



## THE SER-CHARLAP FAMILY NEWSLETTER

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### A LIFETIME OF MEMORIES

by Ann Rubin

*Ann Rubin (12053) represents a branch of the Charlap family that was heretofore unknown to us. They spelled the name Charlov. Now in her nineties, she has a profound sense of family and peoplehood, a broad cultural background, an understanding of history, and is happy to share her memories.*

It is through my maternal grandfather, Joseph Schelevsky (12042) that I trace my roots back to the Charlov family and thence to King David. He was a successful lumber merchant in Goniadz, near Tykocin and Bialystok, but lost his fortune when a hurricane overturned his barges carrying an immense quantity of lumber. My mother Deborah was Joseph's eldest daughter. Together with her father and sister Mary (12048) she left Poland in 1888 for Boston. But Joseph became ill in Hamburg and was hospitalized for arm surgery. The girls went on alone and were greeted by newly widowed cousin Gertrude Levitt, of the Ellenbogen family. I remember my grandfather Joseph as an aristocratic, tall, lean gentleman with gray-blue eyes. Like my mother, I favored him over my grandmother Florence (12045), who was quite provincial compared to her sophisticated husband. My grandmother was the spoiled daughter of a wealthy Ellenbogen from Greigrodt.

My mother had an intellectual curiosity from early childhood and was self-educated. She was proficient in seven languages. In 1893 she married my father, Fisher Wolfson (12051), who was from New Bedford, Massachusetts. This port had once been the whaling capital of the world, the locale of *Moby Dick*, and attracted many Portuguese from the Azores as well as many Sephardic Jews. After whaling declined, the city became a manufacturing center and many East Europeans and French Canadians migrated there for factory jobs. Mother's linguistic skills were of immense aid to Dad who owned a department store and had customers from a diversity of countries. Mother's library contained books in Russian, German, French, and English, in addition to the many Hebrew and Yiddish volumes collected by my father. She shaped my literary tastes and often accompanied me to the public library. She was a charter member of the Jewish Publication Society. She started a Hebrew school in a house placed at her disposal by Dad. By 1912 my parents sold the store and purchased a firm that imported and bottled fine liqueurs. Mother was now free to pursue her cultural interests. She predated the Hadassah discussion groups by starting a Bible Study Group. Subsequently she became president of both Hadassah and the Council of Jewish Women. She was Chairman of both The War Chest and War Bond Drives back then during World War I. On Sunday mornings I would climb into her bed and she would regale me with stories about life in Poland. She would recite Pushkin and Heine to me and shared enriching experiences like seeing Sarah Bernhardt in *Camille*; the great actress sitting on stage all the while because her leg had been amputated. Mother was impressed by Mary Antin's *The Promised Land* and also by the courage of Helen Keller.

On Friday mornings mother always stayed at home to prepare for *Shabbos*. She was as excellent a cook as she was a linguist and I still can recall the fragrant and delicious smells emanating from our kitchen. Even after my sister and I married, we would come home for *Shabbos* dinners often accompanied by friends. Mother had told us that when she was a bride, she recognized a man from her *shtetl* in the synagogue. He was from a lower class and turned his head

(continued on next page)

## MEMORIES (cont.)

so she wouldn't see him. After the service, she approached her *landsman* and said, "Cecil, don't be ashamed to speak with me. This is America, not Goniadz." Cecil took her at her word and frequently knocked on our kitchen door to visit with Mother. They would discuss the old days as she set the table with home baked *kichel*, *taglach*, and tea.

My father was a shy, volatile man who had a marvelous sense of humor. He had perfect pitch and taught himself to play piano, violin, and organ. He also wrote poetry. Dad came to the United States alone at age twelve in 1883. His father, wishing him to avoid tsarist military service, conceived of the idea of sending him to New Bedford under the care of Philip and Sam Genensky, Dad's uncles. They were the first Ashkenazi Jewish settlers in the city. My grandfather told Dad to change his name to Wolfson (his given name was Wolf) and when he would return to Bialystok in a few years the authorities would not recognize him. Grandfather was reputed to be a brilliant individual who came from a long line of distinguished rabbis. He gave my father counsel upon his departure to remember the Sabbath and to keep it holy, to be honest and to study *Talmud*. Dad followed this advice to the letter.

