INDEPENDENT SUWALK & VICINITY BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

1905 

1995

90th ANNIVERSARY JOURNAL

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Published in conjunction with the 90th Anniversary Banquet
Held at Fifth Avenue Synagogue - Grand Ballroom

November 5th, 1995

INDEPENDENT SUWALK & VICINITY

BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

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INDEPENDENT SUWALK & VICINITY BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

A Society of Jews From Suwalk & Vicinity and Their Descendants
(Augustowe, Baklerowe, Filipowe, Krasnopole, Psherosle, Punsk, Ratzk, Sejni, Wizshan, Yelinewe)

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Published on the occasion of the 90th Anniversary Banquet by
the Independent Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association
Sunday, November 5, 1995

OUR SLOGAN

One helps another, and to his brother
He assists and gives him moral support.
- Isaiah, Chap. 41:6

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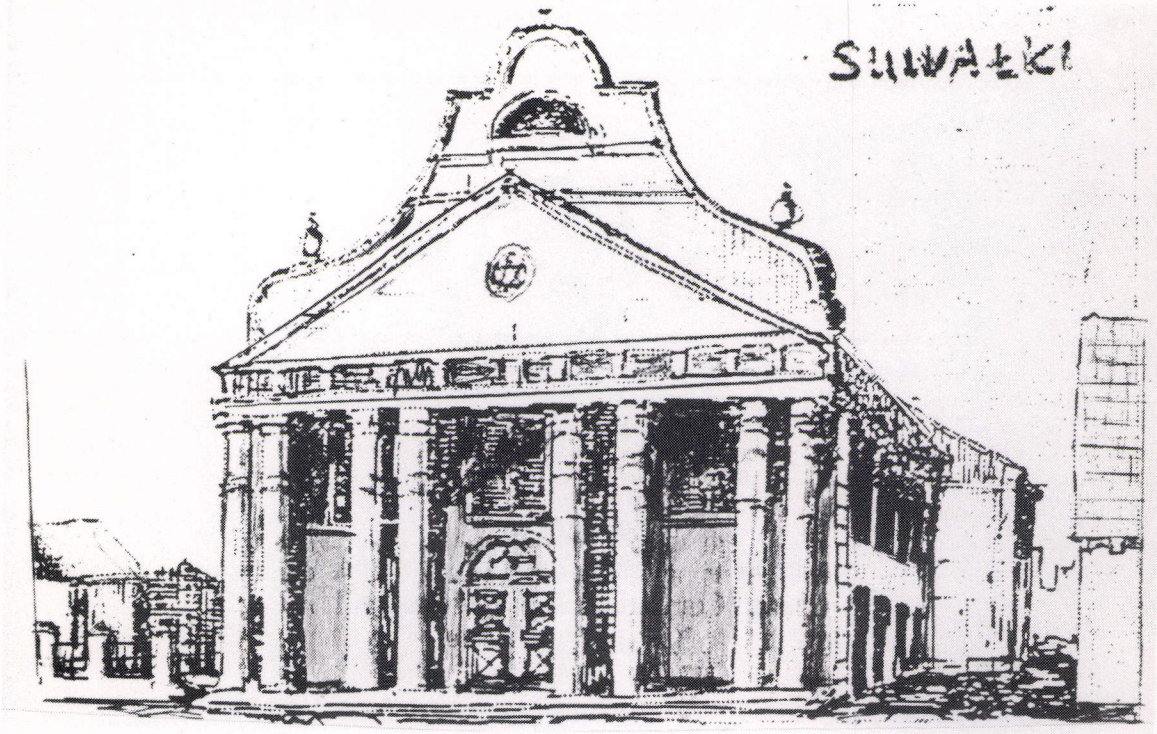
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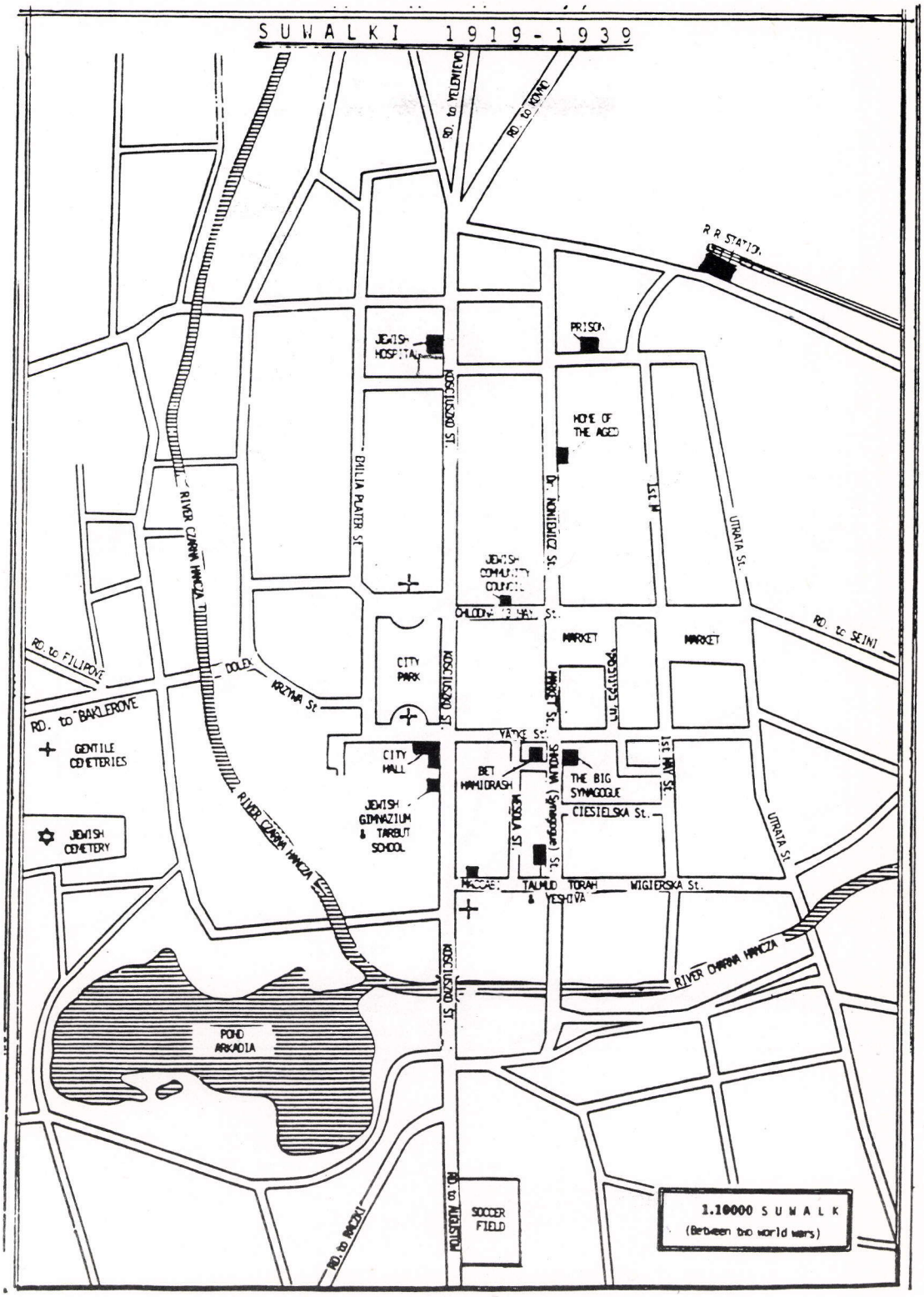
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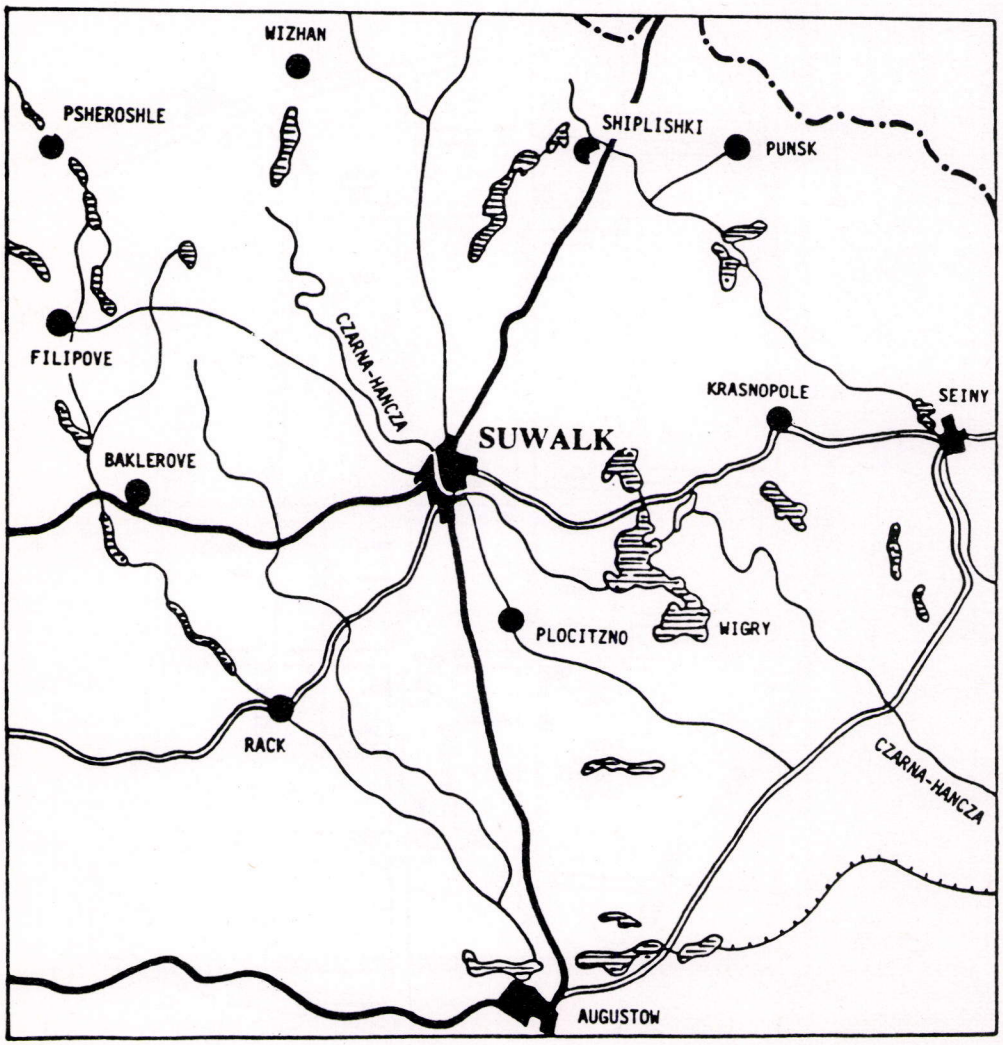

SUWAŁKI


MAGISTRAT
SUWAŁKI

Suwalk - A Map of the Old City



Suwalk & Vicinity



Suwalk - Located on the Pre-War Map



Principal jewish communities in Poland (1919-39).

DEDICATION

We Respectfully Dedicate This

90th Anniversary Journal

in honor of

LESLIE SHERER

in gratitude for more than 50 years

of service as an officer and more than

20 years of service as our President

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This Journal is the work of many individuals from Suwalk and Vicinity and their children and friends. Dr. Kasriel Eilender chaired the Committee that solicited advertising for the Journal, with the assistance of Florence Haber, Anna Wohl and Sarah Mandelbaum. Arthur Leonard edited and typed the contributions and advertisements. Leslie Sherer, with Arthur Leonard's assistance, laid out the final form of the Journal. The written contributions of individual members are identified with by-lines.

We also pay tribute to the hard-working members of our Banquet Committee, Eileen Lesser Margolies (Chair), Leslie Sherer, Arthur Leonard, Kasriel Eilender, and Florence Haber, and thanks to Stanley Diamond, who originally co-chaired the Committee and made important contributions toward the success of the Banquet before he had to resign due to other obligations.

We extend our greetings to all those in attendance at the festive 90th Anniversary Banquet, as well as all those who may read this Journal and share our love for the heritage of Suwalk & Vicinity.



President Leslie Sherer

Greetings From Our Officers

GREETINGS FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Leslie Sherer

Dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends of Suwalk and Vicinity:

The Independent Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association is 90 years old and still going strong. It seems like just yesterday since we celebrated our 85th Anniversary in the same beautiful ballroom of the Fifth Avenue Synagogue in New York City.

Just five years passed, but many changes, both good and bad, took place in the world. In Russia, communism has collapsed but there is not yet complete peace. There is still fighting in Bosnia and other places. The political and economic situations in Eastern Europe continue to change radically. Anti-Semitism, dormant for many years, has continued to raise its head again in many parts of the world, and particularly in Russia. Jews continue to leave there to go to Israel, the United States and other places, where they are received with open arms by their fellow Jews. Although Israel has had comparative peace along its borders for the past five years, internal problems of terrorism have continued. But finally, by signing of the peace agreement between Israel and the PLO, I fervently hope that a permanent peace - Shalom - will take place there. The killing will stop and Israel will take its proper place among the nations of the world.

Closer to home, I am happy to report some of our accomplishments of recent years. In Suwalk, out of scattered, desecrated broken headstones, we erected (thanks to the supervision of Naum Adelson) a beautiful huge ten by fifty feet Monument, a memorial wall placed deep inside the grounds of the old Jewish cemetery. We also completed there a monument dedicated to the memory of four of the most famous 19th century Rabbis of Suwalk. One of this is the famous scholar Reb Yitzchak Isaak Chaver, the great grandfather of our member Mrs. Sylvia Jacobs, who helped to fund this project.

Back in June 1985, after the dedication of a Suwalk monument in Cholon, Israel, at a meeting in Tel Aviv, it occurred to me that it would be a good idea to publish jointly with the Israeli landsleit a Suwalk & Vicinity Yiskor Book in English and Hebrew, in order to acquaint our younger generation with the Jews of our city. (Our original 1961 Yiskor Book, as excellent as it is, was written entirely in Yiddish, a language not familiar to the young either in Israel or the United States.) At that meeting, I presented the idea and asked the Israelis to join in this effort, and I also suggested that they form a Suwalker & Vicinity Association in Israel.

It took a while for these ideas to develop, but eventually book committees were formed in New York and Israel. In New York, the committee included Leslie Sherer, Arthur Leonard, Murray Levine, Irving Kas, Solomon Rayman, and Max Rothschild. David Stern and Uri Shiloh took the lead in Israel, and Yehuda Alroy was the general editor in Israel. An intense effort was made on our and their part to translate a great portion of the original Yiskor Book from Yiddish to English and Hebrew. An effort was also made to update the book by including the history of the Jews in Suwalk from 1919 until 1939, a history which was lacking in the original Yiskor Book. Six hundred copies of the book, titled "Jewish Community Book of Suwalk & Vicinity," were finally printed in Israel in 1989. Regrettably, the book contained only a small portion of the English material we submitted. (Some of the English materials we prepared have subsequently been published, however, as noted below.) Still, it was a great joint achievement that will be of lasting value to posterity. We distributed this book to a number of libraries and Jewish institutions. (Interestingly, at one library that received the book, the librarian turned out to be a descendant from Suwalk for whom this was his first contact with our society. My second hope was also fulfilled, because a Suwalker Society was formed in Israel under the leadership of David Stern, Uri Shiloh and others, and is now led by their President, Chanoch Penn, and others.

Among other achievements was the increase in the biannual relief gifts sent to the needy landsleit. The Relief fund was graciously supplemented by a significant gift from one of our Honorary Trustees, our late Brother Morris Abramowitz. We have continued to make annual contributions from the balance of our operating funds to such worthy causes as Shaare Zedek Hospital in Jerusalem, State of Israel

bonds, Red Mogen David in Israel, and, in this country, the United Jewish Appeal, the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, Dorot (services to elderly Jews in New York City), and others. We support Jewish organizations and the Jewish press, continuing our tradition originated by our founders of helping the needy and supporting Jewish causes. We continue to look after the maintenance of the Suwalker cemeteries in the New York City area, and recently concluded a transaction with Beth Israel Cemetery in New Jersey that allowed us to liquidate part of our investment there in order to help fund cemetery maintenance activities while preserving sufficient space to meet the needs of our members.

Our member, Marlene Silverman of Washington, D.C., started a new organization about five years ago, the Suwalk-Lomza Interest Group for Jewish Genealogists, which published a quarterly magazine called "Landsmen." It is a truly interesting publication dealing with the history of the Jews in the gubernias of Suwalk and Lomza, and I highly recommend reading it. We donated to this organization a copy of the English translations we made from the 1961 Yiskor Book, and they have published extended portions in Landsmen.

In the past five years, our society, I am sorry to report, has been touched by some great losses. Just months before our 85th Anniversary Banquet, we lost our wonderful friend Solomon Rayman, the Financial Secretary and the life and blood of our society for many years. Since then, the losses have mounted, as we lost our Honorary President and spiritual leader, the revered genius Rabbi Dovid Lifshitz, and several of our other officers and trustees, including Vice President Murray Levine, Treasurer Simon Savitt, Trustee Morris Oshinsky, and our long-time prominent member Dr. Norman Altszuler. Our deepest condolences go to their surviving family members and friends.

Yet life must go on. We are encouraged that a new generation of young Suwalker, descendants of members and landsleit, are joining our organization and show an interest in its activities, and that some of our long-time members have decided to become more active in order to take up the work that needs to be done. In particular, we should mention Jehuda Dembovich, who has taken up the burdens carried for so long by Simon Savitt in maintaining and administering our Relief activities as Treasurer, Professor Arthur Leonard of New York Law School, who has taken over as Financial Secretary, computerized our society's records, and chaired our new Cemetery Committee, Florence Haber, who is our new Vice President, and Stanley Diamond and Jessica Schneider, our Recording Secretaries and Cemetery Committee members.

In looking back over the 90 years of our history, we can be proud of our society's steadfast and effective work. We are still a strong, viable organization tied together by bonds of friendship, good deeds and unforgettable memories. For me personally, being an active part of our society for the past fifty-seven years has been a very warm and gratifying experience.

I wish to thank the Arrangement Committee for all its hard work in endeavoring to make this 90th Anniversary a beautiful and memorable one. I particularly want to express my sincere appreciation to our Brother Arthur Leonard for the hard work he has put in on the preparation of this Journal, to our Brother Kasriel Eilender for heading the effort to get advertising, and for all the committee members who have worked so hard to make this party a success, including our Sister Eileen Lesser Margolies for arranging the beautiful banquet, for our Vice President, Florence Meitkes Haber, for Anna Wohl and Sally Mandelbaum, and the former member of the committee, Stanley Diamond. We all hope that you will enjoy this party, have a good time, and remember with pleasure our 90th Anniversary Banquet for a very long time.

Remember the motto: "Ma Tov U Ma Naim Shevet Achim Gam Yachad." (How good and pleasant it is for brothers and sisters to be together.)

Fraternally and sincerely yours,

Leslie Sherer - President

A MESSAGE FROM OUR VICE PRESIDENT

by Florence Haber

I am honored to take part in the celebration of the 90th Anniversary of the Independent Suwalker and Vicinity Association as the newly-elected Vice President. I am a member of the Suwalker society for over 40 years and very proud of it. I would like to take this opportunity and pay tribute to the Suwalker people, who played a vital role in my survival.

I was born and raised and lived in Suwalk until the last day of the Jewish Suwalk. In December 1939, when Suwalk was already under the occupation of the Germans, I left Suwalk to go over the border to Lithuania, which at that time was yet a free republic.

I got out of Suwalk by pure chance. My best friends, Chawa and Brocha Zylkiewitz, lived in the same building with Mr. Yankel Seligson (the younger brother of our late President, Hyman Seligson). The wife of Yankel Seligson had family in Lithuania. Her family sent a man with a horse and wagon to rescue their relatives. Instead, Mr. Seligson decided in the meantime to send with the man the merchandise from his store that he had save, first from the Russians and later from the Germans. The man said that he could take some passengers to smuggle over the border. Mr. Seligson asked the Zylkiewitz's if they would like to take advantage of this opportunity. My dear friends came running to us at night with the news, and told us that early tomorrow morning we have a chance to leave for Lithuania. The first ones to leave were my sister Chana and Brocha. They left with the man and the loaded wagon. Two weeks later the man came back. Mr. Seligson thought that he still had time. This time, Chawa Zylkiewitz and I left with the man. I want to remark here, that when we left it was a relatively relaxed moment. My family even thought that somehow they would cope with the situation. But it was a lull before the storm.

When we arrived in Lithuania, we heard that the same day we left the Germans ordered all the Jews to gather in the "Shulhof" from where they were put on the train and deported. Later we learned that they were sent to Lukov and some to Biala Podlaska. There they were killed on the second day of Succot, 1942. We also heard that Mr. Seligson with his family managed to escape at the last minute and made it to Lithuania, where they later perished with the rest of the Lithuanian Jews. My sister Chana, Chava Zylkiewitz (Oppenheim) and I survived the Holocaust. Brocha Zylkiewitz (Nadler) with her two-year-old daughter were taken in the "Kinderaction" from Ghetto Kowno in Spring 1943.

In 1950, I came with my husband and out 10-month-old daughter to New York, where my sister Mildred lived. She took me to my first meeting of the Suwalker society. I will never forget this meeting. It was like a return to my own family. Everybody knew me, knew my family. The older people remembered my father, Moishe Leib Meitkes, the "shochet." There were also people my age: some of them survivors of the war, others who came to America before the war. It was an overwhelming and very emotional reunion. We spoke of the life in Suwalk before the war, and grieved over those of our families and friends we had lost. We all felt the strong ties that bind us. I was deeply moved by the warmheartedness and friendliness of all the members. This "haimishe" atmosphere still prevails in our society.

Over the years, the ISBA grew and developed in a worldwide organization. Our society is actively involved in all the Jewish causes and especially in Israel. This is thanks to the devotion and tireless work of our dynamic leadership, officers, directors and wonderful members.

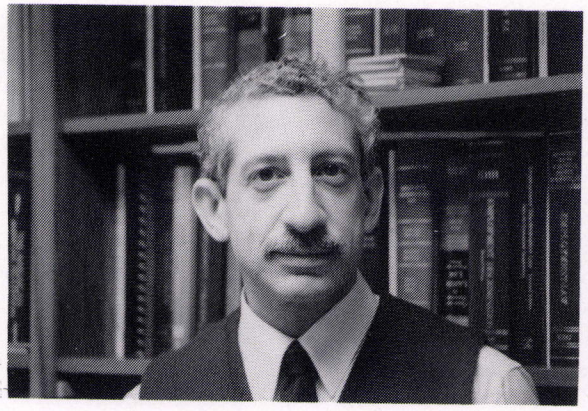
For the last 30 years the ISBA is being led by our beloved President, Leslie Sherer. He is rightfully being honored at this Banquet. We acknowledge his hard work and loyalty to the Suwalker society and its "landsleight" wherever they are. For many years he spared no time or energy to keep our society going and growing. We wish our dear President and his lovely wife, Fay, good health and many more fruitful years and fulfillment.

To our society and all of its members, we wish to celebrate together the 100th anniversary.

Fraternally yours, Florence Haber (Meitkes)

A MESSAGE FROM THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY

by Arthur S. Leonard



Happy Anniversary to the Independent Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association!

My father's parents were born in Suwalk. Their parents were from Suwalk and Pserosle. So my Suwalker roots go very deep. In fact, genealogical research carried out about ten years ago shows that my family's presence is recorded in the town from the earliest time that Jews were allowed to settle there.

And yet, as a child growing up, I knew nothing about Suwalk. It was not until I began to research the history of my family in the early 1980's that my grandfather, Sol Abramson (born Sorach Abramajtis in Suwalk in 1900), told me about the town where he was born.

Grandpa Sol, who ultimately became a master electrician, a life member of Local 3 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and a foreman on some of the biggest jobs in New York City, including the 1939 and 1964 World's Fairs, had his first exposure to this work in Suwalk. He recalled when the first motion picture theater was opened in the town. He was so fascinated that he made a pest of himself until the operator showed him how the equipment worked. And, when German military forces occupied the town during the First World War, he was pressed into service on the local work crews that constructed the first electrical generating plant and wired the town. When he left Suwalk after that war, he spent some time in Germany learning the electrical trade, then worked on a rural electrification project in Sweden, connecting the far-flung farms in the countryside with wires, while based with relatives in the small community of Suwalker Jews who had emigrated to that country, ultimately leaving to join family members already in New York City. He passed away in 1987.

My grandmother, Anna Abramson (born Chana Powiatowski), had already passed away when I began to do my research. But I learned that she, too, was born and raised in Suwalk. In fact, her family was acquainted with my grandfather's family. When they came to New York and her father Jacob set up a tailor shop on the Lower East Side, my grandfather went up to the Bronx, where they were living with relatives, to meet these friends from the old home town. My grandmother, who was a young girl when my grandfather left Suwalk, was now a beautiful young woman with whom he quickly fell in love. So a Suwalker marriage was made in the Bronx, and the rest was history.

While doing my research, I came across mention of a book about Suwalk published by this Association. A friend who was helping with my research gave me a telephone number to call if I wanted a copy of the book. The man who answered my call was Solomon Rayman, our beloved, departed

Financial Secretary, and he urged me to attend a meeting. (Solomon was always on the lookout for new members!) I came, and it was like visiting my grandparents again. The sound of English spoken by Suwalker natives is unmistakeable, and it quickly cast its spell. I've kept coming to meetings.

Sadly, Solomon passed away in 1990, and our president, Leslie Sherer, asked me to take on his important functions of maintaining the membership and financial records and administering the Suwalker cemeteries as Financial Secretary. As I have worked on being the "back office" of the Association, I have come to meet many of you by correspondence, by telephone, and in person, and it is wonderful to know that there is this extended community, stretching out around the whole world, of Jews from Suwalk & Vicinity who still feel that original communal tie. The Jewish community *in* Suwalk may be no more, but the Jewish community *of* Suwalk continues to flourish.

So, what of the future of our Association? The big question is whether the American-born generations of Suwalkers will continue to retain that identity. I rather suspect that for most of them, like me before I began my research, Suwalk is something about which they know nothing. If this Association is to continue into the future, it is important that our current members be sure that their children and grandchildren know about their Suwalker roots. I hope that you are encouraging your children, brothers and sisters, cousins, nephews and nieces, to join this Association and participate in its activities. If we all sign up new members in our families, then the future of the Suwalk & Vicinity Association is secure.



Violin Virtuoso Yosi Chasid



Composer Achron



Poet & Writer Rosenfeld

A MESSAGE FROM STANLEY HOWARD "X"

Hello to all of my "landsleit". That homey Yiddish word is one I've had to consecutively clarify to my children and then to my grandchildren. You see I'm a Suwalker and a first generation American born citizen...the son of an immigrant. My offspring don't share the limited knowledge of Yiddish that I have, and that's somewhat of a shame. Our European heritage and Yiddishkeit are fast becoming a distant memory.

Interestingly, in my family there are already seven third generation American Suwalkers, with more to come. I have first cousins who have produced fourth generation American Suwalkers too numerous to count. Even my wife is a second generation American Suwalker.

I'm telling you all this to make a point. Despite the fact that the current members of our Association are overwhelmingly from among the displaced victims of the holocaust, there are tens of thousands of American Jews who can trace their family's origins to Suwalk and the shtetls in its vicinity. Their forebears are "Suwalki Gebernya" immigrants to America of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. I call these Jews "American Suwalkers".

There are thousands upon thousands of them living in the U.S., Canada, Mexico and throughout South America. In each of their families there is a story about an immigrant's struggle to reach the shores of America...from stories about streets "paved with gold" to stories about avoiding military service under the Czar. I have such a story to tell you that combines pathos with mystery. I hope at least one of you can yet help me to solve the mystery part of it.

She was named Dinah Rachel Diamond at birth. She was a Suwalki Gebernya. No one in my family has been able to verify exactly where she was born and no one else seems to know. She was my late father's mother, my paternal grandmother. At first you may think it strange that my father, Herman Nathan Diamond, bore his mother's maiden name. No, he was not the illegitimate child of an unknown father. That would be an unsolved mystery of a more complex and secretive nature. What follows is the true explanation and the root cause of the mystery.

Dinah Diamond grew to womanhood and married another Suwalki Gebernya. The best guesstimate of their marriage date is 1885. The family mystery is the name of the man she married. She bore him four children, one of whom died in early childhood in Suwalki. My father was the youngest offspring. There were two older sisters, Pauline and Rose. When her eldest child was about ten years old tragedy struck the household. My grandfather, Mr. "**X**", was killed in an accident. The generally accepted story is that my grandfather worked as a wood-cutter and was killed in a tree-felling accident. Grandma Dinah was left a young widow with three small children.

Dinah had three brothers...Nathan, David and Aaron(?). They set about caring for her and her family. At the turn of the century, the burdens of poverty in their lives were so overbearing that all three brothers decided to join other Suwalki Gebernya and emigrate to America. But what about poor Dinah and her young brood? The U.S. Immigration Service would never accept an unsponsored widow with three small children, and Dinah had no sponsoring spouse. So (as the story goes) one night, by lamplight, the Diamonds hatched a plot. Why not have Dinah pose as the wife of one of her unwed brothers? That simple ploy would enable her to join her brothers in their voluntary expatriation. This, of course, is exactly what happened, and in the course of these events, Dinah and her three children assumed her family name, Diamond, instead of "**X**'.

Dinah Diamond soon found another husband in this land of opportunity. She married Samuel Greenberg and bore him a son, Max. She died shortly thereafter, during a subsequent childbirth. She was only thirty-seven years of age. Hers was a short but eventful life. I have recently located my grandmother's gravesite in the Mt. Zion Cemetery, Maspeth, Queens, NY. Unfortunately, the records on file there provide no clues to her earlier past.

Her brother, David Diamond, I can proudly boast, was one of the five founders of the Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association. The founding year was 1905...ninety years ago. I am honored to be the grand-nephew of one of the founders of this Association.

After serving in the U.S. Army in World War I, my father married and raised a family in Brooklyn, New York. His eldest sister, Pauline, had done the same. Rose, his other sister, was also married and raised her family in The Bronx, New York. My father, Herman, was a member of this Association for about ten or fifteen years. He dropped his membership sometime in the 1930's.

During the Great Depression, Dinah's three children were far too caught up in the problems of subsistence for their families to care much about sustaining the family's history. They failed to pass on any significant information about their origins to their children (my generation). Similarly, their children had other interests and were not inclined to ask the questions of their parents that would have allowed the facts

to be recorded before it was too late to ask. The sole bit of information that was gleaned about the family name of my grandfather was that it may have begun with "Wasser--------". With the passing away of Dinah, her three brothers and all of their offspring, my father's true family name became an unsolved mystery.

I am known as Stanley Howard Diamond and I have a birth certificate to prove it. But what should my family name truly be? Stanley Howard Wasser?????, or God knows what? And who and where are my relatives that bear that name and lineage? Can anyone please help me find my name? It has gotten lost in the diaspora.



Plaque given to Leon Perlo, by the children of the Talmud Torah. (Suwalk 1939)

SUWALK & VICINITY ASSOCIATION OF ISRAEL

Dear Mr. Leslie Sherer, President of the Independent Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association, Board of Directors, and Friends:

Congratulations on the 90th Anniversary of the Independent Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association, U.S.A.

We would like to paraphrase a famous proverb: "To witness interesting times is both a curse and a blessing." We have certainly been witness to our share of both during the period between 1905 and 1995, including the onslaught of technical advancement, political upheavals, changing geopolitical boundaries, the genocide of six million of our people and from their ashes the establishment of the State of Israel.

