



Etz Chaim

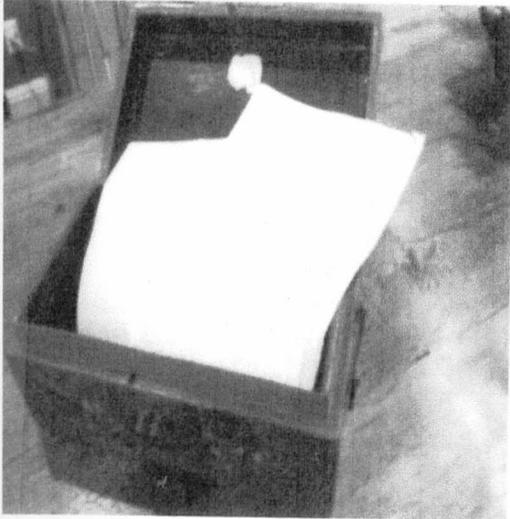
עץ חיים

The Quarterly Journal of the
JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER ORLANDO

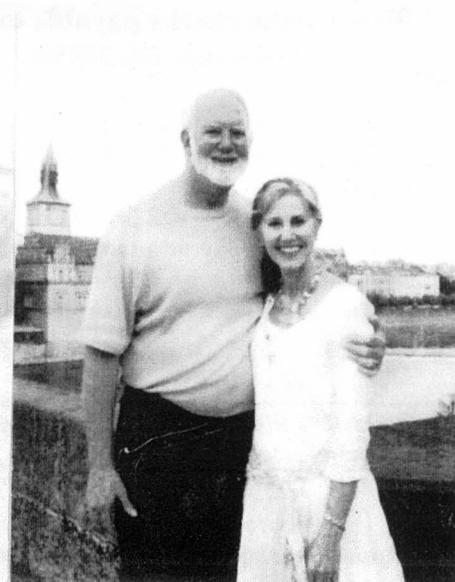
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Greater Orlando Area, Florida, USA

Fall 2009



Czech Threads of The All-American Dream



- 1) Chinese red lacquer box where hidden letters were first discovered in Feb. 2000
- 2) Oswald Holzer in the Czechoslovak Army at the Tisza River, November 1938
- 3) Oswald and Ruth Holzer, Summer Palace Bridge, Peking, China, November 1940
- 4) Joanie Schirm and Roger Neiswender besides Prague's Vltava River, May 2009

In this issue, Part I of a two part article by Joanie Schirm, JGSGO member

ETZ CHAIM

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Please visit JGSGO's website at:
<http://www.rootsweb.com/~FLjgscf/>

Etz Chaim is free to all members of JGSGO. Back copies (when available) \$5.00 each.

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 fourth week - afternoon of the month, at 1:30 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 week. Read the "What's Happening" Calendar in the Heritage; check the JGSGO website: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~FLjgscf/>

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 +

(Check the What's Happening Column and Calendar in the weekly Heritage newspaper and the Orlando Sentinel):

Oct. 7, 2009 –Wednesday: JGSGO Leadership Group-Coffee at The Schulman's Home, 375 Deer Pointe Circle, Casselberry 2:00 pm

Oct 27- Tuesday, 1:30 p.m., regular meeting
 Guest Speaker: Greg Dawson, "Hiding in the Spotlight"
 Mini Sanctuary, CRJ, Malone Dr., Orlando

Florida State Genealogical Society: 33rd Annual Conference, REGISTER NOW for this year's conference featuring Craig Roberts Scott, MA, CG. The conference will be held in the award winning Hilton Melbourne Rialto Place, Friday-Saturday, November 13-14, 2009. For the official 2009 Conference Flyer and Registration form (.PDF file), go to www.FLSGS.org. Print the form and mail in your registration to the address given. The flyer also mentions our special low hotel rates and how to reserve your room.

Nov. 24: Tuesday, 1:00 p.m., JGSGO regular meeting Guest Speaker: Paul Enchelmayer, "Google Goodies for Genealogy" Mini Sanctuary, CRJ, Malone Dr., Orlando

Dec, 22, 2009, Tuesday, Installation and Social Get-together. 1:30 p.m. CRJ Mini-Sanctuary Malone Drive, Orlando

July 2010: The International Associations of Jewish Genealogy, annual conference, Los Angeles, CA

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Now that Autumn is upon us, how often you heard the expression "where did the Summer go?" This may be Florida but it seems we do get enough changes in the weather to think of seasons. And now it's the season to once again get involved in the activities of the JGSGO.



Over the past several months I hope you had some successes with your genealogical research. I remind you all, that JGSGO has a large collection of books in our library located in the Dworkin Learning Center at CRJ. We do not operate a "lending library". You should plan on using whatever references you find at the Learning Center. We do not

have any personnel to man the library or keep operating hours. It's all based on trust. If you are interested in Sephardic Genealogy, JGSGO recently purchased an Avotyany published book; *Diccionario De Sobrenomes (Dictionary of Spanish Surnames)*,

Thanks to JGSGO Past President and long time member, Gladys Friedman Paulin, our library received quite a collection of magazines and materials. Her gift is appreciated and should be enjoyed by all doing genealogical research.

