

THE EARLY YEARS OF JOSEPH MEITES

By Mable E. Meites

Born	December 22, 1913. Kishinev, Russia , d. 1-31-2005
Parents	Ben (Baruch) Meites , b. July, 29, 1885, Kishinev, Russia. d. July 1975 Freda Kaminetsky, b. circa 1890, Kishinev Russia, d. circa 1966 Married, circa 1910, Kishinev, Russia
Gr Gr Parents	Baruch and Esther Maitus , Kishinev, Russia
Gr Parents	(Zalman) Solomon and ? Maitus , Kishinev, Russia
Gr Parents	Ephriam (Frank) & Zeesil Kaminetsky, Kishinev, Russia
Siblings	Morris, b. 7-4-1911, Sarah, b. circa 1915, Isidor, b. 6-23-1918, Samuel, b. Jan. 1, 1921, Jerry, b. 1925, Rachel, (Renee) b. 1927
Married	Mable Emily Rumburg, January 30, 1943, Junction City, Kansas
Children	None

Introduction

Joe and I had hoped to have our memoirs completed before he passed away, on January, 31, 2005. Since we did not succeed, I am writing this from my memory of our discussions about his life, written family history, discussions and letters with family members, students, and colleagues, published materials about his career as a scientist at the University of Missouri and Michigan State University and our trip to Kishinev, Russia in 1972. I cannot guarantee absolute accuracy.

Birth

Joseph Meites was born in Kishinev, Russia December 22, 1913. His memory of what it was like to live in Russia came from his parents, relatives and other Jewish families in St. Joseph, Missouri.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

Joe's Paternal Grandparents - Maitus

I did not find the origin of the name Maitus (Meites) or the place of origin. The Ellis Island website does list a number of spellings for the name, including Maitus, Meitas, Maites, Maitas, Maitos, Meates, Meitus. Joe's cousins supplied the following family names:

Joe's Great, Great Paternal Grandparents

Baruch and Esther Maitus. Their Children were:
Zalman (Solomon), Joel, Jacob and Joseph Maitus

Joe's Paternal Grand Parents

Solomon and? Maitus: Their children were:
Baruch, Sheva and Samuel

Joe's Parents

Baurch and Freda Kaminetsky-Meites

Joe's Maternal Grandparents – Kaminetsky

Joe did not know the origin of the name **Kaminetsky**. It was common practice for people to take the surname of a place where they had lived. Since there was a place called Kam'yanets-Podil'skii, in the Ukraine, Joe thought the name Kaminetsky may have been derived from that. It may not be accurate. After coming to America, family members changed the name to **Kaminesky**. More recently, the name was shortened to **Kay**. Maternal grandparents were: **Ephriam (Frank) and Zeesil (Zees) Auverbach-Kaminetsky** had four children:

1. **Freda, b.** circa 1890, Kishinev, Russia (Joe's Mother)
2. **Daughter, b. ?**, Married non-Jewish Russian Soldier ?
3. **Jacob, (Jack) b. ?**, Married Tillie Nelkin. Their children were: Helen, Charlotte and Florene.
4. **Joseph (Joe) b ?**, Married Ann Rothman. Their children were: Leonard, b. 1-4-1925, Franklin, b. 10-17-32, Connie, b. 4-14-26, and Linda b. 12-28-38

WHERE DID THEY LIVE?

It is not known where the Maitus and Kaminetsky families first originated. However, they were known to reside in Kishinev, Russia in the late 1800's. According to internet historians, "Kishinev was the capital city of Moldova. Moldova is located in Eastern Europe sandwiched between Ukraine and Roumania. It encompasses part of the region formerly known as Bessarabia. The region was, at various times in history, a part of the Ottoman Empire, Russia, Roumania, and most recently, the Soviet Union. In 1889, there were 180,918 Jews out of a total population of 1, 628,867. In 1903 Kishinev had a Jewish population of 50,000 or 46% of the total population. Moldova became an independent state in 1991. The name Kishinev was changed to **Chisinau** and is now the capital of Moldova. It is the largest city of Moldova and is located in the center of the state. It is the main industrial center. The city is surrounded by a relatively level landscape with very fertile ground, offering the basis for agricultural use, especially in the cultivation of grapevines and fruit.