I have had many unusual experiences that I can share. After meeting my future husband Gabriel (12055), we discovered that he and my brother Julie (12052) were classmates as undergraduates at Harvard. They didn't know each other until I introduced them. Gabe went on to Harvard Medical School and Julie to Harvard Law. Gabe was a pediatrician when we met but he suspended his practice upon our marriage since my generous father gave us a gift of a year study and travel abroad. Gabe did post-doctoral work in Berlin and Vienna and we traveled extensively through Europe and the Middle East. I received a teaching certificate from a prestigious institute in Vienna and studied child psychology with Anna Freud in her apartment. In Berlin we attended a concert to hear Albert Einstein perform as a violinist. Then off to Palestine where we lived with Gabe's cousins Emily and Lou Ehrlich. Emily had made *aliyah*  
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as a child and became Henrietta Szold's personal secretary. She introduced us to some of the founding members of Israel, including the poetess Jessie Sampter and Henrietta Szold herself, who entertained us at dinner in her home and invited us to her weekly *Oneg Shabbat*. We even danced a hora with her when she was 69 which we thought aged at the time. The Ehrlichs took us on tours to every nook of *Eretz Yisrael* and on a ten day bus tour of Lebanon and Syria. Emily became curator of the Henrietta Szold Archives. In Tel Aviv we spent a long weekend with Joshua Subrasky (12049), my mother's first cousin. He was an ardent Zionist who joined the BILU group and subsequently became a successful banker. He and another cousin, Judge Bernard Rosenblatt (12050) of New York started the Tiberias project in the Galilee. Gabe was a descendant of Hillel and his uncle was personal secretary to Baron de Gunzberg. He helped Baron de Hirsch set up the Jewish colony in Argentina. Gabe and I had a wonderful life until he passed away at the age of 72.

*Ann Rubin provided a family tree which traces back to King David. This is the 16th independent tree of this type that we have collected from relatives throughout the world. The tree was drawn by an Israeli scribe who copied it from a manuscript that had been handed down to Ann. It reads: "I am Chana (Ann) bat Dvora bat Yosef ben R'Yisrael Zev Schelevsky ben HaRav Aryeh Leib of Tykocin ben HaGaon R'Yisrael Charif, Rabbi of Zablodova and afterwards Bialystok and then in Tykocin. All the Gaonim of the land were his students. From his mother's righteous side he is the son of Mashke Leah who had four brothers including the famous Gaon Ephraim Eliezer Zvi Hersch Charlap." This is where Ann's family connects to the main Charlap tree. Mashke Leah and her four brothers have been well documented. They are the children of Ze'ev Charlap (3146) and grandchildren of Abraham Charlap (2153), progenitor of our modern tree. Mashke Leah Charlap (10835) was married to Yosef Aryeh (10836) who was most likely also a Charlap. His son Moshe Rafael (10837), who was an ancestor of Abram Sachar (10653), used the name Charlap. Now Ann tells us that the Schelevsky family came from the Charlov line. This means that Mashke Leah's other son Yisrael Charif used the name Charlap (Charlov). It should be noted that Charif, too, is an honorary title. If the two known sons of Mashke Leah and Yosef Aryeh used the name Charlap, it appears that Yosef Aryeh was probably a Charlap. Ann Rubin's mother was one of six children of Joseph Schelevsky. Some of these shortened the name to Schell. There are now Schells in diverse geographic locations and we are piecing together the history of this newly found branch.*

## HERZL KASHETSKY: AN ARTIST PAYS HIS RESPECT

*This article was adapted from an interview with Herzl Kashetsky (10162, PL.A-14ddb) which appeared in the Saint John, New Brunswick newspaper.*

Herzl Kashetsky is the grandson of Moshe (10125) and Esther Budovitch (10121) Kashetsky. Born in Saint John, he is recognized as an original creative force in the art world. Walking into either of his littered studios is unnerving. Children with frightened eyes clutch at their mothers' hands; dead naked bodies pile up in a tangled pit; a sad, beautiful girl stares up from a canvas, her sense of violation palpable; a dignified older woman holds your gaze with eyes that have seen too much. These images from the Holocaust, real images of real people, first documented by photographers and now painted by our cousin Herzl, were unveiled at The Beaverbrook Art Gallery in Fredericton, New Brunswick on March 16. The Beaverbrook, in New Brunswick's beautiful capital city, is one of the major Canadian museums. The show consists of 15 paintings and 14 drawings, yet it has taken Herzl 23 years to complete. It has been a labor of love that has both haunted and compelled him, in an effort to remind us that history will repeat itself unless we remember.

Herzl's late brother Joseph (10160) was also an artist and a major influence on him. "As a kid I was always looking over his shoulder, but he was very private about drawing, so sometimes I'd look through the crack in his bedroom door to watch him. When our father died of a heart attack when I was a teenager, I looked up to Joe even more as a father figure. Joe and my sister Esther (10161) also died of heart attacks when they were very young. A couple of months ago, my brother Ancil (10163) had a mild attack, so it's in our family. Joe was just 33 when he died. I was so proud of his work. I sort of felt I wanted it to continue through me. He was very modest. I remember him introducing me once. Someone asked, 'Are you the artist?' Pointing to me, Joe responded, 'No, he's the artist.' I was inspired by Joe. He opened up the world of art to me."

The new Beaverbrook show is entitled *A Prayer for the Dead*. Herzl explains, "It's clearly about the Holocaust, but I think about Joe and the number of deaths in my family and they had an influence. I've had to deal with all that loss on emotional, philosophic, and religious levels and I believe it led me into the Holocaust in the first place. Once you experience something personally, you're more sensitized to feeling other people's pain.

