

L'Dor V'Dor

From Generation to Generation • The Newsletter of the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society

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My Observant, Devoted, Bootlegging Zayde

By: Michael R. Gendler, NJHS Board Member

I want to thank Reneé Corcoran for asking me to write about my mom's (may this once living angel of a wife and mother rest in peace) father, known to me as "Zayde Harry." Reneé became interested in him just from hearing tidbits from my dear long-time girlfriend, Denise Baccus (yes, I realize that Denise merits a special endurance award for putting up with me for so many years). Reneé was correct in thinking that this guy must have been quite a character in the context of local Jewish history. He was.

Harry Holdowsky was born in Poland in 1885 (perhaps 1884), served a stint in the Polish army and then came to America in 1913. There is some conflict in the records regarding the date when he arrived in the United States, but given the chronology of other events in his life it seems that 1913 is the most likely date for both the time of his coming to America as well as his marriage to Esther. He passed away in 1975 (about thirty years after his doctor told him that he better quit smoking cigars and drinking so much, and about ten years after the doctor passed).

The first vivid memory I have about him concerned one of the many times that my parents, my sister, and I drove from Omaha to Sioux City, Iowa to visit Bubbie (may she rest in peace) and Zayde Harry, especially during the 1950s and early 1960s. I was a child of 9 or 10 years of age. He asked me if I wanted to have a "drink." Now to Harry, a "drink" meant whiskey. I looked to my parents who said it would be ok. I imagined that I was about to be poured an ounce at the most, comparable to my allocation of wine at the extended family Seder given by my paternal grandparents. Instead, he took out an 8 oz. juice glass and practically filled it to the top! There was a solid 7 oz. of whiskey staring me in the face. I took the glass to my lips and drank a minute quantity of the stuff. My face turned red, I felt my esophagus burn progressively downward; and then I coughed and coughed again. Zayde laughed uproariously. His face seemed to break apart in the joy of seeing me so ill-equipped to handle the drink. He then proceeded to take the glass and consume the entire quantity in one gulp. His face contorted a bit, then he proclaimed, "Ah, that's good!" I could barely believe what I had just seen.

But then, there was quite a bit about Harry that was difficult to believe. A less shock-inducing but still fascinating memory from childhood concerns Harry's interest in seeing to it that his male grandchildren, when very young, were well-behaved. For him, this meant that they would fight with one another. Yes indeed. He would give a \$2 bill to me and to my cousin if we would do battle. He loved to watch fights and since there were no VCRs *Continued on page 6*



Harry & Esther Holdowsky

2017

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Letter to the Editor

Dear NJHS Member,

I was delighted to receive the beautiful history of the Jewish people of Council Bluffs. I am writing to correct an error.

My mother, Pauline, was the middle daughter of Grace and Lou Bernstein. On page 283 you have a picture of her labeled "Pauline Kulakofsky." My mother was never a Kulakofsky. She was married twice, first to my father, Herman Friedman, also from Council Bluffs (the youngest child of Fanny and Sam Friedman); and after Herman's death, to Alfred Mayer.

There is another, much more minor mistake. The picture of Lou and Grace Bernstein on page 282, is dated 1963 in the book, but I'm certain it is from their 40th anniversary party at Highland Country Club on June 29, 1953. Harold still has a good head of hair in the accompanying family picture on the next page -- Grace and Lou are wearing the same clothes -- but in his picture on page 262 from 1957, he's already well on his way to baldness.

- Richard Friedman

Welcome to Our Newest Members

We gratefully acknowledge and welcome the new members of the NJHS. Thank you for your generosity and support.

Jennie Gates Beckman

Dr. Alvin Burstein

Barbara & Jerry Cohen

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Dr. Jonathan & Renee Fox

Marsha & Ron Frank

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Bob Rifkin

Stuart Sloan

Jaynie Smeerin

NJHS EVENTS & PROGRAMS



Reneé Corcoran, Danny Cohn, & Shana Novak

An Evening With the Heirloomist

"An Evening With the Heirloomist" was held on Saturday, October 21 hosted by the NJHS at the Hot Shops Art Center. From 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. guests were treated to a modern photography exhibit and dessert reception. The event was generously underwritten by the Staenberg Family Foundation. The Heirloomist, Omaha native, Shana Novak spoke about the importance of preserving family heirlooms with photography. Ms. Novak transforms keepsakes into poignant works of art. A silent auction of Omaha heirlooms, mostly from the NJHS collection, was held with proceeds going to the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society.



Margo Parsow, Roger Suess, & Rocky Stern



Midge Bowers, Moline Cassman, Marty & Iris Ricks



Steve Riekes & Don Goldstein



Max Neiden on Dec. 12, 2017 at Tifereth Israel in Lincoln, NE

Remembering Max Neiden

By: Reneé Corcoran

The Nebraska Jewish Historical Society board and staff were very saddened to learn of the passing of Max Neiden. He was listed on our stationary as an honorary member of the NJHS board of directors as his friendship and support goes back to our founding in the 1980s. Max knew the importance of archiving and preserving our Jewish history for future generations.