During Easter on April 6-7, 1903, Kishinev became known to the world at large as a result of two pogroms. These pogroms were described by Russian writer Vladimir Korolenko in his story "House No. 13" and poet H. N. Bialik in his poem, "Be-ir ha-Haregah" ("In the Town of Death").

The first pogrom, incited and organized by the local and central authorities, took place in the late 1890's. In Russia there were few pogroms before the assassination of Alexander II in 1881. The Jews were blamed for his assassination. After that there were many pogroms throughout Russia. Agents of the Ministry of the Interior and high Russian officials of the Bessarabian administration were involved in the preparation, evidently with the backing of the minister of the interior, V. Plehve. The pogrom was preceded by a poisonous anti-Jewish campaign led by P. Krushevan, director of the Bessarabian newspaper Bessarabets, who incited the population through a constant stream of vicious articles. One of the authors of the most virulent articles was the local police chief, Levendall. In such a heated atmosphere any incident could have dire consequences, and when the body of a Christian child was found, and a young Christian woman patient committed suicide in the Jewish hospital, the mob became violent. A blood libel, circulated by the Bessarabets, spread like wildfire. (It was later proved the child was murdered by relatives and that the suicide of the young woman was in no way connected with the Jews). According to official statistics, almost 50 Jews were killed, 92 severely wounded, and 500 slightly wounded. Over 700 homes were looted and destroyed, 600 shops and businesses were looted, and about 2000 families were left homeless. Both Russians and Romanians joined in the pogroms. Russians were sent in from other towns and the students of the theological seminaries and the secondary schools and colleges played a leading role. The garrison of 5000 soldiers stationed in the city, which could have easily held back the mob, took no action. Public outcry of the world was aroused by the incident and protest meetings were organized in London, Paris and New York. A letter of protest written in the United States was handed over to President Theodore Roosevelt to be delivered to the czar, who refused to accept it. Under the pressure of public opinion, some of the perpetrators of the pogrom were brought to justice but they were awarded very lenient sentences. L. N. Tolstoy expressed his sympathy for the victims, condemning the czarist authorities as responsible for the pogroms.

On October 19-20, 1905, pogroms broke out once more. They began as a protest demonstration by the "patriots" against the czar's declarations and deteriorated into an attack on the Jewish quarter that killed 19 Jews, injured 56. Houses and shops were looted and destroyed. On this occasion, some of the Jewish youth organized into self-defense units. The two pogroms had a profound effect on the Jews of Kishinev. Between 1902 and 1905 the number dropped from about 60,000 to 53,243. The economic development of the town was brought to a standstill.

These pogroms resulted in waves of Jewish emigration to the United States, the Americas and elsewhere. After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 the Pogroms stopped only to be revived in Germany and Poland after Adolph Hitler gained power. Source: www.cidi.ni:

"In Kishinev, the Jews lived in what was known as a Shtetl, which was a small village, with a large Jewish population, within the capital city of Kishinev. Kishinev had a population of about 300,000 at that time. The concept of shtetl culture is used as a metaphor for the traditional way of life of 19th century Eastern European Jews. Shtetls are portrayed as pious communities following Orthodox Judaism, socially stable and unchanging despite outside influence or attack. They operate with a communal spirit, where giving to the needy is not only admired, but expected and essential.

Material things were not disdained or extremely praised in the shtetl. Learning and education were the ultimate measure of worth in the eyes of the community, while money was secondary to status. The Shtetl had a consistent work ethic that valued hard work and frowned upon laziness. Studying was considered the most valuable and hardest work of all. Learned Yeshiva men who did not provide bread and relied on their wives for money were not frowned upon but praised as ideal Jews. A Yeshiva is an academy of Talmud studies. It is the main educational institution of traditional Judaism. Like most other societies of its time, it was a tenet of the ruling men of this society that women were inferior to men.”