My first painting, *Faces*, goes back to 1974. It's based on Margaret Bourke White's photograph of the liberation of Buchenwald, with all the inmates standing at the fence. That photograph struck me when I saw it. Being Jewish and reading about what happened - it was always there. So I painted the photograph and included myself in the background. It made it personal. And then I put it aside. I was still very young; maturing and developing as an artist. It wasn't until 1980 that I felt ready to tackle it overtly again. This effort involved two girls in the Warsaw Ghetto. But to do the subject justice, I hadn't read enough to encounter the theme on a grand scale. Sincerity is one of the most important factors in art, whether it's a landscape or a portrait. Finally, in 1990, after searching photographs and other documents in museums in New York and Warsaw, I came to the realization that I was mature enough to begin on the project. I heard of a trip to Poland to visit the concentration camps. It was called *March of the Living*, and hundreds of people took part from all over the world. We converged on Auschwitz to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day. It was a turning point - a deeply moving experience on every level. I was joined with people who were survivors, or children of survivors. Everything I'd read about, all the pictures I'd seen, suddenly were real. When I saw the barracks, the grounds, the barbed wire - and I knew what went on there - it was like walking on holy soil. I could hear the people, see the ghosts going by. I was crying inside all the time. People were crying openly, especially in the barracks, because in Auschwitz and Majdanek you see the artifacts and belongings of the victims: shoes, baby carriages, spoons, dishes, eye glasses, clothes. And when I say spoons, they were piled from floor to ceiling. There were rooms full of women's hair and material made out of hair - canvas and linen. I thought about how many people did it take to get that hair. I was exhausted."

Herzl returned from Poland and began to work seriously on the Holocaust series. "I was paying respect to the dead. Those who were martyred wanted the world to know what happened and that they not be forgotten. Lives were extinguished, families cut off, family lines and entire communities wiped out. In a way Hitler succeeded. There were almost 200 synagogues in pre-war Warsaw. Now there's one. This exhibit is to remember our people who perished and to pay homage to them. I didn't physically experience the Holocaust and it would be pretentious of me to interpret the victims' pain and suffering. So I decided to present the facts in a documentary style, subtly injecting my feelings. In that way, the viewer would himself become a witness. The other aspect is the famous quote, 'If we forget the past, we're destined to repeat it.' I was compelled by the rise of neo-Nazism and Holocaust revisionists. There are survivors who testify that this did happen. It isn't just all photographs. I conclude the exhibit with a painting of such a survivor. It is optimistic. Imagine what this person has to deal with, yet is still able to get something out of life and go on. So long as we say a prayer for the dead there is optimism. After all, who says it but the living."

## FROM THE SHTETL TO DES MOINES

by Chester I. Lappen (3634, Pl. A-2ce)

*Chet Lappen is the great-grandson of Israel Betzalel Charlap (3181) and Shayna Frume Lapin (3190). He is a senior partner in the Los Angeles law firm of Mitchell, Silberberg & Knupp and has represented such famous individuals as Louis B. Mayer and Doris Day. A magna cum laude graduate of Harvard Law School, Chet was Editor in Chief of the Law Review and number 1 in his class. He is listed in Who's Who and was given the Learned Hand Award as distinguished attorney and community leader by the American Jewish Committee. He has served as President of the Leo Baeck Temple.*

My grandfather, Morris (Moshe Aryeh) Charlap (3410) lived near the border of Lithuania and Poland. He left that area when the Russian army came to conscript young men as recruits. Grandfather was very Orthodox and had a beard. To escape conscription, he wrapped a scarf around his head and dressed as a woman. Thus disguised, he left his wife and three children to find his way to America. His first stop was Paris; then he made his way to Philadelphia. The authorities had difficulty spelling the name Charlap in English and gave him the name Kelly. Grandfather didn't care for that; it sounded too much like the Hebrew word for dog - *kelev*. He returned to Ellis Island to get another name. They asked him his mother's maiden name - that's how he became Lappen.

He spent a short time in Boston where he had a nephew Max (3424) who spelled the name Lappin. Then he went to another nephew, also Morris Lappen (3423), in Chicago. While in Chicago, my grandfather worked with the Langendorf brothers who started a bakery. My grandfather was the only one of the three who could read and write and hence he kept the books. They offered him a partnership but he elected instead to receive a weekly salary of \$3.00. It was an unfortunate decision; the Langendorfs became multi-millionaires.

My grandparents went to Des Moines because my grandmother had a half-niece who was living there. She was married to A. Kramer who had an amazing history. Kramer was very religious, studied *Talmud* every day, and was of legendary strength. My grandfather, who was not an admirer of Kramer, nevertheless testified that he once saw Kramer, on a bet, get under a horse and lift it off the ground. Kramer's strength was an asset after his conscription into the Russian army. Because of his incredible physical prowess, his commanding officer made him his assistant, granted him the rank of Warrant Officer, and outfitted him with a fine uniform. Kramer later had four or five children. Except for his son Sam (3627), none inherited his phenomenal strength. Sam later married my father's sister Florence (3624), so by marriage he was my uncle.

