

# Etz Chaim

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JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER ORLANDO



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*Tykocin, Poland.... Larry Morrell, standing beside an old home indicated, "This possibly was my great grandmother's home. Here we saw what my great grandmother saw, walked on the same streets, saw the same river, the same buildings, the same synagogue, went to the same cemetery. An awesome feeling of closeness to the past. This small town, now totally void of Jews was once a vibrant Jewish community until 1941." See pages 8 through 11 for Larry's "My Heritage Tour."*

**ETZ CHAIM**

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P.O. Box 941332, Maitland, FL. 32794, USA  
Editorial Office

2619 Sweetwater Country Club Dr.

Apopka, FL 32712, USA

Jay Schleichkorn, Editor Phone 407-464-9445

FAX - 407-464-9445 E-mail: [PTJay@aol.com](mailto:PTJay@aol.com)

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**Membership Information:**

Regular membership dues effective January 1, 2005. (January 1-December 31) Family \$30.00; Individual Membership \$25.00; Sponsor \$50.00; and Patron \$100.00 Out-of-town membership (more than 50 miles) is \$20.00 per year. *Note: For new members who join after June 1, dues are half price for the balance of the fiscal year.*

Please make checks payable to JGSGO, P.O. Box 941332, Maitland, FL 32794.

JGSGO meetings are held monthly (excluding July and August), usually on the third Monday of the month, at **7:00 p.m.** in the Mini Sanctuary, Congregation of Reformed Judaism, 928 Malone Drive, Orlando, FL. If there is a special holiday or an event on a meeting night, we may meet the previous or following Monday. Read the "What's Happening" Calendar in the Heritage; check the JGSGO website.

*JGSGO's meeting site has been made available through the courtesy extended by CRJ.*

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The JGSGO is a member of the  
*International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies, the Federation of Genealogical Societies and the Florida State Genealogical Societies.*

*As a member and under the umbrella of the IAJGS, the JGSGO is a 501(c)(3) United States tax-exempt, non-profit corporation.*

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**CALENDAR: Future JGSGO Programs + 2006** (Check the What's Happening Column and Calendar in the weekly Heritage newspaper)

August 30-Sept. 2: Boston: The 2006 Federation of Genealogical Societies and the New England Historic Genealogical Society Conference for info:  
<http://www.fgs.org>

Monday, Sept. 18: JGSGO Meeting and Program 7:00 p.m. All-Purpose Room, CRJ: Speaker: Jose Valle, "Collateral Research in Genealogy."

Saturday - Sept. 23: First Day of Rosh Hashanah

Monday - Oct. 2: First Day of Yom Kippur

Monday, Oct. 23: Note: Change in regular meeting day:  
JGSGO Meeting and Program 7:00 p.m.  
All-Purpose Room, CRJ: Speaker : Rabbi Steven Engel,

Monday, Nov. 20: JGSGO Meeting, Elections and Program 7:00 p.m. All-Purpose Room, Hon. Larry Kirkwood, Judge, Circuit Court, 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit, "Update on Using Court Records in Genealogy."

Monday, Dec. 18: JGSGO Meeting and Installation : Wine and Cheese Special Program 7:00 p.m. CRJ All Purpose Room

**Yesterday is history.**

**Tomorrow a mystery.**

**Today is a gift.**

**That's why it's called the present.**

## President's Message

By: Edith Schulman

For weeks and weeks, almost everyday, I have received e-mails from different members of the IAJGS concerning the posthumous baptism of Holocaust victims. A little history may help some of you not familiar with this issue.

Mormons believe proxy baptism gives those in the afterlife the option of joining the religion. It's primarily intended to offer salvation to the ancestors of Mormons, but many others are included.

Names of the deceased are gathered by church members from genealogy records as well as death and governmental documents from around the world.

About 1992, Jewish genealogists discovered that, in many instances, their ancestors (parents, grandparents, sisters and brothers) had been baptized by the Mormons, and subsequently the names appeared in the International Genealogical Index (IGI) of the Mormons. According to Gary Mokotoff in an article in *Avotaynu* (Vol XI, Number 2, Summer 1995), there were 360,000 entries of "known posthumously baptized Jewish Holocaust victims who were not direct ancestors of living members of the Church..."

After many complaints by genealogists and many contacts with the director of the Family History Library in Salt Lake City and Elders of the Church, an agreement was finally signed three years later on May 3, 1995 by representatives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) and members of the Jewish Community. The Agreement called for the following:

1. Removal from the IGI the names as mentioned above, from the more than 200 million deceased persons baptized and recorded in the IGI.

2. Providing a list of the Jewish Holocaust baptized victims to several Holocaust organizations, and written confirmation when removal from the IGI has been completed.

3. Issuing a directive to all officials and members of the Church to discontinue any future baptisms of deceased Jews, including all lists of known Jewish Holocaust victims, unless the Jews are direct ancestors of living members of the Church, or the Church has



written approval of all living members of the deceased's immediate family...

This Agreement was so important that it received wide coverage in the press. The then president of Israel, Yitzhak Navon, sent a message to Gary Mokotoff, president of AJGS, although the AJGS WAS not one of the organizations signing the Agreement. The message said, "Shalom, Bravo! Well done!"

Postscript: According to many of the members of IAJGS, the LDS Church is not honoring its commitment to the Jews and continuing posthumous baptism of Holocaust victims. Many of the names that were removed from the IGI have subsequently reappeared on the list. (Did you know that Ann Frank was baptized five times?) The whole matter is still unresolved. This subject came up when it was learned that the 2007 IAJGS Conference is scheduled to be held in Salt Lake City. Not everyone agrees that the IAJGS should meet there. If you have further questions, you can call me...(407-699-6061 or by e-mail at: [Edith@schulmans.com](mailto:Edith@schulmans.com))

FYI -- Because of national budget cuts and the recent flooding which caused \$2 million in damages to the Archives buildings in D.C., there is a proposed reduction in hours which will go into effect Oct. 2, 2006. Effected will be the National Archives Building in D.C., the National Archives at College Park (MD), and visits to the Rotunda and National Archives Experience on the Constitution Ave. side of the National Archives Building.