Joe’s maternal grandparents, Ephriam and Zeesil Kaminetsky, had a house and some land on the outskirts of Kishinev. They had a cow, chickens, a plot of grapes, and made and sold wine. Some of the pogromists came to the Jewish area and looted from time to time. However, when they attempted a smaller pogrom, grandfather, Ephriam, decided to fight back. He sent his wife, Zeesel, and the two younger children (Jacob and Joseph) to the attic. He had a shotgun, and asked Freda to stay behind to hand him bullets. He kept shooting until he ran out of bullets. One of the pogromists hit Freda on the head with a bottle, and she ran to the attic to hide. She sometimes mentioned that she had a scar on her head. The pogromists severely beat Ephriam and left him for dead. There were bottles of wine in the house, and soon the pogromists were drunk and left. They left the house in shambles. Ephriam was strong physically and spiritually, and he soon recovered. He did not want to go through any more pogroms and decided to leave Russia and go to America.

A brief history from Jerry Meites states that it was Solomon Maitus who arranged the marriage of his son, Baruch, to Freda Kaminetsky. This arrangement was made with Ephriam Kaminetsky. Baruch and Freda were married about 1910. Baruch was a student at the local Yeshiva. They began having children about 1911 when (Moshe) Morris was born.

Grandparents, Ephriam and Zeesil Kaminetsky and their two sons, Jacob and Joseph, left Russia for America in July, 1913. Baruch and Freda Kaminetsky-Meites and their family remained in Kishinev. Ephriam took his family to St. Joseph, Missouri. Grandmother Zeesil’s cousin, Harry Wasserman, had immigrated to St. Joseph prior to 1913. Families usually chose a place where they had relatives and friends. They could help each other, they could speak the same language and follow their religion and cultural traditions, while at the same time become acculturated to their new environment in America.

Family members described grandfather, Ephriam, as being very religious, proud of his Jewish heritage and active in his synagogue. He was a practical man, and worked hard all of his life to provide for his family. Physically, he was of medium height, with dark hair. He did not laugh or smile much. He grew grapes and made wine. He owned two houses in St. Joseph and the Meites family lived in one of them for a time.

Joe described his grandmother, Zeesil, as a small, flaxen-haired blond woman who kept her hair in a bun. She bequeathed light hair and blue eyes to her two sons, and some of their children. Her daughter, Freda, also had blue eyes and dark hair. Some of the Meites children felt that she favored her two sons. I suspect that they did not know that when a woman married she was considered to be a member of the man’s (Meites) family. Besides, women were not considered equal to men.

When the Kaminetsky family came to St. Joseph, Missouri, in 1913, it was a thriving small city of about 80,000. There were interurban trains to Kansas City and Hannibal, Mo. It had

many big wholesale and manufacturing houses, some of the largest stockyards in the country (Swifts, Armours, etc). They had a grade school, high school, and junior college. Carnegie, the steel industrialist, had donated funds for a Carnegie Library, which had the best in all aspects of library offerings. St. Joseph was famous as the site of the Pony Express, which carried mail all the way to Sacramento, California. Also, the railroad to the west went through St. Joseph.

About 1200 Jews lived in St. Joseph at the turn of the century. More than half were from East European countries. There was a Bessarabian Society and other groups from Russia, Poland, Roumania.

The oldest orthodox synagogue in St. Joseph was the Shaare Shalom (Gates of Peace), founded in 1883. German speaking Jews from Germany and Austria first came to St. Joseph in the 1840's. They were well established in business, commerce, manufacturing, and the professions. They helped the new Yiddish speaking Jews adapt to the American environment. They had a separate, reform temple, Adat Joseph (Glory of Joseph). There was friction between the members of these two groups. It gradually dissipated a bit. Some of the families became more assimilated, while others clung to the orthodox, traditional ways. Ephriam was one of the founders of the B'nai Yaacov orthodox synagogue, and contributed two Torahs he brought from Russia. The Torah is a scroll made from kosher animal parchment, with the entire text of the Five Books of Moses written in it by a *sofer*. It may be referred to as the Tanakh or Hebrew Bible, or the Old Testament.