Sam's superhuman strength made him a legend in Des Moines. Once a champion wrestler came to the city and offered \$5.00 to anyone he could not pin in three minutes. Although he knew nothing of wrestling, Sam accepted the challenge and won. The defeated champion reportedly said, "You are totally ignorant of the sport of wrestling but you are the strongest man I've ever met." Incidentally, right here in Los Angeles there is a former trainer of the Russian Olympic team, who is himself a renowned wrestler and weight lifter. He told me there was a group of Jews living in a section of Russia who were legendary because of their superhuman strength. Kramer was probably one of them.

My grandfather saved his money and in a relatively short time brought his wife and three children to Des Moines, where he opened a grocery store. They maintained their Orthodoxy and my grandfather was instrumental in starting a local *shul* and the Hebrew school that we all attended for six days a week.

My father Robert (3625) was a very prominent lawyer in the midwest and was extremely active in civic affairs and politics. He was President of B'nai Brith for the 6th regional district and helped found the Zionist organization and the Hillel Foundation. Abram Sachar (10653) was one of the first directors of Hillel and was at our home on many occasions. He and my father were good friends and knew they were somehow Charlap cousins.

My mother was Anna Sideman (3628). Her family came from the same general area of Poland/Lithuania and she had relations named Lapin. They also knew Charlaps. Her family settled in Dubuque, Iowa where she was born. Her mother was very observant but her father sometimes bent the rules, at least when he traveled. There were years that they had meat only on the rare occasions when *kosher* products were brought in from Chicago. Shortly after my mother started school, my grandmother wanted her to associate with Jewish children. Accordingly, they moved to the west side of Chicago and bought a big home. By that time my grandfather had made a great deal of money.

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*When it is rational to say, "I know not my father or my mother, let my children be aliens to me that no prayer of mine may touch them," then it will be rational for the Jew to say, "I will not cherish the prophetic consciousness of our nationality." The divine principle of our race is action, choice, resolved memory. Let us help to will our own better future and the better future of the world - not renounce our higher gift; but choose our full heritage, claim the brotherhood of our nation. . . The vision is there; it will be fulfilled.*

- George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 1876

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Ser-Charlap Family Association has a new Board of Directors that will work towards assuring the continuity, growth, and success of the organization. News of the Board's activities will be reported in *B'rayshit*. The Board members are:

**Esther Budd (10202)** - wife of Stan Budd (10192); executive of the Budd Department Stores of Ontario. She has been researching the Budovitch branch of the family and helped organize the October 1996 reunion in Kitchener. Esther lives in Waterloo, Ontario.

**Barbara Charlip (7623)** - a Michigan teacher, Barbara did a study in graduate school on the family history. She appeared unexpectedly at the 2nd Catskills reunion and has been active in family affairs ever since. Barbara lives in Southfield, Michigan.

**Eliot Charlip (7615)** - a lawyer and business executive, Eliot brings his professional acumen and intense family consciousness to the Board. He lives in West Bloomfield, Michigan.

**Sidney Goldstein** - a long-time officer of *Chevra Bnei Moshe Neistadt Chechnovtze*, Sid is knowledgeable in organization finance and procedures. Speaking at our first family reunion in 1989 he displayed his warm feelings for family, landsmen, and the Jewish people. Sid lives in Brooklyn, New York.

**Julia Hyman (3718)** - active in real estate and an accomplished sculptor, Julia and her husband Dick (3716) have been researching the Charlap family for many years. A diligent and creative investigator, her contribution to documentation of our history has been significant. Julia lives in Venice, Florida.

**Aharon Manor (6298)** - an electrical engineer living in Beersheva, Israel, Aharon has applied his analytical skills to the study of the family. He is investigating the Mankuta-Charlap connection, along with many other branches of our family tree.

**Arthur F. Menton (58)** - founding president of the Ser-Charlap Family Association, editor of *B'rayshit*, and author of *The Book of Destiny: Toledot Charlap*. He lives in Centerport, New York.

**Beverly Newman (5042)** - a librarian, Beverly is especially active in the world of Jewish books and information. She is from the Lew/Lewin branch of the family and has written warm essays about her ancestry. Beverly lives in Leawood, Kansas.

**Kenneth Packer (1940)** - a teacher, Ken also helps out in his son's sports business. Married to Carol Simon (1929), with roots in the Tama and Mankuta trees, he has shown a profound interest in Jewish genealogy. Ken lives in Washingtonville, New York.