Recently, I had the opportunity to spend time with him at Tifereth Israel in Lincoln. I was very impressed with his dedication to properly archiving the history of his beloved synagogue. Even as his health was failing he spent much of his time and effort sorting through records so that the history and membership of his synagogue would always remain part of the community. Max verified to me the importance of our job, preserving and recording our history for generations to come.

NJHS EVENTS & PROGRAMS

NJHS Book Launch

A book launch of Volume 15 of the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society's *Memories of the Jewish Midwest, Council Bluffs, Iowa, History & Stories*, was held on Sunday, October 15th at B'nai Israel Synagogue on Council Bluffs. Writer, Joey Hoffman, was on hand to sign copies of the book.

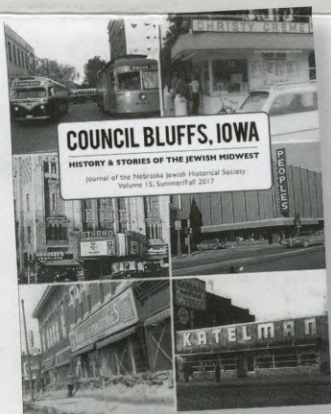
We extend our sincerest thanks to all those who shared their stories and participated in the creation of the book. *Memories of the Jewish Midwest, Council Bluffs, Iowa, History & Stories*, was made possible through the generosity of Ellie Batt, Patty Nogg, The Ted Seldin Family Fund and The Special Donor-Advised Fund of The Jewish Federation of Omaha.



Patty Nogg and Joey Hoffman at the NJHS book event at B'nai Israel



Joey Hoffman signs a book for Gail Krasne Kendel



Need an Extra Copy?

All NJHS members and book participants received a complimentary copy of *Council Bluffs, Iowa: History & Stories of the Jewish Midwest*.

Those needing additional copies can purchase them from:

- the NJHS office
- Nebraskajhs.com
- amazon.com



Patty Nogg, Michael Gallner and Bob Belgrade

LIFE & LEGACY™

Assuring JEWISH TOMORROWS

A program of the
HAROLD GRINSPOON
FOUNDATION

The Nebraska Jewish Historical Society is deeply grateful to all those that are participating in the Life & Legacy Program. Thank you for your commitment to the future of the NJHS and our entire Jewish community.

Michael & Sheri Abramson

Bob Belgrade

Sandra Belgrade

Mark & Jill Belmont

Bonnie Bloch

Beth Brodkey

Ron Brodkey

Norman & Eunice Denenberg
(In Blessed Memory)

Yonatan and Liz Feldstern

Joanne Freeman

Jerry Freeman

Lois Friedman (In Blessed
Memory) / Scott Friedman

Gary & Barbara Goldstein

Kathy Goldstein

Dora Goldstrom

Steven Gottlieb

Bonnie Kuklin Horwich

Jon Jabenis

Gary & Karen Javitch

Debbi Josephson

Jeff Kirshenbaum

Joe Kirshenbaum

Sharon Kirshenbaum

Janie Fox Kulakofsky

Rochelle (Rocky) Lewis

Mary-Beth Muskin

Jody & Neal (Buzz) Malashock

Jon & Denise Meyers

Robert Meyerson

Gary Nachman

E. R. "Bob" Newman

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Alan E. Potash

Marty and Iris Ricks

Rosalie and Milton Saylan

Carolyn "Rocky" Stern

Harry Weiner

Kathy Weiner

3 Anonymous

LIFE & LEGACY TESTIMONIALS

"I am very pleased to be participating in the Life & Legacy program for the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society. We need to make sure that the NJHS continues documenting, discussing and preserving the history of our community for our children. I think it is important to know our history and who we are to better interact with the greater Omaha, Nebraska and southwest Iowa community. I found it easy to formalize my commitment to the NJHS. I invite everyone to consider participating in this most worthwhile program."

- Anonymous

"I felt that participating in the Life & Legacy program was the right thing to do. I chose the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society because they perform a special function for our community. Families, who have lived out of town for several generations, can come back to Omaha and research accurate information about their families they forgot or were unknown."

- Harry M. Weiner

Letters of intent can be amended to include the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society in your afterlife gifts. If you wish to change your letter of intent please contact Margo Parsow at (402) 334-6432.

around then, we served as entertainment for him. Now, he did not wish to (necessarily) see blood. Vigorous wrestling was sufficient as long as we would apply painful holds on one another every so often. We earned those two bucks. And boy did we have fun doing it. I don't know how much this influenced my lifelong love of wrestling and boxing, (I introduced my nephew to boxing gloves at age 6 and we boxed regularly until he was about 16 and was able to and did render me unconscious—I passed out from exhaustion. My doctor suggested that I, at age 58, stop boxing 16 year olds. I obeyed.) but it certainly could not have hurt!