After the Kaminetsky family arrived in America in 1913 opportunities for making a living were somewhat limited. Ephriam spoke no English, had little education, but had a fair business sense. He managed to buy a horse and wagon, which he used to collect empty bottles and barrels. He sold them to the pickle works located nearby. He grew grapes in the back yard, and kept some of the bottles for storing his homemade wine. As a small boy, Joe Meites remembered helping him make the wine. Joe also helped deliver the wine to customers. The prohibition era began about 1918 and lasted until Franklin Roosevelt became president in 1932. The prohibition officers sometimes tried to stop Ephriam from making wine. His defense was that he was the Shamus (Sexton) of his synagogue, he made it only for sacramental purposes, and it had to be Kosher.

During Prohibition, it was permitted to make alcoholic beverages of limited alcohol content for one's own family use or for religious purposes, but not for sale. Joe recalled that the prohibition officers made frequent raids into the homes of immigrants from European countries. These residents made their own wine and beer. The agent would haul out wine and distilling apparatus from basements and dump them on the sidewalk in front of the homes. They must have thought this would deter others.

America entered World War I, in 1917. The two Kaminetsky boys, Jacob and Joseph were inducted into the U. S. Army. The war ended in 1918, so they did not go overseas. After the war, they jointly opened a grocery store on 30th and Lafayette street in St. Joseph. It was a successful enterprise. Initially, the entire Kaminetsky family lived close together. A few years after Jacob and Joseph married, they moved to another part of St. Joseph.

The Russian Revolution left conditions in Russia intolerable for the Baruch and Freda Meites family. There was famine and long bread lines. The Meites family now had three children, Morris (1911), Joseph (1913), and Sarah (1915). Joe's mother remembered that she stood in bread lines for hours. Sarah did not survive. Some of the family thought she did not have enough food. The fourth child, Isidor, was born in 1918.

With the help of family members, and other financial sources, they left Russia for America, in early December 1920. Joe recalled that they traveled by train in Europe, and it was very cold. They made a stop in Paris. They thought Morris had frozen to death, so they took him to a hospital. The doctor did not know what to do. Finally, his mother put Morris in a container of warm water and he was revived. They had little food, but had brought some bottles of wine. It was thought that Morris may have had too much wine in his system. He recovered but was a frail person throughout his life. Freda had another scare because Joe was missing. When they found him he said he was out sight seeing in Paris, alone - at the age of 6. He recalled how dazzled he was by all the different lights and colors.

The information at Ellis Island had the name Boruh Meites; Ethnicity, Roumanian; last place of residence, Kichnef, Roumania; Date of arrival, December 13, 1920; Age at arrival, 35; ship of travel, Zeeland; Port of Departure, Cherbourg, France; wife, Freda, children, Moshe, Joseph and Isidor.

After the Meites family was processed through Ellis Island, they took a train directly to St. Joseph, MO. Joe's mother was 9 months pregnant. They barely reached St. Joseph when Samuel was born January 1, 1921. If there is any question about how strong women are she would be a prime example of strength and courage.

Four very traumatic events occurred in 1928 and 1929 that impacted the Meites and Kaminesky families. In late November 1928, as he was crossing a street in St. Joseph, Grandfather Ephriam was hit by a car. His injuries were extensive. He developed pneumonia and died December 1, 1928.

The second event is his three children inherited money that he left for them. At the time, the stock market was on a high roll. The Meites story is that Jacob and Joseph Kaminesky invested their share as well as Freda's in the stock market. Of course the stock market crashed in 1929 and they lost the entire investment. This resulted in some bad feelings as Ben Meites, Freda's husband, objected to the investment and was very angry with Freda and her brothers for investing it. A few hundred dollars was a lot of money then.

The Great Depression (1929-1940's) quickly followed which meant industries, merchants and other sources of jobs dried up. Joe's father had been working at one of the meat packing companies and they closed. The next traumatic event was the Big Dust Bowl which developed in Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma and some surrounding states in the 1930's. Crops could not be grown, and many people left the area. This event was the subject of the book 'Grapes of Rath' and others. Farmers finally learned that they had to rotate crops and keep the ground covered so the soil would not blow away.

