Connecting the present to the past

Genealogical research is usually only equated with delving into the past and all too often the contemporary scene is overlooked. This need not be so as the following recent examples will demonstrate.

A phone call from Dr. Hillel Don Lazarus in Panorama City, Ca. enlisted my help in locating his relatives in Toronto, originally from Devenishki (Lithuania) and Iwie (Byelorussia).

Apparently, when his own family moved from Canada to California some members had remained behind here. I was given the following surnames: LAZARUS, LEVI, SINGER and FORMAN and I decided to call my friend, Paul Forman, who put me in touch with his aunt, the 'family historian'. She very quickly confirmed the family relationship with Dr. Lazarus and I was able to pass on the good news to him.

The second request appeared more complex:

Mrs. Pearl Atkin from Briarcliff Manor in New York was trying to locate a female relative (originally from Iasi, Romania), whose married name she did not know, and whose son was apparently a physician. She only had some photographs of the lady and her father.

I suggested two approaches: an ad in 'SHEM TOV' and an ad in the Canadian Jewish News. The latter ad fortunately appeared in the Rosh Hashanah issue and brought a most positive response. A jubilant Pearl Atkin writes that she is now aware of 40 - 50 family members in Canada - the doctor whom she was seeking now lives in California!

A third request came from Mr. Gary Silverstein of Cleveland, Ohio. He was trying to locate his relatives in Toronto named Silverstein, Goldman and Pincowitz, originally from Baumal, Lomza and Bodzentyn. He had also spoken to Dr. Stephen Speisman, Archivist for Canadian Jewish Congress and Toronto Jewish Congress.

How fortunate then, that Dr. Speisman was able to furnish Mr. Silverstein with the address of the daughter of the Bodzentyne Rebbe, Rabbi Silverstein!

Lastly I received a request from Mr. Haim Katz in Ranaana, Israel, who is looking for his relatives, brothers Shalom and Pesach Falk from Pichaye (or Pichayev) in Poland. They apparently immigrated to Canada in the 1920's.

I have advised him to enlist the help of the Canadian Jewish News and I hope that his search will be a fruitful one too.

These are but some examples of the possible international scope of a genealogical society like ours. Many calls and requests like these reach me during the year and it shows me that in today's world researchers are virtually only phone calls away from one another and newsletters like these can often provide the additional bridge.

Dr. Rolf Lederer
President, JGS of Toronto
At our meetings:

As we have all recovered from this summer's excess heat we can apply our thoughts again to matters close to our hearts, - immerse ourselves once more in the subject of genealogy...

The first meeting this fall, on October 26, was well publicized and exceptionally well attended. Rabbi Witty recounted the experiences of his recent voyage to Poland and Czechoslovakia and reflected on Jewish life past and present in Poland.

At the meeting on Wed. November 23

Dr. Danny Lowe spoke about the interesting city-wide project: genealogical research into victims of the Holocaust whose relatives live in London/Ontario.

Dr. Lowe, together with a team of researchers, has devoted much of the past three years on the creation of a Yizkor book, having completed the interviews of over 40 families in London/Ont. and created scores of family trees for people whose families in Europe had perished in the Holocaust. A totally absorbing subject to many of us whose own research had also begun with little or no knowledge of the fate of our families, only to discover that none can claim to have been left unaffected by the tragic past.

* * *

Upcoming meetings:

December 21:
Representatives of LIFESTORIES, a company that specializes in preserving your own family history by way of publication in bookform, will be giving a presentation. We plan to hold this year's CHANUKAH EVENING immediately following the above presentation and would like to invite all our members to this social get-together. For members old and new this will be a good opportunity to make more personal contacts with one another, with more leisure time than the regular meetings often allow. Coffee and cake will suitably add to the atmosphere...

The following dates have been set aside for meetings in 1989:

January 25:
Gert Rogers will relate some of her experiences during her recent trip to Poland.

Peter Cullman will report on his visit to Berlin and to the great historic Jewish cemetery in Weissensee, one of the largest in Europe.

February 22, March 29, May 3, and May 31 for which the topics have yet to be announced.

* * *

Mazal Tov!

Mazal Tov to Rabbi and Mrs. Plaut on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary on November 9, 1988. Mrs. Elizabeth Plaut has been involved in German Jewish research for over a decade and has done exhaustive research on the Plaut family. Needless to say that she is one of our more enthusiastic members.