Please mark you calendar and plan to attend the next three meetings. You will enjoy hearing Greg Dawson on October 27 with a follow-up to his presentation of September 17, 2007 when he described his journey to the Ukraine in search of his mother's past history. Now you will hear about the book based on his research, "*Hiding in the Spotlight*."

And on November 24, it's a return engagement for Paul Enchelmayer when he presents "Google Goodies for Genealogy." End our genealogical year with the December 22 meeting with Installation of Officers and a special social-time.

No need to remind you that maintaining our JGSGO involves many volunteers. We only have a small group that is truly active in keeping the organization together. Think about what you can do and how to take a small leadership role. Talk to me!

ADOPTION Q AND A

By Judy Turbin

Question: How do you find if a person is adopted and by whom they were adopted?

Answer: Adoptions are a very difficult area to research. There are domestic adoptions, inter-country and international adoptions, relative adoptions, as well as domestic adoptions from foster care. Adoptions are regulated by individual state statutes, federal laws and case law within individual jurisdictions and by agency administrative regulations.

Adoptions may be open or closed. In a closed adoption, there is probably no direct communication between the birth parent(s) and the adoptive parent(s)—having all required work done through agencies and attorneys (though certain background information and health information has to be revealed to the adoptive parents.) Records are usually sealed. The original birth certificate is supposed to be destroyed, and a new one issued.

In an open adoption, there is direct communication between the birth parents and the chosen adoptive parents. One area for negotiation is the amount of communication between them post-adoption.

There is a way to research an adoption if the adoptee's former surname is known. One can access records at the Court House of the county where the adoption took place to determine the case number. Then one can write to the Clerk of the Court, Records Division for the Family Court, with the case number. If the records aren't sealed for any reason, the final judgment of adoption can be obtained. If the record is sealed, then an application must be made to the Judge currently assigned to the file to unseal it. Anyone having a direct interest in the file will have the best chance of having it unsealed, i.e. a child trying to find a parent or vice versa. Other relationships might prove to be problematic because of privacy issues. If the parties are no longer living, there might be more leeway. If the file is to be opened, helpful information such as adoption agency, or the actual information of parentage can be obtained. If one needs to go through the agency, then privacy issues again come into play. The agency might contact the involved parties to see if information can be released. Some websites at which to obtain more information about adoptions:

<http://www.adoptionflorida.org>

<http://www.adoption.org/adopt/process-of-adoption.php>

(From BRANCHES, JGSGMiami,

Drive carefully. It's not only cars that can be recalled by their maker.



REPLACING VITAL DOCUMENTS:

The U.S. government's official web portal is: www.usa.gov> This website is an all-inclusive source of source of information related to our governments –be it federal, state, it federal, state, local or tribal. Included in this site is a page with a collection of links that can help you replace documents that have been lost or damaged. SEE THE LIST BELOW. The exact web address for these links is: :

www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Family_Issues/Vital_Docs.shtml

- Address Change – How to change your address with government agencies
- Bank Records (.PDF | requires Adobe Acrobat Reader) – Financial tips and resources for disaster recovery.
- Birth, Marriage, and Death Certificates – Where to write for your vital records
- Damaged Money – The Treasury Department will exchange mutilated or damaged U.S. currency.
- Document Restoration--Fire – The Library of Congress offers information on restoring fire-damaged documents and collections.
- Document Restoration--Flood – The National Archives offers information on how to care for your flood damaged photos, books, papers and more
- Drivers' Licenses and Vehicle Registration – Learn how to get or replace your driver's license, and how to register your car.
- Federal Civilian Personnel Records – How to get copies of federal civilian personnel records.
- Immigration Documents – How to replace your lost or destroyed permanent resident card (green card).
- Medical Information Form – Download a form where you can record medical conditions and

other health information for use in an emergency situation.

- Medicare Card Replacement – How to replace a lost, stolen or damaged Medicare card
- Military Service Records – How to get copies of military service records, to prove military service or for genealogy research
- Passport – How to replace a passport lost or stolen in the U.S.
- Savings Bonds Recovery – Cash and replace lost, stolen, or destroyed bonds.
- School Records – Locate your records from a school that has closed
- Social Security Card Replacement – How to replace a lost or stolen Social Security card
- Tax Return – Request a copy of your federal tax return from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

Replacing Your Vital Documents on USA.gov



Thanks to Bob Glasser

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GREG DAWSON RETURNS TO JGSGO

Two years ago (Sept. 17, 2007) Greg Dawson, Columnist for the Orlando Sentinel, was the guest speaker at a JGSGO meeting.

At that time he and his wife, Candy, described their trip to the Ukraine and a mission of search for information about his mother's early life. Dawson also spoke about a book he was writing about his mother's experiences.