Fighting interested Harry, but it definitely took a back seat to booze. He was an energetic man of 35 when Prohibition became the law of the land in 1920. He saw an opportunity and he reached for it! He started out small. My mother remembered when, as a little girl, her dad would take his five daughters (he had no sons) all dressed up for a ride on Sunday. The ride had a very special purpose, however. Harry had the girls sitting on hollowed out seats, under which he stored bottles of illegal alcohol obtained from a supplier. He would make a few deliveries as they took their Sunday morning rides. Customers included members of the police force. His activities in this arena were a microcosm of why Prohibition would not work in America. Too many people demanded the product and in this great country, where the powers of government were not absolute, there were plenty of people willing to risk breaking the law. (I always told my college history students that it would be quite easy to stop illegal alcohol and other drug use if the power of government were unlimited and had no sense of morality. All we need to do is punish the first offense of illegal drug or alcohol sales with an immediate death penalty. It worked in China to stop opium addiction. Thank heavens we do not use such a solution here.

As the decade moved on, so did Harry. By 1924, according to the Des Moines Evening Tribune, December 10, 1924, he and a friend, Harry Kass, were "serving jail sentences for bootlegging." But Harry would not let this one sit. He accused a federal prohibition agent, C. C. Metz and another man with having accepted \$500.00 for protection money, which evidently did not protect Harry! The story was checked out and verified; the federal agent was charged as well for taking the money.

By April of 1927, the Des Moines Register would include the article on the arrest of "the head of a big wholesale liquor ring" that you see at right. That "head" would be my Zayde. Note that he had been "arrested on numerous occasions in recent years." The article also mentions that

LIQUOR RING IS PROBED

Arrests Are Made at Sioux City in Cleanup.

Sioux City, Ia., April 19 (A.P.)—Arrest of two more men, including Harry Holdowsky, said by authorities to be head of a big wholesale liquor ring, was announced by federal prohibition agents as a climax to a series of raids staged during last week.

Holdowsky, who had been arrested on liquor charges on numerous occasions in recent years, was generally understood to have withdrawn from the illicit booze business since he had purchased a confectionery store, but federal men say they have enough evidence to convict him of recent violations of the prohibition law.

The other man arrested was William Margolles. Both have been charged with conspiracy to violate the federal liquor laws. Holdowsky

was arraigned before United States Commissioner A. W. Johnson and was released under a \$3,000 bond. Margolles will be arraigned later.

BELMOND CITY COUNCIL SCRAPE FINALLY ENDS

Belmond, Ia., April 19 (A.P.)—Bickerings, which had obstructed administration of this city's business for the last year and resulted in the resignations of four councilmen April 9, appeared to have been ended today following the appointment of four new councilmen last night.

Thomas McNulty, the remaining member of the council, appointed F. L. Mortimer and the two named P. Barry. These three men then named Louis Moe and the four asked E. E. Boughton to fill the final vacancy.

Mayor A. E. Russell's financial policies had been declared extravagant by the four resigned members, I. H. Benson, John Dorincamp, Lad Simerson and Henry Groen.

he had purchased a "confectionary store." This fits with the identification of his occupation listed as "baker" in the 1920 census. His small bakery shop would also provide useful experience for what would become his longtime ownership of the "Sunset Café" years later at 2627 Pierce Street.

By September 30, 1927, the same paper would refer to him as a "notorious Sioux City bootlegger." Here, he is accused of laughing at two police officers when he was arrested for a serious traffic violation. Harry told the officers

that he had things all fixed at the station. Sure enough, Acting Captain Marcus Crost tore up the ticket as he had done with five others that Harry had accumulated. Soon, Crost himself faced five charges of misconduct!

My grandfather's love affair with whiskey would continue all of his life. With him, the beverage surely lived up to the root meaning of the word "whiskey" . . . "water of life." He drank about one quart per day. His liver was no doubt a special one. When he was hospitalized after a traffic accident (he ran into a lamp post) at age 85, he had to be forced to take alcohol. For once, he did not feel like drinking, but his system demanded it. He pulled through!

Clearly, Harry did not do everything by the book. He wrote his own. He even managed to meld his identity as

Sioux City Policeman Faces Five Charges

(Register's Special Iowa News Service.)

Sioux City, Sept. 29.—Marcus Crost, acting captain and veteran police officer, faces five charges of misconduct as the result of affidavits filed before the city civil service commission by Traffic Officers Bert Frink and Tom Barron. Crost is accused by Barron of tearing up several arrest slips for traffic violations served on Harry Holdowsky, notorious Sioux City bootlegger. The cop alleged the bootlegger laughed at him when arrested and said, "I've got things fixed at the station." Date for hearing of charges against Crost has not been set.

an Orthodox Jew with his jail terms. He bribed police with whiskey in order to permit him to avoid spending time in jail during Jewish holidays. He also was able to bring kosher food into the local jail. But his devotion to Jewish life was no joke. Every time he saw me his first question was "Do you lay tefillin every morning?" I hated telling him "no" but did not want to lie to him either. When I told him the unpleasant truth he did not appear pleased.

Perhaps the most vivid and dramatic example of his love and respect for Jewish law manifested itself at his restaurant, the "Sunset Café." He sold both kosher and non-kosher meat by the late 1940s, keeping them carefully apart. He cheerfully sold kosher meat to Jews and non-kosher (or kosher) meat to non-Jews. However, when Jews asked to purchase non-kosher meat, he would sell it to them, but as they left, he would say to his quite stunned customer, "Choke on it!" So much for "the customer is always right." He would, however, only use such a harsh remonstrance to male customers who made such a purchase. In his own way, this was a great example of Harry's integrity regarding his principles. He was willing to lose customers rather than see men blatantly violate kashrut.