**Larry Rothberg (4416)** - an attorney, Larry is a

Shervanogura, a family that has connections to many branches of our tree. He is married to Judy Jablowsky (4407), whose mother was the noted poet Esther Charloff (4392). Larry's keen legal mind will be of exceptional value to the Board. He lives in Glen Cove, New York.

**Morris Sahr (21)** - Morey was in at the organization of the Ser-Charlap Family Association and has been a staunch supporter ever since. His Ph.D. training and experience as a noted financial planner have led to innovative suggestions for assuring the success of our organization. Morey lives in Palmyra, Virginia.

**Revie Walman (9660)** - Revie, investigating the roots of the Budovitch family, was energized on learning of her Charlap roots. She helped organize the Kitchener reunion with Lynda (10201) and Esther Budd. Revie is active in real estate in Kitchener, Ontario.

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## BIRTHS

**Michael Izzy (Yisrael) Blaier (11476,Pl.23b)** was born on Staten Island, New York on February 12. Michael is the 5th child for Alan (5755) and Michelle (5764) and the 5th grandchild for Robert (5749) and Rosa (5746) Blaier. Rosa's mother was Chaya Lew (4646) who was born in Ciechanowicz, left for Cuba where she married Mordecai Bekier (4651), and eventually came to the USA.

**Helene Rose Deutch (12361,Pl.A-14aaa)** was born on February 10, the first child of Martin (7656) and Jacqueline (12358). Martin, the son of Joseph (7652) and Elsie (7649) Deutch, is the grandson of Israel Charlip (7593) who was born in Lachowicze, Poland/Byelorussia.

**Caitlin Clare Krone (12360,Pl.A-14aaa)** was born on February 20, the first child of Neil (12359) and Julie (7669). Julie's father, Irwin Deutch (7655) is brother to Martin. Beyond that, the ancestry is the same as for Helene Rose.

**Shachar Leshem (12256)** was born on Sept. 19, 1996, the first child of Roie (11186) and Hadar Zaretsky (11183) Leshem. Hadar is the granddaughter of Shlomo Charlap (3310) and great-granddaughter of Rabbi Ephraim Zvi Charlap (3228), pioneer Zionist and founder of Rehovoth, Israel.

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*"Anyone who believes that study of the past is for the sake of the past, has already sacrificed the future."*

- Cynthia Ozick  
December 1996

## MARRIAGES

**Steven Blaier** (5756,Pl.23b) was wed to **Cindy Roberts** (11475) at the Marlboro Jewish Center, Marlboro, New Jersey on April 19. Steve is the son of Robert (5749) and Rosa (5746). Rosa's mother, Chaya Lew Bekier (4646) left Ciechanowicz for Havana, Cuba before World War II. The Lews are also connected with the Smolarczyk branch of the family and Robert Blaier is linked with Mankutas.

**Eve Charlaff** (7858,Pl.A-9c) celebrated her marriage to **Ilan Valani** (11486) on March 23. The *chuppa* was raised at Kibbutz Tzora between Jerusalem and Ashdod, Israel. Eve's father is Joseph Charlaff (7854), from the branch of the family that moved to Slonim from Tykocin. Eve is a specialist in *Eretz Yisrael* studies and Ilan is with the police, in a division which investigates and disposes bombs.

**Morris Lew** (5737,Pl.23a) was married for the third time in December 1996 in Florida. Morris is the son of Pessach Lew (4647), brother to Chaya. Like his sister, he emigrated from Ciechanowicz and lived in Cuba until the Castro revolution.

**Zahava Wietschner** (531,Pl.2a) wed **Shmuel Nayman** (11339) at Shaarei Zion, Brooklyn, New York on March 2. Zahava is the daughter of Rabbi Isaac (477) and Miriam (524) Wietschner and the granddaughter of Anna Sier Wietschner (472). Anna's father, Tifke (470), took the family from Nur to New York in the 1920s. He was the son of Herschel Zvi Ser (468) and Chana Kur (469).

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*errata:* A mistake appeared in the Marriages column of the last issue of *B'rayshit*. Sandy Silverburg (301,Pl.3b) alerted us to the fact that it was his son **Danial** (304), not David (303), who wed **Kristine Pasto** (11294). Also, Sandy is Professor of Political Science, not History, at Catawba College, Salisbury, North Carolina.  
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## OBITUARIES

**Blanche Altman** (9349,Pl.26f) died on Sept. 15, 1996. She was one of six children of Itche (7369) and Yospe Lewin (7368) Cohen. Blanche was born in Kansas City, Missouri and lived in Overland Park, Kansas. She and her husband George (9350) had one son Stanley (9351) who died in 1992. Blanche leaves two grandsons, each of whom have two children.

**Morton Budd** (9403,Pl.A-14dda) died in February. Morton was one of five children of the late Samuel

## LETTERS

We happily receive the newsletters as reading them increases our knowledge of the family. We also congratulate you immensely for your wonderful work *The Book of Destiny: Toledot Charlap*. It is a masterpiece that joins us together - all the branches of the family are in its pages. All those descendants who came out of those little Polish *shetlach* to spread across the world, carrying with them our customs, knowledge of our traditions, and their Jewish hearts. Nor should we forget those dear relatives who died in the Holocaust and also those who successfully escaped as immigrants, suffering hardships to get to new lands. They were our guides giving us strength and guidance through their examples.