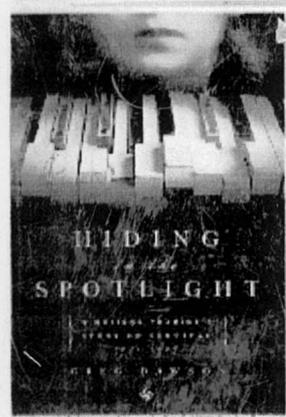
Now the book has been published and Greg will be the speaker at the JGSGO meeting of Tuesday, October 27, at 1:30 p.m. in the Mini-Sanctuary, Congregation of Reform Judaism (CRJ), Malone Dr., Orlando.



The book has been well-received. A recent column in the Summer 2009 Newsletter of the Holocaust Memorial Center, Maitland, described the book: *"With brief selections from his mother's own writing, Dawson's book tells a captivating story of life, music, survival, and triumph of the spirit against incredible odds."*

From Amazon.com:

"In this remarkable recreation of the WWII years, Dawson, a columnist with the Orlando Sentinel, writes about his mother, pianist Zhanna Arkashyna in an account reminiscent of Wladyslaw Szpilman's The Pianist. As a child in the Ukraine, Zhanna was offered a scholarship to the Moscow State Conservatory. Her life changed in 1941 when Nazis grouped her Jewish family with thousands to be executed; Zhanna and her sister, Frina, escaped to roam the countryside as fugitives, hiding and surviving. With a new name and a non-Jewish



identity, Zhanna performed for unsuspecting Nazis. Arriving in New York in 1946, the sisters enrolled at Juilliard on scholarships. Zhanna married violinist David Dawson, and the couple moved in 1948 to Bloomington, Ind., joining the music faculty at Indiana University. To research his mother's homeland, Dawson traveled to Ukraine, including Dorbitsky Yar, where 15,000 Jews were murdered, among them Zhanna and Frina's parents.

On a memorial listing the dead, Dawson was shocked to find his mother's name: 'I had come that close to nonexistence.' With italicized selections from his mother's own writing, Dawson skillfully weaves the story of her life and music into a vibrant tapestry, tattered and torn, yet triumphant."

THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO USING TAX LISTS (PAPERBACK)

By: Cornelius Carroll (Author)

Product Description

Tax lists are one of our most valuable, if often neglected, sources of genealogical information. Tax lists can refer to personal property tax lists, tithables, poll lists, land tax lists, and rent rolls. They usually divulge the names of heads of households and other males aged 16 or over, as well as valuations of slaves, cattle, horses, other types of personal property, land taxes, and notes of interest. They can be used not only to trace a family's migration and its taxable property, but also to prove parentage when no other records are available. Tax lists place individuals in a particular place at a particular time and indicate the amount and type of property owned. They may also indicate the relationship of individuals in a household and their approximate ages.

The Beginner's Guide to Using Tax Lists is Cornelius Carroll's primer for making the best genealogical usage of tax lists. At the outset the author differentiates between tax lists, quit rents, tithables, militia lists, censuses, and similar records and the laws that applied to them. Then, by focusing on the tax lists of Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky and Tennessee, he demonstrates how tax lists can be used for determining parentage, birth and death dates, indentured servitude, slavery, manumission, and racial status. They can be used, in conjunction with other records to help determine the parentage of a female, the date of a marriage, migration routes, and the accuracy of family traditions. Mr. Carroll has also included a list of dates of county formation for the four states referred to above and a number of sample tax lists in order to expose researchers to the legal and other factors affecting the ages and classes of people who were taxable at any given time.

Editor's Note:

Amazon.com has this 60 page publication (1995) by Genealogical Publishing Company in used copies for \$19.98.

You will also find the book (RG 929.1 CAR) at the Orange County Public Library, Orlando.

Heroes are the people who do what has to be done, when it needs to be done, regardless of the consequences.

Part one of two-part Article for JGSGO's Etz Chaim

Czech Threads of the All-American Dream

– Part One

By Joanie Schirm

They met in 1940 in Peking China— she, a beautiful young teacher born in China of American missionaries; he, a handsome young Czech doctor. A year earlier, after the Nazis invaded his native country, he had first taken refuge in Shanghai China, one of the few ports of call in the world accepting European Jewish immigrants during this terrible time in history.

They met, fell madly in love, and married six weeks later. Together for nearly 60 years, they raised three loving children before dying at the dawn of the 21st century within two days of each other. They were Ruth and Oswald Holzer. They were my parents.

As with many of you, my genealogical family tree is magically stitched together using a diversity of thread, creating a tapestry of fine art. Beyond the names on a genealogical chart, the parts of the tapestry I like best are the stories it yields. In fact it seems to me that God likely created Man because he loved stories.

Luckily, my brother and sister share this curiosity about whence we originated; each of us taking different productive paths, contributing to an expansive family chart colored with rich detail. Many years ago my brother Tom Holzer, 65, began researching my mother's side of the family. At the time he was attending Princeton University in New Jersey near the roots of our maternal grandfather, Horace Robeson Lequear, whose family arrived in New Amsterdam, the Dutch Colony that would become New York City, in 1654.

When Tom later worked in the Washington, DC area close to Pennsylvania and New Jersey, he continued his detective work, even finding one relative, Captain Daniel Bray, who was an American Revolutionary Hero. As the leader of the "Boat Gatherers," Daniel's role for George Washington's 1776 Christmas night crossing of the icy Delaware River led to what may be the reason why America is not an English colony. Without Daniel's help, victory at the famous Battle of Trenton may not have been achieved, Americans would not celebrate July 4th Independence Day, and we would speak with a British accent.