Yes, he could be a pretty wild and wooly character. But at his center there was a real love of tradition and life at home. He lived at 603 Iowa Street in Sioux City according to the 1920 Census. He and his wife would remain in that home for their entire lives. For Harry, one of the real joys of life at home included playing cards with his buddies. Every time that I visited him, he could be found in the basement with his friends. When it came time for dinner, his wife would press a button to activate the intercom that was installed there, and call loudly, "Harry, dinner." And upstairs he would come with that wonderful half-smile that was usually on his face.

If Harry was around today I have no doubt that he would find little interest in the new course offered at Brown University on how to reduce what the professor perceives as excessive masculinity in our society. He would, however, find it to be ludicrous (he would be correct but that is another article). To Harry there were several benchmarks that he equated with masculinity. He loved his pick-up trucks. Later in his life when asked why he never drove cars, I heard him say that cars were for sissies. He loved his TRUCK! Another way he liked to put it was as follows when asked about getting a Cadillac sedan: "I'd not give two cents for the whole goddamn thing." At times he also equated drinking and even spending some time in jail with being a man.

For Harry, a real man would not back down if others were taking what rightfully belonged to you! According to the Lincoln Sunday Journal and Star, on Friday evening, December 11, 1953, when Harry was 69 or 70 years old (some debate about his birthdate) two gunmen confronted him as he was walking to his home after parking his truck in the garage. At gunpoint they took the cash receipts from his restaurant that day (\$510). According to my mother, after they took the money they ran to their car to get away. So what did Harry do? He gave chase! Shaking his fist and yelling "you sons of bitches," he hoped to catch them. Thank heavens he did not succeed. They were armed. He was not! That did not seem to bother him in the least! He did keep a .32 semi-automatic pistol in the restaurant, but did not have it on him that evening. Incidentally, I was fortunate enough to take possession of the gun after Harry passed away. He had purchased one heck of a fine pistol (a CZ 27, a Czech weapon that was made in the 1930s; it has incredible balance and still fires with great accuracy (photo below). If you look closely or enlarge the photo you can see the markings made by the Nazis just above the grip and on the silver barrel. They appropriated the Czech arms industry after they occupied the country in March of 1939. This gun was most likely used by police officers.



CZ 27 pistol owned by Harry

Harry loved hearing, a few years later, about how my father (may this wonderful man rest in peace) responded to a phone threat on him and on his whole family from a man who seemed temporarily insane. He told my dad that he was now going to be looking for him and was going to kill him. My father immediately responded that he did not need to look for him. He was coming right over with a gun to blow his head off. The man then got

panicky, gave his brother the phone who begged my dad to do his brother no harm. Dad said he would see what happened. Still, my father took his handgun, got in the car and drove around the man's house. End of threat forever. (The cause of the threat was due to the man having had his refrigerator repossessed. He thought that my dad, who had nothing to do with it, was the cause. It was a matter of paying the bank.) As my father told Harry the story, Zayde was absolutely entranced. He seemed to lose a little bit of interest only when my father told us that this was not a way to handle most threats. He normally would have called the police, but just had a feeling that this man would respond well to an emotional shock. He was right! My father happened to encounter the guy in Benson a couple of months later. The man literally fled. Harry relished hearing this as well.

On a different level, a couple of years earlier, an employee at his restaurant, a cashier, tried to steal some cash. Harry caught him and fired him right in front of others in the restaurant. As he did so he explained just why he was being dismissed. Shortly thereafter, (August 31, 1951) the man filed a \$75,000 lawsuit against Harry for slander! He argued that by accusing him of stealing \$7.50 while others overheard made it nearly impossible for him to get another job. Fortunately, for the sake of justice, the lawsuit was overturned.

Finally, to Harry, to be a man meant to work and to work hard. I don't recall that he ever took what is conventionally called a "vacation." Twelve-hour days were routine, and 15 hours not so unusual. My mother recalled a time when he cut his arm on the meat slicer. It was a very deep cut. But Harry simply came home, wrapped it with cloth and went back to work. I would probably take off at least two days. Not Harry.

So, how does one place a man like this in a moral context? For me, Harry provided lots of life lessons and good reasons to be proud of him as my Zayde. With regard to his illegal actions during Prohibition, it is clear to me that what he did was not at all wrong in itself ("malum in se" as the jurists say) but simply wrong because a law was written against it. After 1933 everything that he did under Prohibition was completely legal. He filled what was a major demand for a product that could produce a great deal of pleasure when used in moderation as well as misery when used to excess, but that was a matter of the buyer's responsibility. The product itself is not evil. In fact, even the Puritans referred to alcohol as "The Good Creature of God."

