eerie receiving photos of my family from a stranger in Germany !

Ray provides me with more details of what she knows about Paula and Moshe. Apparently, her mother maintained a close relationship with Moshe's family in Cape Town after Moshe's tragic death.

Hungry for more details, I am able to access Paula's late cousin, Sylvia Kaspin's memoir.



Excerpt from Sylvia Kaspin's memoir

By now, my aunt Sarah has also published her own memoir :



About a year after Avraham Yaakov left Oria to go to Israel, his son, Moshe, went to South Africa. He had already studied English by himself in Russia, so the language was not a problem for him. He studied bookkeeping at the University of Cape Town in three months and became an accountant and was also a teacher. He had been engaged to be married to Paula (Polly) Lichtzler, but, tragically, six weeks prior to his marriage he was killed in an accident. I remained very close to his fiancée. When I was getting married, it was Polly who sewed my wedding gown, sight unseen, to a perfect fit, and sent it with my parents, who came from South Africa to the kibbutz for my wedding.

Excerpt from Sarah Stepansky's memoir

In May 2012, I meet Ray and her husband Heinrich in Warsaw, and together with Wojciech and my wife Jill, we travel to Treblinka, Orla and Bialystok.

Ray shows me something she is wearing. It is the engagement ring that Moshe had given to her mother. Ray wears it on special occasions. The ring was treasured by her mother throughout her life as the physical memory of Moshe.



Engagement ring given to Paula by Moshe. Eli and Ray Hengy in Orla

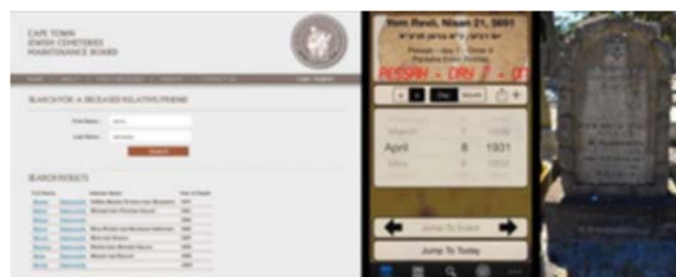
In May 2013 I visit Ray and Heinrich in Freiburg. We search for more photos of Moshe and Paula and we find a framed photo of then on the wall.

However, I am still missing dates and details of the tragic circumstances of Moshe's death.

I ask two of my cousins whether they have any further information. They give me one clue: they remember that their dad, my uncle Isaac, recited the mourner's *kaddish* for his uncle Moshe each year, on the second last day of Pesach.

I check the website of the Cape Town Jewish Cemeteries Maintenance Board for any deaths or burials in Cape Town with the name Moshe Rabinowitz or similar. I find one Morris Rabinowitz, but for some strange reason, the date is shown as "-0001". The information I was hoping for was missing.

I call the Chevra Kadisha in Cape Town, and am given the date of 4/9/31 (4 September 1931), which is nowhere near *Pesach* in the Hebrew calendar. I check my iPhone's Pocket *Luach*, transpose the date to 9/3/31 and voila! It is the 2nd last day of *Pesach* in 1931!



Morris Rabinowitz information from Chevra Kadisha

I get back to the Chevra Kadisha. They find their error, update their database and give me the correct details and the location of the *matseva* (tombstone): Woltemade / Maitland Cemetery (Gate 8). Those who know Cape Town will tell you that it is not safe to visit this cemetery alone. The Chevra Kadisha assigns a security guard, affectionately called Dovid Ben Yok, to accompany me. I take photos and have the inscription interpreted by my cousin, Hadara Boczeko, daughter of Sarah.

Now armed with a date, I ask Jocelyn and Tammy at the Gitlin Library in Cape Town to be on the lookout for any articles around this date. This library has an excellent collection of old Jewish newspapers bound in folders. Jocelyn finds a report in the SA Jewish Chronicle from April 1931.

Jocelyn and Tammy suggest I visit the National Library to check the microfilms of the two local newspapers, The Argus and The Cape Times. I find the accident reports. I also locate the Death Notice and other legal documents at the Western Cape Archives in Roeland Street. I am now in possession of other vital details that allow me to follow up. I visit the scene of the accident, 82 years after it happened !

Knowing that Moshe was a teacher at the Wynberg Talmud Torah at the Wynberg Synagogue, I find out that Moshe was also the secretary at the *shul*. An excellent source is this book written by historian Dr David Scher and Lionel Sher, a copy which can be found in the library at the Kaplan Centre at the University of Cape Town.

Condolences.

We regret to announce the death, as a result of a motor accident early on Wednesday morning, of Mr. M. Rabinowitz, of Wynberg. He was a brother of Rev. Rabinowitz, of Cape Town, and of Miss Rabinowitz, teacher at the New Kindergarten just opened at the Zionist Hall.

Mr. Rabinowitz was a member of the teaching staff of the Wynberg Hebrew School and was highly respected by all who knew him. He will be sadly missed and we cannot all but regret the untimely end to a promising career.

The funeral took place on Thursday afternoon from the Wynberg Synagogue and was attended by a representative gathering of friends and colleagues.