During such periods, there was always the need for voluntary associations to assist their fellow man in all areas, from cultural to economic to just lending a friendly hand. Your Association has certainly proved itself a trustworthy and reliable organization during such periods.

Among various activities in which your Association has been involved, it has also been active in:

(1) The printing in Yiddish of the Memorial Book of Suwalk and Vicinity, which documents the history and folklore of Jewish life in the area;

(2) The restoration of the Suwalk Jewish Cemetery - which was destroyed by the Nazis during the war - and now allows mourners and other visitors to pay their respects;

(3) Your participation in the establishment of the Memorial Monument in Holon Cemetery (close to Tel Aviv) which immortalizes the memory of our beloved brethren from Suwalk and vicinity;

(4) Your participating in printing in Hebrew and English the Suwalk & Vicinity book which includes a chapter about the Jewish activists and Zionists who involved themselves in the establishment of the State of Israel;

(5) With mutual efforts between the U.S.A. and the Israel Suwalk and Vicinity Association, the retrieval of archives from Warsaw and Suwalk and vicinity about Jewish life there which will enable the establishment of a research place at the University of Jerusalem for us and our future generations.

We wish you and your board of directors and members many more years of fruitful activity. Let us hope that future generations will continue within the framework set up by their grandfathers and fathers. We would also like to take this opportunity to wish you and yours a happy New Year, 5756.

Sincerely,

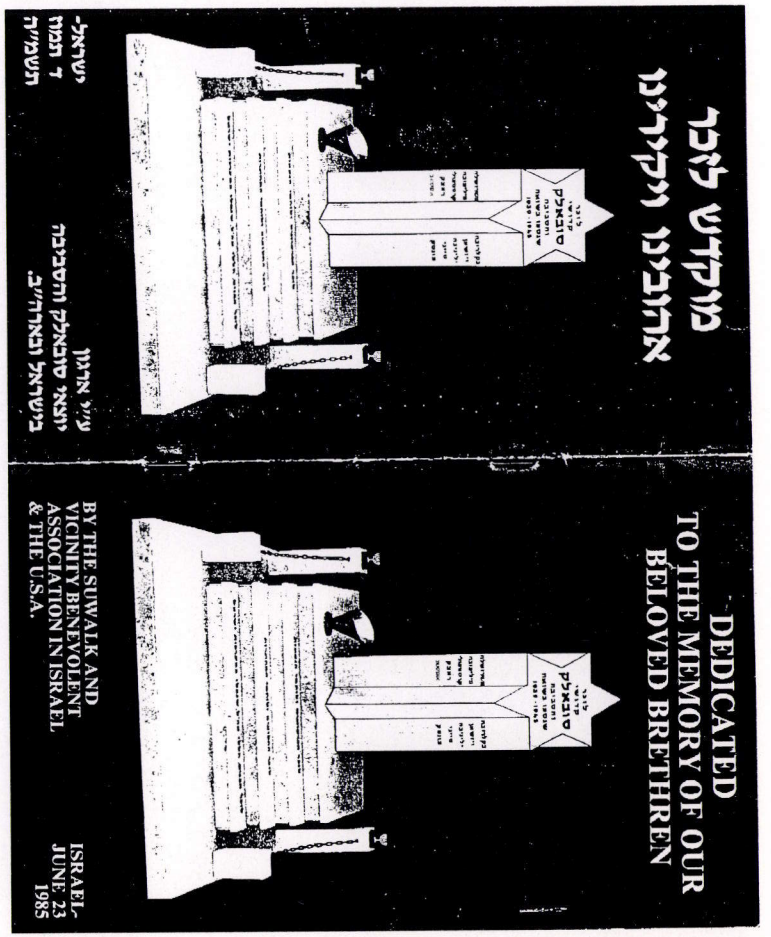
Suwalk & Vicinity Association of Israel
Mr. E. Pen
Ing. D. Stern
Prof. Abramsky
Mr. & Mrs. Sheinman
Mr. B. Amitzur
Mr. E. Borovsky
Mr. J. Idan (Zametski)
Mr. H. Kajam
Mr. U. Shiloh

Ind. Suwalker & Vicinity Benevolent Association

THIS MONUMENT IS TO IMMORTALIZE THE MEMORY OF OUR BELOVED BRETHREN FROM SUWALK & VICINITY

★ The Holocaust victims who perished in the years 1939-1945
★ The Ghetto fighters and partisans
★ All those who dreamed of Zion and unfortunately could not fulfill their dreams
★ Pioneers who fulfilled their dream and to those who came and settled in Israel from the 19th Century and sacrificed their lives
★ For all underground fighters who fought and gave their lives for the establishment of the State of Israel
★ The Israel Defense forces Soldiers who fell in defense of the State of Israel

BLESSED BE THEIR MEMORY



ע"ר סובאלק בישראל והסביבה ת"א



Ruth W. Messinger

Borough President

Ind. Suwalker & Vicinity Benevolent Association

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN

MUNICIPAL BUILDING
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10007
(212) 669-8300

RUTH W. MESSINGER
BOROUGH PRESIDENT

Nov. 5, 1995

Dear Friends:

It is an honor and a delight to join you at this 90th anniversary banquet, and to welcome survivors and descendants of the Suwalki Gubernya community to New York for this grand reunion.

The Independent Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association keeps alive the proud and vital *landsmanshaftn* tradition in our city--a tradition of maintaining pride in and continuity with our rich Yiddish heritage while engaging simultaneously in mutual self-help to achieve advancement in a new land. Your commendable work on behalf of Suwalki survivors of the Holocaust, and in commemorating those whose lives were lost in the Holocaust, is in that proud tradition.

I join you in saluting association president Leslie Sherer for his years of dedicated service to Suwalki Jews here and abroad.

Best wishes to you all.

Sincerely,

Ruth W. Messinger

סובאלק און אומגעגענט בענעוואלענט אסאסיאישן

Ind. Suwalker & Vicinity Benevolent Association

PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

MARK GREEN
Public Advocate

September 27, 1995

Mr. Arthur S. Leonard
Financial Secretary
New York Law School
57 Worth Street
New York, NY 10013

Dear Arthur and Members:

As New York's first elected Public Advocate, it gives me great pride to salute and congratulate the Independent Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association on its 90th anniversary.

For 90 years, the Association has done wonderful charitable work, not only for the Jewish community of Sulwaki, but for other Jewish communities worldwide, as well as in New York.

This year's honoree, Leslie Sherer, has provided commendable leadership for the Association. He has been exceptionally noteworthy in keeping the organization active, especially at a time when many other such organizations folded.

With grace, commitment and tenacity, you have been able to keep active and together a group of people who shared the common bond of being Suwalker Jews, even though they were far from home. Again, let me congratulate the Association on its 90th anniversary and President Leslie Sherer on being the Association honoree this year, best wishes for his and your continued activity within the Jewish community.

Best regards,

Mark Green

Mark Green

MG:sc

1 CENTRE STREET NEW YORK, NY 10007 TEL: 212/669-7200 FAX 212/669-4701

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JBFCS Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, Inc.

120 WEST 57TH STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10019-3371 (212) 582-9100 FAX (212) 245-2096

October 5, 1995

Independent Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association
c/o Arthur S. Leonard, Financial Secretary
NY Law School
57 Worth Street
New York, NY 10013

To the Independent Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association:

On behalf of the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, I want to congratulate Leslie Sherer, president, and all members of the Independent Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association, on the occasion of your 90th Anniversary.

Your generous support of JBFCS helps improve the lives of New York City's troubled families and children. Thank you for your generosity. We are deeply grateful.

I wish all of you good health and peace for the next ninety years.

Sincerely,

Alan B. Siskind, Ph.D.
Executive Vice President

A beneficiary agency of UJA Federation

Seymour R. Askin, Jr., President Alan B. Siskind, Ph.D., Executive Vice President

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A United Way Agency

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Independent Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association
170 2nd Avenue
New York, NY 10003

Dear Members,

9/28/95

On behalf of Republic, I would like to congratulate the Independent Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association as they celebrate their 90th Anniversary. Our sincere and best wishes are extended to the honorable Mr. Leslie Sherer, the long-time president of the Association, and to the honored survivors and descendants of the Jewish community of Suwalki Gubernya, Poland upon their reunion.

Your association has maintained a relationship, in good standing, with Republic for many years and is well respected by our community. We look forward to extending our relationship in the future. We are also looking forward to the Association's 100th Anniversary. Once again, many good wishes.

Sincerely,

Hope Padilla
Assistant Vice President
Branch Manager

CHEMICAL

Chemical Bank
756 Broadway
New York, NY 10003
212/777-5866
ServiceLine 935-9935

October 12, 1995

Independent Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association
170 2nd Avenue
New York, NY 10003

Dear Members:

On behalf of Chemical Bank, I would like to extend a special congratulations to the Independent Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association as you celebrate your 90th anniversary. We would also like to extend our best wishes to the honorable Mr. Leslie Sherer, president of the Association and to the honored survivors and descendants of the Jewish Community of Suwalk Gubernya, Poland upon their reunion.

All of my associates join me in the note of appreciation for the manner in which the association has maintained a good standing valued relationship with Chemical Bank. It is important to us to maintain relationships with such a well respected community association. We will make every effort to constantly improve our service so that our relationship will continue to be a productive one. Once again, our best wishes on this very special anniversary.

Sincerely,

Michael Molinelli
Branch Manager

Development Corporation For Israel
ISRAEL BONDS
SALLY A. DELSON
Director
Division of Organizations

September 18, 1995

Mr. Leslie Sherer
President, Independent Suwalker and Benevolent Association
170 Second Avenue, Apt. 4D
New York, NY 10003

Dear Leslie:

Congratulations on the 90th Anniversary of the Independent Suwalker and Vicinity Benevolent Association. Congratulations also and Best Wishes to President Leslie Sherer being honored on this occasion.

All members of your organization are deserving of the greatest admiration for their courage in the face of the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust, their triumph in rebuilding their lives, and their continuing dedication to making better lives possible for our people.

Your society is to be commended for its many years of devotion to the preservation of freedom. I know that your Journal of personal accounts of tragedy, survival, liberation and rebuilt lives will be a precious legacy handed down from generation to generation. This legacy is especially timely now in view of the current influx of Soviet Jews finding freedom in Israel and seeking new lives for themselves.

The strong and consistent support of the Independent Suwalker and Vicinity Benevolent Association is helping to realize the dream of freedom and the promise of better lives for Soviet Jewish immigrants and others still arriving in Israel today. The technological advances in Israeli Industry supported by Bond investments help strengthen Israel's economy.

The entire Bond leadership joins me in sending best wishes to you and your members. May you go from strength to strength with your achievements in the years ahead.

Warmest regards.

Cordially,

Sally A. Delson, Director

SAD/bg

JERUSALEM 3000

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Suite 1100 • 49 West 45th St. • New York, NY 10036 • (212) 354-8801 • Fax: (212) 391-2674

Images of Jerusalem 3000 and beyond...

Tribute Dinner to benefit the Woman & Infant Center

Sunday Evening November 19, 1995 New York Hilton Hotel

October 6, 1995

Mr. Arthur S. Leonard
Independent Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association
NY Law School
57 Worth Street
New York, NY 10013

Dear Mr. Leonard:

On behalf of the American Committee for Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem, we wish to extend our heartiest congratulations to Leslie Sherer and the Independent Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association on the occasion of your 90th anniversary celebration. Mr. Sherer has devoted his time and efforts to your Association for many years and is richly deserving of your award.

Thanks to dedicated friends like yourself, the Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem has been able to bring quality health care to the people of Jerusalem and Israel for nearly 100 years. We value your friendship and deeply appreciate your support.

May you go from strength to strength for many years with joy, prosperity and good health.

Very truly yours,

Morris Talansky
Sr. Executive Vice President
MT/mt

Ind. Suwalker & Vicinity Benevolent Association

הילף פאר לימודשע יתן

ASSISTANCE TO LITHUANIAN JEWS, INC.

C/O JOSEF GRILICHES, ESQ., J.D., President 245 East 11th Street, New York, N.Y. 10003

the international Organization of Lithuanian Jews in the United States, Mexico and Western Canada,

extends its fraternal and very cordial congratulations to

THE INDEPENDENT SUWALKER & VICINITY BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION
****

on the occasion of its 90th Anniversary

and to its President,

MR. LESLIE SHERER
****

who is being honored on this occasion

We wish friend LESLIE SHERER many more years of meaningful service and manifold achievements for the benefit of Klal-Yisrael.

JOSEF GRILICHES, Esq., J.D.
President

HELEN KRIEGER
Vice President

SONJA KARPUS
Secretary

GEORGE BIRMAN, P.E.
Treasurer

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We delight to share in
Leslie Sherer's Honor.
He is very important to us, as well, and
we join you in recognizing his dedication.

אל אמת

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398 SECOND AVENUE

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In Memoriam



Memorial Address in Honor of Rabbi Dovid Lifshitz Z"L

Delivered November 7, 1993,
to the Independent Suwalker Benevolent Association

by Leslie Sherer, President

My dear Rebbetzin Tzipora Lifshitz, Chayele Waxman, dear members and guests: We are gathered here to pay tribute to our dear departed Rabbi, Reb Dovid Lifshitz. On the 28th of June (or 9th day of Tammuz), our beloved, revered and esteemed Honorary President, Reb Dovid Lifshitz (Zichron Tzadik Livrocho) was taken away from us by the Almighty, to rest in the Gan Eden among the great tzadikim of all time.

His untimely death is a great loss for the Jewish community as a whole and particularly us Suwalker. We will miss him for the rest of our lives. I speak for myself and my family as well as all the Suwalker landsleit when I say that he was a wonderful teacher, advisor, a caring and true friend, a great scholar and gentleman. His greatness and fame put the small city of Suwalk on the map of the Jewish world.

He was Rabbi in Suwalk for only a few years but had the sad distinction, unfortunately, of being the last Rabbi there. It was his tragic fate to confront the horrible sadistic Nazi hordes there. But instead of surrendering to them, he managed, with some of the Elders of the Jewish community, to save as many Suwalker Jews as they could by escaping with them to Lithuania. Miraculous as the escape was, it was not without their personal tragedy because he and the Rebbetzin lost their dear child then. The long and arduous two year odyssey took them through Lithuania, Russia, Siberia, Japan, Hawaii, until they finally entered the United States of America and settled temporarily in Chicago in 1942.

With your kind permission let me go back to another time in the life of Suwalk (you may call it oral history), when our dear Rebbetzin, Tzipora Yoselewicz, was a young, tall and beautiful lady in the 1920s. When time was still comparatively tranquil and life in Suwalk was fairly normal. It was then that all Suwalker Jews looked up to our Rebbetzin's father, the most distinguished rabbi and great scholar, Rabbi Yoselewicz. I still remember him walking during the Sabbath and Holidays to the Beth Midrash, an imposing, tall, majestic figure wearing a top hat and a long, black coat, and everyone stopped to pay respect.

In the late 1920s, a young Rabbi -- an acknowledged genius from the Yeshivas of Grodno and Mir -- a handsome young man with a head of jet black hair and shining, intelligent, penetrating eyes -- came from Grodno to Suwalk. Soon after, it was rumored that he was going to be engaged to Tzipora Yoselewicz. In a fairly short time they were married. The union lasted over sixty years and produced four wonderful children. I do remember the wedding. Many people, old and young, stood in the street watching the Chupah which took place on the second floor balcony of the largest hall on the main street.

A short while later, Rabbi Yoselewicz died. I remember the funeral. Many eulogies were made in the huge yard of the great Synagogue. The most notable one was give by the son-in-law. From there the crowd proceeded to the cemetery and we, the students from the Jewish schools, joined hands to form a chain around the cortege. Hundreds of rabbis from the northern and central part of Poland came to the funeral for a dual purpose: first to pay their respects to the deceased Rabbi, and second to look for the rabbinical seat of Suwalk, which was one of the most cherished and sought after rabbinical positions. At the time, the Elders of the Community Council, having gotten to know, like and appreciate the young son-in-law, Rabbi Dovid Lifshitz, in their wisdom (and also feeling a little threatened by the representatives of the then-great city of Bialystok, who wanted to snatch him away for themselves), decided to appoint Rabbi Lifshitz to the post of Chief Rabbi of Suwalk, in spite of his young age. And what a good choice it was for the following six years!

Reb Dovid took very good care of the Jewish community in Suwalk. He looked after the Talmud Torah, the orphanage, the Home for the Aged, the Bikur Cholim, the Gemilut Chasidim, the Synagogue, Beth Ha-Midrash and cemetery. He settled many disputes, private and public. He was instrumental in establishing a Yeshiva there. He saw to it that the hundreds of Jewish soldiers from all

over Poland who served in the huge Suwalker Garrison were given passes for the Jewish holidays and fed -- whether in private homes or at public kitchens -- kosher meals for Pesach. In 1939, during mobilization, at the risk of his own life, when all the troops were sequestered in the barracks, he requested from the general on his own responsibility permission to let the Jewish soldiers go to the Synagogue for the Yom Kippur services. All of them returned, perhaps having been in a synagogue for the last time in their lives.

He preached regularly from the pulpit of the Beth Ha-Midrash and what a dynamic speaker he was! He taught Torah and Talmud there to all who wanted to learn. His door was always open to anyone who wanted to enter. . .

The Jewish life of the city was thriving under his care and the people felt pleased with him and respected him greatly. In the six years (although he was born in Minsk and brought up in Grodno) he became well known as the Suwalker Rebbe, the good man who could get along with the Polish Authorities as well as with the difficult, erudite group of individuals who stood at the head of the Jewish community in Suwalk. He did many favors discretely for many people, including myself.

I could go on and on, but I would like to pick up where I left off in 1942, in Chicago. When Rabbi Belkin of Yeshiva University heard that Reb Dovid was in Chicago -- aware of his great genius -- he invited him to New York and offered him a Professorship in Talmud at Yeshiva's affiliated Rabbinic Seminary. Reb Dovid and the Rebbetzin settled a block away from the Yeshiva, raised a family of three wonderful daughters and lived there ever since. I can say that it was my wife's and my pleasure to attend all three of their weddings. The first time I was in his house with my little son was as a guest at a wedding of our landlady Anita (Bernstein) Gold.

Then I visited him regularly before every Pesach in company with the leaders of the Independent Suwalker Benevolent Association, who so warmly and heartily received him and his family in New York. Those were memorable soirees in an intellectual and social atmosphere and, of course, the Rebbetzin's food was also very delicious.

I remember him at the time immediately after the Holocaust, when he mobilized the Suwalker landsleit to collect money and clothing and send it to the survivors of that great tragedy. His leadership and zeal were truly remarkable. He never forgot the needy to his last dying day. When I visited him in the hospital and he could barely speak, he opened his eyes and I read his lips when he tried to say "Geshikt?" Meaning, did you send the moeth chitim money?

His great achievement and love was the "Yizkor Book Suwalk." He worked very hard on the editorial committee. But I think that without his idea for publishing such a book and his leadership, we probably would have never done it. But thanks to him, 1000 copies of that book were published in 1961, and what a book it is! It is considered one of the best of its kind in the Jewish language. That book was always close to his heart.

Another great achievement of our Dear Rabbi was the restoration and preservation of the Jewish cemetery in Suwalk. Everything Jewish was destroyed in Suwalk. The only thing left was the cemetery, which they also wanted to take away from us. Thanks to the Rabbi's herculean efforts in the early 1980s the cemetery is preserved. He collected money to erect a big stone wall around and a huge, beautiful monument on it. I do not wish to bother you with more details which I believe you all know about. . .

I remember him gracing our meetings and our quintennial banquets with his gracious presence, his wonderful, inspiring, fiery oratory, his interest in every aspect of the life of the Society and everybody's personal life, his worries and hopes for the State of Israel. Whenever somebody complained about a personal problem, he tried to put that person at ease with an advice or good word. Our family still cherishes with great fondness the Tanach which he presented to our son at his Bar Mitzvah. He was always the first one to write a most generous check for Moeth Chitim and always to remind the Relief Committee that it is time to help the needy. He was more than a mentch - he was a tzaddik.

His entire being elevated and combined the best elements of what it means to be a worthy Jew in terms of mind, body and soul. His mind was the mind of a genius, a "Talmid Chochem," immersed in learning, teaching and learning the Torah, Talmud, and all the other holy books that embrace our jewish genius. He was a scholar par excellence, a gadol b'Israel.

His body was the Jewish people. He was always among them. He loved them. He cared for them. He felt most deeply their pains and celebrated

their joys. Am Isroel was the fabric from which he came and which mostly mattered to him. The synagogue was his sanctuary. When six million Jews perished but still some remained alive, he told me that on his first trip to Israel, stopping in Rome in front of the gate of the infamous Titus, he yelled out at the top of his voice: "Am Yisroel Chai. All you tyrants are dead, but my Jewish people are still alive."

His soul was always in Israel. He believed that the spiritual, religious and future life for the Jews is a united, free, and strong state of Israel. He hoped some day to move and live there. He spoke with awe of the holy places, of its people, of their struggles and achievements. And he always finished his speeches with praises for that eternal city, Jerusalem.

He is no longer with us. His body is where he always wanted to be -- in Jerusalem. But he will forever remain in our minds and hearts. GOD BLESS HIS SACRED MEMORY.

A TRIBUTE TO OUR LATE BROTHER, SAM GRADOWSKI

On behalf of the ISBA we want to express a deeply felt respect to our devoted long time generous member from Augustow,Sam Gradowski,who died in March of 1994.Among many noteworthy deeds ,he was instrumental in putting up a monument in memory of the Jewish Community and martyrs of Augustow.

He left a void in the ISBA and in the hearts of his family and friends.

God Bless His Memory!

L.Sherer



From left to right:S.Savitt,N.Adelson,L.Sherer at the sight of the monument commemorating the Augustow Jewish community and erected through the efforts of Sam Gradowski and a few other dedicated people.



A TRIBUTE TO OUR PAST V.P,MURRAY LEVINE

Murray Levine (Mordechai Motki Levin) was born in Suwalk in 1913. As a youngster he attended the Talmud Torah where,unfortunately,-during intermission,running with other kids out of class- he tripped and fell down a flight of stairs and was permanently injured.He was left with a slight walking impediment for life. At a later age he started working for the famous Kershkowski Fur Company, a company that employed the largest amount of Jewish workers in Suwalk.He was a very capable employee and he eventually worked himself up to the second highest position in that firm next to the chief cutter and designer,Shlomo Krawcinski.

Shortly before WWll Murray emigrated tothe USA.He came to his older brother who then owned a small department store on the upper east side on Second Ave. near Mount Sinai Hospital.Eventually Murray moved to the Bronx. He found a job in the fur center where he learned the American ways of manufacturing fur coats.He made many acqaintances in the fur trade.He got married and started a family.Eventually he established his own business and later formed a partnership with his brother-in-law.Businesswise things were improving.Unfortunately Mrs.Levine developed a heart condition which proved fatal.She died at ST. Vincent hospital in NY.This was a severe blow to Murray and his daughter.Muofrray ,however,was a fighter and a survivor.He didnot let this tragedy to destroy his life.He continued in his business until the 1980ies. He remarried. His new wife ,Liza,was a lovely, generous and accomplished person. Murray and Liza hosted many Suwalker executive meetings at their beautiful apartment in Manhattan Beach in Brooklyn. Liza often sang Jewish songs at our Suwalker meetings and became our entertainment chairperson. Murray was an ardent Zionist,a member of the ISBA for at least 50 years and a generous supporter of our relief effort.He also helped many other Jewish organizations; .awise man who did not say much but did a lot.After the death of Wm.Karmin(our VP of many years) Murray was elected Vice president of ISBA. In my rare absence,he conducted our meetings.He also very ably with the assistance of Esther Raiman andLiza saw to it that there were always refreshments before the formal part of the meetings and a bottle of "shnaps" was his contribution.He and his wife also became active in their synaguoge.He often led the services on Sabbath and the holidays and Liza taught "yiddish".The congregation made him a Gabai(chief officer) and honored him and Liza many times.

The last few years were not too kind to the Levines. Murray developed a severe heart condition and was in and out of the hospital several times.Although he had great hopes of celebrating our 9()th anniversary Banquet, tragically,he never made it.
Murray died on December 15th,1994 at the age of 81 in Montefiore Hospital in Brooklyn,leaving his wife Liza and his daughter.God Bless His Memory.

On behalf of the officers ,board and all the members of the ISBA, we pay our highest respect to our late VP Murray Levin and extend our heartfelt condolences to his family.

We will miss him and never forget him!

by

Leslie Sherer

MY UNCLE SHIMON:
A LIFE OF SURVIVAL AND TRIUMPH
by Ephraim Savitt



A. Prologue: Overview of His Life

All of the active members of the Suwalker Benevolent Association undoubtedly remember my late uncle Simon Savitt, whom I always addressed simply as "Shimon," but whose role in my life was truly parental. By the time this article is published, one and a half years will have transpired since he passed away on May 19, 1994, corresponding to the Hebrew calendar date of 9 Sivan 5754. Shimon left a family that will be eternally grateful to him for his paternal leadership and the indispensable support, both financial and moral, that he provided in order to make us successful, productive and fruitful.

Shimon, as most of you know quite well, was a dedicated member of this society who, in the years prior to his incapacitation in June 1993 as a result of a debilitating stroke, served as your Treasurer. He had a strong dedication to his fellow landsleit, particularly those in this country and in Israel who found themselves in financial distress. In his capacity as Treasurer, as well as through his considerable private donations that he preferred not to publicize, Shimon provided financial support to those persons over the course of many years. Indeed, following Shimon's stroke, which required me to take charge of his affairs, I found countless letters in Shimon's apartment from his fellow "Suvalkers" in the metropolitan area and in Israel thanking him for the holiday donations that they received, either from funds collected by the society which he administered or through his private tzedakah distributions.

In addition to his years of participation in the good works of the Suwalker Benevolent Association, Shimon showed his profound attachment to his family roots in Suwalk by travelling there on a number of "pilgrimages" over the past two decades. Many of you may remember that he prepared "slide shows" at society functions of photographs of Suwalk, among other Jewish points of interest in Poland and Russia, which he took during his travels to his birthplace.

Shimon also visited and took numerous photographs of concentration camps in Poland, especially Auschwitz, where millions of our people perished in the Holocaust. The pictures of these sites of tragedy for the Jewish people, a tragedy that he and his family were fortunate to survive, became part of his vast photograph collection.

Although he rarely accepted credit for anything that he accomplished, Shimon was particularly proud of his successful efforts, at the behest of HaRav Dovid Lifshitz, the late Suwalker Rov, to establish a fence around the Jewish cemetery in Suwalk during the mid-70's and, thereby, to save the remnants of the final resting places of the Jewish community from further desecration by Polish authorities. As most of you are aware, thousands of tombstones marking the graves of generations of Suwalker Jewry were destroyed by the Nazis during the Second World War, and, following the war, a soccer field was established by the municipality over part of the cemetery. In his relentless campaign to safeguard what remained of Jewish existence in Suwalk, which regrettably is now confined to the cemetery containing the graves of our ancestors, Shimon was instrumental in accomplishing this extremely important task. Through successive trips and intensive negotiations with municipal officials in Suwalk, Shimon was able to persuade the authorities to permit the erection of the cemetery fence, which remains the only physical memorial for the hundreds of thousands of departed Jews who, throughout generations, comprised the vibrant and productive Suwalker community of Jewish scholars, thinkers and activists.

In addition to his feelings for his birthplace, Shimon had a strong emotional attachment to the ancestral homeland of his people. His first trip to the fledgling State of Israel in 1950 was followed by frequent visits during the next 40 years that became an annual, and often bi-annual, ritual for him. Indeed, in the 1960's he frequently stayed in Israel for months at a time. Shimon, an ardent Zionist since his youth in Suwalk, revelled in the historical places and holy sites of the Land of the Bible, and he developed a real love affair with Israel and its courageous people.

Shimon forged strong bonds with his many relatives in Israel, and his only true lifelong friends included four of his cousins from Kovno, the Lithuanian city which became the gateway for his family's survival in World War Two. Two of those cousins, the brothers Yehoash and Aaron Levin, passed away within months after Shimon's death. His other dear friends were the late Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren of Israel, who eulogized Shimon at his funeral in Jerusalem in May 1994 on the eve of the Sabbath a day following his death in New York, and Chief Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen of Haifa, whose institution of higher learning in Jerusalem honored Shimon for his philanthropic support. Shimon's visits to Israel over the years were extremely important to him, not only because of his close friends and relatives who lived there and his own love for the land, but because his experiences in Israel rejuvenated him and gave him the spiritual and emotional charge that he needed in order to meet the challenges in his life back home.

Perhaps the most meaningful time I spent with Shimon was during the Rosh Hashana - Yom Kippur period in 1992, the last High Holy Days prior to his stroke, when, along with my mother Sylvia, my wife Leah and our two little boys Abba'leh and Raeli, we experienced two wonderful weeks together in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. It was a time of family togetherness and spiritual awakening that comes only once in a lifetime, and its memories will last forever.

Many of you know that Shimon was a businessman, with interests in real estate and other investments through which he became financially secure. You also came to learn that he was extremely devoted to his friends and family, and had a very engaging and outgoing personality. However, very few of you know that Shimon was a true philanthropist, who in his own discreet way, contributed significantly to Jewish institutions of higher learning. His support of such causes reflected his scholarship in Jewish subjects and his own experience as a Talmudic student in the famous Grodno Yeshiva in prewar Poland where he was known as "Shimon Suvalker," after his home town. Shimon also was a generous benefactor to his economically impoverished brethren, both in the New York area and in our homeland Israel, some of

whom, to this day, convey their gratitude in correspondence either to me or to his last address in Manhattan.

Through no self-promotion, he was honored in 1990 for his philanthropy by the Ariel-Midrasha Institutions in Jerusalem, under the leadership of Chief Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen, his lifelong friend. Ariel-Midrasha is the premier Torah educational institution producing the elite of the Rabbinate and Halachic Judges, known as Dayanim, in Israel as well as in many Jewish communities throughout the world. As such, Shimon received the recognition accorded to such other, and better-known Ariel-Midrasha honorees, as Professor Elie Weisel, Natan Sharansky and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin.

In addition, Shimon enjoyed a strong friendship with some of the pre-eminent Rabbinical personalities of the past immediate generation. Some of you may know that he was especially close to the late illustrious Suwalker Rov and dean of Yeshiva University, HaRav Dovid Lifshitz, whose students number literally in the thousands. As I already stated, Shimon was a lifelong confidante and dear friend of the late Chief Rabbi of Israel, HaRav Shlomo Goren, a Torah giant and prolific writer of Jewish scholarly works, whose own untimely death came within months after Shimon's. Shimon also had a special friendship with the late esteemed Rosh Yeshiva in Monsey, New York, HaRav Gershon Zaks, grandson of the revered Chofetz Chaim of Radun, Poland, who also had honored Shimon in the 1970's for supporting his Torah institution.

These leaders of the Rabbinate were drawn to Shimon for many of the same reasons that many of you felt so strongly about him, as expressed in the wonderful speech delivered by Mr. Leslie Sherer, our society's president, during a Suwalker luncheon last year that was dedicated to Shimon's memory. Shimon was a doer, ready to accomplish goals that he set for himself, a contributor, prepared to help others less fortunate than he, and a sparkling personality, with a ready smile and a warm, engaging manner that made him instantly liked by others. In addition to those traits, Shimon was a Jewish scholar and supporter of Jewish causes, as his friends in the Rabbinate, both here and in Israel, and his beneficiaries in the Jewish community recognized. He neither sought nor desired recognition or honor for those accomplishments.