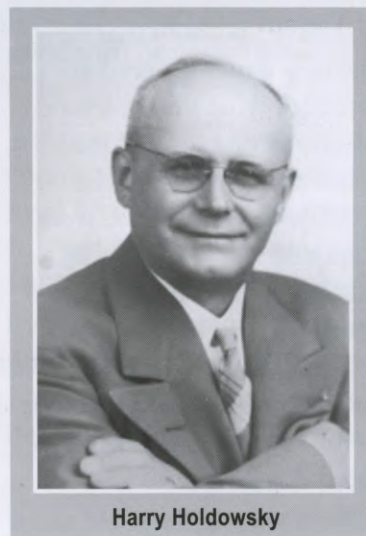
Perhaps worth adding, Harry showed lots of initiative and physical courage as he went out into the world of

illegal booze given some of the potential dangers that abounded. Such obstacles did not seem to matter even slightly to him as he provided for his wife and five daughters.

As I noted before, something that never left Harry was that radiant face and a smile that greeted me whenever I visited. This was a man who embraced the world around him and never tired of working at his restaurant to please his customers. Interestingly, my mother met my father at the Sunset Café while she was working there as a cashier. Shortly after they started dating, her father, Harry, stated that he liked her new man because he seemed to eat so heartily at the restaurant. Harry loved to watch people enjoy his cooking and what is more, to enjoy life with the same exuberance that he gave to it.

One of my mother's last memories before she passed away was of her dear father. By that time, she had lost much of her memory and in fact no longer knew who I was. One of the days when I came to the Blumkin Home to see her she asked me directly who I was. I told her that I was her son. She said that she did not have any kids yet. So I asked her to try and guess who I was. I went on to try out some possibilities. First I asked, "Am I your brother?" She said, "I don't have any brothers!" This was in fact true. My next question was if I was her sister. She laughed and said that I was not a woman. I tried uncle, to which she said "um, no." Then the real shocker came up. I asked my mom if she thought that I was her father. Her answer would keep me laughing all day. She replied, firmly, "NO! He was REALLY good looking!!" Harry's power to shake things up never slowed down even years after his passing. What a Zayde!

Thank you to Jeff Aizenberg, Harry's grandson and my cousin, who kindly provided the photos of Harry and Esther Holdowsky.



Harry Holdowsky

**Do you enjoy
these stories?**

**Consider
submitting a
story of your
family.**

Herman Cohn -- Retailer and Hotelier Extraordinaire

By: *Oliver B. Pollak*

While preparing "Welcome to Omaha," set to appear in spring 2018, I accumulated more information from the Omaha World Herald and Omaha Daily Bee on Herman Cohn and Harry A. Wolf. They were two Omaha Jews heavily invested in hotels.

Herman Cohn born in Germany on October 5, 1856, came to America in 1876 and worked for Morris Levy in his clothing store in Olean, New York. Levy, born in Germany in 1844, came to America in 1866. Levy may have started as a peddler. After five years Levy bought an interest in the firm. Cohn helped Levy open clothing stores in Colorado, New Mexico, Kansas City, and Portland. Levy pioneered the "one price" selling system. Both settled in Omaha in 1886.

Levy served as President of Nebraska Clothing Company, Cohn as Vice President. They out-grew their 14th and Douglas location and in 1898 moved to 15th and Farnam where Nebraska Clothing became a fixture. Levy retired in 1912. Nebraska Clothing closed its doors in 1974. In 1977 the W.L. Clark Library opened on the property.

Herman was an incorporator of the Boston Store in 1890 along with Jonas L. Brandeis, Arthur D. Brandeis, Emil Brandeis and Rohrbaugh. Herman learned retailing from Morris Levy and Jonas Brandeis. They were consummate brick and mortar salesmen, retailers, and merchandisers. Their emphasis on competitive prices and quality help explain their longevity. Public spirit and generosity is noted by his \$40 contribution to the Auditorium Brick Fund and 1906 proposal offering rent free space to the Grain Exchange trading room.

In 1890 Herman married the boss's daughter, Sarah Brandeis. Sarah was the daughter of Jonas Leopold Brandeis, founder of Brandeis. Jonas died in 1903 with an estate value at \$200,000. He left his daughter Sarah \$25,000.

In April 1906 Cohn purchased the block on 16th Street between Capitol and Davenport, a "long neglected block," from Parmalee and O. C. Redick for \$135,000 and \$13,290. The original owners paid \$90 for the two lots. The Omaha Daily Bee reported, "Mr. Cohn does not believe in speculation, but in permanent investment and improvement." The World-Herald writer reported that Thomas H. McCague of McCague Investment Company, agents for Cohn said, "This is not a Union Pacific deal, but is as said a personal investment of Mr. Cohn's and marks an important new era for North 16th Street." Current tenants were asked to vacate.

Record Your Story

Have you recorded your oral history? It is one of the greatest gifts you can give them. The NJHS oral history interviews are a very important and valuable part of our archival collection. If you or a family member would like to record your history, contact the NJHS office at (402) 334-6442. Do it for you, for your children and grandchildren!

Help Us Preserve Our History

The NJHS is seeking personal and family papers as well as photographs and memorabilia of synagogues, Jewish organizations and businesses of Nebraska and Council Bluffs, Iowa. Please contact the office at (402) 334-6441 or njhs@jewishomaha.org for further information.