My sister Pat Holm, 63, chose to study the background of our maternal grandmother, Emma Martha Auguste Kroeger. Emma traveled at the age of 13 in 1896 by boat with her family from Hamburg, Germany to America through Ellis Island and settled in Akron, Ohio. Like hundreds of other Germans escaping the economic

unrest of the 1880's and '90s, the Kroegers came to America for a better life. When she arrived in the U.S., Emma remembered getting off the boat and speaking in her halting English on behalf of her family to a policeman, asking for direction to their new home.

"Please sir; do you know where Medina Road is in Akron, Ohio?"

The policeman told her where Ohio was and her family was very proud of her. In her 90's, I remember my grandmother speaking of this moment as a highlight of her arrival in the United States. Tom and Pat's research in to our Mother-line chart created proof of a typical All-American Melting Pot.

My curiosity on this subject began when I sat as a very young child at the knee of my Czech-American father listening to his real life adventure stories. My favorite story was the one you read first: my parent's meeting story. I always viewed the story as a special gift, confirming that we children were preceded in life by a love story.

When my parent's story ended with an unexpected twist, dying within days of each other, it was then we three adult children had to sift through their lifetime of belongings. Within their exotic collections, we discovered many hidden treasures including old letters, official documents, 8 mm films, classic pictures, historical clothing and more. As we divided things amongst us, my brother and sister granted my wish to take these personal items home because of my long held dream to write a book about my father's intriguing life.

Beyond these treasures found in 2000, I also had amassed in 1989 over seven hours of taped interviews with my father. This information is the basis for what I am about to share concerning the significance of a May 2009 trip to my father's Czech homeland with my husband, Roger Neiswender. It was a journey in search of answers to questions and the meaning of my father's well lived life in spite of horrendous odds against it ending as such.

In January 2008, after 35 years in the business of engineering, I retired to write the book. I had dreamed for years of writing this book, thus the seven hours of interviews, but until 2000, I had no idea I would receive a treasure-trove of additional material to solve an even greater life puzzle. What I was about to discover is that the best treasures we find in life are seldom on the surface.

My first "retirement" year was spent scanning and cataloguing over 500 documents. Simultaneously I was finding and engaging Czech translators to take on the mammoth task of bringing almost 400 letters in Czech to life. Seventy eight different writers had created the letters from 1939 – 1946, documenting in very personal terms the tumultuous times. In the midst of all this was the love story

of my parents. Best of all, among the old letters were typed copies written by my father to friends scattered as immigrants around the world. His precious letters gave me a window in to his young soul, revealing personal truths I never knew about him.

My father, like many people scarred from the World War II Holocaust period by their own unique experiences, never spoke much about it. When we were young children we knew only that my father's parents and grandmother had died during the Holocaust. It was not until 1993 when I was 45 years old that I learned we actually lost 44 relatives, painful news that coincided with the premiere of the acclaimed movie *Schindler's List*.

When the movie premiered, I was living in Orlando, Florida, about an hour and a half drive from my parents' retirement home in Indialantic. The small island town was where my parents had lived for over 40 years and where my brother, sister and I had been raised in an idyllic setting during the 1950 and 60s. Soon after the premiere, when I went to visit them I had thought my father and I might have a special evening together if we went to see the acclaimed Steven Spielberg movie. Looking back on the idea now, having seen the film sequence where human ashes are falling onto a small town; I don't think I was in my right mind when I suggested this to my father, but at that moment I just knew it was an important movie from a significant time of his life. He wisely said a resounding "No, Never!" to my invitation that night but following that he sat down and typed his own list – a list much more important to our family: the list of the 44 relatives who died in the Holocaust.

Mostly annihilated in the Holocaust, my father's extended family played a big part in the many hidden letters we discovered at his death. They were the relatives on his list who vanished mostly in 1942 in Nazi death or concentration camps. Included in the found letter treasure-trove were 46 letters from his parents, Arnost and Olga Holzer, who perished at the hands of the Nazis in May 1942, likely at Sobibor Extermination Camp in eastern Poland. These precious letters introduced me to the grandparents I never had the opportunity to know and love.

For me, getting to know my grandparents through their own written words began the love affair I had been deprived of – I finally met these two compassionate people. Magically I was to learn how much they loved their only child and sacrificed to ensure his dream of becoming a doctor was realized. Over time I found myself mourning their loss as I read their final letters and discovered their gruesome fate through the help of my newly found friends and experts at the United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum (USHMM) in Washington, D.C.



It was from the USHMM Senior Historian, Peter Black that I first learned about the place called Sobibor, a death camp I never knew existed until our conversation in late April 2008. My father had thought his parents perished at Auschwitz but it was through Peter's review of the uncovered documents that he pieced together the likely trail of my grandparents last days. He described Sobibor's role in what was known as Operation Reinhard (Aktion Reinhard in German), a code name for a German plan involving Reinhard Heydrich, a key Nazi strategist in the now well known story of the "Final Solution of the Jewish problem." It was from that conversation that I knew I needed to visit Sobibor and the plan for the trip to my ancestral homeland began to unfold.