Although many of you may be aware of how proud Shimon was of his family, particularly his two late brothers and their children, you may not realize just how important Shimon was in our lives. When my late father passed away 25 years ago in an untimely and unexpected fashion, Shimon assumed a paternal role to my sister Fern (Tzipporah) and me that helped bring us out of the depths of tragedy to the triumph of building our own families and meriting the good fortune of having fine children who are being raised in the Jewish tradition that, in large part, resulted from Shimon's guidance and love. After Shimon's younger brother Eli Moshe died suddenly of a heart attack in November 1989, Shimon accepted the burden of supporting his family, as well, despite the considerable difficulties which that entailed. Before continuing about my uncle Shimon as I knew him, permit me to describe Shimon's family background, his hardships over which he prevailed during the Second World War and his productive years in America.

B. Family Background: His Roots in Suwalk

Shimon was the second of three sons born to Sarah and Israel Zawoznicki in Suwalk. His older brother Yehoash Abba, my late father, became an eminent Talmudic scholar and Rabbi, having studied in the world-renowned Yeshivas of Grodno and Lomza under the tutelage of two of the great Roshie Yeshiva of the prewar generation, HaRav Shimon Shkop and HaRav Yechiel Mordechai Gordon, who ordained him as a Rabbi. After my father's passing, one of his former students, now a Rabbi, described how he was able to explain Rav Shkop's Talmudic lectures, considered among the most complex in the prewar Yeshiva world, with the ease of someone who could recite them "forward and backward" without consulting the text.

Rav Yehoash's career spanned the period from the aftermath of the Second World War in Poland, where he was the principal of the first Torah educational institution established in that country after the war, followed by his service over the next 2 1/2 decades as a Rosh Yeshiva and teacher. For over 2 years in Paris, France, he taught scores of yeshiva students, most of whom were among the survivors of the Holocaust, their first Torah lessons since before the war. Following our arrival in America in 1953, he served for many years as Rosh Yeshiva in Yeshiva Haichel Hatorah in Manhattan, where he ordained students as Rabbis, and as a pulpit Rabbi in a beautiful, old synagogue on

West 149th Street in that borough. He was so beloved by his students that two of them named their sons after him following his untimely passing in September 1970 (21 Elul 5730).

Shimon's younger brother Eli Moshe left Suwalk in the 1930's for Palestine where he studied in the famous Yeshivat Mercaz Harav Kook under the venerable HaRav David Cohen, the Nazir of Jerusalem, and received his Rabbinical ordination. Rav Eli Moshe's studies in the Holy Land, where he remained during the war, saved him from the rigors of the Holocaust in Europe, instead exposing him to the perils of Israel's War of Independence. After arriving in this country in the 1950's, he served in various religious and rabbinical capacities in the metropolitan area. As a measure of his scholarship, Rav Eli Moshe was commissioned by the family of the late Gadol Hador (the recognized foremost Rabbinical scholar), HaRav Aaron Kotler, to assemble that Torah giant's writings and to edit them for publication.

Shimon's father Israel Zawoznicki, my grandfather, was born in Augustova near Suwalk in the late 19th Century. Reb Yisroel, as he was respectfully known, was a businessman who ran a timber and lumber concern in the Suwalk area. He was also a Jewish scholar and Talmudist, and a prominent member of the Suwalker Jewish community in the period between the two world wars, who was active in its communal and religious affairs. Known for his legendary fairness and honesty, Reb Yisroel was beloved in both the Jewish and gentile communities of Suwalk.

Reb Yisroel was a gifted Bal-Tefilah and a superb Bal-Kriah, who rendered his services in these capacities for over half a century, initially in Suwalk and, following World War II, in Paris, then Montreal and finally in New York City. It was said of him that he knew the entire Torah by heart, complete with the proper "nusach" and "trop" required for the weekly Torah readings. Because Torah and community service were his labors of love, Reb Yisroel offered his talents to congregants in the old world and the new for well over half a century without asking for, or receiving, any compensation.

Shimon's mother Sarah, my grandmother, was the daughter of HaRav Yehoash Abba Varshavsky, an eminent Talmudist who served as the Rabbi of Vilkavishki, a town near Suwalk. Sarah had the distinction of raising three fine sons whose scholarship and conduct in life were exemplary in the true tradition of Orthodox Judaism. It is no exaggeration to state that each of Sarah's three sons, different in many ways from the others, yet sharing a common heritage, kindred spirit and the same ideals, had a profound effect on the lives of many persons, family members as well as others, who remain indebted to them to this very day, despite the fact that none of them sought or received the recognition that he deserved during his lifetime.

C. The War Years: Survival During the Holocaust

After the Nazi and Soviet invaders divided up Poland in the Autumn of 1939, Shimon made his way from Suwalk, which became a very dangerous place for Jews, to Kovno, Lithuania, from which he helped secure the safe passage of his parents and brother Yehoash to that city. Following the German attack on Russia, the family joined the long exodus of Jewish refugees accompanying the retreating Soviet Army as the German onslaught continued. During the ensuing dark years of the war and the Jewish Holocaust, Shimon and his family endured a bleak and precarious existence deep in the vast Russian hinterlands and managed to cheat death by joining the ranks of displaced persons conscripted to forced labor by their Russian "hosts."

During the war years, Yehoash fought the Communist authorities in his own quiet, yet determined, manner by steadfastly refusing to work on the Sabbath or Jewish holidays, or to eat available food that he was not certain was kosher, irrespective of the inevitable danger spawned by his courageous strict adherence to the Jewish religion in a godless society. Interestingly, this earned Yehoash the respect of his Russian employers, who actually came to admire his indomitable spirit and his honesty in his work performance. They looked the other way while Yehoash avoided work during the days it was prohibited by his religious beliefs, an infraction which normally would have resulted in severe punishment to the "perpetrator."

At the same time, Shimon succeeded in so ingratiating himself with the Russian authorities, through his obvious organizational skills and managerial abilities, that he was given the responsibility of overseeing dozens of workers in an important timber operation for the Soviet government. Shimon's promotion as a result of his business acumen was a critical factor in saving his parents and brother because he was able to guarantee

sufficient food to sustain life during the severe famine in wartime Russia.

While his brother Yehoash prevailed in asserting and perpetuating the traditional Jewish way of life, despite the adversity of the war in Russia and the plain risks that this entailed, Shimon made it possible, through his rise in the regional bureaucracy, to see to it that his family would emerge from the chaos of war and the ashes of the Holocaust as the surviving victors in the most tragic struggle that the Jewish people faced in its history. These interdependent goals that the two brothers achieved, that of Yehoash's spiritual survival and Shimon's physical survival, resulted in a classic Biblical Issachar and Zebulun relationship between scholar and financial supporter. The brothers' wartime experiences continued to characterize their achievements for the rest of their lives.

C. The Post-War Years in America: Triumphs and Tragedies

Following the Second World War, the Zawoznicki family was repatriated to Poland. However, they soon learned, as did thousands of other survivors, that post-war Poland was, in many respects, even more inhospitable to Jews than the country they knew before the Holocaust. By 1950 the family moved to Paris, where my father Yehoash and mother Tzirel (Sylvia) married and I was born.

Shimon, who became quite successful as a businessman in the post-war years, soon arranged for my parents and me, all of 1-1/2 years old at the time, to emigrate from France to the safety of America, where we found residence in Manhattan because of the opportunity for my father to assume a teaching position. Within two years, Shimon moved his parents, who were prevented entry into this country by the unfair immigration quotas of that era, to Montreal, Canada. In order to be close to his parents and to his brother's family, Shimon established residences both in Manhattan and Montreal.

As a result, Shimon developed real estate interests in both locations, and continued his success in private business undertakings. At the same time, Rav Yehoash pursued his career as a Rosh Yeshiva and, despite his natural modesty and unassuming manner, he developed a network of devoted students who continue to revere his memory a quarter of a century after his life was curtailed in a tragic accident.

In the two decades following the war, Shimon virtually supported his entire family. Not only did he take care of his elderly parents, economically as well as emotionally, but he provided financial assistance to his two brothers and their families, having arranged for Eli Moshe and his wife to come here from Israel in the late 1950's.

Unlike Shimon, neither of his brothers had either the interest or capacity to engage in business. Rav Yehoash, despite eschewing the honor and recognition he so richly deserved, was respected by those who valued scholarship and heard his brilliant Talmudic lectures as a superb Torah scholar. He was completely dedicated to teaching the Torah and Talmud to his students, and was equally happy to explain the intricacies of the complex Talmudic commentaries to his advanced Rabbinical students, as he was to teach the basics of the Aleph Beis and daily prayers to beginners who approached him. Rav Yehoash had no greater pleasure in life, aside from his children, than in experiencing his students' growth in Jewish knowledge. Rav Eli Moshe, whose breadth of Jewish knowledge and writing ability made him eminently suitable as an editor of high level Jewish responsa, also became completely immersed in spiritual service to the Jewish community, although he remained, in his own quiet way, a hidden treasure of Jewish knowledge. Accordingly, Shimon took it upon himself to support his two scholarly brothers, who, in the inevitable tradition of the Rabbis and teachers of that generation, could not make ends meet financially.

In my own experience since early childhood, Shimon was not merely my uncle. He was something greater than that, and he had a much more profound impact on my life than an uncle normally would. Shimon spent a lot of time with me since my earliest memories as a toddler. He played with me during my childhood, and I fondly remember how he acceded to my demands as a child, such as regularly treating me to my favorite egg salad sandwich and chocolate milk when he took me to the local restaurant. In time, he became involved in my graduations, financed my Bar Mitzvah celebration in Israel, paid the tuition for my schooling and that of my sister Fern and made certain that she and I had new clothes for the holidays. As the years progressed, Shimon took the time to play with Fern, who is 8 years younger than I, when she was a little girl and to make me feel important as I was growing up by speaking to me about family matters on adult terms.

Shimon was so frequently at our table for the Sabbaths, as well as for most of the Yomim Tovim, or Jewish Holidays, that we considered him a member of the household. He accompanied my father to shul, drove my parents to family celebrations, and helped them with household errands. Following the school semester, Shimon packed our bags, and transported our family up to the Catskill mountains for our summer retreats. At the end of the summer, Shimon would come to take us back home. Although extremely deferential to my father, Shimon was, in almost every respect, the leader of the family.

In summary, Shimon was much more than an uncle, but he was not, after all, my biological father. Because Shimon occupied such an important role in the lives of my sister and me, we never called him uncle because such a title would not reflect the true measure of what he meant to us. As a result, we called him, very simply, by his name "Shimon," a practice that spanned my experience since my earliest childhood memory to the night before his death in May 1994. On that painful night, as he lay in a hospital bed, breathing in a labored fashion and moaning in the agony of approaching death, I parted with Shimon by reciting for him the Shma Yisrael and Viduy, the traditional Jewish final prayer and confession to the Creator, some hours before he departed from this world.

Nearly 25 years earlier, Shimon had been at my side while, together with my mother, I watched my father die as a result of a freakish motor vehicle accident in Brooklyn on his way home from a wedding. In the years that followed that awful day on September 22,1970, Shimon intensified his paternal responsibilities to my sister Fern and me. While my mother Sylvia became the rock upon which my sister and I depended for our moral and psychological support and development, Shimon helped fill the void created by the sudden absence of our father through his guidance and attention to us. He also continued his financial support, without which our family could not possibly have survived, and afforded his considerable personal strength to us by spending Sabbaths, holidays and vacations with us. With our father gone, Shimon became an indispensable part of our lives, and helped my mother pull us through the many difficult years following our young family's tragedy.

For nearly two and a half decades, Shimon became intimately involved in the daily affairs of our lives. In addition to the economic support he provided to us throughout those years, such as paying the costs of our education, helping us defray the expenses of our weddings and residences and giving generously on our children's birthdays, Shimon offered the strong moral support that assisted our mother in raising and guiding my sister and me through our early adulthood in the emotionally difficult period created by the loss of our father. As time progressed, Shimon became a friend and confidante to me, in addition to a father figure. I greatly valued his advice, forged by his experiences in the Holocaust and as the family leader whose parents and brothers, and ultimately their families and children, looked to for guidance and support.

In his later years, Shimon assumed a significant role in the early lives of my children and my sister's, whom he properly considered his grandchildren. Shimon was the Sandek at the bris of the first-born son to my wife Leah and me, Yehoash Abba, named after my late father, and whom we call Abba'leh. Consequently, Shimon was Abba'leh's godfather in addition to being his great- uncle. He felt doubly blessed when my sister Fern and her husband Danny's son was born and also named Yehoash (Jason) after our father. When Leah and I named our second son Israel, whom we call Raeli, Shimon was fulfilled in witnessing the perpetuation of his late father's name. Prior to his stroke, Shimon experienced the arrival of my sister's little girl Jennifer Brenda. Although, as a result of his stroke, Shimon was unable to attend the bris of our youngest son, born to us last March, Leah and I decided to honor our uncle Shimon at the baby's bris, with the approval of Chief Rabbis Shlomo Goren and Shear Yashuv Cohen, by naming our third child, whom we call Shimi, after him.

Shimon was in the final chapter of his life when we brought the baby to him, having survived, once again, for nearly a year following a massive stroke which his treating physicians initially thought would prove fatal within a short period of time. Despite his obvious pain and suffering, and his inability to speak or move half his body, Shimon's eyes brimmed with tears at the unexpected news that he was looking at a baby boy who would perpetuate his name. I will never forget as long as I live the reflection in Shimon's eyes of his emotions as he stared at our baby boy. Such a display of feeling from a person who, throughout his life, rarely, if ever, exhibited his emotions publicly, even after he suffered the massive stroke that left him paralyzed for

life, was a remarkable experience that is etched in my memory forever. Several weeks later, our uncle Shimon left his world of suffering to join his parents and brothers in the world of eternal life in heaven.

D. Epilogue: The Continuation of his Legacy

With Shimon's passing, the last survivor of our family from Suwalk left us, and, with him, a whole generation of survivors and victors over the horrors created by the arch-enemies of the Jewish people in this century will pass into the annals of our people's history. One week after Shimon's burial, at the unveiling of his tombstone, I stood at the grave sites of my father, grandparents and two uncles on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, overlooking the road to the Tomb of Rachel in Bethlehem and a walking distance to Mount Moriah, the site of the two Holy Temples where our ancestors worshipped over 2,000 years ago. I could not help but think about the passing of their generation, the survivors of the Holocaust through whose efforts the Jewish people continue to exist and to flourish. They had overcome unspeakable adversity to become victorious in the raising of new generations of Jews -- their ultimate triumph over the defeated Nazi oppressors.

During the war years, Shimon had assumed the burden of caring for, and protecting, his parents and brothers, a role that intensified with the arrival of me and my sister, and the subsequent growth of our own families. Shimon loved Fern and me as his own children, and extended that love to our respective spouses Danny and Leah. He felt great joy in spending time with our children, whom he loved as his grandchildren and regarded as the bearers of our family's Jewish ideals for the next generation.

In reciprocity, all of us became extremely devoted to Shimon. Leah, in particular, extended herself greatly for him during the nearly one year period of his incapacitation. Often, she was the first to rush to the Jewish Home and Hospital in Manhattan to be with him when a medical emergency arose. Leah spent a great deal of time with Shimon, irrespective of her time-consuming important commitments to our children and to the operation of my law office, when he needed comfort during a particularly difficult stage in his continued illness. She was also with him during intervals when others, including many of his friends who owed him far more than they could ever repay, did not find the time to visit him in the darkest chapter of his life. More importantly, Leah was insistent that our children, although tender in years, should be brought to their uncle Shimon so that he could glean some nuggets of nachas from them during his last days on Earth, and they, in turn, would learn to appreciate the importance of their uncle and the value of comforting those who can no longer take care of themselves.

In the final months of his life, Shimon often found himself alone, persevering as he did throughout his life through his inner strength. I remember well how Shimon used to wave me off after my late night visits to him at the Jewish Home and Hospital as a signal for me not to worry about him and to go home to my family. When he thought I had left, I silently watched him staring into space in the darkness of his room, unable to move and deep in thought, but strong as ever in determination, waiting for death to relieve him finally from his struggles of over 80 years of life.

Shimon's strength, in large measure, was the reason our family survived the Holocaust and its displacement from Suwalk to America. Because he dedicated himself, with his whole being, to his family, he never married and had children of his own. Instead, he devoted his paternal love to Fern and me and, ultimately, to our spouses and children, instilling in us a traditional Jewish legacy, that, like our uncle Shimon in his lifetime, will survive and triumph over any adversity, and be passed on to our children and future generations.

New York City
September 22, 1995

Rosh Hashana 5756

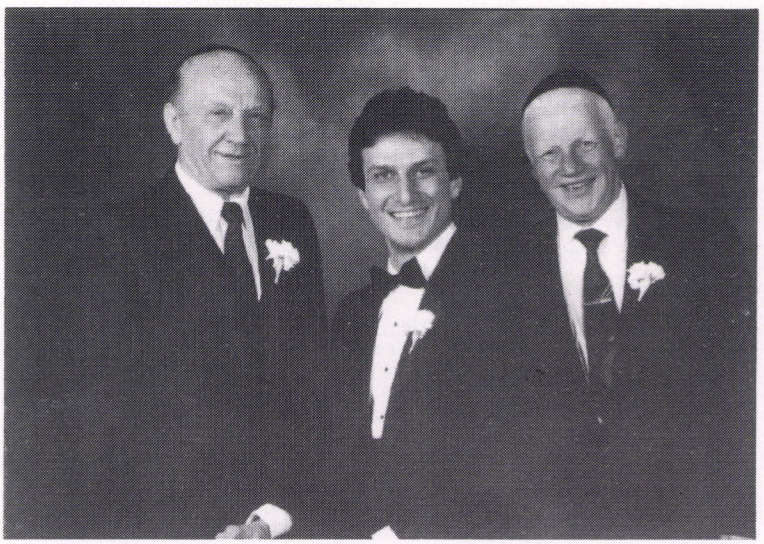
Memories of Shimon Savitt



Shimon (top left) at my parents' wedding with my grandparents - Paris 1950



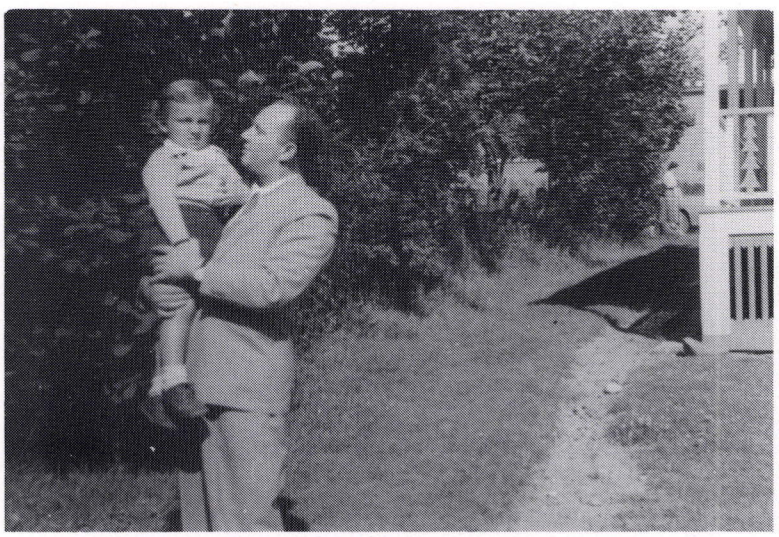
My Uncle Shimon
Paris, 1950



The author and his uncles

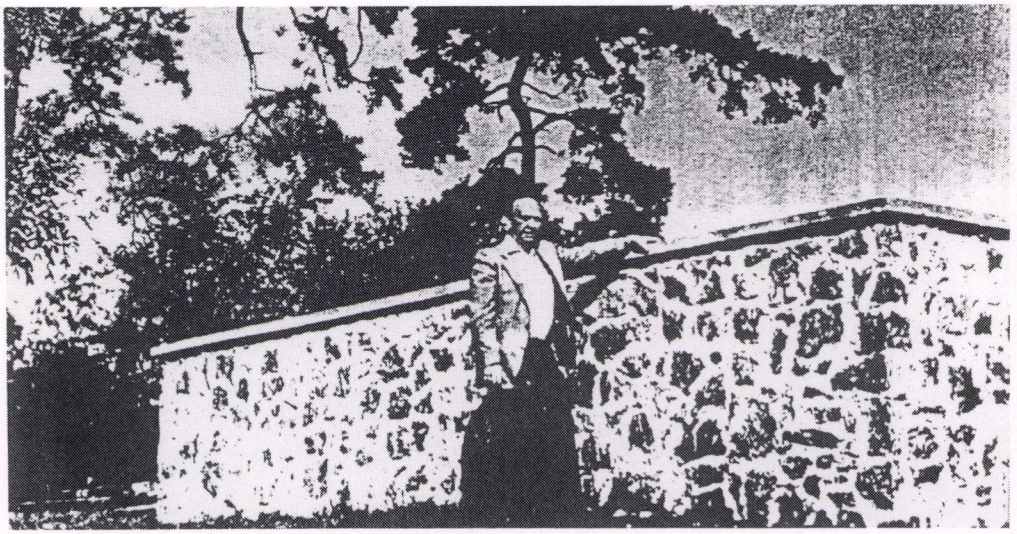


Shimon (upper left) standing
with my parents behind my
grandparents and me
Canada 1954



My Uncle Shimon and I
1953





SOLOMON RAYMAN

In Memoriam



SOLOMON RAYMAN was born in Suwalk in December 1915. He was the oldest son of the large family of the Shochet (ritual slaughterer) Reb Tzodek Rayman and the grandson, on the maternal side, of the famous shochet Reb Moshe-Leib Maitkis. Solomon studied in the local Talmud Torah, where he was a very good student with a remarkable memory. He was a very friendly boy. Upon graduation, he found himself a job at the dry-goods firm of Mr. Silberblat, where he was very much liked and his work was greatly valued.

As a teenager, he joined the Zionist Revisionist organization (Beitar), which was very strong in Suwalk in the 1920s and 1930s, but his greatest pleasure was sports. Solomon was a fanatical sports devotee. The sports club "Maccabi" was his home away from home. He spent most of his free time there, was active in the life of the club and participated in a few sports. His forte was ping pong. He would play it for hours on end. At the table, he was the king. He would return every shot, no matter how powerful, and indeed, in his steady way of wearing his opponent down, he was hard to beat.

That, in a way, characterized his life. He was always steadfast and most dedicated to the things he loved. As a matter of fact, he was a member of the Maccabi representative ping pong team, playing other teams in city or intercity games. He also loved to play soccer. He played as substitute goalie on the second Maccabi team. He never missed a game, and I often wondered at the fact that he remembered every detail, date and lineup of every team and game. He was very active in the affairs of the club, served on many committees, and was considered as the "sports encyclopedia" there. Many year later, I found out that the local sports correspondent from Suwalk to the Jewish press in Warsaw was none other than Solomon, who used to send in his reports anonymously.

Life for the young people in Suwalk in the late twenties and thirties was not too exciting, except perhaps for a particularly interesting sports event or the arrival of a traveling troupe of actors who put on a few shows; an occasional state-supported traveling opera company which put on an opera or two, or some great orators (the greatest of whom, at that time, was Zev Zhabotinski, the founder of Beitar). The occasional visit of an internationally

famous cantor to give a concert of liturgical music in the big synagogue was a real treat for young and old alike.

The opportunities for advancement on the job -- if there was one -- were practically nil, except for those who could advance in their long-established family businesses. In general, the 1920s and 1930s in Suwalk, due to the lack of job opportunities, was a time when most of the Jewish youth endeavored to leave the city in search for a better future. South America and Palestine were the places where most of them went.

Solomon saw than no great opportunity in the Silberblat firm (where he worked for several years) when he reached the top rung on a dead end job. Having made, during his work, contacts with salesmen of manufacturers and jobbers from Warsaw, he was able to secure for himself a position in a wholesale establishment there. He was willing to work hard, and being a capable and honest young man he was liked by his employer and customers so much that he was promoted to the position of a salesman covering the territory of Suwalk and the vicinity. That gave him an opportunity to better himself financially, and also to visit his family in Suwalk from time to time.

He moved to and lived in Warsaw in the middle 1930s and unfortunately was caught there on September 1, 1939, when the war broke out. After the first German blitz he escaped that city and endeavored to find his family and join up with them. Several months of searching in vain and wandering from place to place on foot or by any other available means of transportation did not produce any results. In his search he wound up in a town in eastern Poland, Klesow, in the province of Wolin, where he met a beautiful, lonely young lady, Esther Mesz. She, herself, was a deportee and refugee from her hometown, separated from her parents and family. Solomon and Esther were married under these conditions.

. . . The war years were too gruesome to recall. . .

In 1945, when the terrible war was over and the survivors of the concentration camps started out for their home towns in Poland, bands of roving Polish anti-Semites began the so-called "actions" against these poor Jews, both those from Poland proper and also those who just returned from the Soviet Union. The culmination of these actions was the pogrom in Kielce where a large number of Jews (just returning from Russia) were murdered at the railroad station by anti-Semitic Polish zealots.

. . . Enough was enough. . . Most survivors decided that Poland was no place for them, and at the risk of their lives they crossed the border to Germany where they settled in so-called "refugee camps." Solomon and Esther were among them. Upon his return to Germany, Solomon found out that his whole family, except for his younger brother Betzalel, perished in the Holocaust. He found his brother (a survivor of a concentration camp) in such poor condition that nothing could be done to save him. The poor fellow died in Solomon's arms. It is tragic enough to find out that your whole family was murdered; imagine how terrible it must be that the only one left alive dies in your arms! Trials and tribulations harden a person, and time heals the wounds. . .

Solomon and Esther settled in the camp ("Poking") in Germany, where they soon found a group of Suwalker survivors. Being a good organizer, Solomon gathered them around him. He got a job in the camp office and was able to be of assistance to many of

them. His place was a gathering point. At the same time, he was one of the first to contact the Suwalker society in New York. The Independent Suwalker Benevolent Association immediately sent packages and money, and life in the camp began to be a little easier. Their son, Howard, was born there.

In 1945-46 started the Bricha (Escape), both from Poland and from the camps in Germany, to Palestine. Many from the camps and from Poland risked their lives and took the long tortuous and dangerous trek over the Alps to the future Israel. Others who had relatives here chose to come to the United States. Solomon, Esther and Howard were among those. They came here in 1947. Naturally, life at first was not easy. A new land, no language, a wife and child to support, were no small hurdles to overcome, even with the help of well-meaning relatives and landsleit. Solomon got a job in a Suwalker company (The Gershen-Vanguard) and worked by my side for twenty-five years. A daughter, Debbie, was born to the Raymans, and they were soon able to move from their modest apartment on Willoughby Avenue to larger and nicer quarters in another part of Brooklyn.

Solomon joined the Independent Suwalker Benevolent Association as soon as he came to the United States. He was always an active member and after the leadership of the society changed, he was elected to the job of Financial Secretary, a job in which he served well for twenty-one years until the day he died. He knew a great many members personally and remembered every important event in the society. Solomon was not a very strong man physically in these years, and his serious operations left him frail, but his love for his family, for Suwalk, and his devotion to the Suwalker Association and especially its relief work for the sick and indigent landsleit, kept him going in his good work as Secretary. He was a pillar of the Suwalker and Vicinity Benevolent Association. His and Esther's home in Brooklyn was a gathering place for many Suwalker, not only from here in the United States but also visitors from abroad. His telephone was an open line to landsleit here and in other lands, and his letter writing was legendary. In other words, he was the Suwalker society. He was instrumental in the largest campaign to have many landsleit join the Suwalker and Vicinity Benevolent Association. Besides being a good Suwalker, he was also a devoted husband and a good and loving father to Howard and his beautiful Debbie, and a loving grandfather to their children.

We lost a good member, a very good Secretary. We will very fondly and dearly miss him.

G-d bless his memory. Our deep and sincere condolences go out to his wife Esther and his children Howard and Debbie and their respective families.

Leslie Sherer - President



REMEMBERING MORRIS & MAY OSHINSKY

Morris & May Oshinsky were longtime members of the Association, and Mr. Oshinsky was for many years a trustee. Both of them are fondly remembered by many of our members who regularly attended the Association's meetings. The following comments are adapted from eulogies prepared by their son, Sy Oshinsky.

For Dad - May 30, 1995

Some things you discover about fathers early in life. Others can come a half-century later.

I knew early on that my father had a special attachment to Israel. As a child, not too many years after Israel achieved its independence, I was taken by Dad to an exhibition of Israeli consumer products, everyday things like car tires and canned fruit. Dad asked me what I though about the wares on display, and I guess my response was something on the order of "big deal!" I was not prepared for Dad's reaction of shock and anger. At that time, I could not see, as my father could, the miracle in a tin can with the label "Made in Israel." Later on, the walls and tabletops of his apartment would be filled with countless souvenirs, photographs and paintings he and others brought back from Israel.

Over the years, I also came to recognize the different kinds of heroes in Dad's life. The poet Bialik (an orange from his garden in Israel stands in a tin container in Dad's house). Abraham Lincoln: a beautiful pencil sketch of the president, drawn by my father as a young man, hangs on the wall in his apartment. And people like Arturo Toscanini, admired by Dad as much for his courageous stand against Mussolini as for being a great, demanding conductor. And, more recently, Menachem Begin, not because he signed the Camp David accords with Egypt, but because he wore his kippah proudly.

But recognition of Dad's many qualities also came much later in life. Just the other day, my sister Rosalind called me to relate a remarkable experience. She had spoken that day by telephone to three people who knew Dad well, and each reacted to news of his death with the same exact words: "Who am I going to talk to now." We never realized how much Dad, at age 93 and his mind still sharp and engaging, continued to have an impact on so many people's lives. Or that in his declining years, Dad, who we always regarded as a quiet person, could turn perfect strangers into intimate acquaintances in no time at all. This was Dad we hardly knew.

He had shared with us -- his family -- nearly a century of memories and accumulated wisdom. And apparently with alot of other people. There was the Polish doctor who, while Dad was being examined in the Intensive Care Unit, discussed with him the geopolitical changes that occurred in my father's region of Poland prior to World War I. And there was the Jamaican nurse, a woman who had grown fond of Dad over the two-month period he had spent in a convalescent home earlier this year, recovering from a broken ankle. One evening she spent a half-hour relating a mystical-religious experience she had with her dying mother, and asking Dad for his thoughts from a Jewish perspective.

Dad's devotion to family even extended to those who passed on. Into the last week of his life, he remembered to light memorial candles for his parents and all his siblings. And he remembered the Yahrzeits of not only Mom but of her mother as well. Grandma's Yahrzeit candle was the last one I saw burning in his apartment.

It was Mom, his wife for more than half a century, who was the most enduring focus of his life. When she was gone, his enthusiasm for life seemed to decline dramatically. We couldn't get Dad to spend a day with us before he grew anxious to return home, where he said he could still feel her presence most strongly. He seemed to have withdrawn from active social contact. That's why, perhaps, Roz and I were so surprised at the strong expressions of fondness and admiration that have been expressed by so many people.

In Dad's yearning to return to Mom's embrace, there was this remarkable occurrence a week ago today. As related by Dad to Roz on the last day she saw him: when Dad felt the first pains in his chest, he found himself at the same outdoor spot in Co-op City where Mom's heart attack began in

earnest two years ago. And he rested at the same bench where she had sat -- in their last time side by side -- before returning home.

Dad died on the 27th day of Iyar, just one day before Mom's Yahrzeit. The 28th of Iyar is also Yom Yerushalayim, when Jews throughout the world celebrate the reuniting of the long-divided Holy City. I pray that Mom and Dad are likewise united, sharing the same park bench, in their eternal rest. We'll miss them both. And we'll always remember them as the inseparable Mom and Dad.