According to an email from Jan Meisels Allen, IAJGS Chairperson, Public Records and Access Monitoring Committee, the hours will be M-F 9 a.m.-5 p.m., thus eliminating all Saturday and weekday evening hours.

Read the proposed regulations at <http://www.regulations.gov/fdmspublic/component/main>, then scroll down to NARA-06-0007-0001.

Until Sept. 8, 2006, you may send written comments to: Regulations Comments Desk (NPOL), Room 4100, Policy and Planning Staff, National Archives and Records Adm., 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740-6001.

Finally, after what I hope was a most enjoyable summer, you are now ready for genealogy. I hope to greet you at the next meeting on Monday, Sept. 18, 2006 at CRJ at 7 p.m.

From the Past Lane,

*Edith Schulman*, President

**SPECIAL NOTE: See pg. 12 – IAJGS Meeting and news of the Mormon Controversy.**

## ROBERT SINGERMAN OF PRICE LIBRARY OF JUADICA RETIRED IN JUNE 2006

ROBERT SINGERMAN held the rank of University Librarian, George A. Smathers Libraries, at the University of Florida, Gainesville, where he was the bibliographer for Jewish Studies, Anthropology, and Linguistics, for 27 years. Whenever our JGSGO organized a trip to the library, Mr. Singerman always greeted us and had all kinds of genealogical material available. His story appeared in the Newsletter of the Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Florida, No. 17, Spring 2006, pgs. 21-23

Arriving here from the Klau Library at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, in May, 1979, with a solid background of polyglot cataloging experience with a variety of sacred and profane languages and a rather well-honed grasp of book selection techniques gained from my nine years of service beginning in 1970 at one of the world's greatest Jewish libraries, I was handed the key to Room 18 of Library East (now the Systems Office) and given my terse job assignment by my hiring supervisor, Max Willocks, "It is a rough stone-polish it!" So began my 27-year career building the Price Library of Judaica from a starting line of roughly 24,000 unprocessed



volumes drawn from the Leonard C. Mishkin and Shlomo Marenof personal libraries (both had been acquired, unpacked, and sorted prior to my arrival), to over 85,000 fully cataloged volumes today. In the summer of 1979, the opportunity to purchase the entire inventory of Bernard Morgenstern's used Lower East Side Jewish bookstore in New York City presented itself, I responded unhesitatingly in a flash, and this dusty accumulation came to Gainesville to yield the third of our core collections, still recalled with fondness as the 3-M collections. Thus, in the summer of 1979, a veritable mountain of around 30,000, plus or minus, uncataloged books, pamphlets, and periodicals, many of them exceedingly fragile and scarce, beckoned my ascent. Likewise, very fundamental decisions and work plan strategies for organizing, cataloging, collection development, preservation, and binding had to be launched and this effort would be successful, I decided very early on, only through coalition building with Acquisitions, Cataloging, and Binding, each of these technical service units being very cooperative partners to this day. There was also the perplexing challenge of how to maintain the service hours of

a separately-housed circulating library singlehandedly with no budgeted support staff at this early time.

I somehow survived, even thrived, some might say, with assistance coming from Yael Herbsman, a faculty spouse and a trained Israeli librarian, pitching in, initially, as a temporary hire, then students and elderly volunteer ladies recruited from the Gainesville Jewish community. There were also budgets to be spent—and spend I did—it was difficult in the extreme to know with any certainty what we really owned though initially, a semblance of bibliographical control was imposed through the typing of temporary slips while the Hebrew and Yiddish materials lent themselves to sorting and alphabetizing by title. My initial goal was to have the collection fully cataloged in ten years but this projection, foolhardy as it was, did not take into consideration the rather high percentage of our materials requiring original, in-house cataloging and/or the editing, with upgrading, of shared, sometimes mediocre, cataloging records input by other libraries.

Moving beyond the crawling stage and infancy, the unorganized collection that greeted me in 1979 passed thru the troubled teenage years with two moves of the entire Price Library of Judaica collection. The polished stone is now the well-stocked functioning library it is today, nurtured and enriched by state funds (ah yes, the budgetary cycles of the fat and lean years!) and the endowment providently created by Jack and Sam Price in honor of their parents, Isser and Rae Price. A public dedication of the Price Library of Judaica followed in 1981, and to maintain that momentum, I struggled to create and fill a library newsletter mailed out on a list of over 5,000 names, also of my creation (this newsletter, of which eight numbers were issued, would be absorbed by Amudim, published by UF's Center for Jewish Studies since 1986). The faculty encouraged the students, the students told their friends, visitors told other friends, and over time, the library and its circulating collection came to be known as an exceedingly valuable resource serving not only Gainesville but also readers nationally and internationally through interlibrary loan. The contributions of my four successive Library Technical Assistants should be properly acknowledged in this space: Yael Herbsman, Joy Funk, Carole Bird, and Emily Madden. Gazing now over a somewhat mature library of considerable scope and research-quality depth—I would consider it a legacy collection—this writer is prompted to reflect, much in the style of a wilted Biblical chronicle, "It flourished, and it was good."