The first thing I did to kick off the planning was to contact my Prague cousin, Tomas Marik, 48, the grandson of my father's Aunt Valerie (Valda) Marik, sister to grandfather Arnost. Tomas and his family were beloved by my father. I had met him, his wife Lida, and sister Hana and her family on a 1995 trip with my father to the Czech Republic. In 2000 Tomas and Lida came to Florida for my parents' memorial service and he kindly had returned with some of my father's ashes to be placed at the Holzer family memorial in the Jewish Cemetery in Benesov, my father's hometown. Tomas and I had remained in touch throughout the years and when the hidden letters were discovered, I began sharing them with the Marik family descendants as their relatives played a prominent role in the letters.

For the trip, Tomas and I agreed on the month of May 2009, centering on the desire to hold a family reunion in Benesov, 40 kilometers southeast of Prague. I had a year to get ready and I needed every minute to ensure this trip of a lifetime would be very productive in finding the missing

puzzle pieces of my father's life. To aid in cataloguing the volume of treasure-trove materials (documents, letters, pictures), I hired an assistant, Kathy Bowman, a young woman of Czech origin. She had just completed a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) but because of the slumping economy was unable to find full time work. Thus the bad economy helped me find a perfect assistant for the task at hand as Kathy was highly educated, possessed high level computer skills, and shared a keen interest in the subject matter.

For six months Kathy worked to create a huge Microsoft Excel data base to track the information in the translated, multipage letters which were arriving from translators on a weekly basis. Exhibited in massive three ring binders, the translated letters were showcased in three different orders: chronologically, alphabetically by author, and scanned numerically A – Z and AA – ZZ.

Each translated letter opened up a different author's personal life window from places such as Great Britain, Palestine, China, Czechoslovakia, France, Argentina, Sweden, and the United States. Their voices began to snowball in to all kinds of questions:

Who were these 78 letter writers and how were they related to my father?

Who were the over 300 names referenced in the letters and what happened to all these people?

Who were the people in the pictures and 8 mm films (now transferred on to modern day DVDs)?

What was the meaning of all the documents, now determined to be birth and marriage certificates, death notices, Nazi death sites transport documents, and more?

What was the significance of places and addresses mentioned in the letters and documents?

Why did my father have such a depth of records related to his education?

What did my father's Czech 1937 – 1939 military experience involve?

Realizing the relatives of the letter writers could now be scattered around the globe, could I find them and share these precious letters?

Using Family Treemaker software, Kathy created "Kinship Reports" on key relatives as the many names from letters began to overwhelm us. We even began to develop Family Tree reports for friends who wrote my father, so that we could keep track of "who was who" outside the relatives. I quickly began to appreciate the personal threads of relevance to my father's life that these friends represented and realized that beyond my own relatives I wanted to make contact with their descendents wherever they were in the world.

We developed a "Journey Summary 1939-1941" for

my father, tracking every move he made, month by month using letters, documents and interview stories. Next we created maps showing his escape route and movement around China, using Google Earth to provide a modern day view of his journey.

The more I learned, the more I wondered about and then, slowly, over time I began to understand what it all meant for me - I had been given the responsibility to be the final story teller of my father's meaningful life! Bestowed with these gifts to witness what my father had lived through, I was to be the storyteller for why he went on to live the life he did. And for me and my siblings, most importantly how he had recreated a life which awarded his family the chance for the All-American Dream.

I believe that there is often a standard monolithic account of the Holocaust that one normally encounters but what I was reading in the letters helped bring a more individual picture from the many lives I was entering. I realized what a far reaching impact this history could bring, not just to one family but to a multitude of others who honor this history and the importance to remember. The letters threaded together with my father's stories offered a chance to create a historical lesson, told in a very human way through real people.

To help lay the groundwork for the trip to the Czech Lands, I took a week long research trip in November 2008 to the USHMM. From the earlier conversation, Peter Black had connected me with Henry Mayer, Chief Archivist, Collections. Henry introduced me to Michlean Amir, Reference Archivist, Collections and we quickly became fast friends as we shared the sad heritage of losing our Czech grandparents in the Holocaust.

Born in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, Michlean and her family immigrated first to Israel in 1948 and then in 1955 to the United States. Along the path in our evolving friendship she told how she first learned English from a British teacher in Israel. When she moved to America she could read Shakespeare perfectly but couldn't understand her American teacher. Her story made me think of the many letter writers, lives changed forever through immigration to foreign lands, often against their will. Having worked at the USHMM since 1997, Michlean had obviously adjusted well to her new American life. Now expert on many Holocaust related subjects of which I knew nothing about when I started my research for the book, she helped me understand the right questions to ask and to find the correct resources for answers.

Michlean pointed me in the right direction in the USHMM library to related topics including information about the transports to and from Terezin, the Nazi concentration camp in northern Czechoslovakia where my

grandparents spent one month (April 24 to May 25, 1942) before being deported on the Az transport as passengers Az 906 and Az 907 "to the east" and their fateful final destination.