- Abram (2869,Pl.8f) and Claire (6892) Szulc  
Santa Rosa, Argentina

*The Book of Destiny* is wonderful. I had been reading basically from an interested but detached point of view until I reached page 499. There you mention Moshe Aharon Charlap (3692,Pl.A-2d), born in Grodno about 1865. You tell me that he owned a well-known hotel. That was *Pensione Charlap* and the hotel was run by my grandparents [Abraham Zisel (3691) and Gertel (9992) Charlap]. Also on page 499, you talk about the Shereshevski family and especially about Hersh Zvi who was born in Grodno. That was my "Uncle" Harry

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(9388) and Leah Hoffman (9394) Budovitch. He and his three brothers ran the Budd Department Store chain in Ontario. Mort was born in Saint John, New Brunswick and moved to Kitchener, Ontario. He is survived by his wife Mildred (10183), son Lowell (10189), daughter Jill Walker (10190) and four grandchildren.

**Lou Michelson** (10149,Pl.A-14ddb) of Saint John, New Brunswick died in November of 1996. Lou was the husband of Jennie Kashetsky (10141). Jennie's mother was Leah Budovitch (10120). Lou and Jennie's one son, Alan (10159) is married to Donna Yanker (10168) and they have two daughters.

**Thelma Horwitz Sachar** (10659,Pl.A-4h) of Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts died on February 4. Thelma was the beloved and devoted wife of the late Dr. Abram Leon Sachar (10653). Abram was instrumental in developing the Hillel Foundation for Jewish Life on Campus and was founding President of Brandeis University. Thelma served on the Brandeis University National Women's

(cont. on page 8)



## LETTERS (cont.)

(3707)! And, of course "Aunt" Ida (8921). I knew them as Harry and Ida Sheron and they were the owners of the Berger and Sheron Silk Mill in Elmira, New York, where both my Mom and my Dad, when he came over from Grodno, worked. On page 500 you talk about Zvi who became Grygor and eventually Gregory (8891). He was my cousin and, as a child, my family would take me on visits to him, his sons Monroe (8898) and Harvey (8899), and Uncle Hesse (8890) in Montreal. The book records that Harvey remembers his father speaking of Aunt Gittel who came to Montreal after the Holocaust. That was my grandmother and her family name was Blumowicz before marrying my grandfather. We knew about four of their children: Sarah Alexandra (12268), born about 1900, my Aunt Rita (12269), born in 1902, my Dad, Charles (12270), born in 1904, and Lev (12271), born in 1906. Lev disappeared during the Holocaust and we have no idea, but may assume, what happened to him. Aunt Sarah married a man named Oscar Mueller (12272) who was a judge of the High Court of France. They had a child Nora (12274) in 1924. Nora married Jacques Rosen (12276) and had twins in 1952, Elairette Alexander (12279) and Serges Oscar (12280). Rita lived in Brussels after the war and visited with us in the USA when I was a child. I saw her in Brussels in 1969. I believe Nora and Jacques still live in Brussels. Dad came from Hamburg to this country in 1920 aboard the SS United States. He stayed with Louis Lapin in Paterson, New Jersey. Dad joined the U.S. Cavalry soon after his arrival and was stationed at Fort Brown, Texas. He returned to New Jersey and then moved to Elmira to work in the silk mill. Those three pages of the book made my family's history come alive and I thank you for it.

- Allan Charlap (11337)  
Elmira, New York

The book is very interesting. Through the many eyewitness recollections, there emerges a picture of rural Jewish life in eastern Europe with its happy AND difficult sides, which is not the simplistic, romantic, sentimental image usually conveyed about the *shtetl*. I am also grateful to you for presenting, not only the conventional Zionist story of the development of Israel - dominated by various left and center-left groups - but also bringing in the voices of *Betar* and *Irgun*. The account of the two groups [right and left wings] passing each other in the forest was revealing, as was the description of the *Altalena* incident. My father, a member of *Betar*, told of training in Czechoslovakia in a secret camp during the 1930s. The socialists got wind

of these exercises and convinced the government to close down the camp. Fortunately, most of the training had already been completed. Dad went to Israel where the government was in the hands of Labor. They ran things as if power should be exclusively theirs. My parents eventually had a chicken farm near Ramatayim. The 50 farmers sold their eggs and bought feed through a cooperative. Since these farmers were not Labor supporters, they found it difficult to get enough feed for their chickens and were obliged to augment their supplies "under the table" from the surplus that the leftist *kibbutzim* received. The cooperative complained to the government about the imbalance in the distribution; whereupon the government pressured the *kibbutzim* to stop selling to the cooperatives on the black market. It seems that idealism in theory is not uncommon, but in practice it is rare indeed. It is clear that it is much healthier for a country to have periodic rotation of the parties in power. It cleans out the dead wood and reduces arrogance. Another element of the book that I appreciate is the enumeration of the Jewish participation as soldiers and fighters during World War II. I once was in the detective office of our local police station, chaperoning a kindergarten class. I noticed a note tacked on the wall saying that while Ryans and O'Donalds were dying, fighting for their country, Goldbergs and Cohens were making money. One day I'll use your book to compile all the passages of Jewish World War II military participation just of the Charlap tribe. It should serve an excellent educational purpose.