Successful business relationships would be formed over the years with booksellers, both domestic and foreign, since these colleagues are logically the librarian's ideal partner in stocking the library shelves, certainly in the filling of gaps by servicing desiderata lists, and by their personal involvement such as developing special offers and raising the bibliographer's awareness with collecting insights about the marketplace. Much of this activity has since migrated to the online bookseller search engines like

abebooks.com or, increasingly, e-mailed lists have supplanted dealer catalogs ranging from downright pathetic stenciled sheets on cheap paper to the nicely printed glossy ones with illustrations dispatched in the mail. When the mail brought in the daily harvest of catalogs, the competitive race with other libraries and collectors was on to place my order first! A working partnership might also be developed from time to time with a favored antiquarian book dealer who was invited to search our online catalog before developing a custom-made offer of titles not already owned. Although there was typically more work devolving on the bibliographer, I always resisted establishing an Israeli approval plan, relying instead on my own book selections, with invited help from our faculty in the area of Hebrew belles-lettres.

Starting out with our splendid 3-M core collections, no additional major collections were sought after 1979, though portions of scholarly libraries might come our way as gifts (the Theodor Gaster library) or as selected purchases from retiring professors at institutions out-of-state (Menahem Mansoor, Zvulun Ravid) or yet another walk-in bookstore closing in New York (Feldheim's, down the street from Bernard Morgenstern's former store on East Broadway). From the outset, I solicited free periodical and newsletter subscriptions whenever I could, also published lecture series, working papers, and anniversary books from a wide variety of academic centers, Jewish institutions and communal agencies, federations, synagogues, or directly from authors of memoirs and books of local Jewish history interest. An enormous amount of "here today, gone tomorrow" ephemeral pamphlets were gathered in all of these years. Rising book prices coupled with my perceived explosion in Jewish publishing at home and abroad, on the other hand, now demands an even greater selectivity with respect to purchases of new (and old) books. It has become a severe challenge for us to remain current with our acquisitions and to nurture our paid periodical subscriptions in the midst of repeated library-wide serial cancellation projects.

Knowing that academic programs are not static and that new faculty will generally have unanticipated demands and needs, this bibliographer was continually challenged by nagging questions with long-term implications—Am I buying too much in Hebrew from Israel? Should I buy less or more Yiddish? What about primary sources for the graduate program? If there is no sustained program in Jewish music here, to what extent should Jewish music be purchased, either by me or the Music Library? Dare I ignore emerging electronic resources and audio-visual formats to complement the print collection? With a \$1000 to spend, should it be deployed for out-of-print books that aren't likely to be available (or affordable!) years from now, or do I buy an equal amount of new releases, these the books touted and reviewed in the Jewish press today and likely to be requested? For the same \$1000, should I buy a single rarity for the treasure room, or twenty books or videos at

\$50 each for the circulating collections? The analogy of adjusting the hot and cold water faucet seems quite appropriate in this context. With my retirement looming on the horizon in June, 2006, a new bibliographer coming on board armed with his or her fresh set of operating assumptions, biases, values, intuitions, and knowledge of Jewish Studies research trends and publishing patterns, as well as the local needs on campus, will revisit all of these challenging questions, hopefully with better budgets in place.

In any event, the foundation for sustained growth is remarkably on very solid ground. Collection highlights range from Jewish history in all countries on all continents, with German-Jewish intellectual and community history and the Latin American Jewish communities a focused strength. Additional areas nurtured over the years include demographic reports of Jewish communities, memorial books, Polish Jewry, Sephardic Jewry and Jews in Muslim lands, Jewish-Arab relations, Zionism and histories of Jewish movements and organizations, rabbinical biography, the pre-1948 yishuv in Palestine, Hebrew literary criticism, Festschriften, bibliography and, of course, the ubiquitous pamphlets, sometimes referred to as "gray literature," transecting all aspects of the Jewish experience. As for our sets and files of periodicals (slightly over 500 titles are received on a current basis today), a great many of these are not owned anywhere else in Florida or, for that matter, in the entire southeastern United States.

In closing, I endured and grew stronger, I managed in my characteristically undistracted, systematic way to remain active as a widely-published Judaica bibliographer, and the library legacy I leave behind for future generations of faculty and students remains intact and not dispersed. My motto—a deceptively simple one—is this: "All work done today is cumulative."

*NOTE: Our JGSGO Newsletter, ETZ CHAIM, is filed at the library.*

## Obituary:

Stanley Bloom, age 86, of Longwood, FL, a former member of the JGSGO passed away on August 5, 2006. Born in Boston, September 6, 1920,



Stanley often attended JGSGO meetings in 1998-1999, with his good friend, the late "Bud" Jaffee.

After attending Arcadia University, he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps, became a pilot, and flew many missions in Burma and India. For his service, Stanley received the Air Medal and Distinguished Flying Cross. After WWII, in Florida, he had a long career as a commercial realtor and was recognized for his expertise regarding Disney properti

Stanley was a member of CRJ, serving on the Board as well as a director with Jewish Family Services.

New Book:

## Roots and Remembrance

BY: Bill Gladstone (AKA - Ze'ev Glicenstein)

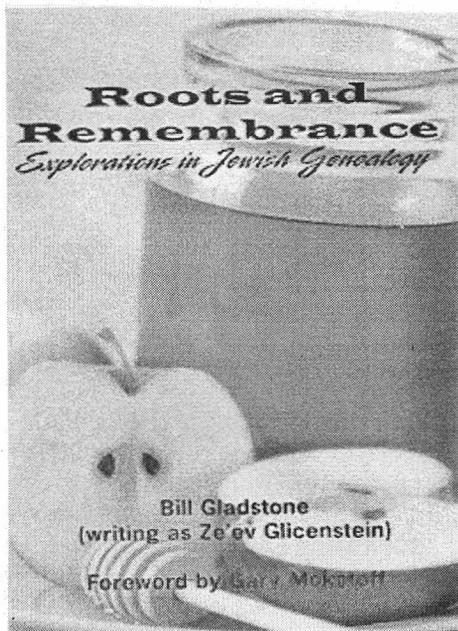
For the past ten years, Bill Gladstone of Toronto has been writing book reviews for AVOTAYNU. Professionally he is a journalist for the Jewish news media. If he has a place in history, it will be that it was Gladstone, then president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Canada, who wrote in September 1994 the article for the Jewish press that the Mormon Church had posthumously baptized 128,000 German Jews murdered in the Holocaust. This article initiated the now 12-year dialogue between Jewish organizations and the Mormon Church about the posthumous baptism of Jews.