Two more children had been added to the Meites family. Jerry was born in 1925 and Rachel (Renee') in 1927. They needed more income so they moved into a house next to the B'nai Yaacov Synagogue. The house was owned by the synagogue. They received free rent as Freda did many things for the synagogue. Baruch also did some things for the synagogue, including being Shamus.

After grandfather Ephriam died grandmother, Zeesil, went to live with the Meites family. They had a small house and eight people living in it. The tiny room shared by Joe and Isidor was given to grandmother Zeesil. The family had little privacy. Zeesil was deaf and diabetic. Joe recalled that her doctor taught him how to inject insulin for her. Zeesil's deafness was very frustrating for Freda, but she tried hard to understand what Zeesil wanted and needed. Their

income was totally insufficient for the family. Freda later took in another woman boarder, who was blind. Morris, Joe, and Isidor, sold newspapers and magazines.

Baruch (Ben) Meites was poorly prepared to earn a living. He had the honor of being selected to attend a Yeshiva as a young man in Russia. Those selected had to be bright students. Although the focus was on religion, Joe recalled that his father read famous Russian novels, history and other books on his own. He was especially good in mathematics. He formulated mathematical problems and solved them. He was proud of his educational background. If he had had an opportunity to attend a university, he probably would have felt more at home in that environment. He tried to sell fruits and vegetables in the neighborhood. It had to be a drastic change for him. At the Yeshiva he was supposed to devote all of his time to studying and learning. He clung to his orthodox religion and lifestyle, and continued to believe that learning was a higher honor than any other kind of work. He was the only Meites in St. Joseph and he missed his family. He sometimes mentioned how terribly sad his father, Solomon, looked when they left Kishinev. Solomon was too old to make the trip and was standing alone waving to them as they left Kishinev.

Joe's mother was more exposed to the world outside the home and tried to cope with the assimilation that she observed, and to some extent, participated in. As the children attended school and participated in community activities, they too were exposed to more assimilation and were making their entry into these changes. It sometimes brought conflict with the parents who were clinging to the life they knew in Russia.

Along with the aging process and the many stresses of living, Freda developed high blood pressure, diabetes, prolapsed bladder and heart problems. Jerry wrote some family history in which he commented that his mother always tried to give good care to her mother Zeesel and the other woman boarder. He recalled that she always was a loving mother. My observation of Freda was that she always looked after the interests of her family and did not take care of herself. She was reluctant to obtain medical care. She also was well schooled in "women's work".

When the great depression came to America, in 1929, many businesses left St. Joseph. Many people moved to Kansas City because the city got the rights to bring the main cross-country railroad through Kansas City instead of through St. Joseph. Kansas City then became the center of development and jobs. As the depression worsened, the grocery store would not support two families. Jacob moved his family to Kansas City. Jacob worked for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. Later, he and his wife, Tillie, opened a women's lingerie store in Kansas City. Jack also became involved in politics. This was the time of the Thomas Pendergast political machine. Later Joseph Kaminesky moved to Kansas City. Joe recalled that he visited his uncles and their families in Kansas City and always felt their love. He said they treated him well and he felt an attachment and love for them.

JOSEPH MEITES

As soon as the Meites family arrived in St. Joseph, arrangements were made for the children to enter grade school. Joe was six years old. Some of the teachers spoke German, so they were able to help the Yiddish speaking children learn English. The Meites children knew only Yiddish. The parents knew some Russian but spoke mainly Yiddish.

At school, Joe said he did not know how to ask to go to the washroom, so he had an accident. The teacher taught him to hold up one finger for urination and two fingers for other

purposes. Joe was in grade school from 1920 to 1928. The teachers focused on course work, but incorporated positive attitudes toward becoming an American. They emphasized patriotism and respect for the flag. The children were made aware of the concept of the “melting Pot”, and the importance of all students being good citizens. Joe discovered the Carnegie Library. He often said that, “as a barefoot boy, I set a goal of reading every book in the library.” He also discovered art and classical music there. His mother encouraged him by giving him a little change so he could have something to eat and stay at the library. She also asked him not to get involved in family problems. She wanted him to spend his time productively by studying or working. This resulted in his learning how not to get caught in the middle of a squabble or the family issues of others.