Does NJHS Have Your Current E-mail Address?

Is your e-mail address current? If you have a new e-mail address, or you have recently changed providers, please let us know. Send an e-mail to Kathy Weiner at kweiner@jewishomaha.org and let her know your updated information. We are going to be electronically sending e-mail from time to time, so please don't be left behind! Send us your current information today!

Are You Moving?

If you are moving residences, please notify us of your address change. Please call the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society office at (402) 334-6441 or send us an e-mail! Reach us at njhs@jewishomaha.org.



Loyal vacillated on the building's size, height and purpose. Three, four or five stories, partly fire proof or 100% fire proof, retail, offices or hotel. Cohn settled on a "first class hotel." The "cuisine will be unsurpassed by any in the entire west. Mr. Cohn promises that the hotel lobby will rival any west of Chicago."

The sketch by architect John Latenser in the Daily Bee was three stories in height. The concrete piers of the "foundation will be built heavy enough to support five stories." The building was to cost \$425,000 not including the land.

As a side note, 1907 was a busy year for issuing building permits for temples and synagogues: Temple Israel, 29th and Jackson, \$55,000; Russian Jewish Congregation of Israel, 21st and Chicago, \$25,000; and Russian Jewish Congregation on 19th and Cuming, \$5,000. The Union Pacific Headquarters Building, New Masonic Temple and YMCA were also on the draftsman's table.

The idea of a five stories emerged before building started in 1907, 1909, and again in 1923. They produced a postcard with five stories. It would increase capacity from about 150 rooms to 300. Despite postcards it did not happen.

First floor rental was slated to be ready in November 1907. The initial tenants included: Howell Drug Co.; Goodyear Raincoat Co.; Gustafson & Henricks Jewelers; Herzog Tailoring; Mrs. Huster; Millinery Hats, Stephen & Smith; Manhattan Shirts and Stetson Hats; Hotel Loyal Barbershop with manicuring, chiropodist and cigars; Chabot Shoes and Loyal Buffet.

The opening of a hotel was usually accompanied by a full page announcement in the newspaper devoted to identifying the vendors who contributed to the hotel's construction and furnishing. Brandeis provided carpets, rugs, draperies and window shades; Gustafson silverware; Miller, Stewart & Beaton, furniture; Omaha Crockery; Burgess-Granden; Electric Lighting Fixtures and G. R. Morris, decoration.

Herman opened the Loyal Hotel at 211 North 16th Street in March 1908. The Hotel was razed in 1976. The land is adjacent to parking lots, Pioneer Courage Park and the name changing Hilton, Red Lion and Double Tree Hotel.

The Cohn's social life appeared regularly in the Omaha World Herald's "In Society", "Society", "Local Brevities" and "Personal" columns. They moved from 25th Ave. to 116 S. 32nd Ave. Their house cost \$16,000, the most expensive built in 1895, referred to as a mansion and an elegant home.

Entertainments included high five, cards, bridge, whist and elaborate dinners. The names Brandeis and Levy and their visiting New York and Wisconsin relatives appear frequently in guest lists published in the paper. In 1895 a "sumptuous repast was served at midnight." A sprained ankle was reported in 1898, and in 1902 a

slingshot gone awry in the eye. In 1906 "Mrs. Herman Cohn gave a dinner and automobile party (picnic and tailgate?) in honor of her niece Miss Lillian Rogers of New York City." They hosted parties for out of town guests, summered in the east and in Wisconsin. Sarah was from Manitowoc. They spent several months in 1908 in Europe, visiting London, Paris and Berlin. Their sons stayed for a year to learn German. At an event in 1910 Mrs. Sarah Cohn wore a "Parisian costume, decollete of pale blue satin with overdress of silver grey chiffon embroidered in design of silver, with diamond ornaments and violets." Sarah was a Lady in Waiting in the Aksarben Court and active in Temple Israel.

On March 26, 1911, Herman and his nineteen-year old son Loyal, for whom he named the hotel, were walking when they were accosted. Herman felled at the "hands of a nervous amateur highwayman with a defective revolver." The assailant fled, discarding the faulty pistol, which was later found. There were arrests but no indictments. Herman Cohn was dead at 55. A \$3,700 reward offered for information leading to culprit's arrest and conviction went uncollected.

In June 1911 Sarah sold the house, "one of the most beautiful of the West Farnam district," to E. M. F. Leflang from Lexington for \$25,000. She listed her "almost new" Stevens-Duryea five passenger automobile for sale. She went to Europe with her children where they expected "to remain for two or three years."

Sarah's grief was compounded by the death of her older brother, Emil Brandeis, who perished in the sinking of the Titanic in April 1912. Sarah gave the hotel to Loyal and Walter. The brothers sold it to H. R. Harper and C. J. Kriel in 1919. Loyal purchased the hotel lease in 1923 and announced his "Active and Direct Management" of the hotel. Loyal placed Joy Sutphen in charge of his earlier business, Interstate Advertising Service. He contemplated adding two or three more stories when building prices declined.