One of Gladstone's journalistic roles has been writing a column for the Canadian Jewish News about genealogy under the pseudonym Ze'ev Glicenstein (Ze'ev Being his Hebrew name and Glicenstein being the Old Country family name). Gladstone has collected the best of his columns and has published them in a book titled *Roots and Remembrance*. It is published by the Ontario Genealogical Society.

The selected columns are divided into six chapters: Personal Stories, Research Topics, Resources, Books, Canadian Research and International Research. Each article is a gem, highlighting stories and events that have occurred in the life of Jewish genealogists. Many articles give insight into the world of Jewish genealogy. Not only might readers pick up ideas on how to advance their own research, but they will find Gladstone's writing style easy to read and his selected topics enjoyable just for the reading itself.

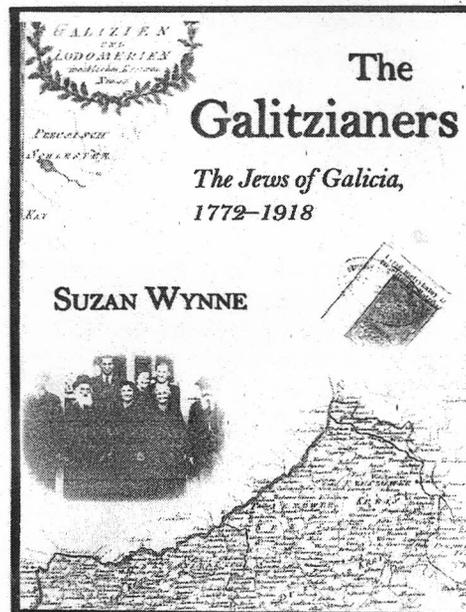
With 232 pages, soft cover, the purchase price is \$27.00 +S&H. You can buy the book at the Avotaynu website: <http://www.avotaynu.com/books/gladstone.htm>.

Or call: 1-800- AVOTAYNU (286-8296)



New Book:

*The Galitzianers: The Jews of Galicia, 1772-1918*, is the latest book from author Suzan Wynne of Kensington, MD. The new book (524 pages, soft cover) includes some key genealogical aids from her first book, *Finding Your Jewish Roots in Galicia: A Resource Guide*, published in 1998.



In recent correspondence with Suzan, she indicated, "the first book went out of print in 2004, but most of the text in the current book is new. There is much more about the geopolitical context within which our ancestors lived their daily lives, as well as: a detailed timeline of key political, social, legal and economic events affecting the Jews; the impact of the Jewish self-governing system mandated by the Austrian government; the impact of marriage laws on genealogical research; updated demographic information; online resources; a much enlarged bibliography; post emigration settlement issues; and a new chapter on travel tips and advice."

In 1993, Suzan Wynne was the founder of Geshher Galicia, the Special Interest Group for Galitzianers. She has been involved in genealogy since 1977 and is a founding member of the JGS of Greater Washington.

At the IAJGS conference in New York, on Wednesday, August 16, Suzan was scheduled to present a lecture on the *kahal*, the Jewish self-governing system.

Suzan also indicated, "This is the only English-language book about Galician Jews in print."

Published by Wheatmark it can be ordered for \$34.95 plus S&H from [www.wheatmark.com](http://www.wheatmark.com) or call 1-888-934-0888

## ABOUT A JGSGO MEMBER

Don Frank, husband of Doris Frank, the JGSGO VP (Membership) has been a resident at the Lake Mary Health and Rehab Center, since November. The following article about Don appeared in the May-June newsletter of the Jewish Pavilion: "Don Frank, a resident at Lake Mary Health and Rehab is a jokester. 'Do you know why a cat is afraid if a tree (No, Don. Tell us.) 'Because it has a bark.'

Don's sunny disposition and sense of humor is infectious. He's always upbeat and he has good reason to be. His wonderful wife of 49 years, Doris Shapiro Frank, visits him every day. It was love at first sight for these two way back in 1956 then their eyes locked at a party in New York. They married nine months later and spent their early years together in Cuba where Doris's family owned a business. However, when Castro came into power, the family moved to Florida where Don pursued a career in the insurance industry. Doris and Don have three children.

Don and Doris have similar interests, one of which is Jewish Genealogy. In fact, Don wrote a book in which he traced his family back many years. It is crammed full of history and photos, He and Doris traveled extensively, especially to Romania and Israel, researching their ancestry, and both have become quite computer savvy. Don has been a member of the Golden Tones musical group as well as a volunteer at the Miami Youth Museum where he loved to serve as a guide for the children and tell them jokes all along the way.

His most recent visitor at the Health Center has been



Jessica Lieblich, 12 years old, who is the daughter of Cathy and Mark Lieblich (Cathy is a member of the Jewish Pavilion board of directors). Jessica is completing her bat mitzvah project with the Jewish Pavilion by visiting Don on a weekly basis. She will be putting together an album recording this wonderful experience which is so enjoyed by her and Don. Don says, "I am so enthralled by Jessica. She gives me something to look forward to and she treats me like gold." Don loves visitors, so if you are in the Lake Mary neighborhood and so inclined, feel free to drop by and say hello. Thanks Don, for bringing a ray of sunshine to all whose lives you touch."

(Note: Lake Mary Health & Rehab is not part of the Jewish Pavilion, but the Pavilion sends people to various nursing homes and offers special programs).

## INPUT SOUGHT FOR A NEW BOOK...

Dr. Lawrence J. Epstein, an author and educator on Long Island, is working on a new book about Jewish immigrants on the Lower East Side. The book will be edited by Arthur Kurzwel and co-published by the Lower East Side Tenement Museum.