- Daphnah Sage  
Newton Centre, Massachusetts

Before we left for a three month vacation in Spain, we had a Chanukah dinner for all the children and grandchildren. Before distributing the gifts, I had all my children and our darling grand-kids sit and listen to me read the story of their grandmother and great-grandmother's struggle in her quest to reach America. *The Book of Destiny* was so descriptive that they sat listening - transfixed. After reading the portion of Jessie Rosen Hanick's (6566) "trip" to America, I told them the book will be on the family room table if they wish to read further about their background and roots. They all agreed to take turns in reading. The first Chanukah gift we gave each of them was a reproduced photo of Grandma Jessie, her parents, and brother Sam (6568), while in Europe. Thank you so much for this great book and for including the portion about my beloved mother of blessed memory. She would have loved it.

- Esther Kanter (6574, Pl.11d)  
Kansas City, Missouri  
(cont. next page)

## LETTERS (cont.)

We have yet to read *The Book of Destiny* from cover to cover but have read enough selected portions to recognize the erudition with which our history has been told. This is an excellent rendition of a very difficult subject - the story of our family and its many branches and how they have fared over the centuries. We read the Newsletters regularly and their arrival helps us keep up on family activities and further history. Though it is hard to keep in touch with all our many relatives, the family association gives us a direct connection with them.

- Irving Ser (1609,Pl.12)  
Longmeadow, Massachusetts

May we bring your readers' attention to the comments of Patrick Goodenough, distributed by a Christian group in Jerusalem. He states that several decades ago, the word "Palestinian" became associated in the minds of many around the world with hijacking, hostage-taking, and other acts of terror. Then the PLO had its facelift. Yasser Arafat was miraculously rehabilitated and transformed from leader of a gang of violent thugs to an honored guest at the White House. But today, despite short memories and pro-Arab inclinations, the truth is there for all who would see it: Arafat and his associates remain hijackers. This time, the entire nation of Israel is being held hostage. Every time Israel moves, the Palestinian leadership, including such "moderates" as Hanan Ashrawi and Faisal Husseini, turn on the pressure, reminding the Jewish people that they are not free agents, that they remain hostages. The row over Har Homa is merely the latest manifestation of this strategy. In the 1970s, the world's media generally shared the view that hijacking was an abhorrent and unacceptable tactic. In the 1990s, unfortunately, far too often the media abet the crime. Recently, international television news channels have regaled us with information about the Har Homa situation. But those who write the news bulletins remain firmly convinced of one thing: that the Palestinian version of events is the true one. SKY NEWS reported, "Israel has defied world opinion by deciding to build thousands of homes for Jews in an Arab suburb of Jerusalem." CNN took this "Arab suburb" concept further, claiming the building was to occur in a section of Jerusalem home to mostly Arabs - even as a camera panned over the barren site, home right now to none, Jew or Arab. And the BBC fell back on that old favorite slur and told the world the homes were to be built for "Jewish settlers." As if to remind us that the media will stick to its biases, even if proven wrong, a CNN anchor reminded an Israeli guest of the violence which broke out the last time Israel had

taken a decision without taking Arab sensibilities into account: "Remember when Israel built that tunnel near the Muslim holy sites?" she asked. Apparently, the poor woman is unaware of the fact the tunnel was built several hundred years before Mohammed was born. But then, historical background was never very important in the media's coverage of the Middle East.

- Leah and Jason Elbaum  
received by e-mail

*The Book of Destiny* is absolutely magnificent! Susan and I were stunned when we received it. Frankly, we expected something quite modest, so you can imagine our surprise. We are thoroughly impressed by the scholarship and deeply touched by your motivation. We feel an enormous debt of gratitude and believe that all members of the family are fortunate beyond description that you undertook this important effort.

- Alan Budovitch (10112,Pl.A-14d)  
Chicago, Illinois

My son Liber borrowed my copy of *The Book of Destiny* and after reading it was very impressed. So impressed that he wants to keep my copy! So please send an additional volume. I am very proud to have this book since it is a testimony to our ancestors' lives that should be transmitted to our children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and to all succeeding generations. We congratulate you for developing so interesting and magnificent a work.

- David Pack (2081,Pl.32ad)  
Santiago, Chile

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## OBITUARIES (cont.)