Sarah Cohn died in her home in the Loyal Hotel in 1936. Loyal, born in 1892, died at the age of 71 in 1963. Walter born in 1894, changed his name from Cohn to Brandeis, died in 1962 at age 68. They were survived by their spouses, Lorene and Gladys. They had no children.

Robert Dorr's "How Did Company Slide From the Top" appeared in the April 17, 1977 World-Herald.

In 1912 William L. Holtzman and John Swanson purchased Nebraska Clothing. In 1940 W. Otto Swanson, maternal grandfather of Brad, Carl and Judge Mark W. Ashford, bought out Holtzman.

When the chatty Frances Morearty wrote Omaha Memories; Recollections of events, men and affairs in Omaha from 1879 to 1917, he reported in 1917 that Cohn's "murderer was never apprehended." Former World-Herald city editor, Ben F. Sylvester, wrote in "The Changing Times," the last installment of the "West Farnam Story," on May 9, 1965, "The murder was never solved." Over a century later it remains a cold case.

The downtown Omaha icons, Nebraska Clothing Company, Loyal Hotel and Brandeis stores, are preserved in promotional postcards produced by the Loyal and Brandeis, fourteen of which are in "Welcome to Omaha."



Headstone of Herman Cohn



Hotel Loyal, 16th and Capitol, Omaha

Genealogy Corner

By: *Arnold Garson*

DNA testing is one of the most powerful tools available to trace ancestors and connect with relatives. It is also complicated and controversial.

Contrary to popular belief, DNA is not a recent discovery. It was first identified about 150 years ago. But the breakthroughs that set the framework for today's understanding of genetic structure and for the use of genetic testing to find family members were gradual and slow in coming. The first accurate DNA testing was used for paternity testing and criminal investigation in the mid-1980s. But it was only about 10 years ago that DNA testing began to become widely used in genealogy.

Today, more than 6 million people have participated in DNA testing for genealogical purposes. Major players in the world of genealogical DNA testing are Ancestry DNA, 23andMe, My Heritage and Family Tree DNA. The cost can range from about \$60 to \$100 for genealogy testing with special pricing toward the lower end of this spectrum frequently available. (23andMe also offers health and wellness testing for an additional \$100). Although the saliva-based DNA test is simple to self-administer, it can take up to 8 weeks or so to get results. Each of the testing companies can be found online, and each has a specialized emphasis and presents its information to users in completely different formats. There's also a learning curve in being able to evaluate, understand and use the results.

But the results can be amazing.

- Tammy Makram was abandoned as a new-born infant on a hospital doorstep in St. Paul, Minnesota on Christmas Eve in 1961. She grew up with an adoptive family in Luverne, Minnesota. A few years ago, she turned to DNA testing to try to find her birth mother. Ultimately, she located both of her birth parents and nine siblings or half-siblings – and, she discovered that she has Jewish ancestry.

- Alex Kafri and his sister, Dorit Yarom, grew up in Israel thinking that their parents were the only members of their family who had survived the Holocaust. But years after their parents' deaths, Alex and Dorit turned to DNA testing to see if somehow, somewhere, they happened to have a few living

relatives. Little did they know. In July 2017, 500 of their relatives from 15 countries gathered with them for a reunion in London.

I have used two of the DNA testing services, Ancestry and 23andMe, a company whose name is derived from the fact that there are 23 pairs of chromosomes in a human cell. Each company has provided me with contact information for more than 1,000 people who might be related to me – although the great bulk of them probably aren't; more about this below.

My most interesting DNA discovery was Ann Greenstone Delaney, a previously unknown third cousin once removed who lives in Southern California. Her paternal grandfather (Harry Greenstone) and my great-grandfather (Solomon Greenstone of Lincoln) were brothers, about 20 years apart in age. I had no idea that Solomon even had a younger brother, and Ann knew nothing of her grandfather having an older brother – not to mention two sisters. We ultimately verified the relationship through death certificates and a Social Security application form.

But here's the best part: Ann had only two photos of her grandfather, who died in 1940, seven years before she was born. Several months after she sent me the photos, I was looking through one of my mother's old photo albums and . . . you guessed it: There he was, Harry Greenstone, up to then an unidentified figure in a couple of old family photos. One photo showed him with my parents, my paternal grandmother (Harry's niece) and other family members in Lincoln in April 1938. Ann suddenly had two more photos of her grandfather and I suddenly had a whole new family line connected to one of my great-grandparents.

DNA results can be presented by the testing companies in various ways. One method is to show the percentage of the total DNA makeup the customer shares with another individual. Thus, my granddaughter, Cymry, shares 26.7 percent of my DNA makeup. Ann Greenstone Delaney shares 1.98 percent of my DNA makeup. 23andMe uses this percentage system. Another way is to show the number of matching centimorgans (cM). A centimorgan is a unit for measuring genetic linkage. Ancestry uses the centimorgan approach. My highest centimorgan match on Ancestry is with a third cousin in Omaha I

discovered just a few months ago. She is Cheryl Phillips, and we have 165 centimorgans of identical DNA because Cheryl's great-grandfather, Abraham Ellis, and my great-grandmother, Lena (Ellis) Greenstone, were brother and sister.