Larry is a Professor of English at Suffolk County Community College and a leader in the Long Island community. He has lectured widely on American popular culture and is the author of many books, including *The Haunted Smile: The Story of Jewish Comedians in America* and *A Treasury of Jewish Anecdotes*.

His new book "will take a 'You Are There' approach, letting readers feel what it was like to live in a tenement, work in a sweatshop, shop on Hester Street on a crowded Thursday night, and so on." Larry would welcome any stories, letters, documents, or photos that would be useful.

Please invite your members to contact him at LJE321@aol.com with any suggestions.

From: Renee Stern Steinig, Membership Vice President  
RSteinig@suffolk.lib.ny.us

## ADL Welcomes Florida Legislation To Protect Travelers From Discriminatory Life Insurance Practices

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) applauds the Florida state legislature for passing and Gov. Jeb Bush for signing into law the Travel-Related Insurance Bill (HB 299).

The Travel Related Insurance Bill prohibits life insurance companies from using a person's travel history or current travel plans as a reason to deny life insurance coverage unless the rejection is based on sound actuarial principles or is related to actual or reasonably anticipated experience. Similar laws have been passed in California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, New York and Washington.

Major life insurance companies have been denying new or renewed life insurance policies to anyone who has recently traveled or who has plans to go to any country about which the U.S. State Department has issued a travel warning. More than two dozen countries are on the list now, including Israel. Once denied life insurance, applicants have sometimes found it extremely difficult or expensive to get life insurance anywhere.

Andrew Rosenkranz, ADL Florida Regional Director, stated, "Florida residents who apply for life insurance will no longer be denied coverage simply because of past or future travel to Israel, without any evidence of increased risk." ADL advocated strongly on behalf of the bill (HB 299) including providing testimony to the Florida House Insurance Committee. Rosenkranz added, "The ADL is very pleased with this new bill and proud of the role we were able to play to end this injustice against travelers." (Ft. Lauderdale, FL. June 27, 2006)

## MY HERITAGE TOUR – April-May 2006

By: Larry Morrell

**Purpose:** The original purpose of this two week heritage tour was to go back to the cities and towns where our grand parents, great grand parents and great great grand parents lived before coming to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I knew I wouldn't be able to find their homes or the streets where they lived. I really wasn't interested in that. I just wanted to see the land, see the same rivers, the same hills, the same streets, buildings, the synagogues, the cemeteries, etc- and get a feel of what they saw, of where they walked. This was accomplished and then some.

**Who went:** On this venture, this quest, I was accompanied by my wife Ellen, daughter Tami and daughter Suzanne. Daughter Dana had to remain home to take care of our grandson, Nathan. I wanted them to experience what I was going to experience. I wanted them to learn more about their Jewish heritage in Central Europe. We had previously been to Israel, so we had already been back to where it started.

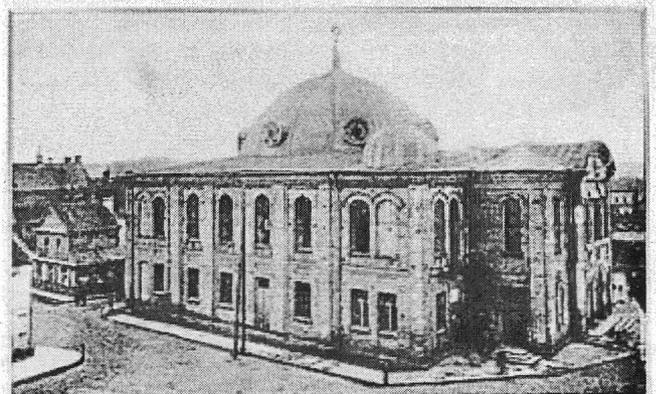
**Itinerary:** I have been involved in doing a family genealogy study for the past five years. As a result, I had some information where former generations had lived before they immigrated to the United States. This included members of the Morrell family, Bornstein family and Ellen's grandmother's family. Knowing this information, I arranged an itinerary that would take us to those locations. Through JewishGen, I was able to obtain personal guides for the Bialystok, Poland area and the Lodz, Poland area. Krakow, although it had no direct family or genealogical connection, it did have a special attraction: the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration/death camp. From Krakow, we took an overnight train to Budapest, the former home of Ellen's grandmother. Actually, it was a small town about a one hour train ride away called Tata. At the train station, we took a taxi into the city center. With my limited knowledge of German, I was able to convey the desire to see the old city center, the old Jewish cemetery and the synagogue. All were accomplished. We did find the grave stone of her grandmother's family! The feeling was indescribable. After a short stay in Tata, we returned to Budapest and then on to Prague.

**Warsaw-Bransk:** Upon arriving at the Warsaw airport, we were met by our guide and driver, Krzysztof Malczewski (Chris) and Suzanne. After a brief introduction, we loaded the van with our luggage and proceeded towards Bialystok. Having read in Aunt Anna's brief accounts of our family, there was a reason to stop in Bransk, along the way. Supposedly, my great great grandfather Levinger was a rabbi there. While in Bransk, we met with local historian and researcher, Zbigniew Romaniuk. The Jewish community of Bransk started in 1820. By 1921 60 % of the Bransk citizens were Jewish. 2,165/3739. Today there are none. The only reminder of the past Jewish community is the small Jewish cemetery being maintained by Zbigniew. He gathers old matzevas where he finds them being desecrated- in sidewalks, curb stones, roads, etc and

relocates them to the cemetery. Currently over 200 mazavas have been saved, preserved and cataloged. Bransk seems to be a typical small Polish town which no longer has a Jewish community.