* * *

New Members:

We are pleased to welcome the following new members:

DR. & MRS. LACOME, MRS. A. M. BELMONT, MRS. S. C. RADCLIFFE, MR. C. ARYMOVICZ and MR. IRVING SALIT of Toronto, and MR. ALVIN TAYLOR of Etobicoke. Another new member, MRS. ELAINE KAHN of Richmond Hill/Ont., has presented us with her fairly extensive family tree on the Mainzer family. These documents are much appreciated additions to our growing library and will be stored in our archives for members' reference.

* * *

Obituary

The Genealogical Society of Toronto was saddened to learn of the sudden passing of Rabbi Shmuel Gorr, a leading international genealogist who had devoted much of his life to Jewish family research. Many of us have been familiar with his enlightening columns in SEARCH. He will be greatly missed by the international Jewish genealogical community.
Not only for beginners...

On November 16, Dr. Stephen Speisman presented a programme at the Bathurst Heights Library, 'Genealogy: Sources for Jewish family history'. The evening was attended by 20 members of the community who were able to glean much information from the learned speaker who has devoted much of his life to genealogy in general and to Toronto history in particular, being the author of the book 'The Jews of Toronto'.

Forum

A subject rarely touched upon is German Jewish refugees to Cuba before the doors of most countries were closed to Jews of Europe in the foreshadow of the second World War. One of our members has recently become acutely aware that some of his family had managed to escape Germany on one of the last refugee ships sailing to Cuba in 1938 and is very interested to find any information on this subject. In this world of genealogical miracles some of our readers may indeed have more knowledge of this particular time frame - any replies may be sent to the editor of SHEM TOV.

Membership Renewals

As this calendar year draws to a close we wish to remind all members to renew their memberships promptly. We know that some cheques are already in the mail, others are keenly awaited... Due to increased costs in printing and mailing we feel obliged to increase our membership fees to $25.00 as of February 1, 1989. Enrolments before that date are still accepted at the old rate of $20.00.

International SHEM TOV...

The creation of our new-look newsletter in 1988 has been exceptionally well received by other genealogical societies around the world, archives and libraries alike. Judging by the favorable response, costant requests for search ads and increased membership, we can look forward to another year of growth and success. As a metropolis with Canada's largest Jewish population we are pleased to realize that the Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto is beginning to attract the growing membership commensurate with the size of its community.

Archives + Addresses

RESEARCH IN CANADA

A major report on Jewish genealogical research in Canada, by Lawrence Tapper of Ottawa, can be found in AVOTAYNU, Vol. IV, Nr.3/Summer 1988.

RESEARCH IN USSR

The optimistic air attributed to 'Perestroika' and 'Glasnost' persists when it comes to future genealogical research in the Soviet Union. The latest report in AVOTAYNU, Vol. IV, Nr.3/Summer 1988 mentions a recent statement made by Arkady Pershenko, first secretary and consul of the Soviet Embassy in Washington, DC. He reveals that "genealogical research in the USSR is now completely open, and persons wishing to do research should direct their requests to the State Archives in Moscow, c/o Boris Ivanovich Kaptelov Central State Archives Bol'shaia Pirogovskaia ul., 17 119817 Moscow, USSR".

It seems that years of seemingly fruitless lobbying has paid off, though as Dr. Sallyann Sack reports after having met Mr. Parshenko, "terms under which the Soviet government will do genealogical research are not known at this time".

PINKAS HAKEHILLOT

A comprehensive list of pinkas hakehillot (Record books of the community) has just been published in SEARCH, Vol. 8, Nr.3. These nine volumes in Hebrew are published by Yad Vashem and currently cover Poland, Germany, Romania, Hungary and the Netherlands. Plans are afoot to continue with more material on Poland and Germany and to add Lithuania and Greece in the coming year. Most volumes can be purchased outright, though many should also be available at libraries and research institutions. These community records, appearing in alphabetical order according to their Hebrew or Yiddish names, give not only a history of their former life, but are accompanied by maps, photos of Synagogues and well known rabbis and communal leaders.
Following numerous requests by members and readers of SHEM TOV outside Toronto, we felt that a comprehensive list of Toronto Landsmanschaften might help many in their ongoing research. The following compilation was kindly provided to us by Mr. Joel Verbin of the Toronto Jewish Information Service, Tel. 635-5600. Mr. Verbin would be pleased to reply to any further inquiry on this subject.