The problem with DNA test results for Jews is that there are so many matches. Among the thousands of matches I have on Ancestry and 23andMe, I have identified only about 15-20 actual relatives -- 2d cousins or 1st cousins once removed on down to 4th cousins and 4th cousins once removed.

The problem is that all Ashkenazi Jews, who account for about 10 million of the world's 15 million Jews today, trace their roots to a group of 330-350 people who lived in a nomadic tribe in Eastern Europe in the middle ages -- roughly 600 to 800 years ago. With such a small originating group, intermarriage among close family members, such as first cousins, flourished for many generations. The result is that all Ashkenazi Jews today carry a baseline of shared DNA with most other Ashkenazi Jews tracing back to the Middle Ages. Putting it another way, we Ashkenazim are virtually all something like 30th cousins with each other. This means that to find close relatives among the test results you need to look most closely at those persons with the most shared DNA. There are exceptions, of course -- I have one fourth cousin once removed with whom I share a scant 16.9 centimorgans of DNA (Hello, Julie Krasne) -- but most of the relationships are found toward the top of the match lists.

Finally, any discussion of DNA testing is not complete without a mention of the controversy surrounding such testing. There are those who believe that it's a risky business because the testing companies end up in possession of your DNA. This can include information regarding certain health conditions, such as having a higher-than-average risk for Parkinson's disease or late-onset Alzheimer's disease. Do you really want health or life insurance companies -- or even prospective employers -- to somehow end up in possession of that kind of information?

The other side of this argument is that the testing companies have said they don't and won't provide such information to any third parties -- and there is no evidence that this has happened. Moreover, every testing company knows that if it ever abused its access to individual test results by providing them to third

parties, they essentially would be putting themselves out of business.

Security breaches, of course, always are possible. But the economic incentive for a hacker seems to be lacking because the likelihood of finding a buyer for the stolen information seems virtually nonexistent. Insurance companies and employers know that if they purchased such information through hackers, it would likely become known at some point and they would face a ruinous, world-class public relations catastrophe.

The same risks, moreover, exist in having medical records on file with pharmacies, hospitals and other health care providers.

There's also the issue of the testing companies using results -- anonymously -- for research purposes without compensation to those whose results they have used.

My bottom line is that I have no problem with my test results being used anonymously for research without compensation to me, and, while I concede that everyone must make the testing decision for themselves, I believe the other risks are extremely minimal. And so, considering the benefits I get from the tests and the fact that it's impossible to eliminate all risks from our lives, I tip strongly toward favoring the tests.

Arnold Garson, who grew up in Lincoln, is a retired journalist and media executive who has researched and written extensively about family history for his family and others. He resides in Sioux Falls, SD and can be reached at ahgarson@gmail.com.



Front row at right with pipe: Harry Greenstone, Front row from left: Sam Garson (Harry's great-nephew) and Sam's mother, Eva Greenstone Garson (Harry's Niece); Back row from left: Sam's wife, Celia, Celia's mother, Anna Stine, and Minnie Greenstone Sherman (Harry's great-niece).

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JON MEYERS *for Receiving the Phil & Terri Schrager Spirit of Federation Award* by Sandra Belgrade

SHARON KIRSCHENBAUM *For Receiving the Phil & Terri Schrager Spirit of Federation Award* by Sandra Belgrade

B'nai Mitzvah

NANCY RIPS by Marlene & Don Dandy, Beth Staenberg, Midge & Bill Bowers, Sandra Belgrade, Renee Corcoran, Jenny & Peter Gordon, Shelley & Skip Stern

TOM FELLMAN by Marlene & Don Dandy, Midge & Bill Bowers, Sandra Belgrade

Anniversary

HAROLD & MILLIE BERNSTEIN by Sue & David Millward, Anne & Bruce Shackman, Kevee Kirshenbaum

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Yahrzeit

ESTHER & ELLEN CANAR, HARVEY ROFFMAN by Mark Roffman

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Appreciation

BOB BELGRADE for Photographs by Beth Staenberg

Births

KAREN & GARY JAVITCH FOR THEIR GRANDSON NOAH by NJHS Board & Staff



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important history.**

Remember the Nebraska Jewish
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The mission of the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society is to preserve the histories of the Jewish families who settled in Nebraska and Council Bluffs, Iowa. The NJHS will promote the acquisition, cataloging and use of the collected materials which depict this history by: participating in conferences; issuing publications to members and professionals; fostering research; and promoting museum projects and related education and cultural activities.

Contact us!

HOURS OF OPERATION:

Monday – Thursday
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

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Whatever the occasion, the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society will help you honor a friend or loved one, or acknowledge a special event.

We have available for all occasions, cards for donations of \$5, \$10 and up. We also have a \$25 packet that consists of six \$5 cards. Please use this form to make your donation.

Once we receive your donation information, a card will be sent to the family or person commemorated.

Please make your checks payable to the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society. Return completed form and payment to NJHS, 333 South 132nd Street, Omaha, NE 68154.

Donations are also accepted over the phone. Call the NJHS offices Monday through Thursday, at (402) 334-6441 / 6442 between 10:00 a.m. & 4:00 p.m.

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