**Bransk-Bialystok:** The drive from Bransk to Bialystok through the Polish countryside of small villages, small farms, and dense forests looks much like it did years ago. There are a few remnants of WW II bunkers near the roadside. Going through the heavily wooded areas, one could imagine how it was over one hundred years ago for a Jewish person traveling by horse cart or even walking from town to town knowing there were robbers and thieves waiting to attack. On unpaved roads with little protection from attack, our ancestors proceeded to migrate from one location to another to improve their lives.

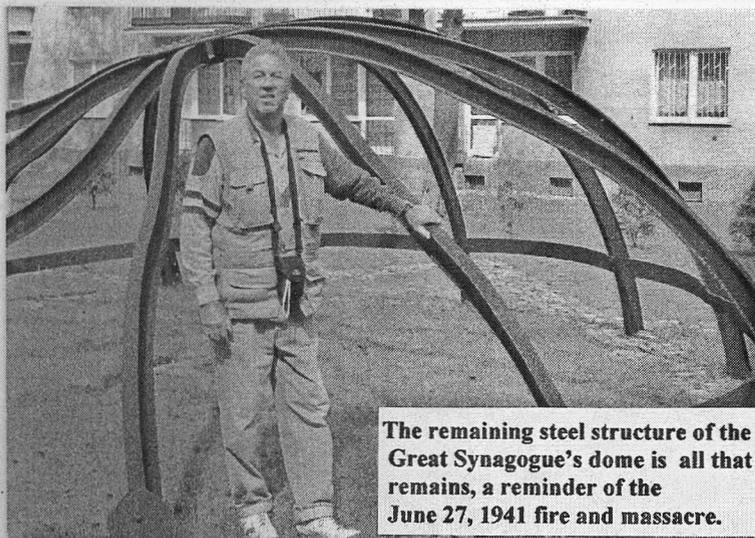
**Bialystok-Tykocin:** This is where it really started. With a copy of the marriage certificate between Solomon Morrell ( Zelman Marel ) and Sarah Leah Patt in hand, I knew I was back to the beginning. Tykocin, the birth place of my great grand mother, Malka Gittel Levinger ( Molly Morrell-Solomon's second wife ) is about 21 miles from Bialystok. It was established in 1424 along the Narew river. Jews first lived there in 1522 and became an important center for Jewish life North of Krakow. The synagogue there was built in 1642 and still stands as a museum. Near by was the old Jewish market. The old Jewish section of town is still intact and is being preserved. It's like going back in time. Here we saw what my great grandmother saw, walked on the same streets, saw the same river, the same buildings, the same synagogue, went to the same cemetery. An awesome feeling of closeness to the past. This small town, now totally void of Jews was once a vibrant Jewish community until 1941. Bialystok is a much larger city. It became more important due to the rail line from Warsaw and the industrial revolution. In 1939 Bialystok was 60% Jewish-60,000. Today there are three-one claims not to be Jewish, one is inactive and the third, our guide in Bialystok-Tykocin, Lucy Gold , is almost single handedly preserving the Jewish history of Bialystok. She pointed out the Jewish section, many former Jewish homes, Jewish " palaces", an old synagogue, the " Hebrew gymnasium" the remains of the Great Synagogue where 800 Jews were burned alive in 1941 and the memorial to those killed in the ghetto uprising.



Great Synagogue in Bialystok

(Pre WWII)

Great Synagogue in Bialystok

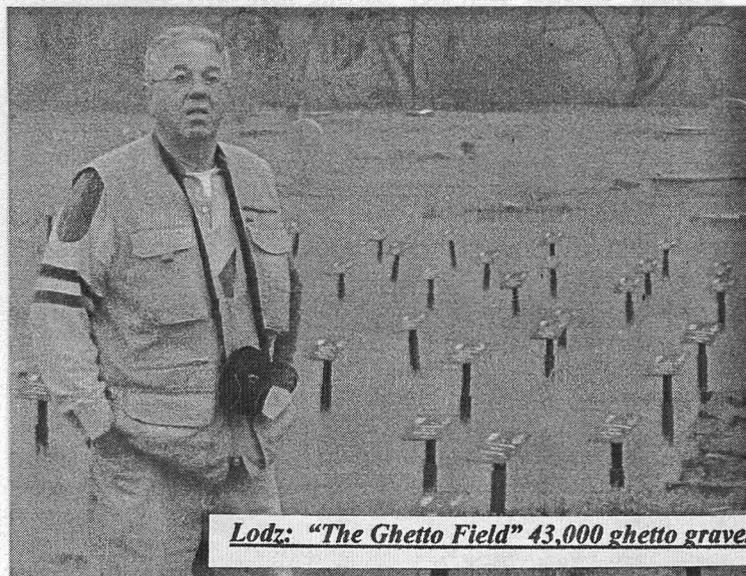


The remaining steel structure of the Great Synagogue's dome is all that remains, a reminder of the June 27, 1941 fire and massacre.

We also went to the largest Jewish cemetery in Northern Poland about 30 acres in size. There has been and still is quite a lot of vandalism taking place there—drinking, partying, fires, damage to tomb stones etc. Unfortunately, we had no idea where our family was buried in that cemetery. Perhaps one day when the tomb stones are recorded and documented, we will know where to place a small stone in their memory. Again there was a feeling of a connection with past family from Bialystok: Marel (Morrell) Levinger, Patt, Oruszkas. We were able to see what they saw, walk the same streets, hear the noises of the city, visualize what it was like in the mid to late nineteenth century Bialystok