For Mom - May 20, 1993

When anyone tried to get Mom to reveal a recipe for one of her favorite dishes, like her noodle pudding, she would usually reply, "Oh, it's just a little of this and a little of that." It wasn't that Mom was secretive. She was just too modest to believe that she was in possession of any unusual knowledge. You might as well have asked her, "What is the meaning of life?"

But, in fact, she did provide us with some very clear answers to the last question. As she lay in the hospital bed, unable to talk because of the respirator, she managed to use her limited body motions and facial expressions to let us know that she had some pressing information to convey to us. We placed a notepad and pencil in her hands. Despite great difficulty, she scribbled out several messages. One read: "There's more meat in the container." That was my mother. Worrying that we were not feeding ourselves properly, and letting us know that she had provided for such a contingency.

A second message took us only a few seconds longer to interpret: "Money for the nurses." That, too, was typical Mom: overlooking her pain and precarious situation to concentrate her thoughts on the kindness shown to her by the nurses who labored around her for days and nights, and asking us to repay them in some material way.

Mom never asked for much, only that we enjoy the fruits of her labor. But don't think that my mother was a martyr. Your pleasure was her pleasure. She thrived on it. Really. She didn't like being the subject of attention. She like working in the background, creating a Shalom Bayit -- a house of peace -- where you could always find a warm smile on her face, and a plate of hot soup on the table. Never a complaint about her health. And never an unkind word about someone else. It always amazed us how many young people -- distant relatives most of us hardly knew -- would seek out Mom and Dad. They often traveled great distances, just to spend an afternoon of conversation -- and a little nosh -- with Mom and Dad in their modest apartment in Co-op City. Perhaps this bridging of the generation gap shouldn't have surprised us. For, as it is said in Proverbs about a good wife -- and a good mother, for that matter -- she not only gives food to her household, but smiles looking at the future.

The money and noodle pudding she could offer us were limited by the size of her bank account and her refrigerator. But the love and affection that were behind these gifts were boundless and available to everyone.



Memories of Suwalk

The Suwalker Life

MY MEMORIES OF SUWALK, 1919 - 1937 - PART II

by Leslie Sherer (Eliezer Szereszewski)

"A Brievele der Mamen"

Those who read my first article in the 1990 Anniversary Journal will know that I wrote mainly about the city itself. Here I will endeavor to write about the Jewish people who lived there from 1919 to 1937, when I left for the United States. But first, a brief description of the city.

A landslady here in New York once told me that Suwalk was a "small shtetl, with one long street." When I told that to David Bern, he protested and indignantly replied: "Not so, Suwalk was a 'shtot' (a city)," with a population of approximately twenty-eight thousand people, almost half of them Jews, surrounded by a garrison of about twenty thousand soldiers. Now it is a city of sixty-five thousand including the new part (which is north of the old city) and the old. As you can see on the map, it is located in the northeastern part of Poland, in the triangle between Lithuania and East Prussia. It is set amid beautiful, majestic pine forests and many lakes, the largest of which is Wigry (the summer vacation land of the highest Polish officials, including the President, who built villas there for rest, vacation and hunting).

The "old city" itself consisted of many streets, long, short, wide and narrow, straight and curved and some slanting down to the river Czarna Hancza. The main street, Kosciuszko Street, was a beautiful wide street, one kilometer (two-thirds of a mile) long, lined on both sides with old chestnut streets which bloomed in the spring. On the east side of the street was a water mill, the German church, three movie houses, two banks, a sick bay (a "krankenkasse" - the current version would be similar to an outpatient clinic), a police station, many stores, a huge public school and Smolinksy's windmill. On the west side of the street were Arkadia (the former estate of the Russian governor), the post office, a 'polamtov' (Polish-American trading and travel company) and the birthplace of Maria Konopnicka, the famous Polish poetess. Also on the west side of the street were two public baths, police headquarters, our Hebrew gymnasium and tarbut (elementary) school on the third floor of the same building, City Hall, the Russian church, the city park (which took up one third of that street), stores, courts and federal offices and the most beautiful building in the city - 'Resursa' (the merchant's club), the annex to the public school - ogonek ('little tail'), the Polish bank and, finally, the hospital complex (two huge brick buildings - one Polish and one Jewish building).

The street parallel to it was divided in three parts. The first was 'Schulgasse' (synagogue street), which was called in Polish "Berko Joselewicz" (after a Jewish hero in the Polish uprising) with the Great Synagogue, which was used mostly for High Holidays, special and ceremonial occasions, with two smaller ones called Kloizlach ('little prayer houses'), a yeshiva, and a Mikva on three sides of its huge yard. Across the street was the Bet HaMidrash, with two Kloizlach, which was used every day of the year. It was the Rabbi's permanent prayer and study place, where he preached on Saturdays and, during the week, taught Talmud and Mishna with old and young alike in the afternoons.

Suwalk had twenty-seven Kloizlach seating as many as fifty to a hundred or more people - six in the vicinity of the Synagogue and the Bet Midrash, the largest of which were the tailors', the shoemakers', the locksmiths', the fishermen's and handworker's (craftsmen-artisans). The smallest one was 'Moti-Meier's, which was in his 'chsanie' (guest house for observant travelers). So you can see that the working people of Suwalk were literate, knowledgeable and some even very erudite. Although the Suwalker Jews ranged from very conservative to liberal, socialist ideas were very deep seated since the 1905 revolution. The craft people played an important role in the affairs of the Jewish life and at times, were represented in the 'Vad Hakol' (community board).

The other Kloizlach were spread throughout the city in some large apartment houses. One of these was in my neighborhood, in the very large apartment house of Mr. Brown. Mr. Brown was considered one of the richest men in town. He was an agent for New York Life insurance company, and a 'walking credit union,' who loaned money on interest ("Notes") to

business people. He was a remarkable man. Although some of his debtors failed, he never sued them, always settling their cases. He used to walk in the street and talk to himself. When people asked him why he did so, his answer was "I like to talk to smart people." Mr. Brown's quotations were legendary in the city. All his business was in his head and on a tiny piece of paper. His head was a regular computer. He did, however, never like his competition, no matter how small. One of his competitors, a Mr. Levine, was a very short man (a relative of our late Vice President) whose nickname was "Malushki" ("tiny"). One day, when I was working in the public bank in a very long room with the entrance at one end and the cashier's cage at the other, Mr. Levine was standing by the cashier's window. When Mr. Brown came in and noticed Mr. Levine, he ran through the bank, picked up Mr. Levine by the collar, carried him out with Malushki's short legs bicycling in the air and threw him out, much to our great astonishment. That was the great and only laugh we had during the few months of my work at the bank.

The second part of the street was taken up by the market. The third part was a business street with the home of the Jewish aged on it. That street ended at the prison. These two main streets were intersected by: 1) Vigry Street, where the Maccabi club was and where, on the second floor was "Cisha" school, a small school (where the language used was Yiddish - because it was maintained by the Jewish Socialist Party in Poland - the Bund), whose members and some Zionist youth were the principal defenders of the Warsaw ghetto. There was the large Kuntz Brewery and the Adelson watermill; 2) Yatkegasse, the second intersecting street - named so for the mall with the butcher stalls all around it and the ritual slaughter house; and 3) 'The Third of May Street,' that ran from the square of St. Alexander, with its huge Polish church (in front of which one had to remove his cap or receive a severe reprimand and, at times, a good beating), past the large market and the smaller horse market to the end of town.

All around the main market, Kosciuszko Street and third of May streets were all-Jewish stores with two Polish stores and a Polish barber shop owned by Mr. Galay, the socialist mayor of the city. The last cross street was a long, winding street that started from the hospital past the big school, the prison and ran on to the railroad station.

There were actually three rabbis in Suwalk; all of them lived on Vesola ('happiness') street. The Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Dovid Lifshitz, lived on the south side of the street with an orphanage across the street from him. At the north end of the street lived Rabbi Altman. Rabbi Magentze, whose name was the Russian version of the name of the German city of Mainz, lived in the middle of that street. Rabbi Lifshitz, a talmudic genius and sage, dealt with big problems, family and business disputes, and represented the Jewish community before the local authorities. Rabbi Altman concerned himself with problems of Jewish soldiers and questions of Kashrut. Rabbi Magentze was a pure scholar who studied, interpreted and wrote about religious matters. There were also three schoctim, ritual slaughterers, Meitkes, Rayman, and Mydlinski. Sometimes I wonder why that street was called Vesola and not "Rabbinical Street" - perhaps, it was because, by coincidence it happened that the Spielberg family, musicians for all occasions in Suwalk, lived there, too.

Our city had a big two-story Jewish hospital, nine Jewish doctors and one surgeon - Drs. Weissman, Staropolsky, Preisman, Smolinski, Rosenthal, Sherman, Capt. Rosenthal (director of the military hospital), Mydlinski, Charko and the wonderful surgeon Dr. Grubstein. There was also an unauthorized doctor (a 'feldscher') by the name of Ralski, who practiced aspirin, enema, cups and glass of milk medicine and who, incidentally, nearly sent me to the netherworld. But that's too long and too private a story to relate here. There were six dentists, Drs. Katzenelenson, Stern, Wigdorczyk and Indursky, two female dentists, Drs. Erdreich and Wolf and two lawyers - our member David Bern(stein) and Erdreich. The latter was actually a non believer but was called by the Polish lawyers as the "Jewish" lawyer. There was Erdreich's apothecary and two drugstores, all on Kosciuszko street.

There was in Suwalk an electric power plant since 1915, installed during World War I by the Germans, while they still used gaslight in New York City. That plant was run by a Jewish engineer named Mr. Trotzki. So you see, we were quite civilized. There were practically no illiterates. Most of the Jews in Suwalk were business people. We had a large farm equipment and bicycle factory, Rola, which produced and distributed to the northeastern part of Poland, three banks, two shipping companies, two lumberyards, two flour mills, two breweries and

one of the largest fur trading companies in northeastern Poland - the Kershkowski brothers - who always occupied the first stall in the international fur fairs in Vilna and who bought in Moscow and Leningrad and manufactured and sold in Warsaw, Leipzig and London. Our late Vice President, Murray Levine, was one of their chief employees. We had many wholesalers, storekeepers of all kinds and some large suppliers to the military.

The stores were closed on Saturdays and High Holidays and Kashrut was strictly observed. The prayerbook was orthodox and, except for a few agnostics, all the Jewish population observed the Sabbath and holidays. Occasionally, after Sabbath services and a good lunch, we youngsters liked to go past city limits to watch a soccer game and some young men, in the late evening, liked to sneak in through the back door of one of two Polish restaurants to savor an excellent pork chop topped off with a slug of vodka.

Suwalk was, during Csarist times, a 'gubernie' (a state capital) by that name. After World War II, it became the largest, albeit one of the poorest states in Poland. The largest because it was granted the southern part of East Prussia and the poorest due its relative lack of heavy industry when compared with the southern states.

Our Suwalk was the hub of ten small towns (shtetlach) with Jewish populations. People who were related to Suwalker sold to and bought from Suwalker merchants a variety of manufactured and agricultural goods. They sent their children to be educated in Suwalk, they participated or attended certain cultural or sports events or came there to see a good doctor or for hospitalization. They attended a wedding or other simcha or, sometimes, a sad event in Suwalk. They were all in heart, body and soul an integral part of the greater Suwalk. They were our vicinity landsleit.

Speaking of sports and soccer games, comes to mind our Maccabi Sports Club on Vigry Street, with the great athletes, the three Fink brothers: Shimon (soccer), David (soccer and boxing), and Abraham (outstanding soccer player who represented all Poland's Maccabi Clubs in the Israel Maccabia; and Skladlaowski, the long distance runner candidate from Poland's team to the Olympic Games). There, a lot of the time was spent on sports, cultural and social events. It was generally a place for young people to have dances on Saturday nights or on other special occasions.

Politically speaking, Suwalk was considered the fortress of Zionist revisionism, a movement led by Zev Zabotinski, the world- famous orator and a promoter, throughout the world, of the liberation of Palestine from the English to become a Jewish State. Most teenagers in our city belonged to this organization called "Beitar," (Brith Trumpeldor - members of the association who adopted the name of the Jewish hero, Trumpeldor). It was a quasi-military group encouraged to the purpose of fighting the English and establishing a Jewish state. It was led in Suwalk by David Stern, the younger brother of the famous Abraham Stern, who was killed by the English and who, together with Menachem Begin and Itshak Shamir, was the founder of Likud, but later broke away and found the more radical LEHI party. Abraham Stern fought for the liberation of Palestine and creation of a Jewish State. The 'Shomer Hatzair' (a young socialist Zionist organization) had a small membership and so did the Orthodox Zionist group. The predominant party, however, was the Beitar.

Most Jewish boys in Suwalk started their education in Talmud Torah, which was not just a Cheder, but had a regular public school curriculum plus Hebrew, study of the Pentateuch and the beginning of Talmud. For some, that was the extent of their education. For others, it was a stepping stone to the Jewish gymnasium (high school) with a full public and Hebrew education including Hebrew literature, Jewish history, religious education, Talmud, etc. Some girls attended the Tarbut schools, a network of Hebrew schools throughout Poland.

My alma mater, the Jewish gymnasium, produced a number of prominent persons including; Abraham Stern; Pinchas Sapir (Pini Kopciowski) of Ben Gurion's Zionist Labor Party - one of the founders of the State of Israel - its first and world known Finance Minister; David Stern, member of the Knesset and head of the builders' association of Israel; Goldstein, vice mayor of Tel Aviv; General Granit (Grinstein) from Vishan (a neighboring town), one of the three leaders of the Exodus and veteran of the three Israeli wars; high officers in the Israeli army; professors, poets, writers, and my classmate Uri Shiloh, chief of water works in Israel and an international businessman. Suwalk also produced high officials in the governments of France, South America, etc. In America, Suwalkers were among the founders of HIAS, the Beth Israel Hospital in New

York City, nationally advertised businesses (EXLAX) and products (Baskin Robbins, Van Heusen, Air Light baby carriages), philanthropists.

I remember that, at our Hebrew graduation, Dr. Staropolosky (the knowledgeable talmudist) quoted a passage from the Hallel - "The stone which the builders rejected will become the cornerstone of our nation." These were prophetic words.

The principal of our gymnasium, Dr. Efron, was feared by most of the students, but was very much liked by me. He understood me better than my own father. He helped me to overcome my problems with my difficult home life. He helped me with my weak subject, math. I think that he liked me in spite of the caricatures that I drew of the teachers, and even of himself. He even corresponded with me on a personal level after I left for the United States.

I happened to be an artist and did a variety of paintings (live and technical) for a dentist-inventor, posters for special events, dances and Maccabi soccer games, which were displayed in store windows and around poster kiosks. All my friends enjoyed my caricatures and kept them for years as mementos. I did scenic set designs for school shows. Once our high school produced a successful musical for the public in the great hall of the 'Reduta' (the city theater). I had my chance of doing big-time scenery. For that purpose I needed two assistants for a week or two. I had no problem finding them. Both eager to play a little hookey from the classroom, Isaac Dorsey and Sammy Aueron volunteered their services to be my assistants. Half serious and half fooling around, in spite of the spilled paint and other boners and continuous misunderstandings, the scenery was built and installed on the stage of the Reduta in time for the opening of the musical to the applause of the public.

Reduta was a large hall where preelection campaigns and other assemblies, New Year's dances, etc., were held. State and federal sponsored travelling troupes put on shows. There we saw, from time to time, a Jewish road show with the best Jewish stars of Poland. Concerts were performed there, and it was the place where my best friend, Hirsch Mishkinski and I watched, in awe, our first opera: Tosca, performed by a travelling Warsaw Opera company. There we heard, with an overflowing crowd, the unforgettable four-hour special address to his Zionist revisionist faithful by Zev Zabotinski, which was music to our ears.

This was not the only place in the city where we regularly heard music. There was music emanating from the shell of the bandstand of the city park played on Sundays by the 41st Infantry band under the leadership of the Jewish conductor, Captain Bechulka, who, miraculously, survived the war and later became director of the fire fighters orchestra in Tel Aviv. The bands of the cavalry regiments played on Tuesday or Thursday afternoons. These were not the only times we heard music in the streets of Suwalk. Unfortunately, from time to time, there was pathetic music played at the funeral of a Christian soldier being brought to rest in one of the cemeteries, Beethoven's Funeral March.

On the third of May (Poland's Independence Day), we heard music practically the whole day, starting with the excellent 41st Infantry band, followed by the cavalry, artillery and other military, veteran's groups, Boy Scouts, male and female public gymnasia, girls' seminary and finally our gymnasium's small band, with Jewish organizations bringing up the tail. That parade passed a reviewing stand of civilian and military dignitaries in front of City Hall and lasted practically a whole day.

That day was particularly important, ecstatically and eagerly anticipated by a Jewish city character nicknamed "Itchy Chescht" ('itchy salute'), whose greatest passion was to march with and salute each band as it passed by. From early morning 'til the end of the day, he ran from one band to the other, to the following one. It became a little difficult and dangerous to trot alongside the cavalry bands but somehow he prevailed until the last one (our band) passed by. I guess he must have been pretty tired by then, but then he had a whole year to rest and recuperate.

Itchy was one of many characters in our city. There was "Peretz the engineer," a silent man who never uttered a word to anyone and never failed to attend any kind of construction, from people digging a hole in the ground, to fixing a broken fence or building a house. He was always there, wearing a nondescript, dirty, sweaty, full-of-holes caftan, three-quarter fringy pants, not unlike the jeans worn by our present youth. He always walked barefoot in the summer and, in the winter, with no socks and torn shoes. He was thin and emaciated, probably hungry and freezing. People found him, one very cold winter evening, screaming, with his tongue frozen to the window of Mr. Applebaum's butcher and deli shop. He must have been so hungry,

frightened and disoriented to go into the store, that he resorted to licking the window. The window was eventually defrosted with candles and the poor soul was relieved of his misery.

There were a few others, less openly distinguished in their afflictions. Among them was Motye, nicknamed "Tschipok" (chicken pecker), who looked like a caricature of Popeye the Sailor and walked like Donald Duck. His family lived in the poorest section of the city. There was a house full of children and practically nothing to eat. It probably did not matter too much because Motye had only two teeth, one on each side of the bottom of his mouth. To earn a few groszen (pennies), he used to hang around the intercity bus station, waiting for the arrival of a bus (that came once or twice a day) so that, if lucky, he could carry one or two bags for someone. He drew the attention of my generous, caring mother, who felt sorry for him and who gave him, from time to time, something to eat in our kitchen. In gratitude, he probably felt that it was his duty to become my orderly and, every day, when school let out, he waited for me, grabbed my heavy briefcase, filled with books, and strutted proudly behind me. He guarded me and shoed anybody away from me, even though the distance from my school to my home was only diagonally across the street. I guess that this was his loyalty to me and also a secret motive, because he was always rewarded by my mother with something to eat.

One day I came home from school feeling sick and feverish with a headache, dizzy and pains all over me. Motye followed me home. I probably had a bad case of the flu. I laid down and wanted very badly to sleep. I asked Motye to go home, but Motye did not move. On the contrary, he sat down closer to me. My temperature must have probably been 106 degrees and all I wanted was to sleep. I asked him again to go. In my naivete, I was afraid that, if I were asleep, he would take something from our house. Finally, in desperation, I yelled out, "Go home, Tzchipok." No sooner did I finish these words, when a shoe flew in my direction and, luckily, hit me in my forehead with the flat side of the heel. Otherwise, I would have split my head open. It knocked me out and Motye ran away. In my then state of mind, I did not realize that perhaps he cared about me and was worried about me and did not want to leave me alone until my mother returned home. In retrospect, I realize his loyalty to me. After that incident, I did not see Motye for a long time.

In Poland, when a young man reached the age of twenty-one, he had to stand before the selective service commission. Unlike most of the Jewish fellows, Motye was eager to join the army. He did not speak Polish, was illiterate, and, for other obvious reasons, he was originally rejected. The news shattered poor Motye. The commission, however, felt that they had to send Motye to Grodno for a more thorough physical and psychological examination by a higher commission. After a month, he returned, crestfallen with some bad and good news. The bad news was they had rejected him again. The good news was that they had told him, when all his teeth would grow back in his mouth, they would let him be a proud soldier. So you can see that Poland had soldiers with all their teeth, but with little of everything else. That's probably why they lost the war in a few days.

These were some of the tame characters of our city. There were more that I do not care to mention. There were dangerous ones, like a lady of a noble Russian family who walked around the streets and loudly proclaimed the virtues and glory of the Tzar, Nicholas and kept on saying "The Tzar is alive. Long live the Tzar." Youngsters kept on teasing her and yelling "Nikolai zdokh" (Nikolai croaked). Then, enraged, she used to pick up a stone and, cursing in Russian, threw it at them. There was a former businessman whose business went sour and, although fairly young, his hair and beard prematurely turned white and disheveled. He looked like a wild lion, roaming the streets, ranting loudly. People avoided him. But of all the dangerous people, the one that stood out most in my mind was a spinster, a former teacher, by the name of Miss Charnes, who professed to be in love with Adolf Hitler, claiming that he was her boyfriend. She ran around the streets with a wild look in her eyes, yelling about her love and devotion to Hitler, not loathe to tear up a cobblestone from the street and throw it at passersby. People feared her and ran away from her and shunned her like the plague. One late afternoon at dusk, as our apartment was getting dark, my mother was out visiting her cousins and I was sitting at the table, trying to do my homework. The door quietly opened up and there sneaked in Miss Charnes, closing the door, shut behind her with her back, staring wildly at me. Even now, sixty-five years later, when I recollect that incident, a chill goes down my spine. I froze. After a few seconds of deadly silence, I heard her yell out: "Where is he, they told me he was here?" By that time, the blood rushed back to my head and I, thank God, regained the presence of my mind, and

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immediately answered her: "He was here a few minutes ago to look for you, but since he did not find you here, he went back to your house." Like lightning, she was out of the room and I, scared out of my wits, ran to bolt the door shut. I was only sorry that I had only one lock to close the door.

Our city of more or less twelve thousand Jews (depending on the financial situation) had all kinds of people, good and bad, educated and ignorant, clever and inane - most sane and, as you saw, a few others. Life went on more or less in harmony with the Polish population except for a few disturbing events. From time to time (very seldom) there was an anti-Semitic incident of one degree or another, like the uprising of the peasants, aided and abetted by local toughs, which I described in the first article, in which store windows were broken and at a prearranged signal, Polish young men turned against their Jewish "friends," with whom they were walking in the street, and beat them up.

Another potential threatening incident happened on a spring Friday market day, when a peasant with a club in his hand went up on the step in front of the largest piece-goods store owned by the respected, distinguished, Mr. Mintz, located on the corner of Yatke and Kosciuszko streets, and started yelling that his wife went in to buy some material, but the Jew did not let her out and is keeping her there to kill her for blood for matzohs. Peasants came running from all the markets with clubs in their hands, ready to break up and loot the store and the adjourning stores on both streets. To rescue the woman from the jew, the mob grew larger and larger and noisier by the minute and the situation became very ugly, fraught with bloodshed. Someone noticed the police sergeant, Lagoda (a giant of a man), who spoke a fluent Yiddish including Hebrew words. Lagoda was a clever man, a friend of the Jews, not like the other sergeant, Achenbach, of German descent who, like most of the volkdeutschen in Suwalk and vicinity, although being Polish citizens worked covertly and treacherously to deliver Poland to Hitler. One of them was our German lady teacher, Mrs. Rosenthal, who, after the war, was executed by the Polish. Lagoda was particularly a protector of Jewish businessman, and I suspect that they, in return, were of no small help to him. Lagoda made his way through the unruly crowd, confronted the troublemaker, who by now, was scared at the sight of a policeman, grabbed him by the shirt, and asked him three questions: the first was "Do you have a horse and wagon?," the answer was "yes." The second: "Where are they?," answered "in the dolek" (the smallest of the markets and parking place for horses and wagons), and finally, question number three: "And who is watching your horse and wagon?" By now the peasant, scared out of his wits, replied "My wife!" You see there was a law that horse and wagon had to be watched lest the horse would run off and cause some damage. Then there would be a severe fine and possibly a jail term. Thus a dangerous situation was resolved with the peasant sent to jail and the Suwalker Jews much relieved.

I remember when, early in the 1930's, Rabbi Yoselewich (then the chief rabbi in town) died, and hundreds of rabbis from northeastern Poland came to attend the funeral and, at the same time, vie for that plumb position. However, in their wisdom, the Vad Hakol made a fortunate choice by choosing Rabbi Yoselewich's brilliant young son-in-law, Rabbi David Lifshitz. Rabbi Yoselewich was not a born Suwalker, and he served only about six years there. Through his great scholarship and erudition, he made the name of Suwalk, via the thousands of his rabbinic students, known throughout the Jewish world. The huge mass of mourning Suwalker and visiting rabbis followed the body of Rabbi Yoselewich from the synagogue yard through the streets of the city to the cemetery. We students, from all the Jewish schools, formed a human chain to contain that huge crowd. To some of these kids, it may have been their first visit to a cemetery. To me, it was the second one. I was there at the age of seven for my maternal grandfather's burial and stood in awe and fright before the open grave when his tallit- covered body was put to rest and shards were put on his eyes by the chevra kaddisha (burial society). Christian bypassers stopped and, seeing that great procession, they took their caps off in respect and crossed themselves.

One summer, the Vad Hakol decided that the eighty year old great synagogue needed a refurbishing and a painting job. For that purpose, besides the city painters, they hired a master painter from Grodno. He knew well the use of paint and how to mix colors. He was, however, no artist. Somebody mentioned my name. The painter took me aboard. He worked on the restoration and decoration of the Ark, painting the flat columns, reaching about two and a half stories high and wonderfully imitated wood grain on benches and stands. I painted landscapes and scenes of sacred places in the Holy Land, since pictures of people were not permitted in a synagogue. I painted in ovals superimposed on the columns. The work was tedious

and dangerous since we had to work on very high, rickety wooden scaffolds, and at times I worked on my back. At that time I did not realize how precarious it was. I thought it was a challenge.

To amuse the painting crew, I painted a caricature of the shamos (sexton), a man with a flaming red beard, and put it above the Ark. He used to come in every day to check on the progress of the work, criticize and annoy us no end. When he saw that picture he nearly collapsed. Yelling and cursing, he tried to climb up the ladder but, afraid of going higher, he gave up and ran out and it was good riddance for a while.

One day, to my surprise, the principal of our high school, Dr. Efron, came in to see what was happening in the synagogue. I got scared and nearly fell off the scaffold. Thinking naively, perhaps, that he did not approve of my working there among ordinary painters, my fears were soon laid to rest when he later told me that he liked my work very much and how proud he was of me.

The work was finished on time before the holidays and the city people admired it. The master painter was paid and returned to his family in Grodno. The other painters were also paid. All except me. Mr. Weissberg, the head of the Vad Hakol, refused to pay me on the grounds that he did not officially hire me. The pleas of my mother and the painters, and even the threats of their relatives - the city "starkers," who all liked me - were to no avail. There was a silver lining, however. My mother, G-d bless her memory, and I turned to Rabbi Lifshitz who explained to Mr. Weissberg that, according to the Bible, no work, no matter whether hired or not, shall go unpaid. I was finally paid a pittance, just enough to buy me a warm winter coat. I am forever grateful to our dear Rabbi for this and other good deeds he did for me and my family in Suwalk and in New York.

Besides the orphanage on Wesole Street, there was a Jewish home for the aged on the street of Dr. Noniewich. There was a "gemillas chasodem kasse" (interest-free loan society office), Bikur Cholim and a 'visitation for the sick association' under the supervision of Jacob Trop on Kosciuszko Street. Later, in the USA, Mr. Trop was the secretary of the relief committee of the ISBA (Independent Suwalker Benevolent Association). He, under the chairmanship of Rabbi Lifshitz, with the tremendous help and magnanimity of Dr. David Mirow, Max Michel and myself and some others, worked arduously to collect monies, clothes and food to send to the Holocaust survivors in the camps in Germany after World War II. He was a lifetime Secretary of our Relief Committee.

The institution that took care of the help of the (mostly indigent) children in Suwalk was the "TOZ," acronym for the society of the protection of health, with headquarters in Warsaw and branches throughout Poland. It ran a small outpatient and dental clinic and served warm meals to the children. Drs. Weissman, Staropolsky, Sherman, Rosenthal and others and some dentists gave their services pro bono. Employed there also was the sister of our current vice president, Channah Meitkes.

In August of 1937, my exit papers and visa were ready and a sea passage ticket came from New York. Although I was not involved, since my friends were in trouble with the law for political reasons (being communists who belonged to an outlawed party), my exit from Suwalk had to be secret and swift. My then girlfriend, who was later killed in the Holocaust, was away on vacation and, to my great regret, I was not able to say goodbye to her. My best friend Hirsch Mishkinski came to say goodbye and brought me a gift, a fountain pen, and asked me to write to him and to see his uncles in New York to try to bring him over to the United States. We both embraced and cried. In New York, I saw Hirsch's uncles many times. Both of them were men of means. I begged them several times to bring him here, but they flatly refused. My best friend was shot by the Nazis in Kovno.

On my way to the United States, my mother accompanied me to Grodno, where my paternal grandparents lived. I said goodbye to them, to my dearly beloved uncle Benjamin, uncle Joseph and aunt Channah and all my cousins. Parting with my mother was very emotional. We were both reclining on my grandparents' bed. She embraced me and sang to me, the heartrending famous Jewish song "A Brievele der mamen."

Mein kind, mein treist, du
forst avec iber de veite, groisse
yamen;

Fargess-ze kein mol nicht, mein
liebest kind, zu schreiben a
brievele dein eilender mamen.

(My child, my joy, you're going
away to far places over mighty seas;

Never forget, my dear child, to write
a little letter to your lonely mother,
please.)

She, and the other relatives, except my old grandparents, accompanied me to the railroad station. A last kiss. I kept my composure until the train slowly pulled away and my mother's beautiful face started to fade away. I tore myself away from the window and burst out in hysterical crying. I shook like a leaf and could not stop myself from sobbing for a long time. The other passengers looked at me with amazement and unbelief that a grown man could cry like a little baby. Little did they know what my heart told me; that I probably would not ever see her alive again, nor ever know where her grave would be.

When my classmates, Lala Tombacher, Katia Osowiecki, Sammy Aueron, Morris Lizewski (Levitt), Morris Bialostocki (Stokes) and I immigrated to New York, we joined the then newly created junior Suwalker and vicinity group. This organization was made up of the children of the members of the ISBA. It was formed in 1938 by the Ladies Auxiliary of the ISBA, under the chairmanship of my beloved aunt, Mrs. Sylvia Gershen. The group was led by that wonderful, dedicated lady, Mrs. Bailey (Mrs. Mintz from the Dolek), whose husband, Reverend Bailey, married Fay and me in 1941.

Just as the aim of the men and women of the ISBA was to aid Jewish institutions and the poor in Suwalk, so was the aim of our group to send help from New York to the needy children in Suwalk. For that purpose we chose the TOZ. Members of the junior ISBA group included my cousin, Jenny Gershen Schiff, then-ISBA President Sandowski's daughter, and Ruth Hilfman Frank (now Judge Grosberg), and many whose names I no longer remember. We collected about two hundred dollars, which, in those days, was a lot of money and sent it to Suwalk. That helped them to establish a day camp in the city park and give the children extra food and toys in the summer of 1939. We received from them warm letters of thanks and photographs. Unfortunately, that was the last time we heard from them ....