Joe attended Talmud Torah until the age of 13 and had a Bar Mitzvah in 1926. He attended Central High School from 1928-1932. He thought that St. Joseph had an excellent high school. He enjoyed his classes, and participated in sports, including track. Joe was interested in making radios. He mentioned that he attended a special class in Radio at Central High night school and made crystal sets. I found a certificate that indicates he completed the course in May, 1930. Joe always had curiosity about how things are made and how they work.

Joe described some of his experiences as a youngster. He recalled that he just happened to be in a part of St. Joseph at the time a negro man was being hanged from a tree. He was shocked and appalled. At the time he had not had much experience with black/white issues. It left him with a horrible feeling that people could be so cruel to each other.

Joe remembered that he, his brothers and other boys would go on exploring expeditions along the Missouri River which was near their home. He said he enjoyed nature, and being near water. Joe recalled that Missouri summers were very hot and humid. He described a small park that was near the house and said his family members would sleep in the park. He remembered that the grass was thick and cool as compared to their small house. Joe and I visited St. Joseph in the 1970’s and he took me to the park. It had been left as he described it. Historically, in 1860, St. Joseph was one of the two endpoints of the Pony Express. In 1882 the notorious Jesse James was living in St. Joseph under the name of Mr. Howard. He was shot in the back and killed while hanging a picture. An excerpt from a popular poem of the time is “that dirty little coward that shot Mr. Howard has laid poor Jesse in his grave”. The two events resulted in the slogan, “Where the Pony Express started and Jesse James ended”.

Jesse James was known as one of Missouri’s notorious outlaws. Jesse had a wife and two children. He moved to St. Joseph in 1881, apparently deciding to settle down and give up his unlawful ways. The Jesse James house is located at 1318 Lafayette street and became a historical museum. Joe had had the opportunity to attend western movies and was intrigued by having had such a notorious person live nearby.

No biography of Joe Meites would be complete without including his relationship with his brother, Isidor and the school systems in St. Joseph. Joe and Isidor were very close. They shared each other’s intellectual interests, and were best of friends. They consulted each other about important decisions in their lives. One might expect them to turn to their parents, but Joe and Isidor were exposed to a world that was not familiar to their parents. This probably caused them to turn to each other. They were among the top students in their classes. Joe had an ability to remember everything he learned and he loved to have an audience to discuss his interests. Isidor was very perceptive and could get to the essence of things with ease and depth. Joe often commented that Isidor was “the best of the family”. He meant intellectually and personally. Joe thought Isidor would make significant contributions to society in the future. Both were good natured and thoughtful of the feelings of others.

Joe recalled how fortunate they were to have had Calla Edington Varner as Principal at Central High School. According to a 1932 publication of Wakitan, the High School Year Book, she was recognized as an outstanding principal, who had a way of bringing out the best in students. She was greatly admired, and made a good role model. She taught that the school was a community, which is known by its leaders. As the principal, she was considered the mayor of that community, and the students were its citizens. She carried out a liberal administrative policy, which allowed for freedom to be progressive and instigate change.

One edition of Wakitan, the Central High School Yearbook, has a photo of Joe with the caption: "Name some line in which *the professor* is not a success, if you can. From radio to debate he has attained the highest honors. Extracurricular activities included: Capers; Corporal ROTC; Debate Team; President, Forum; Tower Gleams staff; Latin Insignia; Literary editor; Centhology; National Honor Society."

The Wakitan Yearbook had a photo of Isidor Meites with the caption: "Isidor's intellectual ability is unexcelled. Extracurricular activities included Associate editor, Kaper Klapper; Co-editor-in-chief, Wakitan; Editor in-Chief, Outlook; Editor-in-Chief, Tower Gleams; Vice President, National Forensic League; Wakitan Play; Capers Side Show; Spring Exhibit; English, Mathematics, Latin Insignia; Vice President, Forum; President, Penman's Club; Quill and Scroll; Team; ROTC; National Honor Society."