Terezin, called by the Nazi "Ghetto Theresienstadt", also was where my 80 year old great grandmother Marie Holzer perished in December 1942, and where the Nazis threw her ashes in the River Labe. Many other relatives were confined or passed through Terezin on their way to death camps.

In the library I read the following about Az Transport in the book: Ghetto Theresienstadt by Zdenek Lederer, 1953:

"May 25, 1942...1,000 prisoners from Theresienstadt to Lublin, where all men from fifteen to fifty worked at the construction of a concentration camp in Lublin. Eventually they shared the fate of all prisoners in Lublin: they were murdered in the death camps of Belzec, Majdanek and Sobibor. One sole prisoner survived. Being a watchmaker he was sent to Oswiecim (Auschwitz) and put to work..."

The description of the one survivor did not fit my grandfather. At age 56 he would not have been selected for labor and he was not a watchmaker. I spoke again, this time in person, with Peter Black. He said by the timing of my grandparents' arrival on the Az transport, it was most likely they were taken to Sobibor. His opinion of six months earlier had not changed. It was doubtful I would ever know with absolute certainty, one of the sad facts encountered by millions of descendants of Holocaust victims.

After I shared copies from my computer on what existed in the "treasure-trove," Henry Mayer told me it represented "the largest and most extensive personal collection I have seen in some time." He was impressed with the diversity - letters, photos, film, taped interviews, and clothing, including the original pants my father wore when he escaped the Nazi controlled Czechoslovak Army in late March 1939. I suspected the collection was extensive but hearing this opinion from Henry meant a lot to me. As strange as it sounds, knowing that my father was a great collector of things (coins, stamps, hats, canes, and more), I thought he would have enjoyed hearing Henry's opinion. Most importantly, it reinforced the importance of my emerging mission to share this meaningful information far and wide through my writing.

Michlean introduced me to Steven Vitto, Technical Information Specialist in the USHMM Registry of Holocaust Survivors and together we researched a few of the names from my father's list of 44. He was able to find all the available records dealing with my grandparents, Arnost's brother Leo Holzer, and sister Olga (Holzer) Winternitz. For Leo, whose wife and son Hanus (Hans) had survived,

Steven found documents from concentration camps Terezin, Auschwitz, and Buchenwald and made copies for me to take home.

I was introduced to Judy Cohen, Director of Photo Archives, Anatol Steck, Program Officer, International Archival Program, and Benton Arnovitz, Director of Academic Publications. Each individual was extremely well versed on their subject matter, kind, and passionate about their mission to broaden public understanding of the Holocaust and its contemporary relevance to the world in which we live. After a successful USHMM trip gathering even more information to mull over, I spent the next few months leading to May 2009, planning the trip and writing. Referred to me by Michlean, my primary translator Lukas Pribyl became a fast friend through the many months process of uncovering the news in the letters. Lukas, a young, passionate documentary film maker, was supplementing his income doing translation work.

Over the time we worked together, Lukas' four films featuring personal stories from the Terezin transports were being finalized. Two of the films were previewed by audiences and judges in prestigious film festivals and he began to make a name for himself. In his down time from film festivals, he was translating hundreds of the treasure-trove letters and providing important historical footnotes. The words began to paint a picture of a Czech society which changed overnight through the brutality of the Nazi occupation. It vividly revealed the stories of other exiles like my father dealing with their loss of everything precious to their young lives.

The letters portrayed Czechs left behind under the Nazi domination doing the best they could to survive, while humiliating anti-Jewish decrees changed their lives. First deprived of civic freedoms, then freedom of movement and finally human dignity, the overwhelming majority of the letter writers lost their lives through genocide. The letters that came after the war shared the experiences of those who survived and the grief that followed.

I began to fully understand why my father had hidden the painful letters away.

One thing I had learned quickly after my retirement is that no good genealogist can get by without an extensive To Do List which vastly exceeds all available time. My Czech Trip "To Do List" mirrored this fact and as Lukas and I talked regularly through emails and Skype telephone calls, he recognized that he could play an important role during our trip. He kindly offered to help and I accepted immediately.

I knew my second trip to the Czech lands, this time without my father but with the aid of my cousin Tomas and my now friend and translator Lukas would help me put the

final pieces of my father's life puzzle together. It was through this trip of a lifetime that I would understand the places and emotions that surrounded my father's early life: where he and his parents lived, where he went to school, where he hung out with his family and friends,

- his role in the pre-World War II Czech military build-up, and what happened after he left the country.

I also hoped to learn what role the "Butcher of Prague," Reinhard Heydrich played in my relatives' demise and finally, what life is like now for Czech family members, friends, and their descendents.

Using saved up American Express frequent flier miles we booked our May 5th Delta International Flight to Prague and through Vacation Rental By Owner (VRBO) reserved an apartment near Prague's famous Wenceslas Square at Stepanska Street 59. With our long To Do List in hand, my husband Roger and I said good-bye to family and friends and took a flight on the trip of a lifetime.

To be continued in the next issue of Etz Chaim.....