September 1st, the Jewish Suwalk and its ten vicinity towns were no more.... The TOZ and the unfortunate children were no more. G-d only knows who among them survived the terrible Holocaust and if a few of them did, how many. Some of the younger doctors were killed by the Russians in the Katin forest (being conscripted into the Polish army) and so were thousands of our brothers and sisters, parents and children. G-d bless their sacred memory. Our activities ceased and our lives were changed. Only memories and the Jewish cemetery in Suwalk remain.

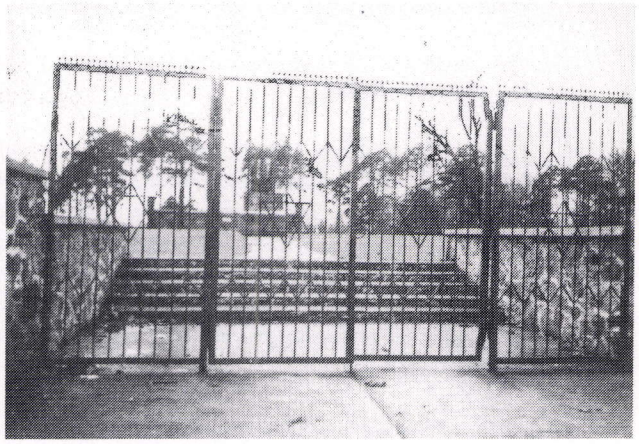
In their memory, I appeal to you, young people of Suwalk and vicinity descent to join our organization to help our indigent landsleit wherever they may be. Remember that our organization, ninety years old now, did a lot of good for Suwalker since its creation in 1905 - both here and abroad, especially in the aftermaths of the two terrible World Wars. As a Suwalker you can help to continue that worthwhile work.

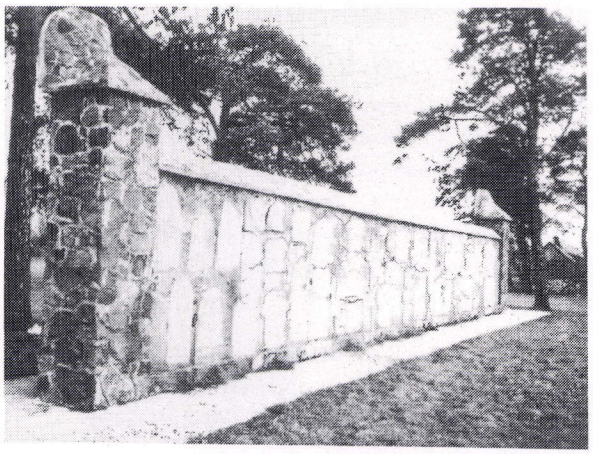
In this second part, I tried to paint for you a picture of 'Suwalk un ungegent' (Suwalk and vicinity) and its Jewish people in words. There was so much more to write which I have forgotten over the span of sixty-five years. My story may not be exact. However, much of the history of the greater Suwalk, in more accurate detail, you will be able, eventually, to read in David Bern(stein)'s book: "An Odyssey of a Lifelong Zionist Activist," which is now in print. As you see, twelve thousand-plus Jews, a community of good and bad, rich and poor, very religious and nonobservant, the highly educated and the illiterate, most of them sane and a few others, the wise and the inane, business people, workers, busy people and 'laydigeirs" (do nothings), were all knitted in one fabric which was called the greater Suwalk. I love my city, my mother, my relatives and friends and the years I spent with them there.

When some of my acquaintances in New York ask me what was so special about a small town in Poland, they cannot understand. To me, Suwalk is like a tree, a Tree of Life, with its leaves scattered throughout the world; its trunk cut down, mutilated, brutally ravaged and burned. Its roots are the only Jewish place remaining in Suwalk as a symbol of generations of our ancestors, buried deep in the earth under the few memorable stones of tribute and the huge beautiful monument built of the broken headstones in the cemetery. Thus we remember the great Rabbis of the nineteenth century and the

martyrs of the Holocaust, all the generations of Suwalker Jews, in the only remaining Jewish place there: the Jewish cemetery.











Reminiscences From Suwalki Prior to World War II
by David Bern, Attorney at Law

Following is an edited excerpt from a book being written by our member, attorney David Bern, called "An Odyssey of a Lifelong Zionist Activist," about the story of his life:

From Riga I returned home to Suwalki. Although I was born and raised there, it looked to me entirely different. Its natural beauty, the peaceful likeable existence which previously I took for granted, now appeared to me entirely different. Even the people whom I had previously known were more friendly. Everybody greeted me as a long lost brother.

The park which was in the center of town was in its blooming summer glory, with all kinds of flowers well tended. Twice a week concerts were given by influential musicians from the local army garrison, among whom were many Jews, including the director, Beczulka, who in later years became the director of the Firefighters Orchestra in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Even the relationship between the Polish population and the Jews was much more civil than in many other Polish cities. Out of the total population of about 38,000, there were about 16,000 Jews.

The main street that ran through the center of town changed its name depending on the regime. Under the Russian government, when it was the seat of the provincial government, it was called St. Petersburg Prospect. After the Polish government took over in 1919, it became Kosciuszko Street.

On both sides of the park were churches. The Polish Catholic church of St. Peter and Paul was built at the same time as our building was built by my great-grandfather, David Zaiberg (a rabbi by title and education but with no pulpit), with the same bricks as the church taken from the Patz Palace, home of a Polish nobleman whose famous beautiful palace in Gothic style suffered irreparable damage during the Polish insurrections in 1830 and 1860-63. It was so beautiful that there was a Polish proverb -- "Wart Pac Palaca i Polac Paca" -- which means Pac was worthy of the palace and the palace was worthy of Pac. I only saw the remaining Portyk of this palace, allegedly built by Italian and French architects, and it was really beautiful.

On the other south side of the park was the Russian Orthodox church, built in the style of St. Basil's Sobor. This was inactivated when Poland became independent, as it was looked upon as a symbol of Russian occupation and a competitor for the Catholic Church, as in so many other Polish cities that were previously part of the Tsar's Russian Empire.

Having been absent from Suwalki for a whole year, I came for a three months vacation. I was considered a guest in town, and my friends form Beitar and the Zionist Revisionist organization asked me to come and help in the organizational work. I helped to organize a mass protest meeting in the Shulhayf (that is in the yard of the great synagogue) with the participation of Rabbi Joselewicz, whose two sons, although both members of Hashomer Hatzair, were good Zionists and my personal friends. They were very helpful on this behalf, because it was a protest against the British mandatory government of Palestine, which was blocking immigration of Jews into that country. I had previously helped to organize such a demonstration in Vilno. The immigration stoppage was a result of a report by Sir John Hope Simpson that there was no more room in Palestine for immigrants.

I also helped to publish a local Yiddish paper, "Unzer Weg," which appeared periodically and which I edited in later years after I had graduated from the University. Being then a young student, I was instrumental in organizing a Jewish academic ball, which later became a tradition. The entire intelligentsia and leadership of the Jewish community participated, with the proceeds to go for subsidies of the Jewish student organizations in Warsaw and Vilno.

The summer, my friend Abraham Stern, who was then a student of both the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and the University of Padua in Italy, came from a visit from Israel. At that time he already had contact with the underground organization of "Irgun Tzvai Leumi," the national paramilitary organization headed by David Raziel, also a Hebrew University

student. Their activities were in great contrast to the ideology prevailing at the University, as represented by the majority of teachers and administrators.

However, the real reason I came to Suwalki that summer (instead of going to the reserve officer training camp for military preparedness) was the series of hot love letters I received from my girlfriend, Rachel-Ruth Gutkowski, my future wife of fifty-five years, who was then my faithful comrade, friend and co-worker. It was her idea to expand the academic ball. She was a great social mixer, a very popular young lady and a tireless worker for all Zionist causes until the last day of her life. She was a beautiful young lady at that time, full of life and energy with her friends, both boys and girls from the state gymnasia and the Jewish gymnasium (high schools). We made long excursions in the various summer "resorts" in the vicinity.

I became an involuntary hero during one such outing, in a place called Jashinowo. When our group arrived, we were told that a group of Polish hooligans had threatened to attack the Jewish summer dwellers unless the Jews left their village. Shortly thereafter, while a group of youngsters were dancing the Horah accompanied by quite loud singing, a group of Polish boys actually approached the dancing and singing group, ready to attack them. The inexperienced Jewish boys and girls fled in a panic. I grabbed a horse whip from one of our drivers, put to shame the Jewish boys, and attacked the hooligans. When they saw that the Jews were not afraid, that they might get horse-whipped, they turned around and ran away. When we came back from this "battle," my Rachel organized a hero's welcome for me and the boys who went with me. Several years later, we did the same thing when some hooligans attacked the Maccabi ball during a dance they were holding. Those were actually the few incidents of actual Jew-bashing in this otherwise peaceful community.

The government under General Slavoy-Skladkowski openly preached a boycott of the Jews. I remember his statement condemning physical excesses against Jews, but he said that "Walka ekonoriczna owszem," economic struggle is welcome, and the Polish people, although here and there indulging in physical excesses, certainly followed his advice as to economic struggle. The Jews were eliminated from all occupations and branches of commerce and industry that required government licenses. There were no official legal restrictions against Jews, but the officials appointed to grant those licenses simply did not grant them to Jews. The purchase of land in the provinces bordering on foreign countries also required special permission. Since most of the Polish provinces, including Suwalki, were affected by these rules because they were adjacent to the borders, this meant that land transactions were practically prohibited for Jews, whose great majority populated exactly these provinces.

Additionally, the government controlled a number of branches of commerce and industry through monopolies. There were monopolies of manufacturing and distribution of sugar, salt, alcoholic beverages, and similar and related commercial enterprises. These were all run by government employees, of whom about one percent were Jews, either assimilated with non-Jewish spouses or war veterans. For generations, the Jews had dealt in the manufacture and distribution of religious devotional Christian objects, but the Parliament enacted a statute forbidding members of non-Christian religious groups from dealing in such objects. In this way, the Jews were excluded from such manufacturing. These policies deprived thousands of Jews of a livelihood, even without specific anti-Jewish legislation.

Finally came the anti-shechita law. This delivered a dual blow to the Jewish community, even as it also was detrimental to the Polish economy. The discussion in the Polish Parliament on this question of the Shechita, the ritual slaughter, was full of anti-Semitic venom, raw hatred and denigration of the Jews and alleged that such slaughter was cruel and merciless to animals. There were daily speeches in the Parliament by Mrs. Pristor, whose husband was one of the leaders and members of the cabinet of Slavoy-Skladowski. Even some "enlightened" Polish speakers told the public that they were tired of eating meat which was blessed by a bearded rabbi. The pictures in the Polish press were taken almost verbatim from Hitler's "Sturmer" newspaper.

Actually, the situation was such that prior to the independence of Poland, the commercial slaughtering was in Jewish hands, both production and distribution, to the benefit of the non-Jews. Since the back part of the animal was not kosher, it was sold to non-Jews at a much cheaper price, and the Jews paid for the poorer, less choice meat, higher prices. All this was possible because 70% of the Polish people lived in the villages and only 30% in

the cities. Since the Jews constituted 11% of the total population, that meant they were 1/3 of the city dwellers and meat consumers. It was therefore tolerated all the time, and this anti-Shechita law was a terrible blow to the Jewish population, not only physically but also morally. The law provided that kosher commercial butchering was allowed only for the need of the Jewish population, and that no export of meat could be handled by Jews.

I said above that it was detrimental to the Polish economy that the non-Jewish suddenly-promoted exporters did not know what they were doing. It also turned out that non-kosher meat was harder to preserve and alot of it was ruined in transit. We, the Polish Jews, did not take it easily. For a period of two months after this law went into effect, the Jews stopped eating meat and meat products, and finally forced the government export agency to minimize the danger of serious losses by making some concessions. But during those two months, the great majority of the Jews observed the boycott, refraining from eating meat and meat products. The Jewish newspapers provided vegetarian menus to help out in providing culinary meatless ideas.

The same thing happened to my legal profession. From the Tzarist days, there were limitations on the admittance of Jews to the legal profession. When at the turn of the century Jews began to apply for admittance into the law departments of the Russian universities, they were curtailed first by the laws of residence outside of the Pale of Settlement for Jews, so that only children of the privileged intelligentsia and first class merchants and individuals with the top marks and personal connections could apply, and even those upon graduation mostly served as assistants to certified sworn attorneys, and were not certified themselves. Even the famous great defender of Bailis, Oscar Gruzenberg, was for a long time only an assistant, and he was admittedly a great legal genius. However, when Poland became independent, in the years 1918-19, a flock of graduate lawyers became certified sworn attorneys, plus many transferred from East and West Galicia, the former Austrian provinces where the Jewish lawyers constituted a great majority when Christians left the practice of law to become the judges and high government employees -- to which positions Jews were not admitted.

Again, a long debate followed in the Polish Parliament on the government proposal to close the list of admitted attorneys. Again, no specifically anti-Jewish law was enacted, but it was declared that the profession was over-crowded, and therefore, beginning July 1, 1938, the list was to be closed. Each Appellate Court district was to limit the number of attorneys to be admitted after the number was to be filtered through by the examinations.

I took the exams in June 1938. I was one of eighteen who took the examination, consisting of 12 Jews and six non-Jews. Of course, the six non-Jews passed, but only six Jews passed including myself, and we were admitted the following year just before the official closing of the list. The examination, by the way, was very difficult, because they were not administered to people who had just graduated from law school, as is the case here in the good old U.S.A., but rather after five years of practice. It was in a form similar to a write of certiorari to the Supreme Court in an actual case, and the candidate had to decide the case exactly as the Supreme Court's decision was, except that the reasoning could in some exceptional cases differ from the majority decision.

Having passed the written exam, the candidate faced a committee of three examining members of the board. Fortunately for me, at the time of my examination we were part of the Wilno Appellate District, where the Russian Code Swod Zakonov, was still in force, whereas my circuit court district was still under the Napoleonic Code. Having graduated from Wilno University, I had studied the Russian Code, but practiced under the Napoleonic Code. Therefore, my examination actually was a discussion of the conflict of laws and the diversity of the two codes. In addition, the chairman of the board of examiners was my good old friend and often co-counsel Profession Pietruszewicz, which was helpful. I also spoke better Polish than most of the Wilno students, who were actually raised in the Russian language. The rest is history.

Encounters of a Different Kind: Memories of a Suwalker

by Henry Dorsey (Iska Wigdorczyk)
November 1995

Early Childhood

My memory of certain happenings goes back to the age of four, in 1923. I attended nursery school, which I believe was located on the second floor at 54 Kosciuszko Street. It was only a building away from where we lived, 52 Kosciuszko.

Once a week there came to the school a violinist, who used to play with a small orchestra at Jewish affairs. He would sit cross-legged in the middle of the floor and play a varied repertoire of classical, dance and Jewish music. We children would sit in a circle listening attentively and singing along with the popular tunes. For no reason at all, when he played classical music and played high notes, I would get very frightened, start shaking, and bitterly cry. My mother and dad had an awful time with me every morning to persuade me to go to the nursery against my protestations and tears. Finally, the nursery teacher allowed me during the music hour to step out of the room. I cannot explain my childish reaction. Since my late teen years, I have loved classical music -- high notes and low notes -- attending symphony concerts, violin and piano concerts all the time.

The next episode had also a psychological effect on me. The reason in this case is self-evident. Suwalk used to hold a market day twice a week year round. On those days the town was busy, as merchants from smaller communities would come to resupply their needs. Peasants from surrounding villages would bring fruit, vegetables, dairy, produce, and poultry for sale. I loved to go to the market with my mother and our maid to shop for all the colorful food items. Mother would load up the baskets and I wanted to help the maid to carry them, but they were too heavy for me.

Toward the late afternoon, when the peasant-farmers had sold their wares and finished with their purchases, they would head for the bars to celebrate their successful business day. In our area also lived White-Russians (Katzky), and when they got drunk they were a wild lot. On one of the market days, I was standing late in the afternoon in front of our building, watching the White-Russian peasants conducting a wagon race on the cobbled main street, which they used to do very often. The participant in the lead wagon was standing up, with a whip in his hand, prodding the horses to a greater effort. He was very shaky and unsteady. He suddenly lost his balance and tumbled over the top of the wagon. His legs got entangled between the struts on the side of the wagon. He hit the cobbled surface with his head, which split open, and a trail of blood formed, while the horses were galloping wildly without any control. The gory scene turned me off for years against eating red tomatoes. It took a long time, but I am over it now. I now eat tomatoes with a passion!

When I was about seven, my father decided that I was old enough to accompany him Friday late afternoon to one of the steam baths in town. Most frequently we would go to Kaplan's Steam Bath. I am not sure even today whether the decision to take me at such a young age was wise from the health point of view. On the other hand, it didn't seem to affect me adversely. Physically, I developed quite normally. I looked forward to going to the steam bath. It was great fun and a pleasurable experience.

One Friday, somebody trying to raise the heat and steam inadvertantly poured a bucket of water with a soap bar in it. The invisible fumes reacted on us after we left the bath house. I passed out on the way home. My dad had to revive me. He himself was very wobbly. That Friday we did not go to synagogue for evening prayers, as we normally would do every week.

On the way home from the steam bath on Fridays, I saw and heard the Sabbath Guardians (Shomrei Shabbat) going from store to store and announcing loudly to close up, the Sabbath deadline is approaching. It was customary most Fridays after supper to visit Grandpa and Grandma. The table was laden with all kinds of goodies. The best I liked was Flava-Beans (bob). The elders would wash it down with beer and the children with soda-pop.

Summertime during school break my parents would rent a cottage (datsha) in Jasinowo, about ten kilometers out of town. From the gravel highway led

a sandy pathway up-hill. On each side there were cottages occupied by the local peasantry. Around each courtyard invariably there was a barn and cow-shed and stable. Many peasants also built a modest cottage for rent. In most cases, cottage rentals to summer vacationers was their major income.

The first cottage adjoining the highway belonged to a Jewish family, who ran a convenience store. They had a horse and wagon to haul supplies from town. It was a treat and diversion occasionally to go in with one of their sons to town to obtain supplies for the store. When I was given the reins to lead the horse I felt there was nobody to compare with me. It was the same feeling as sitting behind the wheel of a car.

Jasinowo was nestled in a forest like most of our countryside. On the other side of the highway about two kilometers away was a lake, where we would go swimming. We would also go berry picking. Black and red berries were in abundance. While picking, we would eat more of them unwashed than we would bring back to the cottage. One day I must have swallowed a poisonous berry, because during the night I was violently ill. My stomach pains were unbearable. My mother tried to comfort me. She was at a loss what to do. The cottage had no electricity and electric pads were unknown to us. My mother took a lid from a tin cookie can, heated it repeatedly with the aid of a lit candle, and applied it to my stomach. My pain subsided. In later years, I marvelled at my mother's ingenuity and the resourcefulness of the older generation in acquiring remedies in emergencies.

As a youngster I must have had a passion for horses, I suppose influenced by cowboy movies. When I felt well, my adventurous courage led me into the stable of a cottage owner. I left the bottom half door open, not thinking of any consequences. I had never mounted a horse before. I tried to do so this time, though I had no intention of riding out of the stable. Just to sit on top of a hourse would have been for me a satisfying experience. In my clumsy attempts to get on top, I must have frightened the horse. He whinnied loudly, rose on his hind legs, and darted out of the stable. A second horse followed in the same fashion. I became very frightened, grateful I wasn't trampled, but very concerned of the outcome. The first horse was gone, not to be found, but the second remained in the yard.

At the age of 12, I had outgrown Jasinowo. My mother had a distant relative in Punsk, where I spent a delightful few summers. It was a small town about twenty kilometers from Suwalk, at the border with Lithuania. The population there consisted mostly of Jewish and Lithuanian inhabitants. Most buildings were wood structures, including a beautiful and quite imposing synagogue. It is the only town I knew where the Jewish population mostly owned farms and actively operated them. My hostess was a widow with three sons and two daughters. They all worked on their farm and I eagerly participated in whatever capacity I could.

For a city dweller, life on a farm was fun. The sons and I slept in the upper part of the barn, on fresh, pleasant smelling hay. We would get up at daybreak and after a lusty breakfast we would set out to ride to the field, which was about five kilometers away. The horses' front legs would be tied up with a rope leaving about a foot and a half in between and attaching to it a long chain pegged in the field. The chains with the peg were moved a little further each day to give the horses more grazing ground. After a day's work in the field, we would untie the horses and ride back to the farm house. All the riding we did was unsaddled and sometimes to the uninitiated like myself used to cause discomfort to the rump and on the thighs between the legs. Despite all this, the pastime of riding was a youngster's challenge and fun. Haying and cutting down wheat was hard work. Tractors and agricultural mechanisation had not reached yet this part of the world.

While I was gone to England I heard that prior to the war a huge fire broke out in this town, and half of the buildings (including the synagogue) burned down.

After the war, I found out that the oldest son of my Punsk hostess survived the Holocaust. He was returning to Suwalk and hence to Punsk. On the train journey he was murdered by local anti-Semites.

In Suwalk, a great majority of sports-minded youth belonged to the Maccabi organization, including myself. One of the main pillars of the organization was the soccer team, which belonged to a national league. Whenever they played against a non-Jewish team, the rivalry between the national identities of the populace became heightened. The soccer stadium was a few kilometers out of town. When the Maccabi team would win, the non-Jewish youth felt their pride was hurt. On the way to town,

they would use obscene language against the Jewish youth, and in many instances provoke them to a fight.

The members of the Maccabi soccer team were looked upon as idols and youth models. Their protector and financial supporter was a local wealthy fur merchant, Shaje Kershkowski. Every Friday late in the evening, most members of the soccer team and privileged members of the organization would gather at Sandowksi's bar at the corner of Jatkowa and Rynkowa streets. Since it was after permitted hours, one could not walk in through the front door. We had to enter the premises through a back alley and watch that no member of the local police was around. It is my understanding that the bar owners had a tacit understanding with some members of the law enforcement agency, to overlook misdemeanors entering their premises after hours, in exchange for monetary gifts. The only reason I was admitted to these gatherings is because I had an older cousin who was on the board. Inside they would play pool and discuss the strategy of the forthcoming soccer match. My most favorite activity there was eating fried and stewed slices of calf or beef liver, which the Sandowski's were reknowned for (in Jewish parlance known as "leberkes"). We would wash it down with a few beers. Since I was underage, I was limited to the amount they would allow me to consume. The benefactor to all these delights was my cousin Morris (Maishal) Brown.

The fellows in my age and myself began to be restless in the ranks of Maccabi. Though we were still young, we felt that some of us played soccer just as well as the senior team. We wanted to belong to an organized league, understandably in a lower class than the first team. We organized a committee, of which I was a member, and we petitioned the board with the proposal. Our pleadings fell on deaf ears. They did not want to take away any glitter from the first team. We were left with no option but to resign.

We decided to establish a new organization with non-financial support from the revisionist group "Betar." We named the organization "Nordia." I assume, because we were young, we were a gutsy bunch, not giving much thought to any consequences. In order to obtain financial support, we planned to hold dances with permits to sell liquor and food. The day decided on was every Friday, the beginning of the week-end, a day ahead of the Maccabi dances, which were held on Saturday evenings. We figured that the young crowd had limited resources, so spending money once a week on a dance was all they could afford.

In order to hold the dances, we rented suitable premises. Without having any resources, but hoping in our future enterprise, we rented large premises on the second floor on Kosciuszki Street, in a building that belonged to the Kaplan family, who manufactured and distributed pop-drinks. The premises needed painting, floor waxing for a smooth dancing area and general cleanup. With the skimpy funds collected among us, we bought paint and did the work ourselves, including yours truly. These premises became our permanent club rooms. Prior to the first Friday, we engaged a dance orchestra. Beer and pop-drinks we obtained on consignment. Each member was assigned to make a number of canapes of various kinds. The only money we needed in advance was for liquor. We managed to scrounge, borrow, cajole a minimum of funds for that purpose. We knew if we got a substantial crowd, we would run out of liquor. The hour arrived, we kept our fingers crossed and our hearts pounded with uncertainty. At first the attendance was sparse, but later on it began to increase. We were happy to see a number of non-commissioned Army officers, since they like to imbibe liquor. We soon ran out of that desirable product. We ended making a modest profit. It augered well for the future. With more financial resources, we made sure we didn't run out of liquor supplies.

We took another audacious step. We decided to run dances on weekdays in nearby smaller towns like Sejny, Filipowo, Raczki, etc. . . . We would load up a horse-drawn wagon with liquor, various beverages and food, and the orchestra and the organizers would come along. It proved to be a very successful enterprise; for the local populations it was an entertainment event eagerly awaited and appreciated.

When our treasury had become a little more expandable, the time came to establish a soccer team and apply for acceptance to the "B" league. We needed jersies with a motto printed on them, soccer boots, soccer balls and other tackle. Our funds were limited, we only ordered the very essentials, the rest we put on hold. We used, in the meantime, our own everyday shorts, socks, held by garters used at that time. For shin protectors, we used school scribblers.

At this juncture, I must bring in our highly respected late Rabbi, David Lifshitz. His wisdom and public relations were unmatched. The following occurence remained between me and the Rabbi a voluntary unarranged secret, only revealed now for the first time. One Friday morning, I was alone in the Nordia club offices. I heard a knock at the door. I responded loudly, "Come in," and to my surprise there stood an elderly gentleman. By his garb and appearance, he looked to be an Orthodox Jew. He wore a long black coat, reaching almost to the ankles. He sported a long, bushy beard. I was puzzled why such an individual would come to a secular Jewish sports organization. To my utter dismay, I soon found out.

He spoke up: "I am the Rabbi's messenger. He sent me to speak to Wigdorczyk, the late dentist's son." "I am Wigdorczyk," I retorted. "The Rabbi asks you to stop holding dances on Friday evenings - the beginning of Shabbat." I was devastated and at the same time puzzled. Why would the Rabbi single me out? The only explanation I can offer is that I was quite instrumental in organizing the club, and I was one of the few appointed to run the dances. After a few moments, I composed myself and fast and intense thinking, I responded, "Please explain to the Rabbi, if we discontinue holding dances, the club will fold and a Jewish youth institution will go down the tubes. This is our only means of income." The emissary, discontented, left.

I remained very concerned what the ultimate outcome would be. I did not tell anybody, including the board, of that encounter. I did not want to dishearten anybody or cause a polemic among the membership about how we should respond to the situation. I decided to wait for further developments, which never arose. To this day, I believe the Rabbi wished to make his attitude known and let it rest. I was 14 years old when this took place. I wonder where I acquired the temerity for such a confrontation. Maybe just because of age, one tends to show less respect before moral authority. My esteem of the Rabbi rose with the years. As I grew older, I understood more the Rabbi's dilemma in making many decisions and offering counsel to the community.

Sometime after 1950 I found out that the Rabbi, after difficult hardships during the war, had reached the United States, lived in Brooklyn, and taught at a yeshiva. Subsequently when I visited New York, I went out to Brooklyn to meet the Rabbi. A man whom I assumed to be the Rabbi's assistant opened the door. I told him my name and that I was a Suwalker. The Rabbi must have noticed me from behind a desk where he was sitting. He handed me a yarmulke to put on my head. (In anxious anticipation to meet the Rabbi after so many years, I forgot to equip myself with necessary garb.) I sat down across from the Rabbi. I observed a happy, emotional face. The Rabbi called out, "Tzipora, Tzipora, come here, we have an honored (hosheven) guest." The Rabbi's wife came in. I got up and felt like hugging her, embracing her, at least shaking hands to express my happiness of seeing her well and alive. I forgot or didn't even know the etiquette between orthodox men and women. I knew the Rebbetzen better than the Rabbi. She was a very close friend of my cousin Bella Friedman (nee Brown).

I related to the Rabbi in brief about my life since I left Suwalk and the tragic fate of my family as it was known to me at that time. On the Rabbi's desk lay sprawled numerous photographs and papers. The Rabbi said, "You came to visit me on an auspicious day. I just received from Werobejczyk from Poland a bunch of the last photographs of Suwalker victims in concentration camps before their death." The photographs were lifted from German identification cards from the camps. Werobejczyk was instrumental in recovering them from a Polish farmer in exchange for a substantial amount of money, which the Rabbi collected for that purpose and forwarded to him. The Rabbi asked me if I wished to look them over. It was a sorrowful and painful moment. Some of the photographs were my schoolmates in the prime of their lives, some were elders, whom I knew so well, and some were youngsters and children. The few I did not know were from the younger generation.

When I left I was happy to have seen the Rabbi and the Rebbetzen, but very saddened and moved by the pictures. On the way back to New York City, the images of the faces kept coming up in front of me, and I kept on visualizing like a dream the last minutes of their lives. Subsequently, I met the Rabbi on a few occasions, predominantly at the anniversary banquets of the Suwalker Society. At no time did the Rabbi or myself mention the episode in which we were the main and only players in the pre-war years in Suwalk. Among the many attributes our Rabbi possessed, diplomacy, tact and understanding must be counted.

For King and Country

At the outbreak of the Second World War, I was living in London, England. Three days later I found myself in a line in a volunteer recruiting center offering my service to the Royal Air Force. Because at that time I was not a British subject, the only service I could join was an Auxiliary Unit in the Army. After obtaining a release for the duration of the war from the Polish authorities, discontentedly I was called up March 18, 1940, to report for Army duty. We received very little military training, merely seven weeks. Later, May 5th, we became part of the British Expeditionary Force and shipped to France.

Before we managed to get acclimated to our new surroundings, as we were preparing to be moved toward the Belgian border, we received orders to pack camp and move west instead toward Brittany. We avoided main highways wherever we could. Nevertheless, we were strafed a few times. On one such occasion I was knocked out, and when I came out of it, I found myself lying on a stretcher in a first aid station with my left hand bandaged up. Very soon a medic showed up and explained that a grenade or a small bomb exploded near me. I was covered with debris. My pinky finger was cut deeply on the sharp edge of a rock. They stitched it up, but warned me that it might have to be looked after when we reached a more peaceful place. We marched about three days until we reached the racetrack in the port city of St. Malo. We abandoned on the way our duffel bags, kits, everything we carried with us, except our rifles. During these few days we existed on whatever we could bag, scrounge and raid from French peasant houses.

The local population was becoming hostile to us, pointing out the index finger easterly and exclaiming "Berlin is this way" and not the way we were heading! Drinking wine from domestic vats and unpasteurized milk, and consuming food whatever we could find, certainly does not contribute to a digestible diet. The majority developed dysentery. Our underwear and khaki shirts were saturated with sweat from the baking noon sun, and with dust from sandy country roads. In the state we were, our minds blank, our limbs stiff, and our bodies painful from fatigue, I became very resigned, and did not feel that I wanted to make the slightest effort to go even one more step. If I was left on the ground where I was stretched out for most of the day, it would make no difference to me. I admired our Commanding Officer. He found somewhere a wooden box with dried apricots, which he carried on one shoulder. He was handing it out and encouraging us to keep up our spirits for a short while yet, and everything will be fine.

Towards late afternoon, the order came for my company to march to the docks. Somehow, each found a little reserve strength to stagger on and embark on a small boat to return to England on June 19th, six weeks after we had left. Every standing room on the boat was occupied. We stood shoulder to shoulder. There wasn't even a speck of room to turn around. The sight I saw of St. Malo Harbor from the boat could only be compared to a set for a war movie. Except this was for real. Lined up on the cliff edges, thousands upon thousands of army trucks, motorcycles, armoured cars and tanks, scores of them at the bottom of the cliffs, rode over the edges with the engines still going. How ironic it was to see some of our French civilian allies driving up with all kinds of older vintage vehicles, and scores more wheeling up barrows, loading them up to capacity with abandoned army store issue, blankets, clothing and useful items for themselves or for sale. We were the last boat to pull out from the docks, and therefore assigned to dynamite the entrance to incapacitate it for when the Germans arrived.