Tower Gleams was the Central High Student Publication. A 1932 issue indicates that Joe apparently aspired to be a poet, as he had the following poem published

"A STUDY"

*Through the streets we shall walk
You in silence - while I talk
Of the sky, the stars, the sky again
That latest book which I read
While you shall hold high your head
and say, "yes", with near disdain,
Knowing that you can, make torture keen
With the passivity your pride demands.*

*Then through the silent sleeping park,
Under the shadows of the dark,
We shall walk, hand in hand,
Where for moments I shall not purr
In meticulous monotone; leaves will stir
As we pass under lamp posts dim;
My heart will become more grim
With thought of what I wish to say -
And you will know, you will feel,
You will be pleased with my delay;
For a second my hopes will soar,
And I shall begin, as often before
With "Sweetheart, I love you so," -
Then hesitate and look into your eyes,
Whereupon you will smile sardonically,
And give me a touch of your palm, -*

*As though a touch were balm!
Yet you will not deign your lips to part,
But just set your eyes on a most distant star -
And I will muse on how far apart
Your cruel nonchalance and my heart's passion are.”
Joseph Meites, 1932*

Isidor had articles in *Tower Gleams* in the 1935 and 1936 issues. At the age of 18 he was editor-in-chief of *Tower Gleams*. Excerpts from his article, “Mark Twain: Genius of the Average” follows: (It exemplifies his perceptiveness and his writing skills)

“It is the tendency these days to analyze our great men in terms of psychological phrases of indefinite meaning. A worthy man who may have lived in blissful ignorance of the word psychology and its various applications is thus in danger of being made posthumously the object of a microscopic study. Consequently, we find that Mark Twain, the man who prefaced one of his books with the notice that he would prosecute anyone attempting to find a motive in it, and banish anyone finding a moral, is being torn to pieces by eager analysts who then proceed to quarrel over just these things. This in itself, had it been well done, might not have resulted in so deplorable a situation. Unfortunately, each of Mark Twain’s many biographers naturally chose that part of Mark Twain’s character which he (the biographer) liked best. Having forgotten the complete Mark Twain, each man (like the blind men in the old tale, describing the elephant) attempts to analyze the whole from one of its parts.

So we may have an excellent analysis of Mark Twain as a great satirist and denouncer of social evils, as a jolly, rough, old story teller, as a simple uncultured Mid-westerner, and as a great American artist. But we do not have one complete interpretation by this group of him simply as Mark Twain. He was not just one of them, he was all of them. He was a many-sided personality. To insist he never changed is actually to bring him down from his position as a foremost American author and make him simply a fun maker, satirist, or a boor, and that would certainly be untrue.

How could Mark Twain write so well about the average man and appeal so greatly to the average mind? Simply because he himself, basically, represented the average, i.e., the uncultured point of view. He furthermore, had the ability to transfer that viewpoint into writing; it is this which makes him stand out in the age he characterized so well, as an artist. Human like all of us, he was vain and loved to pose, as he himself admitted. From this arose the legend by which he became known throughout the world. He was neither well educated nor completely uncultured, but he posed as either, or both, depending upon mood or circumstances. He certainly was no art critic, yet he does give us several hours of pleasure in presenting his opinion on some of the world’s most noted works of art, opinions which we may have also, but dare not voice. That does not mean that he is devoid of artistic appreciation; it merely brings out his independence. Perhaps he felt how ridiculous his attitude was, but he did not intend to worship Michelangelo just because everybody else did. Nothing pre-digested for Mark! If he couldn’t have his own ideas, then better do away with it all, even at the risk of appearing stupid...”

Isidor Meites, 1936

Joe graduated from St. Joseph Junior College on May 31, 1934. Isidor attended Junior College also but I did not find further information about his activities. In addition to the required

classes, Joe was a member of the Cheshire Cheese and International Relations Clubs. The purpose of the Cheshire Cheese Club was to further the interest in literature, both by writing and by discussing writing. At bi-monthly meetings, each member presented some form of literature through a modern example of that form. The club sponsored the publication of the literary magazine, "Penny Whistle"

The aim of the International Relations Club was to increase knowledge and good will in international relations. They often sponsored prominent local and national speakers. The club also sponsored the Debate Team, and entertained guest debaters.