**Bialystok-Lodz:** We took a train back to Warsaw on our way to Lodz ( Wudj in Polish ). Again passing through the country side, you could imagine how it was to travel by wagon through the dense forests on unpaved roads. What was so striking was to see how wet the ground was. It seems like that whole area is swampy. Now I know why the old pictures show all the men in high boots. Also, it was apparent how easily Jewish travelers could be attacked by thieves. After changing trains in Warsaw, we traveled to Lodz just a couple hours away by train. What a large metropolitan city compared to Bialystok and Ttkocin ! Again, we could see the remnants of the old 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial, commercial city. Many of the same trolley car lines, buildings, were still intact after WW II and the Russian control. Wandering around the area of our hotel in a light drizzle, we could see the splendor of the city even though the buildings were dirty, in need of repair, but still ornate. Somewhere in this city, our Bornstein family resided, worked, and went to synagogue. We did make a trip to the new Jewish cemetery dating back to 1892. Most of our family had already departed Poland before they could be buried there. However, some distant relatives who remained in Lodz are there either in the cemetery itself or in the Ghetto Field containing 43,000 graves of people who died in the Lodz Ghetto. There's a great web site devoted just to the Lodz Jewish cemetery that is wonderful. The old Jewish cemetery is no longer. That hallowed ground was covered over and made into a parking lot by the Russians in the

early 1950's! Many of the synagogues were also destroyed by the Russians, not the Germans. Again, that feeling of connection was there.



Lodz: "The Ghetto Field" 43,000 ghetto graves

**Lodz-Belchatow:Krakow:** After reading the memoirs of my great Uncle Morris Bornstein (Uncle Moishe) I had a better understanding of what life was like for the poor, struggling textile working family in both Lodz and Belchatow. Traveling by car the thirty miles or so was much easier than in 1880. Again, the peril of Jewish travelers was apparent by having to go through heavily wooded areas along the way. Belchatow was almost totally destroyed during WW II. Because it had become an industrial center, coal producing area, it was a prime target for bombing. Hardly a building stands that was built prior to the war. Not having any address to look for where our Bornstein family lived and worked, we just drove through the small town just looking. Suzanne made a very interesting observation. Grandpa Bornstein's old house in Clermont by Lake Minnehaha was very similar in design to many of the larger houses in Belchatow and other Polish cities. Maybe he was trying to connect with the past he never had as a poor youth The streets may be different, no synagogue exists, homes are new, but still knowing my grand father and his family had lived there still had some meaning. My search for the sense of what had been had been completed. Like the man said, " I'll be baaack".

**Krakow-Budapest:** Traveling from Krakow to Budapest by "night train" was quite an interesting adventure. The first problem was to find the right train track. Second, we had to board the correct " wagon" with all of our luggage in just a very short period of time. No mean feat to accomplish since the trains even in Centra' Europe are very punctual. Once on, we had to find the right compartment. Much to our surprise, the three berths were down. That left us approximately sixteen and a half inches to maneuver our luggage and our selves within an area that measured about sixty four square feet without berths, closet and a small wash basin. It was determined, that the youngest would take the upper berth. I had the bottom berth. After a few

mishaps, the lights were turned off for a restful sleep on the train going to Budapest. However, passport control, border crossing, another passport control, and who knows what else, we made it through the night. Daylight came early and we were able to watch the scenery change as we traveled deeper into Hungary.

**Budapest:** We arrived in Budapest at the scheduled time. Our guide, Gabriella, was there to meet us. After dropping off our luggage at our hotel, we began to tour the old city of Buda. What a breathtaking view from the Buda castle looking down across the Danube at the Pest side. Ellen's grandmother spent much of her youth in Budapest so the city had a special meaning for her. After going through Buda, we went through Pest before really getting down to business to see the old Jewish section of Budapest. As we wandered through the Jewish section, we saw many signs of former Jewish businesses, old Jewish homes inhabited today by Orthodox Jews. We visited a Jewish butcher where I purchased some kosher salami, took a rest break for coffee and pastry at the Carmel restaurant not too far from the famous Dohany Street synagogue. In the immediate area, we visited the Talmud Torah school, the new Holocaust Memorial, and saw the "Reform" synagogue that is still very active. As a matter of practice, I attended Friday evening services there which was a great experience. No English. Only Hebrew and Hungarian. That Shabbat evening, there was also a large group of about thirty young Jewish singles from the United States. Men and women sat separately as expected. The choir was magnificent. The organ was a nice addition. In a very modest sanctuary, approximately ninety six Jewish people joined together as we have done for thousands of years. It felt good! The next day, we took a train ride out of Budapest to a small town called Tata. This is where Ellen's grandmother and great grandmother were from. As luck would have it, there was a taxi at the small train station in this small Hungarian town waiting for us. With my very limited skills in German, I was able to convey to him what we were interested in seeing in Tata. The old city, the old castle, the old synagogue, the old Jewish cemetery. All of this was accomplished. There is not much remaining of the old city as there is in Tykocin, Poland. The thirteenth century castle still remains. The synagogue is now a museum containing Roman artifacts and statues. The gem was the cemetery. After driving in a roundabout path, we reached the old Jewish cemetery with its wall, burial house, the caretakers cottage, and the grave stones-matzevas. After wandering through numerous rows of memorials, up and down the slopes covered with high weeds, we found it! We found an old memorial with the name of Ellen's great grandmother's family. It was very emotional for her just as it was for me in Bransk, Tykocin, and Bialystok. A connection had been made. From there, we went back to the train station to catch the return train to Budapest. Another quest accomplished.



Tami and Ellen at the Tata Cemetery where they found the tombstone of Ellen's great grandmother.

**Bratislava-Prague:** The short two hour train ride from Budapest to Bratislava was relaxing. The scenery was pleasant going through farming areas, small towns, by several rivers. Tami slept, Ellen read, I looked and took pictures. Arrival at the train station in Bratislava was without any problem until we had to deal with the stairs. This was not easy with all our luggage and all those stairs. After some huffing and puffing and local assistance, we made it to the taxi stand. Taking a ride and being taken for a ride by the taxi cab driver, we reached our small hotel. Since it was Saturday, all of the Jewish places of interest were not open-the Jewish museum, the mausoleum containing the remains of Rabbi Moses Schreiber, and the "Hatem Sofer." We arrived too late to attend Shabbat services at the one remaining synagogue in a once vibrant Jewish community. After wandering around the old section of Bratislava in a light rain, we decided to return to the hotel. Tami and I later returned for a more extensive look at the city. On the way to the old city castle, we passed a memorial plaque to Raoul Wallenberg. The old city was quite active with British tourists there for the weekend. The next morning we departed for Prague. The four hour train ride to Prague was very relaxing. Ellen and I took a short rest in the dining car for a glass of white wine and to discuss what we had seen and done so far.