A few boats rendezvoused a few miles outside the harbor and waited for darkness to set in to sail under cover. During the night we heard a few large explosions, airplane noises and tracer bullet firings. Most of the night I was glued to the spot I had first allotted to myself, the rifle propped in front, my hands resting across the barrel and head leaning on top of it. First I was dozing lightly, then I must have fallen in a long, deep sleep. It is the first and only time I ever slept so soundly standing up.

When I woke up, dawn was breaking. I could see faintly the shore line, outlines of boats, dock cranes and large one-storey buildings, which must have been dock warehouses. This indeed was Southampton, where we disembarked. A multitude of people, some with Union Jack flags, stood behind temporary guard barriers, waving, cheering and applauding. The significance of this welcome demonstration at the time was not well understood by me. Only later, when we first saw the daily newspapers and read for the first time about the Dunkirk disaster and glorious rescue, could one accept the jubilation of the populace.

It was a great relief after standing for so many hours, to settle in a train compartment. Members of the Salvation Army were handing out to each one of us a five-cigarette package, "Golden Flakes," a small Cadbury chocolate bar, and a most welcome cup of tea. This was the best cup of tea I ever had. It was the first warm food consumed in about five days.

As the train started to roll along, we were passing familiar stations with lots of commuters waiting to go to work in the Greater London area. It suddenly dawned on me to send a message to my family, who I was sure were anxious to know my whereabouts. The only coins I had in my pocket were French. I asked the other compartment occupants if they had British coins. They could not understand why on a moving traing, where there was nothing to buy, I would be in need of local currency. They gladly handed over to me whatever was available until they found out what I was doing with it. I pulled out my note book, wrote identical messages with my uncle's business phone number, asking to call and inform that "Henry is back in England." I wrapped the paper messages around each coin and as the train slowed down passing stations, threw a few through the window and exhorted commuters to pick them up. When I met my uncle, I was really surprised to learn how many people called in with the message. The family was very happy to hear from me earlier than we were allowed to communicate with them. With the troubled news coming through regarding the British forces in Europe, they were naturally very concerned about what was happening to me.

We were billeted temporarily at Olympia Palace, from which prior to the outbreak of the war the only television station in evidence in the world at that time was broadcasting. Olympia Palace is situated in the middle of a large park with motor thoroughfares going through it. The civilian population was allowed to come in the park and vehicular traffic to go through. The Army personnel were forbidden to step out of bounds, which was the periphery of the park, guarded by military police. We were given a pep talk by our superiors not to telephone our families and in discussions with civilians not to give out information about what happened in France and our whereabouts there.

Our living conditions in Olympia Palace, which was converted hastily for a temporary transit station, were far from desirable. To visualize the circumstances, it is sufficient to mention that there were no showers or bathtubs, and for a few thousand troops stationed there at the time we only had two bathrooms with four washbasins in each. In the mornings, only to take a shave and splash the face one had literally to line up for a few hours.

My only desire at that time was to have a warm bath to take off the grime and sweat stuck to my body for over two weeks and a change of underwear and a clean shirt. I noticed two women coming every day inside the Olympia building to dust the huge organ pipes which were in the large hall. I approached one and asked to call my uncle and tell him to get a cab and come to see me. I would meet him inside Olympia Park at the concession bar-stand. My uncle, as usual, did not let me down.

On the appointed hour he showed up, I jumped in the cab, pulled down all the window blinds and asked to be taken to Russell Square Hotel. It was known for its steam bath, saunas and excellent masseurs. When my uncle asked me if there was anything I needed, I answered "Yes, a set of underwear and a khaki shirt." I was delightfully soaking my body in a luxurious bathtub and thinking to myself, the world could be so content, why do we need wars, except for destruction, misery, and disruption of young lives like myself, it does not solve anything. In the meantime, my uncle through some acquaintances managed after business hours in the East End to find for me such precious commodities: underwear and a shirt and socks. When I got dressed, it never felt so good! Our next stop was a first class restaurant. What a fabulous meal I had. No other after that tasted better.

We returned to the hotel. My uncle went home and I went to sleep on the softest mattress, covered with the cleanest and best smelling linen since I was called up to the Army. I was afraid in all that comfort not to oversleep the next morning, so I phoned the desk to wake me up at six in the morning. When the phone bell rang, I was in a deep sleep, totally relaxed and too lazy to get up. When I realized where I was, I jumped up fast, shaved, washed and dressed in a jiffy.

I hailed a taxi, drew all the blinds, told the driver to take me to Olympia Park and drop me off just inside it where the red-caps (military police) were not around. With the morning rush hour and lots of traffic crossing the park, to get back unnoticed was an easy undertaking. I just made it before the

morning roll-call. My bunk neighbors gasped in surprise when they saw me and asked later where did I find a female so fast to be away all night. They could not elicit any answer from me, until they noticed my brand new shirt and this mystery had become more enticing to them.

After a short stay in Olympia Palace, we were moved to Devonshire on the coast. We were billeted in a pre-war summer camp, with individual well-appointed cottage-cabins. The view from here was magnificent, as the camp was perched high on top of a sandy cliff. At the bottom was the sandiest beach I have ever seen, sloping gently into the Atlantic. The sunsets were made for romantics. The atmosphere here was serene. It seemed that the war was on another planet and never touched this corner of the world. This was good living, like being on an extended holiday. It served intentionally as a morale builder after the fiasco on the European continent. Slowly, we were re-equipped with Army issue and as our psychological health was restored we were being gradually retrained and prepared in not too long a time to return to the continent. But this time, we would have to fight our way back.

After a while, every company soldier went on furlough, including me. Most of the two weeks I spent in London experiencing a few air raids, but mostly enjoying wartime life in that big city. The civilian population did not know the limits of what to do for the members of the services, especially for the ones who were involved in the recent evacuation. Anyone with a visible injury, like being bandaged, having a cast or crutches was the guest of honor wherever he appeared. Sometimes it became embarrassing, besides having to be able to control the liquor intake.

The family invited me to go out for dinner to a Jewish restaurant, where my uncle used to dine often, and a lot of the regulars knew him. Before the waiter even came to take the orders, drinks were sent over to me from almost every table, and diners on the way out passing by would stop for a lengthy chat, wanting to know how I felt and where and how I was injured. I did not know that even a small injury with a small cast on the hand, during a war, can cause so much concern and sympathy.

After returning to camp, I was sent to a military hospital for an operation on my injured finger. In the emergency room I was stitched too tightly and both joints became stiff. In this hospital, the medical-nursing staff, the Auxiliary Volunteer services, were marvelous. As with the civilian population, they made us objects of adulation. One member of a vountary service was the daughter of the king's cousin. A Jewish fellow from Warsaw, who was in a wheelchair, and I, because we shared the same room, were looked after by her. Many afternoons she would with my help wheel my friend for a walk on the hospital grounds. While relaxing outside we would very often unkindly tease her about her royal lineage, but she took it all in its stride.

After rejoining my unit, I was sent for retraining in the Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers.

After the debacle in France, my original assumption that the infantry is not my favorite service only reinforced my belief. By that time, the attitude of the military authorities was changed. They realized they were in a prolonged struggle, and anybody's offer to sacrifice life or limb would not hurt British pride, no matter what nationality, race or religion they were. I initiated efforts to be transferred to the Royal Air Force. That wasn't a simple undertaking, as I found out later. The rivalry between the different branches of the Forces was very strong, and the higher ranks did not look very favorably on castigating one branch in order to transfer to another. It took me over a year and a half to finally obtain permission to be transferred.

I changed the uniform from khaki to a royal blue and I became a proud Airman. At my choice, I was sent for training as a navigator/radio operator. On finishing the course, I was called in to see the Commanding Officer, who informed me that, since I spoke Polish, the High Command wished me to join the liaison-interpreter pool. They needed interpreters who had some technical air force knowledge to work with the Polish Air Force. That news upset me very much. I planned to complete a tour of twenty-three operational flights and be released to go back to the university, hoping to complete dental studies to go in my father's footsteps. But it wasn't going to be. The higher-ups would not change their minds; their exclamations were: "We have a war to win, so your studies can wait." I had no defence against this; I had no option but to accept what was put in front of me.

A Tribute to a Stoic Lady and Dear Friend

The families of Gutkowski and my own (Wigdorczyk) were intertwined in happy and tragic events. Mr. Gutkowski and my father were close friends. Most evenings they would play cards in the Professional Merchants Club (Kupiecki). My sister Esther (Estusia) of blessed memory was born on the same day as Janet (Szejnka), one of the three Gutkowski girls. In 1955, when I met her in New Castle, Pennsylvania, where she and her late husband, Joseph (Yossel) Mirowski, a Suwalker, lived, she showed me her birth certificate. On it was my father's signature as a witness. She assured me that her father was a signatory on my sister's birth certificate. She also proudly pointed out a few gold tooth crowns, which my father made and still were in good shape through all those years.

Judith, the youngest of the three sisters, went to school with me from kindergarten to high school. These two sisters were in our house (which was across from the school) practically every day. The Gutkowskis lived a few kilometers outside town. Their father would come in with a carriage and horses to pick them up after school from our place.

In 1950, I found out that Dr. L. Small (Smolinski) was in New York and practicing in Bellevue Hospital. I contacted the hospital and they informed me that recently he had left and opened up a practice in Liberty, New York. Since I wasn't acquainted as yet with the geography of the United States, I assumed that New York is the city only and I was not aware of the state of New York. I took it for granted that Liberty is a suburb of New York City and when I visited it I would contact Dr. Small.

The same year, I married in Toronto and we went on our honeymoon to Grossinger's resort in the Catskills. At the dining room table we sat with a few couples from New York City and the surrounding area. I entered into a conversation with the gentleman sitting next to me, and asked him if he knew where Liberty, N.Y., is. He looked at me with astonishment and answered, "You are sitting on it." Excitedly, I asked the people at the table to look after my bride, because I had to phone somebody and would be back shortly. I asked the telephone operator to find Dr. Small's number and get him on the line. In a few minutes I was in an emotional conversation with him. The next day he came to the lodge to see me. In the telephone conversation, he exclaimed, "That must be a lucky day, I got two calls from Suwalkers." The first call came from Judy Mendelson (nee Gutkowski). She was with her husband on vacation in the Catskills, twenty miles from Grossinger's. This was the first news I obtained that Judy was alive and residing in the States.

I called the hotel where Judy was staying and asked that she be paged. In no time, she was on the line. Tears of happiness, wonderment, bewilderment mixed together ensued in excitement. The time was 10:30 in the evening. I told Judy to stay put where she was and I was coming over to see her. I went back to the dining room table, picked up Ida and told her that we were going to meet somebody in another hotel, and I would explain everything on the way. Grossinger's arranged a limousine for us. In half an hour we reached the hotel where Judy was vacationing. She was waiting in the foyer. We embraced warmly and kissed. There was a deluge of questions and answers on both sides. We wanted to catch up on twelve years of separation, full of tragic events, in the shortest time possible. We met her husband, Paul, and twelve-year old daughter, Shirley. For the first time, I found out that her oldest sister Ruth and her husband, lawyer David Bern (Bernszteyn) from Suwalk lived in Chicago, where he was in practice. It was at this meeting I found out about Janet and Yossel. We did not get back to our hotel until 1 o'clock in the morning.

Janet, Yossel and their neighbors came for breakfast to our house. We spent a few hours together and they set out for their return trip to New Castle. At about 4 o'clock in the afternoon we received a telephone call from the provincial police that our friends were involved in a serious car accident. We subsequently learned that a car crossed the median and hit them head on. Yossel and the neighbors were killed instantly. The only survivor, but badly hurt, was Janet. Her undaunted will and perseverance helped her to pull through after a lengthy recovery. Since that time, we never celebrated our wedding anniversaries.

From there on our friendship with Judy and Paul deepened, and we would visit them practically every summer in Muncy, Pennsylvania, where they lived. Paul owned a successful clothing department store. He was an astute businessman and Judy became his public relations person. They were the only Jewish family in Muncy, very well integrated and respected. Unfortunately, in the last years Paul's

eyesight failed him and he had to retire early. They have been spending winters in Hallandale, Florida. For the last few years we stayed for three months just around the corner from them. There was not a day that we were not in touch, went out for dinner or most often have been invited to their place.

Last winter in February, Leslie and Fay Sherer came to Florida for three weeks. All the Suwalker we knew gathered together for lunch, as we did every year. Though Judy was already under the weather, she masked her discomfort and put on her best face. In March, a condition which plagued her for a few years took a turn for the worse. She was flown to Pittsburgh and then to a nursing home near Muncy, where she passed away in May.

Judy, that petite, gentle woman, had more courage and fortitude than a giant. She endured the Holocaust in concentration camps, lost her first husband and a daughter. She never talked about it, never complained, carried on her life with zest and verve. Nothing could make her happier than entertaining lavishly and being with people around her. She moved and worked fast, effortlessly, always with joy. In Florida, she was a voluntary chauffeur for anybody who needed a pick-up or ride to the airport.

Judy was a very devoted wife and in the last span of her life, when Paul needed it most, she gave of herself much beyond the call of duty. She epitomizes the Suwalker woman, and we were very grateful to have known her. Rest easy, my dear, dear friend. You will be remembered, always. . .

Epilogue

Suwalk, for its size, was a unique town. It was located in an enclave surrounded on three sides by borders with East Prussia and Lithuania. This is where the railway line ended, and all the country roads and highways from nearby smaller towns and villages led to our pivotal major town. Topographically, the area was reknowned for its forest and numerous lakes. The population was multinational, complemented by a large number of military personnel.

The Jewish population was highly organized, with numerous institutions, political of every shade, predominantly zionistically oriented. The secular and religious educational facilities were excellent, on a high level. A number of students attended universities abroad. In a modest way, our compatriots contributed to the world of arts, literature, sciences and most of all to Israel and its heroes.

I am proud to be a Suwalker. I hope the generations to come will keep the torch alight and also be proud to say "My ancestry is from Suwalk."

SUWALK & VICINITY: THE LAST CHAPTER

Dr. Kasriel Eilender

Ninety years have past since the establishment in 1905 of the Independent Suwalk Benevolent Association. During this time of almost one century many important, sad, as well as tragic things have happened to the Jewish people; the worst catastrophe was World War II with the Holocaust. Naturally thousands of communities over Europe had suffered this carnage. Our city of Suwalk was among them.

Our city had before the war approximately between ten to twelve thousand Jewish people. During the war they had been scattered all over from the forest of White Russia, Ukraine up to the Ghettos and extermination places in central Poland. Some of them were in the various military groups, but the pattern of destruction ran across families.

My father Josef Eilender was in the Russian Underground Army, where he was in charge of a family camp in western White Russia. My mother was there and when he died she perished from hunger, and after my sister's legs froze she also perished. My brother was shot before he went into the forest and my grandmother was also shot. This was not unusual for some of the families to be victimized in various fashions and in various places.

Time is allegedly a healer, but it is also a killer. It kills people; it kills also memories. However, this should not be the case with our people. When I came to the United States and attended meetings of the Suwalk Benevolent Association, it reminded me of my city, where there was a big hustle and bustle and Jewish people involved in business, education and politics. Sitting at this meeting, I was reminded of when I had seen hundreds and hundreds of people from Suwalk and vicinity active, energetic, interested in the fate of our fellow "landsmen" who had survived the Holocaust and started to come to the United States.

Unfortunately, at present not too many of these people are around. Our society as well as those from the vicinity are getting smaller and smaller and some have already disappeared. We should try to work out a plan where all of the towns around Suwalk, whoever is still in this country belonging to one of their "lantsmanshaft," to join the Suwalk Benevolent Society to create a stronger establishment.

However the future lies in the younger generation, the people who have never seen Suwalk or been on a trip. Some of them, they should at least carry some of the memories of the city, where the physical presence of the Jewish people are almost fully extinguished.

Our friend Naum Adelson and his wife are the guardians of the Suwalk cemetery. However, we should remember that recently there was an attempt to take this holy place away from us. For the time being this was put on hold. The local authorities have stated that they have run out of space for their people and therefore they wanted to take a part of the cemetery where Rabbi Lifshitz started the campaign years ago to establish a memorial for our people. He was helped by the president, Mr. Leslie Sherer, as well as Mr. Simon Savitt in this endeavor.

The young generations of many nationalities, in this country especially, are searching for their roots. They are traveling to far places. It is no wonder that some of our children are doing the same. In September of 1993, after fifty-four years and much prodding by my son and daughter, we went to Suwalk. They were worried that I would get very nervous and upset before I would enter our former house. However, the hurt was so great that I was totally stunned, I had no emotions at all. I looked all over the city and hardly saw anything that had to do with the Jewish people that had lived in that city for at least two hundred years. The Talmud Torah where I had been a student was gone, there was only one house where people lived but I could not remember this building. All the Jewish places of worship were destroyed. Nothing, not even a table to show that here lived, worked, suffered and worshipped Jewish people. Even the cemetery no longer remained the way it had been. It seemed that in the not too distant future there would be no physical sign of our presence as Jewish citizens in this city.

This is the second part of the Holocaust. Suwalk will be Judenrein, not only in a physical sense but in the historical sense as well. We cannot let this happen, because Suwalk was an important city in Poland regarding the Jewish community. We know

the history of Suwalk well. The liberation of Palestine was started by a man from Suwalk by the name of Stern. From Suwalk came the avenger for all the horrible crimes committed by the Nazis, Wladek Mariampolski. He was a Major in the Polish army attached to the war crimes group in Munich, Germany. I met him on several occasions; he also took me to Dachau where they had imprisoned twenty thousand Nazi war criminals, some that we had been searching for. From Suwalk also came the Israeli Minister of Finance, Sapir.

We visited the city of Augustowo where there was a nice Jewish community and where there was a cemetery that was totally devastated by the Nazis. They had removed all of the head stones to build swimming pools and highways. There was a monument placed by several headstones which had been organized through the efforts of the late Samuel Rudofsky. There my grandfather Benjamin Blacharski from Augustowo was buried. However we could not locate his grave, as it had been raining making it almost impossible, until a Polish doctor who was the father-in-law of a colleague of mine from the Polish high school that I had frequented helped us search until we found it.

About thirty meters from this area, we came across a small obelisk and graves and it was written, "Here are buried Soviet Soldiers who liberated this area, if you want to know their names you can inquire at the inner City Hall". This was some encounter, because in October of 1939, Soviet soldiers came to Suwalk for a short time. They took us in their trucks -- many Jewish citizens who wanted to get away from the Nazis -- to Augustowo. They took families with their furniture and their businesses and drove them across the border. We waited for them later under the Nazis for four years. Finally they came, and now some of them have been buried here in our Jewish cemetery.

I would like to point out that according to the literature that I have been going through, six thousand Soviet soldiers died to liberate the cities of Suwalk and Augustowo. Forty-five thousand are buried, four kilometers from Suwalk on the way to Yelenievo, but forty-five thousand prisoners of war were murdered by the Nazis. We should pause for a moment and think about them, too.

When I went to the Talmud Torah, I remember our teacher Zimmerman taught that there was going to be a war between two giants, Gog and Magog, two tremendous giants and during this battle among them a lot of Jewish people will perish. Thinking back now about what I learned in Talmud Torah, I see that I witnessed this battle as did most of our people. Our G-d was with us and our enemies have lost. We are here to stay; in spite of what they thought, they have been wrong. Heidrich had stated "that after the victory the only forty Jews left will be in a museum in the city of Prague in Czechoslovakia". However, not only did he not live to see this day, since he was assassinated by the Czech underground people, but he was wrong. Meyerling was also wrong, the civilian manager of the shops where we worked near Radon in Poland (it was a concentration camp, Blyzyn), where he said that this camp was going to be an example of efficiency and any other criteria according to the German authorities. He was wrong, too. We are here and we intend to stay forever.

We should, however, educate the younger generations to see Suwalk and preserve the traditions, the memories, and the history of Jewish Suwalk. We cannot allow that silence, ignorance and lack of sentiment should promote the holocaust of forgetting.

Modern technology and good will people, like Mr. Spielberg, who is creating a library, a memorial of Shoah, we should also cooperate with him and use modern technology which we have to not only educate our children and grandchildren but also people from other nations. I've just heard from Naum Adelson that he has received a letter from Warsaw where it was signed by the Spielberg Foundation asking him if he could contribute any information about his experiences.

As we celebrate today, the ninetieth anniversary of our esteemed organization, we should pay tribute and commemorate all of the people starting with the founding fathers, all the officers, all the members and all the people of good will who have contributed their time, their skills and their funds to this organization.

At this junction it is my privilege as well as my pleasure to honor and pay tribute to an unusual Suwalker, the present President, Leslie Sherer. He was probably one of the last lucky ones to receive an American Visa in 1937. He came to this country as a very young man who was facing a difficult task of getting used to a new country that was in crisis, not only economically but also politically at a crossroad.

He did not forget his city of birth and his people. During the war it was difficult to do a great deal of relief work, however, he was involved in some of it. After the war, when many of the survivors started to trickle into the country, he got very active in all aspects of the relief work and he was making house calls, bringing clothing and bringing medications. He was also assisting Dr. Mirow, who was a physician in Suwalk and its vicinity who had been here for many years and was also very involved. Then he became more involved in the Independent Suwalk Relief Organization; he had the heart, he had the sentiment, the know-how, and he had feeling. His was an involvement in all sorts of capacities, as well as being President of the organization for decades.

Before becoming President he skillfully helped the other officers and Presidents, among them Mr. Hyman Seligson. It should be said without any exaggeration that Leslie Sherer did not miss a meeting, an affair or gathering of any Suwalk endeavor or activity for the last forty-five years. We pay tribute to his dedication and hard work.



A Group of Survivors after the war in a D.P. Camp in West Germany.

Seating 1st row: From right to left: Mrs. Sara Greenstein, Rabbi Abraham Magence, Mrs. Ida Magence, Mrs. Goldie Reizeltzwiling, Mrs. Felga Szteinberg and David Leon Szteinberg.

2nd row: From right to left: Leib Finkowski, Leah Tzwiling, Mrs. Hanna Ribald, Nechama Tzwiling, Mrs. Esther Rayman & Solomon Rayman.

3rd row: From right to left: Moishe Kagan, Mania Miszkinski, & Moishe Greenstein, the son of Chaim & Sarah Greenstein.



A Yizkor meeting from Suwalker and Vicinity. Survivors after the war in a D.P. Camp in West Germany in 1947.

Some of the survivors are our members: Dr. K. Eilender, Rabbi Abraham Magence, Morris Collins, Sam Gradowski, Charles Oken, Moishe Rakow, Jakie Pfefer, Dr. Arnold Kerr, Israel Ribald, and Solomon Rayman.

ROOTS

by Susan Sherer Mayer

I often wonder why so many people are interested in studying genealogy. In the process of tracing their lineage, what information do they hope to uncover? Are they simply trying to link themselves to some ancient period in history during which a family tree originated? Or are they, perhaps, trying to create a link to their modern world? And, whether they climb up the tree or down, do they eventually find out what they want to know?

Asking all these questions inevitably leads me to some interesting discoveries and, of course, to another question.

If other people find it so appealing to investigate their family histories, why don't I?

Perhaps the reason is that, for me, the question of lineage has never been an issue. As a young Jewish girl growing up in New York, I knew where I came from. It was always perfectly clear to me that I was a direct descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who arrived in Manhattan via Lvov and Suwalk. What happened in between seemed insignificant.

Well, that may sound like a joke, but, unfortunately, that joke dominated my genealogical thoughts for a long time. If it's true that humor very often conceals pain, then I found just the right quip to hide behind. The real and serious reason I avoided looking back was because it hurt so much to discover the truth. For me and my family, tracing our background meant only one thing - facing the horrible memory of our enormous losses. Something terrible had happened to us which severed the immediate link to our ancestry. We had no history. We had no generations. As a result, our family began and ended with the four of us.

Nevertheless, the four of us produced a fantastic family with absolutely no complaints about size. In fact, we were closer and more in tune with each other because of it. I couldn't imagine growing up any other way. I had the very best childhood a girl could ever have. Our home was filled with love and warmth, education and encouragement, aspirations, laughter, art, music and friendship. All those elements were crucial in helping me develop my adult sensibility. Everything I am I owe to my parents and the environment they created for me. To this day, I consider my parents my best friends and my brother a constant source of love and support. And the fact that my grandfather was able to join us for a brief moment fills me with happiness.

But, regretfully, beneath all the joy our family embraced, there was a faintly perceptible undercurrent of bereavement. I always thought that my parents' sadness was deliberately hidden in order to shield my brother and me from the world's cruelty and evil. My parents, of course, wanted their childrens' lives to be perfect. They wanted to give us something they never had - a sense of security. In this setting, I couldn't be the one to elicit memories that were excruciatingly painful, so I avoided asking questions about the past. And, understandably, information did not come freely or easily. In essence, the entire area of genealogy was counter to our happy, tranquil lives, so it was far better to ignore the subject. And we did, for a long time.

And yet I certainly was curious. Naturally, as we grow older, our circles expand to include a wider range of experiences. We observe people and places, we ask questions, and, sometimes, we get answers. But, most of all, we wonder why things exist a certain way. Like all headstrong teenagers, I felt I had the right to know it all.

Hesitantly, at first, I tested the waters. Initially, the response was no response. Next came tentative remembrances that were drenched in tears. And then, miraculously, a metamorphosis. Was it the passage of time or a decision my parents made that broke through the silence? It doesn't really matter. All I know is that at some point memories became clear and stories were shared. Not just about the ravages of the Holocaust, but also about an earlier, better time.

I was thrilled to learn about my parents' childhoods: homes, schools, shuls, libraries, sports, shops, friends, families, hairbows, bicycles, skis, weekend outings and summer vacations. I sensed that their childhoods were very similar to my brother's and mine. Their homes were happy and warm, their days were filled with exciting

adventures. They adored their parents and their parents adored them. I delighted in hearing them talk about life in their home towns. But what captured my attention above all else were the poignant recollections of my grandmothers. I would have loved to have known them. Is there anything more comforting for a child than to sit on a grandmother's lap, or be enveloped in her arms, or hear her say, "Shayna maideleh," or taste her chicken? I can only fantasize about those moments, but I know that they would have happened a million times over if only we had had the chance.

Perceiving what my parents endured before they even reached the age of twenty had a powerful effect on me. When I was that age, I tried to imagine being in their place. But I couldn't begin to envision such deprivation: a life without parents, home, a native language, familiar sights and smells and surroundings, neighbors, best friends. I couldn't conceive of the fear and loneliness and uncertainty that must have overwhelmed them. The enormity of their loss was so apparent and so very dreadful.

And yet they survived. How incredible that they found each other and began a family and overcame huge obstacles to achieve the most remarkable goals: mother, grandmother, economist, teacher; father, grandfather, artist, designer. They are true heroes who possess immeasurable stores of courage. And they make me proud to be their daughter.

Considering the emotions that well up whenever the subject arises, it's fantastic that my parents were willing and able to talk to me about their lives in Poland. I know how hard it's been, but I also think it's terribly important to continue the retrospection. What remains unsaid becomes lost. I don't want my parents to lose their youth and I don't want my children to be robbed of such potent memories. The price we have to pay in reliving the war and its destruction is very high, but necessary.

So although I'm still not interested in pursuing a formal study of genealogy, I cherish the information my parents share with me. Each and every time they talk to me about their early lives, I listen in awe. I feel my ancestors come to life. I reclaim my history. And I realize that, finally, our family has its generations.

Footnote:

My maternal grandfather, David Spiwak, was born in 1890. He died of pneumonia in 1936. My maternal grandmother, Cyrla Spiwak, was born in 1903. She died as a result of being shot by the Nazis in either 1942 or 1943. My paternal grandfather, Max Szereszewski, was born in 1891. He survived the war after being exiled to work in a Russian forced labor camp. He arrived in New York in 1947 and died in 1957. My paternal grandmother, Sarah Szereszewski, was born in 1892. She died of hunger while in exile in Russia in 1942.

My mother, Fay Sherer (nee Spiwak) left Lvov in May of 1938. She arrived in New Jersey on May 14, 1938. My father, Leslie Sherer (ne Szereszewski) left Suwalk in August of 1937. He traveled to Manchester, England, to say goodbye to his maternal grandmother, uncles and cousins and arrived in New York in September of 1937.

BEST GET WELL WISHES

TO

Bubbie Chaia Rochel Andres

AND

HEARTIEST GREETINGS

TO THE

Andres Family



FROM THE

Isba

Poetry by Chaya Rochel Andres
(used with the permission of the poet)

My Father's Bequest

A legacy that cannot be wind-blown,
  Is the one my father left to me...
On my cheek, a salty tear ran down,
  Pent-up, hot—from my father's desire and anxiety.

Father! You observe, I speak wordlessly—
  Through a silence you understand and heed—
In my youth you were to me
  A saviour that appeared, whenever there was a need!

Tell me, father, tell me, from whence was derived
  Your great knowledge? Your schooling was short-lived.
Relying on your wife's mother for "kest" and bed;[1]
  Even helping her in the baking of bread.

On a bench in a tiny synagogue—or silently near lectern,
  You sought and gained knowledge—and used it in turn...
Reading the fine print wasn't alien to you—
  You savored "essen teg,"[2] whole years through.

Deep in my heart you planted your "nigun"[3]...
  The tone I hear clearly, as well as your voice—
I bear them within me, as if in folds sewn....
  With love I guard them, gather them to me, and rejoice!

"Come, Chaya Rochel, hearken to me!
  You are familiar with Reb Jacob's wise Commentary[4]..
Your mind is as sharp as lightning, flashing free...
  Learn, learn my child...of great use 'twill always be."

[1] *Living on "kest"—a practice whereby the mother-in-law provided free bed and board so that the son-in-law could continue to carry on with his studies.*
[2] *Essen teg—townspeople took turns feeding poor students one day a week (or more if they could afford to do so). This was considered a "mitzvah" or good deed.*

[3] *Nigun—a sacred melody, used for singing out certain prayers.*
[4] *The Commentaries of Jacob.*

Poetry by Chaya Rochel Andres
(used with the permission of the poet)

Youthful Aging

As we grow older
Youth silvers before our very view.
Though one's altered being grows colder,
Still young twiglets blossom anew.

Once more are turned childhood's pages;
Reminders of that lovely yesteryear
Of green grass and Sabbath melodies,
When youth and love were a constant pair.

When one was in love with the whole wide world,
Who then could hinder you?
Your loyalty then was so tightly knotted,
You wanted all humanity with warmth to imbue.

This youth, so true — so full of yearning,
Has accompanied you a whole life through . . .
Young seedlings — now part of a weaving —
Of memories, ever to renew.

Kernels in their fullness - - - foods that nourished
Seeds asprouting — youth's gift in giving . . .
Of eventful years — lived through and ripened
This joyous song — for youthful maturing.

•••

Nostalgia

Winter in Our Old Home

In my parents home, on a winter's night,
The window-panes hoary with frost-
The shutters fastened tight - -
Within the stove-potatoes baking,
Mama has a herring sliced, ready for the eating.

"Draw closer, children, to the warmth," mama said.
"The tea in the kettle has already boiled, long past-
Then there's the ruddy corn-bread-
And herring and potatoes, for our repast..."

"Recite a blessing, dear children mine.
Give thanks for the fruits of the earth-so good...
Praise the creator of the world divine,
For his bounty to us destined..."

In the stove, the fire crackles aloud;
Embers fly-the coals, red-hot...
Potatoes in the embers browned,
MaMa soon the delicacies will allot.

She, of life so little demanding-
Making a High Holiday feast for us,
Of potatoes and herring...
And "Thank you, G-d, our ever righteous."