Our deepest sympathies are extended to his family, as well as to his fiancée.

Condolence notice from SA Jewish Chronicle, April 1931

FATAL CAR CRASH AT SALT RIVER

YOUNG TEACHER KILLED

A young Jewish teacher of Hebrew named Rabinowitz, living at Coghlin's Hotel, Wynberg, was fatally injured in a collision between a motor-car and a bus at Salt River at 12.40 a.m. to-day.

He was a passenger in a motor-car driven by Mr. Katz, manager of the Mowbray Hotel, Mowbray. The collision took place at the corner of Durham-avenue and the Main-road, Salt River. The motor-car struck the rear end of the bus, which had turned down Durham-avenue on the way to a garage.

The car swerved across the road and mounted the pavement on the sea side of the road. The car was badly smashed. When Rabinowitz was extricated he was taken to the Woodstock Hospital, where he died a few minutes after admission.

The dead man was a brother of the Rev. Mr. Rabinowitz, a Jewish minister of Constitution-street. He was engaged to be married to a young woman who recently arrived from Palestine.

Newspaper article about Morris Rabinowitz' accident, and his Death Notice



Accident scene

CELEBRATION OF THE WYNBERG SYNAGOGUE

קיום חגיגות

A MONUMENT TO THE GENERATIONS

Just how dependent the congregation was on its personnel, could be seen in the passing of Mr M Rabinowitz, who was killed in an accident in early 1931. Mr Rabinowitz had acted as Secretary to the Congregation and teacher at the Wynberg Talmud Torah for some 9 years. Without him the seating arrangements for that year, were chaotic. As the minutes of 9 August 1931 relate, "nothing (concerning seats) was left on record since the late secretary used to remember all by heart" (!) It took five successive weeks of advertising in the Cape

Excerpt from book by David and Lionel Sher



Hebrew School Picnic, 1922

Wanting to research further and keen to connect with descendants who may have more to contribute I meet Paula's extended family in New York, Toronto and Israel: Robby Gordon, Glenna Gordon, Rose Kamnitzer and Michal Itzhaki.

Rose Kamnitzer in Toronto has a collection of family photos from her parents Berl Lacki and Bella Lichtzier, Paula's sister. Berl was also Moshe's good friend. They corresponded by postcard after Moshe arrived in South Africa in 1920 until Berl arrived in 1929.

These photos in Rose's collection were taken in Poland and South Africa and are special in many respects.

The following are the only photos of Moshe and Paula taken together in Cape Town.

My journey of discovery, starting with a photo given to me in Israel, has taken me to Germany, South Africa, Poland, the USA, the UK, Canada, and back to Israel, with updates to my research findings in each destination.

It has been the subject of my lecture at the IAJGS international conference in Jerusalem in July 2015, and at subsequent venues and presentations in South Africa and Australia.

But my search isn't complete.

The details of the driver of the vehicle in the fatal accident are still of interest. The newspaper cutting tells us that Mr M Katz was the manager of the Mowbray Hotel. I've tried accessing the archives of the company that once owned the hotel, the bus company most likely involved in the accident, and have consulted various Cape Town historians. So far, I have struck out on these.

I am still hopeful that more leads will come my way. And so... to be continued.....!



Eli with Paula's extended family



Rose Kamnitzer's images

The following are the only photos of Moshe and Paula taken together, in Cape Town.



Pictures of Moshe and Paula together



Moshe and his family Left to right: Moshe with his nephew Isaac, with nieces Sarah and Paula, an unknown man, and Moshe's friend, Berl Lacki



Eli Rabinowitz, a former South African, born in Cape Town and who has lived in Perth, Australia, since 1986, is involved in a wide range of Jewish community activities, including filming events genealogical research, and bringing the Memories of Muizenberg Exhibition to

Australia, now on its way to Toronto and North America. He gives talks and presentations on his world-wide Jewish heritage travel and photography.

Eli is a member of Perth's: Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society of Western Australia Website : jhgsa.org.au

He has generated a number of KehilaLinks pages for the JewishGen web site, which include 23 sites in Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, Germany, China, South Africa and Australia.

He maintains a regular blog at: <http://elirab.me> His web site at <http://elirab.com> invites you into his world of digital storytelling.

Additional information relating to the story of Moshe and Paula can be viewed at the following links :

Blog : <http://elirab.me/remembering-uncle-moisey/>

Website : http://elirab.com/Moshe_%26_Paula_Online.html/#5

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/mosheandpaula/>

LitvakPortal : <http://elirab.me/litvak-portal/moshe-paula/>

This article was originally published in the SA-SIG Newsletter, Vol.14, Issue 4, June 2016: and is republished here with permission.

Website : www.jewishgen.org/SAfrica/



Soon in Perth

WWII navy personnel to be honoured

On Sunday 14 August 2016 a unique event that is sure to be of much interest to the Perth Jewish community and many others will take place.



The Western Australian Association of Jewish Ex-servicemen and Women (WAJEX), together with the Kings Park Honour Avenue custodians from Highgate RSL, will hold a dedication ceremony with the presentation of Memorial Plaques for the two Western Australian Jewish Royal Australian Navy personnel whose lives were lost during World War II.