After I met Joe and Isidor, it became clear that they had very fond memories of their experiences while in the St. Joseph school system. They felt they had excellent learning opportunities. Joe always felt appreciative of the Carnegie Library, where he spent much time and benefitted greatly.

At home, the Meites and Kaminesky families lived in close proximity to each other. Being Jewish and having been the victims of pogroms and anti-semitism, they followed the rise of Nazism in Germany and Austria, the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe, and in America with great concern. They identified with the concept that the Jewish people needed a homeland and became involved in local activities to further the Jewish cause.

According to internet historians, "The proponents of Zionism regarded it as a national liberation movement whose aim was the self-determination of the Jewish people. It was believed that Zionism was an international political movement that regarded the Jews as a national entity. The focus was primarily on the creation of a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine. Nationhood was thought to have first evolved somewhere between 1200 BCE and up to about 70 CE. There were different ideas about the purpose of Zionism throughout its history. The Jews from Eastern Europe, where anti-semitism was rampant, immigrated to Palestine. They founded a number of agricultural settlements, known as Kibbutzim, or Moshava, with financial support from Jewish philanthropists in Western Europe."

One of Joe's relatives, Sarah Maitus, daughter of Sheva Maitus lived in Russia. She married Shaya Sarotzky and they immigrated to Palestine about 1900. They had formed a group of Jews who purchased land in the upper galilee and established one of the first Kibbutzim, known to this day as Kibbutz Dalyia. In 1955 Joe and I visited Sarah in Kibbutz Dalyia. She showed us a photo of a tree that was the only thing on the land when they arrived. We visited Sarah many times and watched the Kibbutz change from a large farming area to an industrialized kibbutz.

By the 1930's, Joe began to consider the possibility of going to Palestine to live. He knew he had to have some farming skills as he wanted to help the Jewish people settle the land. After Junior College, he obtained a summer job working on a farm. When that job was finished he could not find any other work in St. Joseph. Joe decided to hitch hike to New York. He found a job in a mothball factory and stayed a year. He was enthralled by New York. He was able to ride on the streetcars or ferry for 5 cents. He enjoyed many American and foreign films and plays. He chose French and German films, as he wanted to learn to speak these languages. He had opportunity to go to the movies during the period of the silent movies in St. Joseph. He found the New York museums full of history and art, which were some of his favorite subjects. He often mentioned that he had a wonderful experience there.

Joe managed to send some money to his parents and saved some for college. He chose the University of Missouri and enrolled in the College of Agriculture, in 1936. He thought this would better prepare him to help develop the land in Palestine. Joe needed additional funding for college so he applied to the National Youth Administration. This program provided funds to the university to hire students. He was fortunate to get a job as laboratory assistant with Dr. C. W. Turner, a noted scientist in endocrinology. He received the BA degree in Agriculture in 1938.

Working in Dr. Turner's laboratory opened up opportunities for Joe to observe the research that Dr. Turner and his graduate students were doing. He became interested in research and Dr. Turner asked if Joe would like to start working on a PhD degree as his student. As sometimes happens, his career as a scientist started quite by accident and he seized the opportunity. Dr. Turner often told me Joe was one of the best students he ever had.

Dr. Turner had several graduate students. I do not remember all of them, but I do remember Ralph Reese, Victor Hurst and John Trentin. They and their wives became lifelong friends. Dr. Turner's laboratory was located in the Dairy Department and was near the University dairy products. This made it convenient for the students to gain access to milk, ice cream, cottage cheese and other dairy foods.

Joe completed the Masters Degree in biochemistry in 1940. He worked toward the PhD degree until November 1942 when he was inducted into the U. S. Army. He was within about six months of completing the PhD. His story continues in the next chapter on College, Courtship, Marriage and World War II. More about Isidor in that chapter.