Committee and worked for many years on behalf of the university's libraries. Abram's grandmother was Miriam Charlap Abramowitz (10647). Thelma was the mother of Dr. David B. Sachar (10669), Dr. Howard M. Sachar (10667), and the late Dr. Edward J. Sachar (10668). She had five grandchildren, four of whom survive her. She also leaves a great-granddaughter.

**Edwin Walter Sear** (1323,Pl.8aa) died of cancer on July 1, 1996. He was 46 years old and a resident of Roswell, Georgia. Edwin was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, the son of the late Rose (1313) and Louis (1305) Sear. He is survived by his wife Shirley (1510), son Zachary (1518), daughter Shana (1519), brother Dr. Alan Sear (1322) of Tampa, Florida, sister Carolyn Sear Rosen (1325) of Nashville, Tennessee, and Annette Sear Wade (1324) of Austin, Texas. Edwin was a graduate of the University of Tennessee and was a stockbroker and financial planner at Prudential Securities.



## ROOTS

by Hannah Koplowitz Stein (603,Pl.4ba)

I remember, years ago, thinking - who cares about my ancestry, where I come from, where my roots are? I am myself and as long as I am a good person and a good Jew, I'm not interested in my family history. The passage of time has changed my perception. Indeed, the person I grew into is very much a product of the soil that nurtured me from generation to generation. It is with pride that I bear my heritage and teach my children about theirs, both from our national and family perspectives. That includes the Ser-Charlap family of which I became a part upon my marriage to Zvi Stein (579) in 1969. Zvi has roots in the Pasternak and Kur branches of the family.

Now, besides raising my five sons (with G-d's help), I teach English in a New York City high school; I am actively involved in the religious life of my Young Israel community; and I write poetry about things I feel strongly about. The following poem is one example.

I am also quite excited about my new venture as a consultant for establishing and building home based businesses in the United States and abroad. In fact, if anyone in the family is interested in diversifying or building income in a residual fashion, I would love to discuss some exciting concepts with you. You can reach me by leaving your number on my voicemail (516)733-0884 or at my home (516)486-5062. I'd love to hear from you.

## ROOTS

by Hannah Koplowitz Stein

My father's face is before me  
In a photo gray and worn,  
Shirtsleeves rolled, a cabbie's cap,  
Smiling simply, gently, warm.

In a photo gray and worn  
On a street I never saw  
Smiling simply, gently, warm  
Never changing, always seeing his daughter.

On a street I never saw  
Shadowed in forgotten dreams  
Never changing, always seeing his daughter  
Of the woman red-haired and fair.

Shadowed in forgotten dreams  
Of challah baking, borscht fermenting  
And glow of Sabbath light. The daughter,  
Hair covered, long sleeved, in prayer,  
Of the photo and the red-haired and fair.

## A PLISKY MEMOIR

by Gary Gelber

*This article, provided by Tillie Sier, was drawn from a piece that appeared in a 1980 edition of the New York Daily News. The author has connections to the Parczewski branch of our family and has written a history of the Plisky family.*

A previous article in the Daily News, reminiscing about Siegel Street and the Lyric Theatre, prompted me to write about my grandparents, Harry (Herschel) and Bella Plisky, who grew up in that neighborhood. They always used to go to the Lyric to see the Yiddish plays. As a little girl, my mother used to sit on Harry's knee to enjoy the plays.

My grandfather was an iceman in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. He used to go out with a horse and wagon selling ice in the area. When he came to America in 1908, Harry stayed with a cousin, Yossel Zuckerman, at 390 Grand Street. No one knows what happened to Yossel and I was hoping that perhaps one of your readers might remember him or his family.

Grandfather was born in the town of Ciechanowiec and my grandmother was from Milejczyce, both of which were located in what was then Russian Poland. When my grandmother, Bella Lubar, was quite young, she left her *shtetl* and went to work for her future mother-in-law in nearby Ciechanowiec. She worked as a "mother's helper," taking care of the children, though she herself was no older than 16 at the time. My grandfather had already left for America, so my grandparents never met each other in Russia.

One day, as my grandmother was bending over, her future mother-in-law gave her a tap on her backside and said, "Perhaps when you arrive in America, you'll meet my Herschel there." Sure enough, my grandmother did meet him and they got married in 1917.

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## A MINYAN IN COURT

*"What is your occupation?" the judge inquired of the witness, an aged observant Jew.*

*"I'm a minyan man."*

*"What's that?" asked the judge.*

*"Well, sometimes in the synagogue there are only nine men. I come in to join them and it makes them ten," explained the old man.*

*Impatiently, the judge snapped back, "What are you talking about? When there are nine persons and I join them, there are also ten."*

*A look of delight shown on the Jew's face as he bent close to the judge and whispered confidentially, "Also a Jew?"*

- Donald Miller, 1945

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*- Tillie Sier (475, Pl.2a)  
New York City*

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