After arriving in Prague and transferring to our hotel, we began to explore the area. Prague is probably one of the most beautiful cities in the world. The next morning, our guide met us and we began the tour of Prague. Because we were more interested in seeing and learning about the



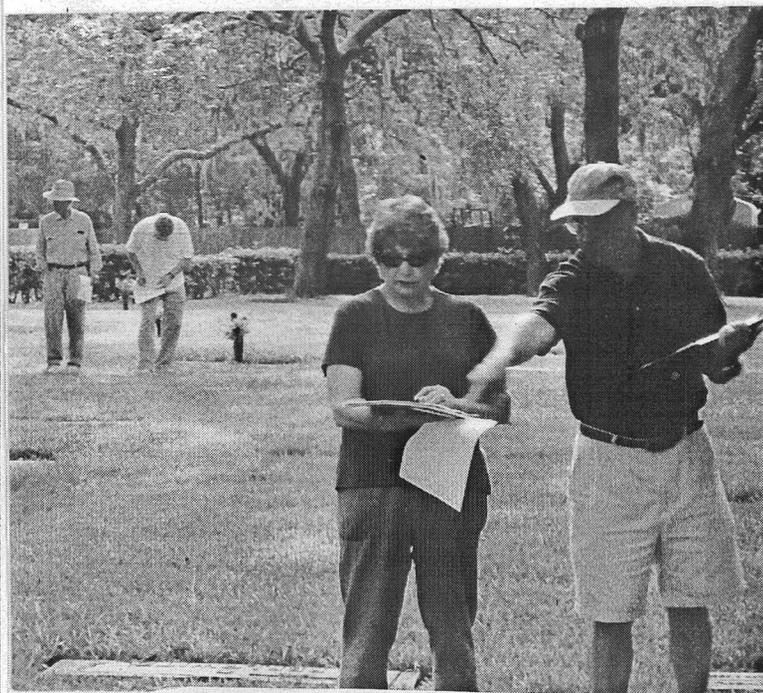
## The IAJGS Annual Meeting – New York City (August 13-18, 2006)

“Everyone who attended the meeting at the conference on Wednesday afternoon (August 16) deserves to be commended for their forthright thinking and their ability to listen to the discussion that has been going on around all of us and make a decision based on the facts, not the personal emotions surrounding the issues at hand. For those who did not attend, the slate suggested by the Nominating Committee was unopposed and was elected by acclamation. The only real controversy in the meeting was a disagreement as to whether Gary Mokotoff should speak before or after the discussion on the resolution put forth by JGS Greater Washington. By a narrow margin, Gary spoke first, detailing the facts of his recent meetings with leaders of the LDS Church and other Jewish leaders with a stake in the discussion over Mormon baptism of Jews. Although the church’s position seems to be that they are changing the ways these baptisms are being conducted, and they are taking steps to eliminate mass extractions in the future, their fundamental precept of baptizing the dead will not change. In the future, however, only Mormons with a password will be able to get into the system to baptize their ancestors, which is defined loosely as any related individuals. Those who seek to abuse the system can have their password revoked. Gary is of the belief that the controls the church intends to put on the process will make it harder, but not impossible, for church members to extract lists in the future, an activity the church is trying to stop. My understanding of what he said is that, in the future, only Mormons with a password will be able to see which ordnances of the church have been applied to those listed in the International Genealogical Index (IGI), an index which includes both baptized and non-baptized individuals. He indicated the Mormons were genuinely surprised at the reaction of Jews to the issue, as they felt that this was strictly a Mormon practice and in no way reflected on any attempt to proselytize. Although they accept the dead through baptism, this does not confer an obligation on the dead to accept the Mormon religion. Letters were sent to IAJGS from Harold Tanner, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, and others, requesting that IAJGS stay out of the matter for the time being and let a dialogue among friends who disagree, continue.

The motion proposed by Greater Washington failed for lack of a second. There was no further discussion.”

From: Chuck Weinstein <President@jgsli.org>  
Sat, 19 Aug 2006 X-Message-Number: 1

## JGSGO CEMETERY SURVEY



(photo: in the background Bob Glasser and Stan Weinroth, Sandy Moss and Jose Valle in the forefront. Photo by Larry Morrell)

On Sunday morning, July 9, from 8:30 to 10:15, five members from JGSGO participated in the cemetery project at All Faiths Cemetery, Casselberry. Under the direction of Larry Morrell, the four other volunteers were Bob Glasser, Sandy Moss, Jose Valle and Stan Weinroth. Completing the necessary report for submission to the IAJGS, Morrell indicated, “we found 166 headstones with information about Jewish burials.”

Thanks to the volunteers who gave their time for this worthwhile project.

## Cemeteries Starting To Place Databases Online

Several Jewish cemeteries now have their databases online. Two New York cemeteries, Mount Carmel and Mount Hebron, are examples and Stephen P. Morse has created a portal to these sites at <http://stevemorse.org>. As is typical of functions at the Morse site, it provides greater functionality than at the host site.

The Mount Carmel Cemetery site is <http://www.mountcarmelcemetery.com> and for Mount Hebron it is <http://www.mounthebroncemetery.com>.

The New Mt. Sinai Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri, has an alphabetical listing in PDF format for all burials from 1850 through October 2004. It is located at:

<http://www.newmtsinaicemetery.org/page6.html>