Oh, how pleasant was our life,
The Sabbath approacheth ere long,
With its saintliness-its Sabbath song,
The cholent in the stove-
The almighty up above...

"G-d of all the universe" we sign together...
While about our table, angels hover-

Of what avail can flowery rhymes or mere words be,
When my heart aches within me.
My heart overflows with yearning...
I wipe a tear from eyes that are brimming...

מיין ליד

די האָר גרייז-גראָע,
און קנייטשן אין פנים,
באַברילט די אויגן
און שוואכער ס'געהער,
ס'האַרץ ווערט יונג,
ווען ס'איז אַ ליד אויף דער צונג.

ווען יונג און לייכט נאָך דיין גאַנג,
ווען אין דיר נאָך זינגט געזאנג,
און גאָרניט קירצט דיר אָפּ דעם שפּאַן,
ווען אַ לאָנגער וועג איז נאָך פאַראַן,
איז פריש ס'געמיט – דו ביסט נאָך יונג!
און אַלע שפּאסן אויף דיין צונג . . .

ווען יאָרן אָבער לאַסטן אויף דיין גוף,
און רופן שוין דעם „עלטער רוף",
ווען דו אליין ביסט מער „ניט דאָס",
און וווּנדערסט זיך: פארוואָס? פארוואָס?
זאָג אַליין זיך: יונג, ביסט יונג!
ווען ליד אַ נייס איז אויף דיין צונג . . .

ס'איז שווער מיט אַלטקייט זיך צו פּאָרן,
ווילסט ציילן אויף צוריק די יאָרן.
בייגט זיך ביסלעכווייס דיין רוקן,
מאַך זיך ניט און פרוו'פאַרקוקן.
זאָג זיך: ביסט געווען און ביסט נאָך יונג !
ס'איז אַ ליד דאָך אויף מיין צונג ! . . .

קאָנסט ניט טאַנצן מער אין גאַסן?
נעם און פרוו אַ ליד פאַרפאַסן.
וועסט עס זינגען און דערציילן,
און אַלץ וואָס היילונג דאַרף – פאַרהיילן . . .
און וועסט פאַרחידושט זען: ביסט יונג!
כל זמן דאָס ליד איז אויף דיין צונג . . .

* * * *

די נייע וועלט

פארוואָס צעבייזערט איז אזוי די וועלט?
אזוי אָנגעשטרענגט ס'געמיט . . .
עס קעמפט דאָך יוגנט
פאר א וועלט א פריי
אָבער שווער איז פאר עלטער צו פארדייען
די וועלט, די איצטיקע, די נייע . . .

מענטש פאר'עקשנ'ט איז געוואָרן,
שטרעבונגען ליכטיקע, פארצויגן וויי מיט שטריק.
צעשטורעמטע וינטן, ---
בלוט געמישט מיט שטעכעדיקן דארן . . .
פעלדער ניט צעאקערטע,
פארטריקנטע, פארבענקטע,
און ס'גייט די וועלט איצט אויף צוריק! . . .
צי קען געמאָלט זיין
אז ס'האָבן נייע ווינשאפטן,
דערפונדענע טעכנאָלאָגיעס,
פליאונגען אין רוימען,
צעשטערט די וועלט,
די באשאפענע – די אלטע? ---
און הימלען שטורעמען צערייצטע,
ערד האָט מענטשן פארזונקען –

און הימלען שטורעמען צערייצטע,
ערד האָט מענטשן פארזונקען –
זיין גאנץ האָב און גוטס דערטרונקען.
און עס שוידערן צעשראָקענע געמיטער
פון בייזער קעלט,
וויל הפקר'דיק צעריסן איז די וועלט!

* * * *

History of the Independent Suwalker & Vicinity Benevolent Association

The Founders Of The Suwalker Society
Historic Overview by Chaim Seligson G.b.h.m.

In the year 1880 there were already, in New York, Suwalker who came to improve their lives in the new land. Among those was a man by the name of A. Markowitz,a dear, good and friendly Jew who in his heart longed for Suwalk. Markowitz knew every Suwalker immigrant including his family from gene rations back. He nurtured a dream to organize a Suwalker Society where its participants would be able to help each other in time of need and also could socialize with each other so as to bring back sweet memories of their Suwalk childhood years. At that time, an actual trip to the city of their youth was an impossibility.

In April of 1905 Markowitz with the help of seven other Suwalker founded the Suwalker Society,and he became its first hospitaler (a person who visited and gave comfort to the sick).



Top Row From Left To Right: *A.Markowitz,L. Danski, A.Finkelstein, M.Danski, and H. Reinshreiber
Middle Row From Left to Right: *M. Cohen,*J. Markson,*L.Silverman, B. Harison and M. Jacobson
Seated From Left To Right: K. Sereiski,*D. Diamond and M. Yellin.
* indicates Founder.

HISTORY OF THE I.S.B.A.

by Leslie Sherer

After the Russo-Japanese War and after the Revolution of 1905, a large emigration from Russia to the United States began from and through Suwalk, because of its proximity to the German border. Thousands of young men and women began to arrive here, with many from Suwalk and the vicinity among them. This situation created a need to take care of and help these emigrants in the new environs of New York.

Most of them were working people and naturally veered towards the landsmanshaft branches of the Arbeiter Ring (Workmen's Circle). Since all of them spoke Yiddish, naturally, they were guided by the Daily Forward (whose philosophy was socialist) to join those landsmanshaftn of the Workmen's Circle. So there was created a Suwalk-Wolkowisker Branch.

Some new arrivals joined that branch, but a group of small business men and intellectuals who did not agree with that socialist philosophy formed their own independent association. So, in 1905, was born the I.S.B.A. There were seven founders: A. Markowitz, J. Markson, A. Finkelstein, B. Harrison, D. Diamond, L. Silverman, M. Cohen. Jacob Markson was the guiding spirit and lifetime secretary of the Association. David Diamond was the great uncle of our current Recording Secretary, Stanley Diamond.

I do not know where they used to meet and how often they did. (I suppose it was somewhere on the lower East Side.) I do know, however, that their meetings were formed on the basis of Masonic ones. They apparently had in the center of the room a coffin covered in black and new members were initiated by some Masonic-like of a ritual. I think that the first president was named Silverman. The fraternal association was partially an interest-free small credit union and gave health benefits and burial accommodations. It bought plots in two cemeteries and paid death benefits to its members. It helped indigent Suwalker and vicinity new arrivals.

During and particularly after World War I, when Suwalk and its environs were alternatively ravaged by German and Russian armies and later the Bolshevik War, the Jews there suffered terrible hunger and deprivation. The ISBA formed a relief committee, which sent many packages of food and clothing to Suwalk and a young member, Brother Sperling, was sent to Suwalk with a large amount of money for relief. It was a massive effort and it helped a great deal.

One of the most active workers of that committee was a young man who just returned from the Western Front. He worked like a beaver, and excelled in the relief work: Hyman Seligson. He came to this country as a young boy to live with his uncle on the lower East Side. He thoroughly enjoyed the Jewish life there. He felt there like a fish in water. That time and milieu shaped his whole life. He loved the Jewish language and always used it. He was a scholar in Hebrew, Torah and Talmud, and he often quoted passages from those works. His knowledge of the same was remarkable.

What happened to the Association in the years from post-World War I until 1937, when I arrived in this country, I do not know. There must have been records, but I don't know where they disappeared to. All I know is that as soon as I arrived, my dear uncle and aunt made me joint the ISBA. I remember that Mr. Miller was then the Recording Secretary and he had a log about three inches thick and proceedings of every meeting were scrupulously recorded.

At that time, the society used to meet twice a week, on Monday and Thursday evenings, in a large room on the second floor of a Taxpayer Building on the southeast corner of Second Avenue and First Street. The President then was Mr. Sandowski, a retired teacher, a Hebrew scholar, wise man and gentleman. The Treasurer for Life was my uncle, Bernard Gershen, the Vice President was Leon Perlo (after his death was Jack Ulius later, and then David Silverman. the Recording Secretary Mr. Miller, and the General Financial Secretary Jacob Markson (Wendorf). Meetings at that place were held twice a week for a few years longer.

President Sandowski modernized the proceedings. He did away with the coffin. Discussions were held in an orderly manner. Moeth Chitim monies were sent to Suwalk annually. In

50th ANNIVERSARY 1955 OFFICERS

אראנזשמענט קאמיטע



ערשטע רייע פון רעכט צו לינקס: ל. פּערלשטיין, סעק. דזש. גלאדסטאון, חיים זעליגסאן, טשערמאן. ד. סילווערמאן, ל. ליווי.

צווייטע רייע: דר. ד. מיראָוו, טרעזשורער, ה. וולאדקאווסקי, מ. מישעל, ב. סאלינסקי, מ. קליינבערג, ס. ריימאן.

Ind. Suwalker & Vicinity Benevolent Association

1922 the Ladies Auxiliary was formed. Its last President was my wonderful aunt, Mrs. Sylvia Gershen. Members were called brothers and sisters, and the meetings were conducted in Yiddish. The only disputes were about the graves in the cemetery.

In June 1939, Vice President Leon Perlo made a trip to Suwalk, and as an ambassador of good will delivered a sizable sum of the society's money to help them complete there a wooden two-storey annex to the Talmud Torah, which was then completed. At about a year earlier, the society had switched its meeting place to the second floor of the annex of Central Plaza on Seventh Street between Second and Third Avenues. The meetings were held there once a week, still in the evening when the members were still able to travel in the evening in the subways and busses free of fear and harassment.

At that time, quintennial banquets were fully attended by many members and friends. The ladies arranged for theater parties. There were well-attended outings to Mr. Simon's hotel in the Catskills. Monies for Moeth Chitim were annually sent to Suwalk to help the needy. Nobody expected the great calamity that was to befall the Jews in general and Suwalk and vicinity in particular.

The meetings moved to the second floor of 843 Broadway, corner of 14th Street. Suddenly, the members, although still full of vigor, began to show their age and traveling, especially at night, became a chore. It was decided that meetings should be held twice a month on Sunday afternoons. During the 1930s at its height the society counted close to 400 members. The older members started to die out, and our cemeteries slowly began to fill up. We still had a membership of over 250 brothers and sisters.

After President Sandowski and Jacob Markson died, we had two presidents, brothers-in-law, Jack Ulius and David Silverman, and a Secretary Wendorf (who died young) in the 1940s and early 50s. They served at the time when Montefiore and Beth Israel Cemeteries were bought and that was a time of keen rivalry for buying graves. To some degree it was a difficult time.

In spite of that, help to the needy and philanthropic work continued throughout the entire period between the two World Wars. The organization was still strong and its reputation spread far and wide. The stalwarts were Sandowski, Markson, Gershen, Perlo, Seligson and others too many to mention. Although there were a few more Suwalker Organizations, one in New York (The Workmen's Circle Branch), one in Chicago, one in Detroit, one in Argentina, and even Israel, none of them could claim the accomplishments and longevity of our Association in New York, except for a revived society in Israel.

The immediate time after World War II found our organization hard at work in as much help and concern as was humanly possible to render. Under the guidance of our esteemed Rabbi David Lifshitz, who was able to save his family and himself from the Holocaust, and again Brother Hyman Seligson. Beside personal and family losses, the conclusion of the war found the Association shocked and numbed by the great tragedy, but not immobilized by it. Relief work of great magnitude through the Relief Committee started under the indefatigable, devoted leadership of Dr. David Mirow, Mishel, Trop, and myself, to help the unfortunate survivors in the camps in Germany, postwar Poland, and other parts of Europe and later Israel.

Inquiries were made. Survivors were sought. Food clothing and monies were immediately sent. Assistance was given wherever possible as soon as a name and address were received. Many members gave much of their time and helped financially, and none abstained. There was also called a conference of the New York, Chicago and Detroit chapters, who met in the Pennsylvania Hotel here and laid out a grandiose plan for mutual action under the chairmanship of Seligson (NY) and Bernstein (Chicago), after the clarion call to help by Rabbi Lifshitz. That example was followed since, and will continue as long as there will be a Suwalker society and as long as there will be an outstretched hand asking for it.

Brother Seligson was elected President in the late 1950s. Since the mid-40s, a new spirit came into the organization. We received as our spiritual leader the last Rabbi of Suwalk, the revered genius Reb Dovid Lifshitz. He was by then the graduating rabbi in Yeshiva University (Rav Yitzchok Elchonon Rabbinical School [REITS]). He graced our meetings with his presence and always was to install our officers, and he did so until the end of his life. Of course, he was our Honorary President. Through the thousands of his devoted and respectful students he was known through the world as Der Suwalker Rebbe.

50th ANNIVERSARY 1955 LADIES AUXILIARY

אפימערם אין עקזעקוטיוע פון די סובאלקער לײדיס אקזיליערי

לאדעלשאפט פון די סובאלקער לײדיס אקזיליערי פון דער אינדעפענדענט סובאלקער בענעוואלענט אסאסיאציע, אין אנדענק פון איר 50 יאריגן יובילעום. (פארשטייערינען) : פרויען זיצנדיג פון לינקס צו רעכטס

60th ANNIVERSARY BANQUET COMMITTEE



באנקעט קאמיטע

זיצענדיג לינקס צו רעכטס: ס. ריימאן, סעקרעטאר, ה. וולאדקאווסקי, וויס פרעזידענט, ח. זעליגסאן, פרעזידענט, ל. שערער, טרעזשורער און י. טראפ, האספיטעלער.

שטייענדיג לינקס צו רעכטס: א. ל. וויס, ד"ר מיראו, מ. אבראמאוויטץ, ה. ספעקטאר, ב. סאלינסקי און א. קאלעט.

60th ANNIVERSARY BANQUET COMMITTEE

Seated Left to Right: S. Rayman — H. Wladkowsky — H. Seligson — L. Sherer — J. Trop

Standing Left to Right: A. L. Wise — Dr. D. Mirow — M. Abramowitz — H. Spector — B. Solinsky — I. Kalet.

Ind. Suwalker & Vicinity Benevolent Association

60th ANNIVERSARY HONORARY TRUSTEES OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS



די ערן טראָסטיס צוזאמען מיט די בעאמטע און די באָארד אף דירעקטאָרס פון יאָהר 1965.
זיטצענדיג פון לינקס צו רעכטס:
ס. ריימאן, פינ. סעקרעטער „ב. גערשען, ל. דאנסקי חיים זעליגסאן, פרעז. דזש. גלאדשטיין" ערן טראָסטיס,
און ה. וולאדקאווסקי, וויים פרעזידענט.
שטייענדיג אין מיטען שורה:
פון לינקס צו רעכטס,
מ. גאטליב, מ. מיללער, ב. סאלינסקי, מרס. פערלשטיין, מ. אבראמאוויץ, ד"ר ד. מיראו, י. טראפ, האספיטאלער,
ל. שערער, טרעזשורער.
שטייענדיג די לעצטע שורה פון לינקס צו רעכטס:
מ. מישעל, רעק. סעקרעטאר, מ. איוורי, א. ל. וויס, פובליסיטי סעק., ג. יעדידיע, מ. ריבאלד, ה. ספעקטאר און
י. קאלעט.

HONORARY TRUSTEES — 1965 OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Seated Left to Right:
S. Rayman — B. Gershen — L. Dansky — H. Seligson — J. Gladstone — H. Wladkowsky.
Standing Middle Row Left to Right:
I. Gottlieb — I. Miller — B. Solinsky — Mrs. T. Pearlstein — M. Abramowitz — Dr. D. I. Mirow — J. Trop — L. Sherer.
Standing Top Row Left to Right:
M. Mishel — M. Ivri — A. L. Wise — G. Yodidie — I. Ribald — H. Spector — I. Kalet.

די ביסעלע נייע מעמבערס וואָס האָבען זיך אָנגעשלאָסען זיינען סובאלקער און אומגעגענד, וואָס האָבען זיך גערעטעוועט פון דעם דייטשען מערדער פאָלק, און האָבען געפונען א סביבה וואָס דערמאָנט זיי אין זייערע יונגע היימאט יאָהרען.

מיט א צענדליק יאָהרען צוריק האָט נאָך די סאָסייעטי געהאט פארבינדונגען מיט די סובאלקער ארגאניזאציעס פון שיקאגא און דעטרויט. צום בעדויערען האָבען די דאָזיגע ארגאניזאציעס צוליב די אָבגעשטאָרבענע אקטיוויטעט פון די הויפט פיהרערשאפט ליידער אויפגעלייזט געוואָרען אזוי — אז מיר אין ניו יאָרק — זיינען פערבליבען די איינציגע אָרגאניזירטע קערפערשאפט וואָס זיינען די איינציגע יורשים אין אמעריקע, פון אן אונטערגעגאנגענע אידישע סובאלק.

After Mr. Wendorf's death, I became the Financial Secretary. Since the early 1950s, the time when gangs began to show their ugly selves, traveling began to be a problem. The members voted to meet only once a month, on the third Sunday afternoon each month.

Brother Seligson was elected president in the middle 1950's, after David Silverman. The Society began to get a breath of fresh air. Seligson's strong personality, his lifelong devotion to Zionism, his belonging to many Jewish organizations, on some of which he was a board member. His leading place on the board of Mount Eden Synagogue in the Bronx, brought respect and the name of Suwalk into the Jewish street. He represented us at the UJA, Zionist Organization of U.S.A., at the Israel Bonds, at Shaare Zedek Hospital, many yeshivas, etc.

Seligson was the one who proposed and undertook to write a new constitution (in Yiddish and English) for our society with the then special secretary, L. Pearlstein. The meetings, since I remember, were always conducted in Yiddish, our "mame loshen." So, without thought for the future, the constitution specified that meetings were to be conducted in that language.

Rabbi Lifshitz proposed in 1959 that a book about Suwalk be published. Seligson rolled up his sleeves and set out on that herculean task. An editorial board was formed with Rabbi Lifshitz himself, L. Pearlstein, yours truly, Solomon Rayman, Ben Solinski, Dr. Mirow, Trop, Mishel, and a few others. We did research, collected much material, elected the great Berl Kahn to be the Editor, and in spite of the many difficulties and late night meetings, but for the iron will of Hyman Seligson, 1,000 copies of Yiskor Buk Suwalk were published.

Unfortunately, the book was written only in Yiddish (again a mistake) except for a brief introduction by Seligson. According to the Jewish Press, it was one of the best of its kind. There is not a copy left for sale.

I remember vividly the pre-Passover soirees for the leadership of the ISBA held in Rabbi Lifshitz's house. The air was thick with Torah, Talmud and Halacha. The exchanges, principally between the Rabbi, Sandowski, and Seligson and others was something to behold. The genius of our Rabbi, his fantastic memory, his examples and his words of wisdom, and of course the Rebbitzin's delicious fish, which gave us a taste of Suwalk, was nothing to sneeze at. This was Seligson and his times - a renaissance in our society. His two accomplishments were the highlight of his presidency. Seligson began to fail in 1975 and died in 1978. G-d bless his memory. His son Aaron has been a good and devoted member for many years, and is now a respected trustee of our society.

That brings me to my election as President of the ISBA. In 1978, my first Vice President was William Karmin, Treasurer Charles Oken, Financial Secretary Solomon Rayman, the second "Mr. Suwalk." He lived and breathed that city. His hope was a gathering place for survivors and many landsleit. He was a good and devoted Secretary. He maintained a vast correspondence with landsleit all over. Our Recording Secretary was Israel Kalet, a very diligent and fine man. A new Board of Directors was installed and we veered away from our constitution and started holding our meetings in English. We moved then to Synagogue Adereth-El on East 29th Street. We kept up the tradition of the moeth chitim campaign, and support to Jewish organizations. Thanks to the bequest and generosity of our former trustee Morris Abramowitz, we were able to raise the twice annual donations to needy landsleit. We kept up the tradition of the quintennial banquets. We met ten times a year.

Due to the urging of Rabbi Lifshitz, a large sum was collected to build a solid six-foot stone wall (254 meters) around the Jewish cemetery in Suwalk, since it remained the only Jewish place there. We got in touch with Naum Adelson (one of three Jews living there at the time). Things were rough at the beginning. In 1984, a delegation consisting of Simon Savitt, Charles Oken and myself went to Suwalk and despite difficult sessions in City Hall, we finally got permission to go on with the project. The project was left to be executed by Naum Adelson, who with his son and a captain (a former mayor of the city) helped us in the negotiations. Adelson found an architect, a contractor, left over cut stones were brought from a church in Baklerove, and the wall was built. Broken gravestones were collected from parts of the city and were fashioned into a beautiful, huge (50 X 10 foot) monument to the memory of our ancestors. A monument to honor the four geniuses, rabbis of the 19th century, and a small monument of stones erected by the few returning Suwalkers in 1945, were all put there. Simon Savitt, on his frequent trips to Europe and Israel made it his business to stop in Suwalk to examine the progress of

OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF THE BOARD 1985



Standing (left to right): I. Ribald, Board Member; S. Savitt, Hon. Trustee; M. Levine A. Rakow, Board Members; S. Aueron, Recording Secretary; M. Rothschild, Board Member
Seated (left to right): S. Rayman, Financial Secretary; L. Sherer, President; M. Abramowitz, Trustee; William Karmin, Vice President; Chas. Oken, Treasurer

Ind. Suwalker & Vicinity Benevolent Association

work, and final results which he reported to us.

A year later, the ISBA in partnership with our sister organization in Israel, erected a monument (in the shape of a star of David), in memory of Suwalk and its surrounding towns, in Cholon Cemetery in Israel. In the presence of three to four hundred landsleit, that evening at a gathering at Zionist House in Tel Aviv, I proposed that we jointly publish a new English-Hebrew memorial book for the satisfaction of the English and Hebrew speaking public. Since the 1961 book ended with the period of 1919, nothing was said of the times and Jewish people between the two World Wars. The book was to be printed and published in Israel. The editor was Yehuda Alroy. There arose many problems of distance and ideas which were eventually solved with the English part 40% and the Hebrew 60%. There were 600 books printed (far too few) and none are now available for sale.

After the death of Vice President Karmin, Murray Levine was elected to that post. After Kalet's passing away, Solomon Rayman became Financial Secretary. He discharged his duties in an exemplary way. At that time, the number of First Class members had shrunk to only about 50. Rayman and I decided to launch a new membership drive to attract social members. Solomon and I worked very hard on this, and to our gratification we was able to gain more than 100 new social members, so that the Society today has a membership of over 150. When he died in 1990, we had the good fortune to have as our Financial Secretary, the wonderful, able and most devoted Professor Arthur Leonard, who volunteered to step in and help the ISBA put our society into the 21st century. He computerized and organized our affairs. Our Recording Secretaries became Stanley Diamond, grand-nephew of one of our original organizers, and Jessica Schneider, granddaughter of our former President David Silverman.

Rabbi Lifshitz and Simon Savitt, with their departures, sadly left a great void in our organization. G-d bless their memories.

As you see, most every President left some accomplishment, and I hope better changes for the future. On my side, I am the proudest of having democratized the society, given women a voice in our affairs, having the first female Vice President, Florence Haber, and having the first women on our Board. I am proud of broadening the activities of our society by founding chapters in Washington, chaired by Bert Meyers; Canada, chaired by Henry Dorsey; Florida, Sammy Aueron; Chicago, David Bern; and my son David is still trying to organize a branch on the West Coast. Our relations with our sister organization in Israel, because of very close cooperation with my friend Uri Shiloh (Shuchman), David Stern, Chanoch Penn, became very close. I am proud that during my Presidency a great wall, with that huge magnificent monument of broken headstones in memory of our ancestors and the greatest Rabbis of the 19th century, was built. It gives me much pride to have the ISBA in my time to be a partner in erecting a monument in Cholon, Israel, and then publishing a Hebrew-English memorial book.

So you can see, beside helping indigent landsleit here and abroad, we of the ISBA are in the forefront of carrying the name of Suwalk, which is synonymous with rendering help. From the first President Silverman through S. Sandowsky, J. Ulius, David Silverman, the great H. Seligson and myself as well as Vice Presidents Leon Perlo, myself, William Karmin, Murray Levine, and Florence Haber, Treasurers Bernard Gershen, myself, Simon Savitt, Jehuda Dembovich, Financial Secretaries J. Markson, Wendorf, Gladstone, myself, I. Kalet, S. Rayman, and Professor Arthur Leonard, and Recording Secretaries I. Miller, M. Mishel, L. Mosierznicki, Stanley Diamond and Jessica Schneider, and finally Hospitalers Solinsky, J. Trop, and Esther Rayman, as well as all of you good and dedicated trustees and board of directors who stood true to the aims of the founders and above all you members who kept up the good work and the good name of the Independent Suwalk and Vicinity Benevolent Association.

I, one of the "last Mohicans," hope that the organization, which remained the only Suwalker & Vicinity organization in the Diaspora, will live and prosper under a new and younger leadership. I hope it will go on into the 21st century and celebrate its 100th Anniversary. I thank you for being here with us to celebrate our 90th Anniversary.

Special thanks go to the arrangement committee for doing the yeoman's work on preparing this banquet and journal: Special ones to Eileen Lesser Margolies, Prof. Arthur Leonard, Dr. Kasriel Eilender, and thanks to Vice President Florence Meitkes Haber, Anna Wohl, Sara Mandelbaum, and Stanley Diamond.

OFFICERS AND ARRANGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS 1995



DR. K. EILENDER
Committee Co Chair

PROF. LEONARD
Financial Secretary

E. RAYMAN
Hospitaler

LESLIE SHERER
President

F. MEITKES-HABER
Vice President

S. DIAMOND
Recording Secretary

A. WOHL
Committee

Y. DEMBOVICH
Treasurer

E. LESSER-MARGOLIS
Committee Chair

Ind. Suwalker & Vicinity Benevolent Association

JEWISH SUWALK THEN. . .



Drs. Weisman And Grubstein
With Hospital Staff



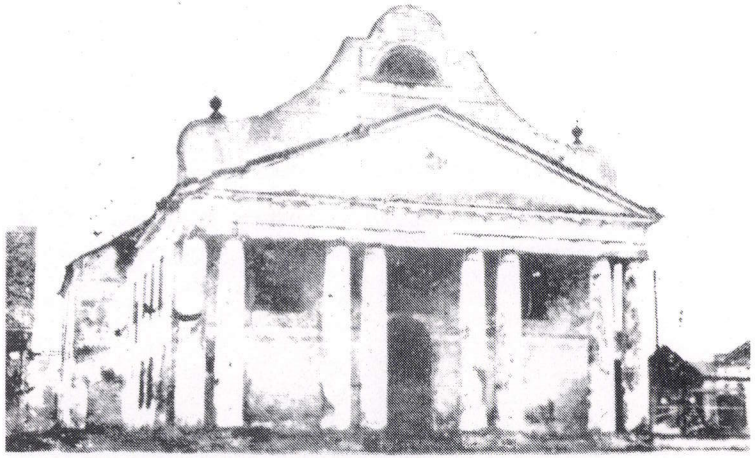
Jewish Hospital In Suwalk



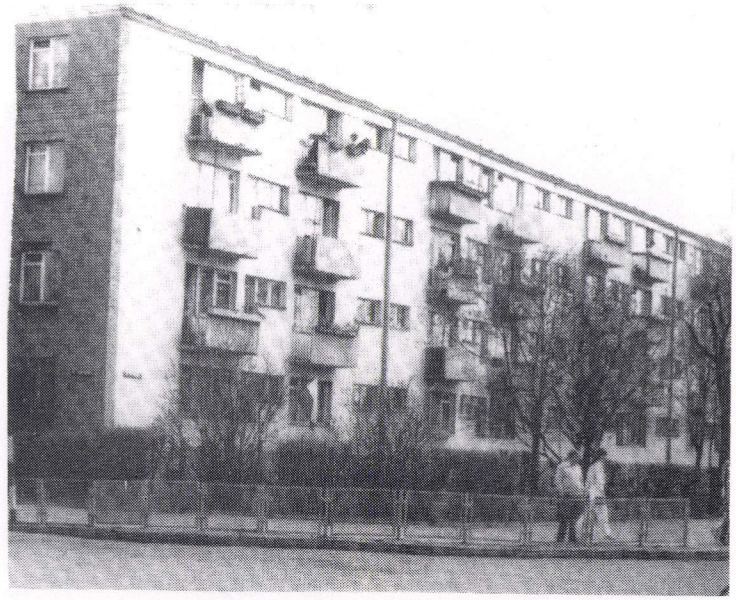
Doctors & Directors Of TOZ



Jewish Children Of the Suwalker Orphanage with
Their Director, Mr. Bielicki In 1922



The Great Synagogue of Suwalk



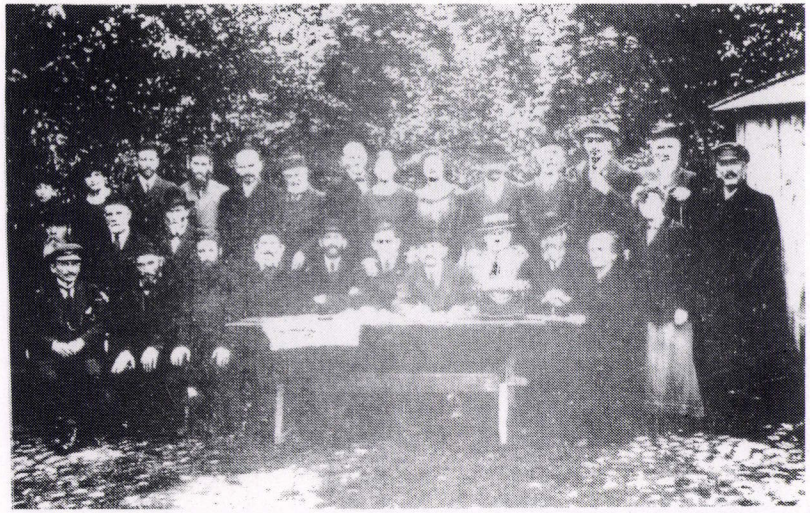
A building standing on the site of the Great Synagogue



Presentation of the Torah to Tzar Nicholas by the Rabbis and Elders of Suwalk in 1905



Reception for Senator R. Kowalski at the railroad station in1923



DELEGATE OF THE SUWALKER AND VICINITY RELIEF COMMITTEE SPERLING ON THE OCCASION OF HIS ARRIVAL IN SUWALK TO DISTRIBUTE AID AFTER WORLD WAR ONE HE IS SURROUNDED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS RABBIS AND ELDERS OF THE CITY OF SUWALK.



Cultural & Literary Association "MUZA"
1923



A Class of the "Talmud-Torah" Hebrew Schoon in the year 1926.

Top row from right to left: A. Weller, J. Krawczynski, Solomon Rayman, Y. Zamecki, Plaskowski, Szteinberg, S. Gutman
2nd row: I. Szurpinski, M. Ospowat, A. Werobejezik, B. Stolnicki seated on the lap of the principal Rosenberg, Teacher Mrs. Schus, teacher Salman holding B. Albert on his lap, H. Gelbord, E. Lewine, A. Litmanowitz
3rd row bottom: B. Szczupacki, J. Lewentin, Ch. Rakoczynski, H.W. Sandowski, A. Kusnierzycki, Redak, E. Lenszewski, M. Bialostocki, Karmin.