APTER FRIENDLY SOCIETY
65 Maxwell St., Downsview, Ont., M3H 5B4
Telephone: 633-7918
(A landsmanschaft group of this Polish town, with 100 men and women members, (Apter Ladies), involved in social and charitable activities.)

BEIZETCHINER B'NEI YAACOV SOCIETY
c/o 3000 Bathurst St., #605, Toronto/Ontario, M6B 3B4
Telephone: 782-7316
(Approximately 20 seniors, both men and women, who donate collectively to UJA, Israel Bonds; primarily a burial society.)

BERGEN BELSEN ASSOCIATION
352 Brooke Ave., Toronto/Ontario, M4W 1M2
Telephone: 782-1317
(150 adult and senior men and women who meet to discuss and remind people of the Holocaust.)

CHENOFSCHOVER AID SOCIETY
6 Elway Court, #3, Toronto/Ont., M6B 2N8
Telephone: 787-4492
(130 adult men: sick and burial society, charitable group.)

DRIELTZER YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY
326 Wilson Ave., Downsview/Ont., M3H 1S9
Telephone: 638-2767
(Active as a charitable and sick benefit society; membership: 120 men.)

FARBAND OF LITHUANIAN JEWS IN TORONTO
65 Wenderly Drive, Toronto/Ont., M6B 2P1
Telephone: 787-1993
(Composed of 100 families. (adult and seniors): charitable activities for Israel; social and cultural activities.)

IBANSKER MUTUAL BENEFIT SOCIETY
131 Trosedale St., #1405, Willowdale/Ont., M2R 3T1
Telephone: 665-3647
(50 adult men involved with charity and sick benefits; also has a sisterhood.)
PULTUSKER LANDSMANSCHAFT
43 Clifton Ave., Downsview/Ont., M3H 4K9
Telephone: 636-8632
(60 couples engaged in charity work in Israel.)

SHEDLITZ LOKOW SOCIETY
185 Searle Ave., Downsview/Ont., M3H 4B5
Telephone: 636-4071
(12 couples who donate money to charity and socialize.)

SHEDLOVER YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY
78 Waterloo Ave., Downsview/Ont., M3H 3Y4
Telephone: 633-2712
(Composed of 50 men with a group for under 35 and for over 35; also a women's group of widows of members. Social programmes, charity work and cemetery plots.)

STASHOVER YOUNG MEN'S S.B.S.
96 Charlton Blvd., Willowdale/Ont., M2R 2H4
Telephone: 222-6327 or 532-8029
(150 men involved in charitable and social activities for Israel and Jewish activities.)

STOPNITZER YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY
437 Connaught, Willowdale/Ont., M2R 2H4
Telephone: 223-1343
(75 male adults and seniors active as a mutual benefit society.)

TORONTO JEWISH ASSOCIATION OF HUNGARIAN DECENT
C/o 3565 Bathurst St., Toronto/Ont., M6A 2Y8
Telephone: 789-0954
(500 men and women of all ages; affiliated with New Horizon Day Centre for senior members.
Objective: to satisfy the cultural and social needs of Hungarian Jews residing in the City of Toronto. Charitable organisation, sending aid to Hungarian Jews in Israel, Hungary and Transylvania.)

TORONTO MEZICHER LANDSMANSCHAFT
135 Antibes Dr., #1001, Willowdale/Ont., M2R 2Z1
Telephone: 665-4393
(80 men and women who help serve new arrivals, supporting Israel and landsmanschaft in Israel.)

TZOSMERER FRIENDLY ASSOCIATION
35 Meadowbrook Rd., Toronto/Ont., M6B 2S5
Telephone: 787-2257
(59 men and women seniors participating in a 57-year old charitable group.)

WARSHAVER LODZER M.B.S.
2 Purdon Dr., Downsview/Ont., M3H 4W8
Telephone: 630-1793
(120 men active in charity work for Amal and other Israel projects.)

WEIRZBNIKER FRIENDLY M. B. S.
122 Collinson Blvd., Downsview/Ont., M3C 4C7
Telephone: 633-7936
(120 families providing social, charitable and cultural activities for members with a strong interest in Israel and the Jewish community; provisions for member burial plots.)

ZAGLEMBIER SOCIETY
272 Codsell Ave., Downsview/Ont., M3H 3X2
Telephone: 665-3331
(140 men and women (founded by Jews of the Polish province) active as a charitable society.)