Joanie Schirm is a writer in Orlando, Florida and a member of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Orlando. She is currently working on a non-fiction book, tentatively titled *My Dear Boy*, a story of her journey to discover the facts and meaning of her late father's life. The story proves that one's destiny need not be determined by uncontrollable outside forces, but can instead be rooted in the indomitable spirit. Until her retirement in 2008, for 17 years Joanie served as President of Geotechnical and Environmental Consultants, Inc. (Orlando). In 1994 she was featured in the international media for her leadership in bringing World Cup (soccer) to Orlando's Citrus Bowl and in 2001 was named Orlando's Business Woman of the Year. During 35 years in the business of engineering she wrote for many technical and association publications. She is mother to Kelly Lafferman and Derick Schirm, grandmother to Ty and Ava Lafferman and Michael Leubscher-Block, and wife to Roger Neiswender. Contact her at jschirm@cfl.rr.com>

The nice thing about the future is that it always starts tomorrow.

PAUL ENCHELMAYER NOVEMBER 24th SPEAKER

At the coming November 24th JGSGO meeting, you will be pleased to know that Paul Enchelmayer will return to present another interesting program. His subject will be "Google's Goodies for Genealogy." His previous lectures on April 9, 2002 and February 20, 2006, were well-received by JGSGO Members.

On Paul's web site, it states, "With over four decades in the applied technology fields of computer education and training, industrial educational photography, audio and video production, and the growing field of technology assistive genealogical research." Paul offers personal and group training in a variety of computer subjects.



Paul grew up in Wilmette, IL and attended Southern Illinois University and the University of Miami. He has worked for the City of Orlando, the University of Miami, Rollins College, the US Army and the US Navy.

His genealogy research involves his families including Enchelmayer, Sauer, Seypelt, Muth, Klok, and Pelargus. Other interests include 3D photography and Photo Restoration. He also sings in Barbershop Harmony, choruses and quartets.

Mark you calendar - JGSGO meeting, Tuesday, 1:30 p.m., November 24, 2009, in the Mini-Sanctuary, Congregation of Reform Judaism, 928 Malone Drive, Orlando, FL

Advice from Snopes.Com
<<http://snopes.Com/>>

1) Any time you see an E-Mail that says forward this on to '10' of your friends, or sign this petition, or you'll get bad luck, good luck, or whatever, it almost always has an E-Mail tracker program attached that tracks the cookies and E-Mails of those folks you forward to.

The host sender is getting a copy each time it gets forwarded and then is able to get lists of 'active' E-Mails to use in SPAM E-Mails, or sell to their spammers.

2) Almost all E-Mails that ask you to add your name and forward on to others are similar to that mass letter years ago that asked people to send business cards to the little kid in Florida who wanted to break the Guinness Book of Records for the most cards.

All it was, and all any of this type of E-Mail is, is a way to get names and 'cookie' tracking information for telemarketers and spammers - - to validate active E-Mail accounts for their own profitable purposes.

You can do your friends and family members a GREAT favor (PLEASE) by sending this information to them; you will be providing a service to your friends, and will be rewarded by not getting thousands of spam E-Mails in the future! Also, if you do forward something someone has sent you please delete all the addresses on the E-mail other than your own; that way you will not be forwarding someone else's info.

If you have been sending out (FORWARDING) the above kinds of E-Mail, now you know why you get so much SPAM Mail.

Do yourself a favor and STOP adding your name(S) to those types of listings regardless how inviting they might sound! You may think you are supporting a GREAT cause, but you are NOT in the long run. Instead, you will be getting tons of junk mail later! Plus, we are helping the spammers get rich! Let's don't make it easy for them!

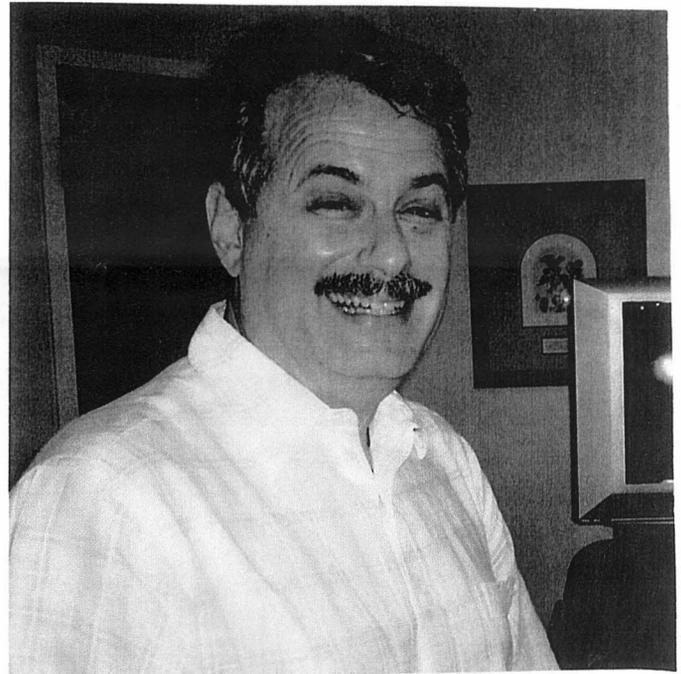
Also: E-Mail petitions are NOT acceptable to Congress or any other organization. To be acceptable, petitions must have a signed signature and full address of the person signing the petition.