A class of children in Filipowe in 1921 with their teacher Morris Oshinsky as their teacher first left, our Board of Direrctors Member

Ind. Suwalker & Vicinity Benevolent Association



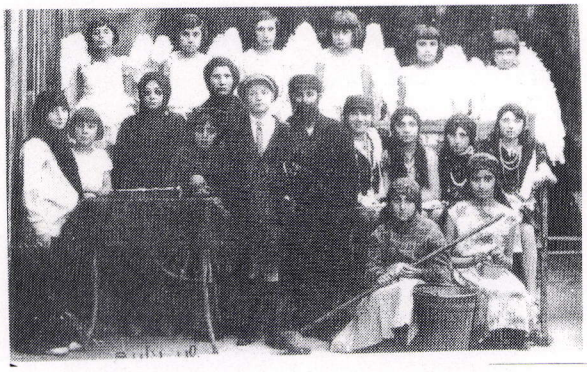
A class of children in gymnasium with their teachers
2nd row top from left: 2nd Leizer Blumberg, 4th from left: Wolowski
5th: Bielecki and 6th: Abe Henigson
Seating next to the teacher from the left side: Ariowitz



The brass band of the Jewish gymansium in Suwalk with its leader, Mr. Goodman and Principal, Dr. Efron



Group of Students from gymnasium with Teacher M. Rotberg



A Show Presentation by the Girls of the Hebrew School "Tarbuth"



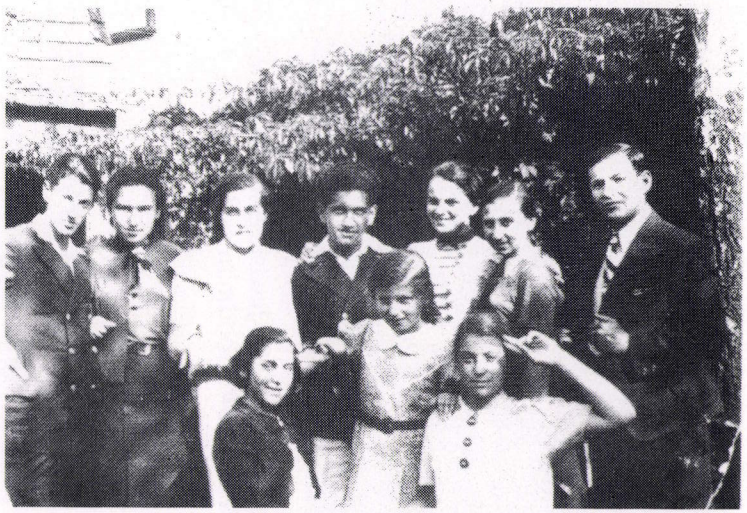
A Show Presentation by the Girls of the Hebrew School "Tarbuth"



Jewish Folksschool in Suwalk:
students and teachers



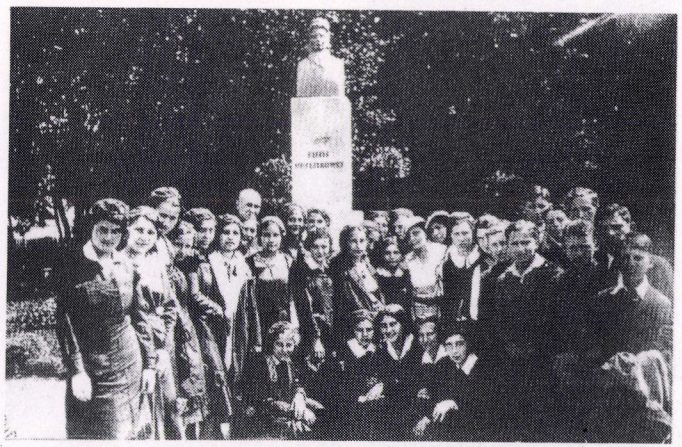
A class of children in gymnasium with their teachers
2nd row top from left: 2nd Leizer Blumberg, 4th from left: Wolowski
5th: Bielecki and 6th: Abe Henigson
Seating next to the teacher from the left side: Ariowitz



Group of Students
from gymnasium 1938



Standing: A. Rabei, N. Chwilowski, L. Szereszewski, M. Strelecki, B. Szczupacka, Seated: Lifshitz, D. Bromberg, M. Szczupacka



Field Trip of Students of the Gymnazium to Grodno 1933.



The Leaders of the Jewish Sport Club "*Makkabi*" in Suwalki in year 1930

Standing from right to left: Goldberg, Jacob Fridman, Israel Puszczanski, Moishe Kaufman, Simon Fink, Leib Lifshitz, Heniek Klaczkowski, Silverstein.
Seating from right to left: Jacob Rotenstein, Abraham Kaufman, Shaya Kierszkowski and Morris Brown.









The Last Soccer Team of the "Makkabi" in Suwalki in 1939

Standing from right to left: The Captain of the team, Abraham Fink, Chaim Krasnopolski, Getz Ospowat, Chaim Wysocek, Jacob (Jancry) Brenholtz
2nd row: from right to left: Shymjoshke Oshinski, Yeshaya Goldstein, Szmuel Krzywicki
Only two of them are alive, the rest perished in the holocaust



The Leadership of the Organization: Brith-Trumpeldor in Suwalki

Bottom row: From right to left: Rachela Goldstein, Yehuda Zylkiewicz, David Stern, Jacob Shulkis, Chonko Pomimunski.

Second Row: From right to left: Dr. Reuven Feinstein, Abraham Raibman, Sejnenski, Indka Sperling, Stella Glikson, Podlaski.

Third Row: From right to left: David-Leon Szteinberg, Danek Efron, Zuchowicki and Leizer Tzalikowski.



Officers & Members of the "BEITAR" Organization in Suwalk.



Beitar at the Lag B' Omer outing



A Group "Beitarim" of a *Hachshara*



5th Anniversary Banquet of "Brith-Trumpeldor" in *Suwalki*, with Dr. Weisman, Dr. Staropolski and Director Efron.



Chalutz Hatzair in Suwalk



A group of Jewish soldiers serving in various regiments in Suwalk at a communal Seder. Kosher food was provided by the Jewish community in Suwalk and served by volunteers from the city.



The Big Synagogue in Suwalk in the time of the war in 1942.



מראה החורבן לאחר השואה

Destruction Of Suwalker Cemetary After The Holocaust.



Returnees To Suwalk
1945



Saved Torahs By
Survivors Of The Holocaust





A Yizkor meeting from Suwalker and Vicinity. Survivors after the war in a D.P. Camp in West Germany in 1947.

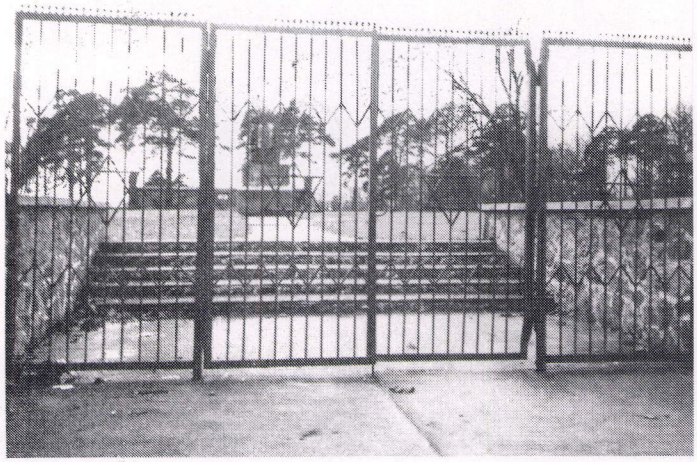


A Group of Survivors after the war In a D.P. Camp in West Germany.

. . . AND NOW



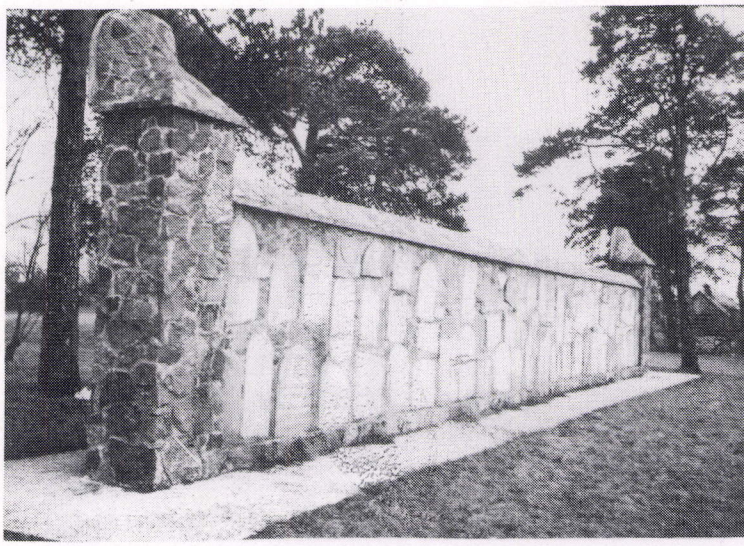
Monument Erected By
Survivors In 1945



Suwalker Jewish Cemetary
Front Gate



Monuments Dedicated To 4 Rabbis,
Sages Of The 19th Century



The Great Memorial Monument
Made Of Broken Headstones

GREETINGS

FROM FRIENDS & SUPPORTERS OF

THE INDEPENDENT SUWALK & VICINITY

BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

On the following pages, we have listed the members of our New York, Florida, Chicago, Washington D.C., & Canada Chapters, as well as other Suwalk & Vicinity friends and supporters in the United States, Canada, and Israel.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

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Tributes & Advertisements

אין אייביקען אנדענק
פון דער לעצטער סואוואלקער רב

הרב הגאון ר' דוד ליפשיץ זצ"ל

נפטר י' תמוז תשנ"ג

וועלכער איז געווען געטריי די שטאט און איהרע איינוואוינער ביז די סאמע לעצטע שעה פון קהילה לעבען, און צו די סואוואלקער פעראיין בכלל און צו יעדער סואוואלקער לאנדסמאן בפרט פון דעם טאג ווען ער איז אנגעקומען אין אמריקע אין מיטען וועלט-קריג.



ביי די געלעגענהייט ווינטשען מיר געזונט און אריכת ימים אונזער טייערע מאמע און באבע, די לעצטע סואוואלקער רעביצין, הרבנית צפורה חוה ליפשיץ תחי',
מיט נחת פון אירע קינדער, אייניקלאך און אור-אייניקלאך דא און אין ארץ ישראל.

שולמית והרב נתן קמינצקי וב"ב
חיה וחיים אייזיק וקסמן וב"ב
שרה איטל והרב בנימין משה שטיין וב"ב

With pride, love and best wishes to LESLIE SHERER on his being honored at this, the 90th Anniversary banquet of the INDEPENDENT SUWALKER BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION. . .

We, his family, can truly attest to his lifelong untiring dedication and devotion to Suwalk and the welfare of the Suwalker Society.

LESLIE, be strong and continue for many years to come,

Your loving wife,

Fay

In loving memory of our dear parents, grandparents and great-grandparents

SARAH and MAX SZERESZEWSKI
CYRLA and DAWID SPIWAK

from

Fay & Leslie Sherer
David, Barbara, Robert, Charles & Margaret Sherer
Susan, Philip, Michael, Laura & David Mayer

In honor of the following simchas:

the 90th anniversary of the Suwalker Society
our father's (grandfather's) being honored by the ISBA
our son Robert's entrance to Columbia University
our son Charles' Bar Mitzvah
our daughter Margaret's Bat Mitzvah
our nephew Michael's Masters Degree from Brandeis University

and the following soon-to-arrive simchas:

the 55th wedding anniversary of our beloved President and his wonderful wife - Leslie and Fay Sherer (Mom & Dad - Grandpa & Grandma)
our 20th wedding anniversary

we extend congratulations and best wishes to all our members

David & Barbara Sherer, Robert, Charles & Margaret from across the continent in Clyde Hill, Washington (just outside of Seattle)



Ind. Suwalker & Vicinity Benevolent Association

We Salute Fay and Leslie Sherer

For All Their Remarkable Achievements

And

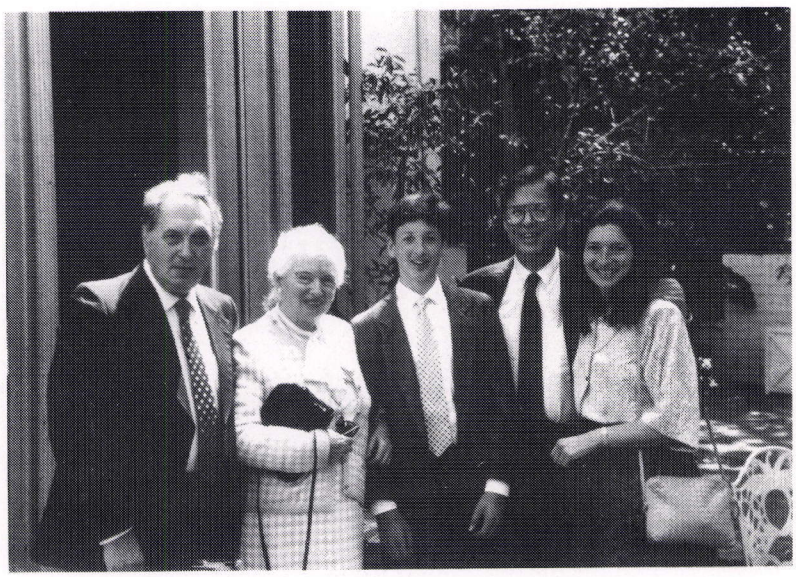
We Congratulate the Suwalker Society

On Its 90th Anniversary

With Love & The Very Best of Wishes

From

Susan, Philip, Michael, David, Laura & Nickie Mayer



סובאלקער אומגעגענט בענעוואלענט אסאסיישן

In Revered Memory

of

HYMAN AND SYLVIA SELIGSON

* * * * *

Always Dedicated to the Welfare
of Suwalkers Worldwide

* * * * *

from their children

Aaron and Anita Seligson
Alvin and Iris Seligson

and grandchildren

Eve and Alexander Seligson
Eileen Seligson Janowsky

The Third, Fourth and Fifth Generations of

Perlo's In America

Honor the Members of

The Perlo Family

Who Were Born In Suwalk

And Came to America

The Third, Fourth and Fifth Generations of

Perlo's In America

Honor the Members of

The Perlo Family

Who Were Born in Suwalk

And Came to America

Hinda and Solomon Perlo

David Perlo

Harry Perlo

Hyman Perlo

Eli Perlo

Leon Perlo

Dorothy Perlo Rapoport

Louise Perlo Babus

Rosalind Perlo Bleecker

In Honor of

My Suwalker Grandparents:

Sol and Anna Abramson (Abramajtis)

And in Honor of

My Suwalker Great-Grandparents:

Abram Itzhak & Alte Rochel Abramajtis

Yakov & Gittel Powiatowski

* * * * * *

Arthur S. Leonard
Financial Secretary, I.S.V.B.A.

IN MEMORY OF
OUR DEAR LATE UNCLE

SHIMON SAVITT

(ZAWOZNICKI)

WHO PASSED AWAY IN MAY 1994
AFTER A LONG ILLNESS

HE SERVED AS TREASURER
OF THE ASSOCIATION
FOR MANY YEARS
WITH DEVOTION TO
HIS LANDSLEIT AND TO
HIS BIRTHPLACE

A LOVER OF ZION,
HE LIVED HIS LIFE
ACCORDING TO THE VALUES
OF THE TORAH
AND WITH COMPLETE DEDICATION
TO HIS PARENTS,
BROTHERS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

WITH LOVE AND FOND REMEMBRANCE,

LEAH & EPHRAIM SAVITT
AND THEIR SONS
ABBA'LEH, RAELI AND SHIMON ZVI

Congratulations

to the Suwalk Association

and to

Dr. Kasriel K. Eilender

for their many years of
generous service
to the Jewish community

and for their successful efforts

to keep the SUWALKI spirit alive

Jeffrey & Elizabeth Eilender

In Loving Memory of

Our Parents, Josel and Sara

Brother Gerson

Sister Esther

Grandparents Ejga and Ben-Zion Blacharski

Dr. Kasriel Eilender & Family

IN MEMORY OF
OUR BELOVED FATHER

HERMAN N. DIAMOND



Born in SUWALKI - **January 14, 1896**

Died in U.S.A. - **June 10, 1963**

CARL S. DIAMOND

STANLEY H. DIAMOND

Congratulations on the

Suwalker 90th Anniversary

The Gershen-Estroff-Schiff Family

Father: DR. AKIM WIGDORCZYK
Died 1929

*** Mother: MARJA WIGDORCZYK**
*** Sister: ESTUSIA CHARIN**
*** Brother-in-law: JOWEL CHARIN**
*** Nephew: IMKA CHARIN**
z"l

* Lost During The Holocaust In Concentration Camp
Belsen (Belzec) In 1942.

IN MY HEART FOR EVER AND EVER

H. Dorsey
(ISKA WIGDORCZYK)

In Loving Memory



SOLOMON RAYMAN

Beloved Husband, Father, Grandfather, Friend to All
From his loving Wife, Esther
His Son, Harold, Family and Friends
His Daughter, Debbie and Family

In Memory of

MAX, SAM, JOE, and BEN SCHREIBER

of Suwalki Gubernya

Bob and Burt Schreiber

To Honor the Memory of our Latest Great Losses in Our Family

My Dearest Sisters:

Mildred Lobe (nee Meitkes),
died on the 27th day of the month of Kislev 1990 in New York

Chana Neuman (nee Meitkes) died on the 20th day of the month of Elul, 1993 in Jerusalem

Our Beloved Son-in-Law, Dr. Moshe Lavi,
died on Purim, 1992 in New York

Mosche and Florence Haber (nee Meitkes)

Congratulations on Your 90th Anniversary

In Memory of

May and Morris Oshinsky

From Their Children & Grandchildren

Rosalind & Edmund Rosenblum, Steven and Jeffrey
Sy & Carole Oshinsky, Daniel, Suzanne, and Ari

IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY DEAR PARENTS
ISRAEL & CHAVA DEMBOWICH
AND MY DEAR BROTHER CHAIM
AND EVERYONE IN MY FAMILY
WHICH I LOST DURING THE HOLOCAUST

from JEHUDA DEMBOWICH & FAMILY

GREETINGS FROM THE DAUGHTERS OF
TOBKE & ENOCH SMOLINSKY

GAIL SMOLINSKY TUKEL, JACQUELINE SMOLINSKY DRUCKER, MIRIAM SMOLINSKY HOBERMAN, PAULINE SMOLINSKY SCHREIBER & FRIEDA SMOLINSKY LEEMON

Josef & Fanya
Teitelbaum & Alex



Moritz & Chaya
Rafaelson
(Uncle & Aunt)

In sacred memory of my martyred Father, Uncle and Aunt, and all our martyred landsleit, and my beloved Mother Fanya Alexandrowicz Teitelbaum

Alexander J. Turney (Teitelbaum) & Family

GREETINGS TO THE DEVOTED AND DEDICATED OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF OUR SOCIETY WHO HAVE MADE IT POSSIBLE TO CELEBRATE THIS 90TH ANNIVERSARY

MAZEL-TOV AND BEST WISHES FROM

MANIA & MORRIS BROWN
MONTREAL, CANADA

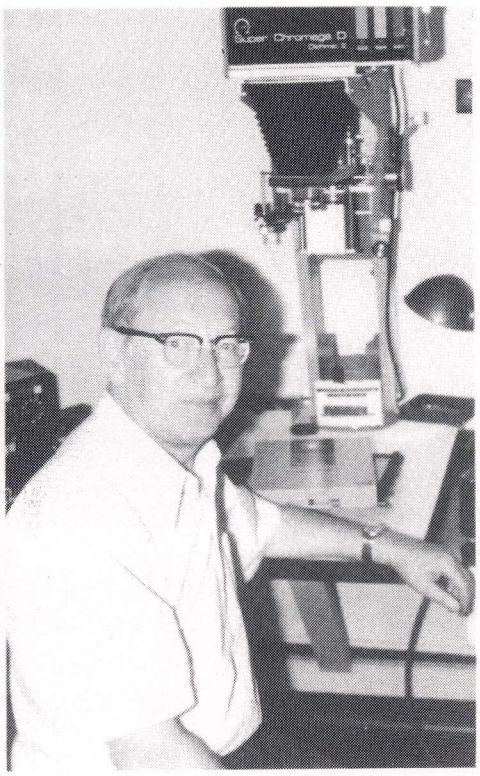
In memory of Izik Arthur Dishman

He died November 1994,
at the age of 85

I am his sister

Lillian Kachor





Before and after. . . The Suwalker Garden

Me and my girlfriends, 1932

Me, my husband, and Naum Adelson, who still lives in Suwalk. Photo taken in 1989. The benches were the same old ones, and I was very moved. All I could see were ghosts of my past, where I was born and spent my youth.

Greetings and best wishes, Dorothy Rebhan (Dvorah Dyszman)





Congratulations and Best Wishes to the Independent Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association on their 90th Jubilee Anniversary.

####

I, Chana Minor Frishman, born in Suwalki, am now residing in Dallas, Texas.

The following picture is the only photograph that I have. In the picture are my Grandparents Chaya and Abraham Minor, my Parents Masha and Shmuel Minor, and myself, the oldest child, and my two sisters, Freida Minor Goldberg and Rachel Minor Teper, who reside in Israel. My Grandparents were killed by the Nazis in the Lukov Ghetto.





All the best in the coming year. . .

Norman Andres

In Blessed Memory of Our Parents

Martyred FATHER GERSHON ELIYAHU BERNSTEIN, President of the CHEVRA KADISHA (Burial Society) in Suwalk, President of the Real Estate Owners in Suwalk, and our Deceased MOTHER MIRIAM RASHEL BERNSTEIN.

David S. Bern, Attorney at Law, Chicago, Illinois
Anita Gold, New York City, New York

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

SAM GRADOWSKI

His Wife and Family

DAVID & LESLIE FASTENBERG

CONGRATULATIONS ON THIS 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SUWALKI BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

FROM THE WASHINGTON, D.C., CHAPTER

DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY
OF MY PARENTS

Chaja Gutman
(nee Finkelstein)

Solomon Gutman ע"ה

Eliezer Gutman ע"ה
my brother

Leib Lipszyc ע"ה
brother-in-law

and all my childhood friends and teachers who perished by the subhuman Germans during the war.

ALLAN (Abrasha)
FLORENCE GUTMAN
and children

TO

Leslie Sherer

AN HONOR WELL DESERVED FOR A HALF CENTURY OF SERVICE AND DEVOTION

The Weinblatt Family

In Memory of My Beloved Parents and Sister
Chaim & Rywad Prawdzinski and Miriam Korb-Prawdzinski of Israel

Mr. Jacob Prawdzinski

In Memory of My Parents Chaskel & Elka Henigson
by Abe Henigson & Family
In Memory of My Parents Nathan & Sylvia Rosenthal & Sister Ruth
by Irving Rosenthal & Family

In Loving Memory of My Abramajtis Grandparents
Arnold & Loretta Cohen

In Cherished Memory of Our Dearly Beloved Mother & Grandmother
Asna Judith Konopko z"l

Bernard & Anne Konopko, Daughters Evelyn & Susan, and Grandchildren

In Everlasting Memory

of a Distinguished

Past President

DAVID and JENNIE

SILVERMAN

In Cherished Memory

of Our Dearly Beloved

Wife and Mother

GERTRUDE SILVERMAN

SCHNEIDER

Lovingly Contributed by

JACK SCHNEIDER

JESSICA ROSE SCHNEIDER

CHARLES STEPHEN SCHNEIDER

Compliments of

ALEX E. FRIEDLANDER, Ph.D.
PROFESSIONAL GENEALOGIST
Specialist in researching Suwalki Guberne Families

169 Stratford Road, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11218
(718) 693-7169 / (718) 941-5147

In Loving Memory of the

ROSENGOLD, MARGOLINSKY, WYZANSKI AND ZYMAN
Families of Filipove, the

BARDIN, BOROFSKY, ARONSTEIN & GOLAMBIEWSKI
Families of Baklerove and Suwalki, and the

FRIEDLANDER and FREEDMAN
Families of Verzbelove and Kalvaria

ALEX E. FRIEDLANDER

In Loving Memory of

Dr. Norman Altszuler

Whose Sudden Death

Has Saddened Us All.

Sara Mandelbaum (nee Altszuler)

In Memory of. . .

John Ulius

Rose Ulius

Anna Stein

Rhodel Stein

Benjamin Richman

Libbie Richman

Cynthia Shapiro

Ind. Suwalker & Vicinity Benevolent Association

In Loving Memory of Our Dear Parents

Bashl & Berl Wolkowyski
&
Badana & David Kushel (from Punsk)

and All the Wolkowyski and Kushel Family
That Perished in the Holocaust

Solomon & Jean (Kushel) Walker & Family
Toby Treger, Daughter & Family
Lucy & Martin Richmond & Son
Saul & Tula Wolk & Family
(All Wolkowyskis)

In Memory of

PHILIP GERSHEN

סובאלק און אומגעגענט בענעוואלענט אסאסיישן

JOSEPH SAUL





Congratulations and Best Wishes To The

Independent Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association

On Its 90th Anniversary

From

Sol & Tola Wolk & Family

Toby Treger & Family

(Wolkowyski)

In Memory of my beloved Mother, Brothers and sister lost in the Holocaust

Zelda Biedak (Krozsitsky)
Chonek (Chonki)
Rachael (Rochele)
Shimon (Shimele)

from

SAMUEL (SCHMUEL) BEDAK
South San Francisco, California

IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY WIFE
SYLVIA BEDAK
Mother of ARNOLD and GORDON
Grandmother of Arbel, Sivan, Shahked, Gal and Samantha

In Memory of my dear Uncle and Aunt
CHAIM ELIEZER & DORA (BIALYSTOCKI) BIEDAK
(from Augustowa)

from

SAMUEL BEDAK
South San Francisco, California

In Memory of my father WOLF BIEDAK
Grandfather of Gordon Stuart & Arnold Lionel

from

SAMUEL BEDAK
South San Francisco, California

Congratulations on Your 90th Anniversary

Bert & Debbie Meyers and Family

Brodofsky, Greenberg, Levy, Penschinsky
Rotski & Suwalki

****

Morris Aarons & Son, Inc.
1283 Coney Island Avenue, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11230
Services Available Wherever & Whenever Needed
Joseph Sherman, Funeral Director
718-338-4500

****

Congratulations & Best Wishes on the 90th Anniversary
of the Independent Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association
from the
Chevra B'nai Arya Anshai Krasnopolie

Executive Committee

Louis Goldberg, Finance Secretary
William Mark, Past President

Manuel Levine, President
Yetta Rugatz, Recording Secretary

****

In Memory of My Beloved Parents, Elias & Raschel Bernstein
My Loved and Never Forgotten Husband, Fima Gold
And My Loved Uncle, Hirsch Bernstein
Niuta Bernstein Gold

****

In Memory of My Dear Parents Abraham & Esther Lew
And My Brothers and Sister
Pearl Lew Prawdzinski

****

In Memory of the Jews of Jeleniewo & Vicinity
"In Love They Are Remembered"
Storick Family

****

In Memory of My Beloved Parents Louis and Ethel Levine
And Brother Harry Levine
from William and Ruth Levine

****

In Memory of My Revered Great-Great-Grandfather
Rabbi Itzhak Isaac Chaver, Chief Rabbi of Suwalk
Sylvia R. Jacobs

****

Best Wishes to Leslie Sherer
and to Members of the Independent Suwalk Benevolent Association
from Manuel & Myrna Levine

****

In Memory of My Family
Joseph Mirow, Izaak & Deena Gutkowski, Ruth Gutkowska Bern,
Judith Gutkowska Mendelsohn, Mirowsky Family
Janet Mirow

****

Rosalind P. Bleecker

****

Doniger & Leibson Families From Suwalki, Ratzk (also Augustow)
Creating Inclusive Family Tree
Anthony Lewis, 24 Wheeler Lane, Natick MA 01760-1842
ANTHONY LEWIS@BIO-RAD.COM

Thanks To Our Journal Sponsors

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Thanks To Our Journal Sponsors

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Eva Schwarz, in memory of the Lewentins

Leonard & Helene Spring

Suwalk-Lomza Interest Group for Jewish Genealogists

Floyd & Gail Tukel

Alexander J. Turney

Charlotte Wechsler, in memory of Henry Wechsler

Dr. & Mrs. Philip Goldberg

* We note with sorrow that Dr. Altszuler passed away shortly after sending his sponsor donation.

OCTOBER, 1995

MR. LESLIE SHERER
PRESIDENT OF THE INDEPENDENT SUWALK AND VICINITY BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

DEAR LESLIE:

I WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND MY CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU AS THE ONGOING PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE PAST 20 YEARS...ALMOST ONE GENERATION!

WE HAD GROWN UP, STUDIED AND GRADUATED TOGETHER FROM THE SAME HIGH SCHOOL CLASS IN SUWALK. I THEN WENT ON TO ISRAEL (THEN PALESTINE) AND YOU TO AMERICA. DESPITE THE DIFFICULTIES ACCLAMITIZING TO OUR NEW HOMES, WE WERE BOTH FORTUNATE TO AVOID THE HOLOCAUST. OUR PATHS THEN CROSSED AGAIN IN 1960, ABOUT TWENTY YEARS LATER, WHEN WE RENEWED OUR FRIENDSHIP. I WAS FORTUNATE TO SPEND TIME TRAVELLING WITH YOU AS WELL AS ENTERTAINING YOU AND YOUR WIFE AT MY HOME IN ISRAEL.

THERE ARE NO WORDS TO DESCRIBE YOUR DEVOTION TO THE U.S. ASSOCIATION OF SUWALK AND VICINITY; WHICH WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1905 AND WHICH IS STILL EXISTING TODAY. I ONLY HOPE THAT YOU WILL CONTINUE AS PRESIDENT AND IN GOOD HEALTH TO GUIDE THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ASSOCIATION.

DURING MY FREQUENT BUSINESS TRIPS TO THE STATES, I ALWAYS INVOLVED YOUR ASSOCIATION IN CO-ESTABLISHING ISRAELI-BASED PROJECTS TO MEMORIALIZE SUWALK AND VICINITY WHICH WERE ALSO OF INTEREST TO THE U.S. ASSOCIATION. THANKS TO YOUR LEADERSHIP AND INSIGHT YOU ASSISTED IN MATERIALIZING MANY OF THE PROJECTS WORKED ON. THIS INCLUDES THE HOLON CEMETERY MEMORIAL, THE PRINTING IN ENGLISH AND HEBREW OF BOOKS AND THE RETRIEVAL OF ARCHIVES FROM SUWALK.

NO DOUBT YOUR LOVELY WIFE FAY WAS ALWAYS BY YOUR SIDE AND WAS A TRUE SOURCE OF INSPIRATION TO YOUR MANY ACTIVITIES. I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO WISH YOU AND FAY MANY MORE YEARS OF GOOD HEALTH AND FRUITFUL ACTIVITY.

FINALLY, ON THIS OCCASION, I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK YOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR THEIR CLOSE COOPERATION AND DEDICATION TO THE ASSOCIATIONS IN THE U.S. AND ISRAEL.

SINCERELY,

URI SHILOH

IN HONOR OF
LESLIE SHERER
CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES
ON A TRIBUTE SO DESERVING FOR YOUR
MANY YEARS OF DEVOTION AND SERVICE

LESSER BALDASSARE & MARGOLIES FAMILY

We Would Like to Thank All The Contributors That Have Made This Journal A Success.

The Journal Committee

Autographs

90 יאהר
אינדעפענדענט סובאלקער בענעוואלענט אסאסיאיישאן

1905  1995

90 יאהריקע באנקעט אויסגאבע

ארויסגעגעבען צו דער געלעגענהייט פון דעם 90 טען יאהריגען באנקעט
אין ניו יארק אין דער 5טע עוועניו סינאגאגע 5 איסט 62 סטריט
זונטאג, דעם 5טן נאוועמבער 1995

צוזאמענגעשטעלט און רעדאגירט פון פראף. ארטור לענארד און לעסלי שערער
(אבראמאיטיס) (שערשעווסקי)