South Africa's Landsmanshaften:
The following are further sources in the same context:

THE JEWISH BOARD OF DEPUTIES
Archives department:
P.O. Box 1180, Johannesburg, 2000
Republic of South Africa

ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS (former: SH'ERITH HAPLETAH)
P.O. Box 2779, Johannesburg, 2000
Republic of South Africa
Contact: Mr. Efrat, Tel. 616-2755
Mrs. V. Reitzer, Tel. 614-1145

SHATER & DISTRICT BENEVOLENT SOCIETY
303 Fairways, Oak road, Fairvale, 2191
Telephone: 640-2361
Republic of South Africa

MALATER & DISTRICT SOCIETY
P.O. Box 8553, Johannesburg, 2000
Republic of South Africa
Contact: Mr. I. Chaitov
Telephone: 786-6846

KRAKINOWER SICK BENEFIT SOCIETY
P.O. Box 4826, Johannesburg, 2000
Republic of South Africa
Contact: Mr. S. Seef
Telephone: 786-6878
We dug into our roots for an International Family Gathering

(...continued from SHEM TOV, Vol. IV, No. 2)

By Alan L. Simons

... Then Max proceeded to tell us the story of Leizer Gelernter...

Prior to World War I, Leizer and his wife Jane, with two of their children, (only two sons were born at that time), had packed up their belongings to head for Berlin. Leizer had decided to open a cigarette and cigar manufacturing company in Germany.

While there, he was visited by his very young nephew, Max Gelernter. Max had been 'sent' to Leizer's home to try and persuade Leizer to join some of the family in the U.S.A.

"None of the family really got on with uncle Leizer. He was quite aggressive and so pro British. He wouldn't hear of joining us," Max told us. Max remembered the street and number of Leizer's home. Some hours later, during a conversation with my mother in England, I was able to verify this address as correct.

My mother also mentioned to me that during the early 30's, two of Leizer's brothers visited him while they were on a business trip to London. Leizer had returned to England by then to become more active in the British socialist movement.

"I remember my great uncles getting into enormous arguments with my grandfather," my mother told me. They tried to persuade him again to move to the U.S.A., but he still refused."

My mother remembers quite vividly the scene. Leizer shouted about how good Britain had been to his family and he wasn't going to give it all up to go to capitalist America. Which, indeed was strange, for there wasn't a bigger capitalist than Leizer!

The two brothers from the U.S.A. must have realized they had lost the battle. They left London and by doing so Leizer's brothers were never again reunited. In fact, until my meeting with Max, my immediate family never realized we had any living relatives in the U.S.A.

All information on family members, past and current is updated at regular intervals by a family member living in France. She is assisted by a U.S. member in verifying the accuracy and completeness of the information already on record, and then additions and changes are transferred into the computer.

Every three years a print-out of the Gelernter Family Tree is available for distribution at the International Family Gathering. To further this end, in advance, family members are sent copies of the computer print-out of their immediate family segment, with a request for their assistance in filling in birthdates, check for corrections or additions and to add the names of spouses, wherever possible.

Each family member is given a coding number. For example: 16.55*. 16 refers to the generation; 55 to the individual person's identification number; * lost in the Holocaust; ** disappeared during the war, and so on.

Plans are now underway to hold the 1990 Gathering in Toronto. Thus, the tradition and values of the Gelernter family will continue.

However, it was the words of Rabbi Charles Gelernter that summed up the true spirit:

"At a recent Bar Mitzvah celebration, there were fifty relatives, sisters and brothers, uncles and aunts, grandparents and cousins. The grandmother bursting with pride remarked: 'Imagine all these relatives, and not one single friend.'

Here, however, we have family and friends we haven't met, and I look forward to the opportunity to get to know them all. For not only has my name not died, but I have a family and friends that won't allow it to die."

* * * *
In Search of...

SHEM TOV, the first Canadian Jewish Genealogical Newsletter, introduces what has developed into one of the most popular services for genealogists anywhere: search columns in which readers may advertise their personal field of research in terms of names and localities of families they are seeking, thus discovering others in pursuit of similar or identical families.

Although the enthusiastic proliferation of Jewish genealogical news bulletins all over North America may result in duplications, we feel very strongly, that in spite of this, much ground can still be broken in our own backyard, in a Canadian context so to speak. We may also consider that newsletters such as this will soon become permanent sources of reference, collectors' items in any Genealogical Library.