The various Honour Avenues in Kings Park are lined by magnificent Bangalay eucalyptus trees planted and dedicated to the memory of individuals who gave their lives in time of war while serving the nation. There are approximately 1,600 plaques maintained by the Highgate RSL Honour Avenue Group which has been responsible for the plaques since 1922. The impressive dedication services are held only four times a year in May Circle off May Avenue.

The ceremony on 14 August is a special one just for these two Jewish naval personnel, Steward Lionel Rothbaum and Able Seaman Isaac Herman. Their story will be told during the ceremony, which is to be conducted by officials of Highgate RSL, Rabbi David Freilich and rabbi Adi Cohen, with the participation of WAJEX members. The plaques will be presented to family representatives for placing near the designated tree. Along with other dignitaries, the Royal Australian Navy will be officially represented.

This is sure to be not only a moving ceremony, but also an important one for the community in recalling the contribution and sacrifice of our young people in time of war.

The community is invited to attend.

For further details, Notices will be placed in forthcoming issues of The Maccabean.

Keith Shilkin

*The Maccabean,
22 July 2016, Vol.45 No.4*



World War II

Role of the Western Australian Jewish Women

Dr Rodney Gouttman is currently conducting research into the role of Australian Jewry during World War II. He is interested in the role of the Western Australian Jewish women during this war, both in the military; on active service in whatever capacity as well as on the home front.

If you have any information about this and also any images to go with your stories, Dr Gouttman would very much like to hear from you. His email address is: rmgout@gmail.com and his telephone number is : (03) 9571-3783.

Dr Gouttman is the author of two books in which Western Australian Jews played a more than significant part.

The first, "**An Anzac Zionist Hero: The Life of Lt Colonel Eliazar Margolin**"

JHGS-WA have the first book in their Library

The second book: "**In Their Merit: Australian Jewry and WWI.**"

DONATE

As an independent organisation we rely on gifts like yours.

Without the generosity of people like yourselves who care for Jewish WA heritage, the history and culture we treasure would be lost.

We need your help and support, donate now.

Donations of \$2 and over are Tax Deductible to the JHGS-WA Museum & Library.

VOLUNTEERS are always needed, put your hand up and step forward.

Joining the battle for Israel's independence

Tom Tugend

The Australian Jewish News :
jewishnews.net.au



It's 66 years since a band of foreign volunteers took to the skies to ensure Israel's birth and survival. Now their exploits are being relived on the big screen in the new documentary *Above and Beyond*.

Produced by Nancy Spielberg, the youngest of Steven Spielberg's three sisters, the film focuses on the overseas pilots who made up 90 per cent of the fledgling Israeli Air Force in the first desperate months after Israel declared its independence in May 1948.

The pilots came mainly from America and South Africa; nearly all of them were veterans of WWII, and were known as Machal, the Hebrew acronym for "volunteers from outside the land". Wearing German helmets, uniforms and parachutes, this ragtag band of brothers flew planes left behind in Europe by the German army and made of spare parts.

The documentary looks at the scavenging and deal-making that supplied aircraft parts and planes for the men who turned the tide of the 1948 war and established Israel's now enviable air force.

Of the four Spielberg siblings, Nancy is the most connected to Israel, having spent a year working on a religious kibbutz. About 10 years ago, the Hollywood grapevine had it that Steven Spielberg was planning a feature film on the genesis of the Israeli Air Force. So when Nancy started to become serious about her own project, she alerted her Academy Award-winning brother.

"I didn't want to step on my big brother's toes", she said.

But Steven encouraged his sister to go ahead, contributed a modest amount toward her \$1.3 m budget and noted that if her documentary was well received, it might inspire a feature film down the road.

Nancy said: "These men are heroes and the stories of their exploits are incredible. It is an honour to talk to them and to show others what they did".

About 4,000 volunteers from 58 countries fought in Israel's War of Independence, the overwhelming number in the infantry, artillery and other ground forces.

JTA



Shimon Peres at interview with Producer Nancy Spielberg and Director Roberta Grossman



DVD : \$14.99

"Above and Beyond"

Educational DVD
\$65.00

Would you like to donate this to the JHGS-WA Library?
Anything over \$2.00 is tax deductible..

South Africa's 800- The Story of South African Volunteers in Israel's War of Birth



**David Solly Sandler
Guest Speaker**

on

Sunday

30 October 2016

1.30pm for 2.00pm start
at Noranda Chabad Shule

"South Africa's 800" is about Machal, the collective Hebrew acronym for volunteers from abroad and about individual volunteers, colloquially known as Machalniks.

Israel's War of Independence, lasted from end of 1947 until the summer of 1949, with approx. 3500 overseas volunteers, mostly Jews, but non-Jews as well, were recruited and integrated into the military network. Forty Three countries are represented, with volunteers coming from South Africa, USA, Canada and Australia just to name a few.

Come and hear David, with Martin Levit, who have done a lot of research on the 800 South Africans. Let them tell you about the experiences of these Volunteers who supported the fledgling Jewish state in its War of Independence.