SCHULMAN DOES IT AGAIN!

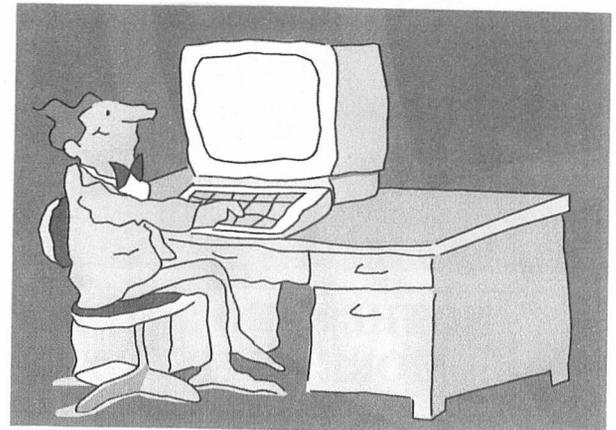
On May 19, 2008, Mark Schulman gave an interesting presentation on "Preserving Digital Photos." His lecture was well received.

Agreeing to a return invitation to give a program "Repairing and Restoring Old Photos" on Tuesday afternoon June 23, 2009, Mark again did a superb job!

Using a Power Point presentation, Mark demonstrated how damaged photos with scratches and spots could easily be repaired with photo programs. He said, "photos with a range of problems can often be repaired." He referred to several programs (Corel Paint Shop, Adobe Photo Shop, Paint. Net) and how to play with colors and sizes.



For a copy of the presentation slides contact:
<http://www.schulman.homedns.org/mark.nsf>



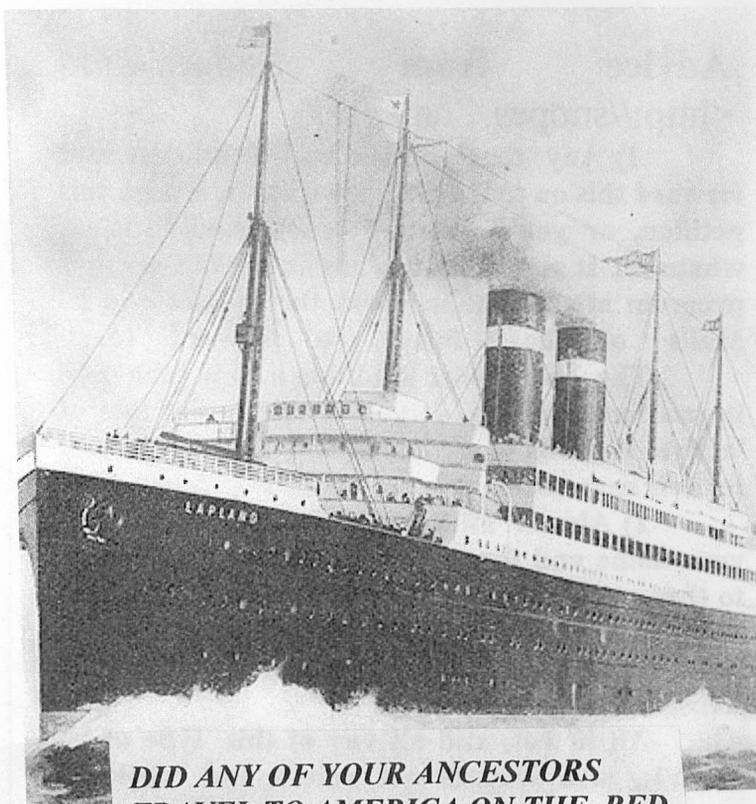
Search for Descendants of Red Star Line Passengers

Between 1873 and 1935 the Red Star Line shipping company transported almost three million people from Antwerp to the United States and Canada. The City of Antwerp has created a Red Star Memorial site at:

http://www.redstarlinememorial.be/smartsite.dws?id=MHE_LANDING&ch=MHE with plans to open a museum in Antwerp.

The project is looking for individual stories about the immigration experience of using the shipping line including photographs. If you are/know a person or descendant of a person who took a ship from Antwerp to settle in North America, contact: redstarline@stad.antwerpen.be.

The names of the Red Star steamships are Arabic, Belgenland, Berlin, Camboman, Devonian., Finland, Friesland, Gothland, Kensington, Kroonland, Lapland, Manitou, Marquette, Menominee, Merion, Mississippi, Nederland, Noordland, Pennland, Poland, Rhyndland, Samland, Southwark, Switzerland, Vaderland, Waesland, Westernland, Winifredian, Zeeland.



DID ANY OF YOUR ANCESTORS TRAVEL TO AMERICA ON THE RED STAR STEAMER "LAPLAND"?

The Golden Years???



NOTHING TO DO! ADVICE.... HOW ABOUT GETTING MORE ACTIVELY INVOLVED WITH THE JGSGO?