A search ad in which you can list surnames, towns, geographic areas and other personal information may contain up to 25 words at a cost of $5.00, each additional word will be charged at $0.25: abbreviations will be counted as words. Your own name, address and Tel. No. are free of course.

As a courtesy to others we strongly suggest to reply to any written inquiry, even if not able to assist.

Please submit your entry printed or typed, showing all SURNAMES underlined in CAPITAL LETTERS.

Cheques are payable to: Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto.
Address: P.O.Box 446, Station 'A', Willowdale/Ontario, M2N ST1, Canada.

The deadline for the Spring issue of SHEM TOV is January 31, 1989

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S-1/wi88
SHAHR, Yaakov
Rehov Matiyahu 31,
Bnei Brak, 51604 Israel
...I am preparing a large work on the history of the SHOHAR family.
I would sincerely appreciate members of the SHAHR family (whose family name is original and has never been changed or translated) sending me all known material on the ancestry of their family and their history so that I may complete the extensive family tree which is being prepared.
C-2/wi88
CULLMAN, Peter,
99 Yorkville Ave., Toronto,
M5R 3K5, Canada,
(416)964-2196
...Seeking information on the COHEN family from Zagare/Lithuania, many of whom immigrated to South Africa early 1900

S-2/wi88
SILVERSTEIN, Gary,
1990 Ford Drive, # 516
Cleveland, OH 44106, USA
(216)791-3622
....Seeking information on MORDECHAI SILVERSTEIN, died approximately 1963 in Toronto, might have been a butcher from Bodzentyn/Poland. He was a brother of NATHAN SILVERSTEIN who died in Toronto in 1934, son of Shlomo and Sara Silverstein, nee Blumstein.
C-2/wi88
CULLMAN, Peter,
99 Yorkville Ave., Toronto,
M5R 3K5, Canada,
(416)964-2196
...Seeking any decendants of Philip LURIE, born 1911 in Kursenai/Lithuania, who perished there in 1943. He was a son of Jankel LURIE whose other sons and daughters all immigrated to South Africa ca. 1900/05.

Marcus & Henriette PURSCH, nee Simonstein;
William & Hulda CAMINER, nee Simonstein;
Naumann & Minna WOLFF, nee Simonstein; all were born and married in Schneidemühl/Posen late last century, some subsequently moved to Berlin.

C-3/wi88
CULLMAN, Peter,
99 Yorkville Ave., Toronto,
M5R 3K5, Canada,
(416)964-2196
...Seeking any information on any decendants of Philip LURIE, born 1911 in Kursenai/Lithuania, who perished there in 1943. He was a son of Jankel LURIE whose other sons and daughters all immigrated to South Africa ca. 1900/05.

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SHEM TOV, the quarterly newsletter published by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto, is free to members; single and back issues are $4.00. Membership fees are $25.00 per calendar year. The Society was founded in 1985 and currently has over 40 members. Meetings are held September to June, usually on the last Wednesday of each month at Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue, 470 Glencairn Avenue, Toronto; notices of meetings are also announced in the Canadian Jewish News (Miriam Herman Column). Guests are always welcome.

The goals of the Society are to promote an awareness among Jewish community members of the possibilities of tracing their ancestors, to foster an ongoing interest in our heritage, to encourage the sharing of research techniques and to disseminate information on genealogical research to family historians and professional genealogists alike. SHEM TOV is dedicated to publish articles of personal research experiences, inform its members of new and tried pertinent research sources and act as part of a growing international network for experienced family historians and beginning genealogists.

The officers of the Society are:

- President: DR. ROLF LEDERER 922-5134
- Vice-President: JULES SAMSON 633-4557
- Project Consultant: ABE GOLDBERG 224-0161
- Secretary: SELMA SACROB 223-0192
- Archivist: BERNIE MORRIS 787-8982
- Phone Chairman: SYLVIA MORRIS 787-8982
- Treasurer: ANNETTE OTIS 782-4646
- Hon. Life President: RAYZEL ROBINSON

Contributors to this issue are: Rolf Lederer, Alan L. Simons, Peter Cullman.

If you wish to submit an article for the spring issue of SHEM TOV, please send typewritten material to the editor PETER CULLMAN, 99 Yorkville Avenue, Toronto/Ontario, M5R 3K5, Canada, Tel. (416) 964-2196.

Deadline: January 31, 1989

For subscriptions, membership or changes of address please contact the secretary, SELMA SACROB, P.O.Box 446, Station 'A', Willowdale/Ontario, M2N 5T1, Canada.

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