

L'Dor V'Dor

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

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Remembering NJHS Past President & Friend Louise Abrahamson 1919-2015



Louise with Milt & Rosalie Saylan



George Shafer, Helen Epstein & Louise in 2008 at a NJHS Event.



Louise with Debbie Friedman at the NJHS Annual meeting in 1993.



Louise at NJHS Annual meeting in 1991.



Louise's Clothesline at Boys Town with son's Steve & Hugh.



Louise in 1982

In March, 2015, the NJHS lost a very dear and loyal friend. Louise Abrahamson served as president of the board 3 times. She would say that the Historical Society was her passion. Her guidance and dedication to the NJHS will be greatly missed and never forgotten.

**2015 – 2016
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**A Message From Our Board President,
Bob Belgrade**

Thank you very much for your continuing support of our Nebraska Jewish Historical Society. The Historical Society is now in its 33rd year of service collecting the History of Jews in Nebraska and Western Iowa.

Over these years, thanks to our members and community, we continue to collect, maintain and share the Jewish History of our area. Here is a short reminder of the work we do:

We accept your historical artifacts, pictures and documents. They are cataloged and stored in proper containers in a climate controlled environment.

We have collected over 800 oral and video history conversations with members of our community who have sat down with the NJHS to share their memories of their families and growing up in Nebraska and Iowa. Many of these folks are no longer here in person, but their voices and videos live on sharing into the future.

If you have not shared your history with the Historical Society, please consider sitting down with one of our friendly interviewers. It, usually, only takes about an hour. There is no charge and we will make copies of your interview for you to give to your family. What a great benefit to you and our community!

We have produced many exhibits from our archives. You may remember the exhibits of "24th Street", the "History of Rabbis in Omaha", and "The Brandeis Stores" to name a few. As you walk the halls of our Jewish Community Center, I am sure you will notice much more of our work.

We maintain the Henry and Dorothy Riekes Museum at the front door of the JCC. It contains artifacts from the former Kapulier Synagogue in Omaha and a visual history of the synagogues of Omaha. Please make a point to visit it when you have a chance!

We have produced many "Memories of the Jewish Midwest" Journals with more in depth research content. These subjects have included "Jewish South Omaha", "Mom and Pop Grocery Stores" and many biographies of Jewish Nebraskans and Iowans. The next Journal, currently being written, is about the History of the Jews of Council Bluffs.

We send our members regular Newsletter, just like this one, periodically.

Our website, www.NebraskaJHS.com is a great resource too. We have collected cemetery and burial information that is searchable on this website. You can look up someone by name and see where they are buried and other information when available.

Our collection is used, frequently, as a research source for people all over the world.

As you can see, we try to do A LOT of good work with very limited funds and resources.

I am most thankful for you, our members, receiving this newsletter. I always want you to be proud of the great work that is being done by our Nebraska Jewish Historical Society and of the support that you give to us. The investment of your gifts of time, artifacts, funds and history are used wisely!

Save the Date

October 18, 2015

NJHS Annual Meeting: *The Boomer Years*

2:00 PM – 4:00 p.m. | JCC Auditorium

Do you remember the curly q fries at Tiner's? Did you go to the Blackstone Hotel after the movies on Saturday nights? Or watching the first man to land on the moon? Or the Beatles? Spend a Sunday afternoon reminiscing with us.

NJHS Wins Award



The Nebraska Jewish Historical Society and Steve Riekes were recipients of the 2014-2015 Jewish Federation of Omaha Community Service Program Award for the Omaha Jewish Reunion. Also receiving the Award this year was Typecast Recast and Fabric of Survival.

Welcome To Our Newest Members

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

Karen Schlüssel

Mary Deupree

Nebraska Jewish Historical Society Mission Statement

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.

Stay in Touch

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. E-mail Kathy at the NJHS office at kweiner@jewishomaha.org and let her know your updated information. We are going to be electronically sending mail from time to time, so please don't be left out or behind – send your current information today!

Are You Moving?

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

Record Your Story

Have you recorded your oral history for your children and grandchildren? 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. Contact the office at (402) 334-6441 or e-mail njhs@jewishomaha.org for further information.

We Need Geeks!

Do you have a son, daughter, or grandchild that would be willing to volunteer time to help the NJHS with social media? If you know of someone please call us at (402) 334-6442 or e-mail at njhs@jewishomaha.org.



The “Little Sheel” on 25th & Seward

By: “Big” Joe Kirshenbaum

First let me explain the difference between “Sheel” & “Shul” – there is none. They both mean the same thing - Synagogue. A synagogue is called either a Shul or a Sheel in Yiddish, with the difference in the pronunciation. Depending on the part of Russia or Europe the person is from. I hope you are not confused – just remember they mean the same thing. A synagogue means “Sheel” or Shul” no matter how it is pronounced.

Another example of the difference in pronunciation is the English word “butter”. It is pronounced “Piter” or “Puter” in Yiddish, depending again on the part of Russia or Europe people came. The people that said “Piter” called their Synagogue “Sheel” while the others said “Puter” and called their Synagogue “Shul”. It is just like in the United States, words are pronounced differently in the north, south, east and west.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s the Jews from Eastern Europe, especially Germany and Russia were suffering from pogroms, riots, persecutions and anti-Semitism so they began migrating. However, most countries had immigration quotas and would allow only so many refugees into the country yearly. The United States insisted that each family that came have 2 sponsors. Each of the 2 sponsors had to document amounts earned and bank account balances. They had to guarantee the families coming would not be a public burden. When the Jewish people migrated from the Europe it was mainly to the areas where other Jews from their same areas settled. Eventually people from the Kupel area of the Ukraine followed and settled in Omaha. My father came here because my Uncle Joe and his wife had relatives living in Omaha who migrated earlier from Kupel.

The typical family that came from Kupel in the 1900s were mainly poor, kept strictly kosher and were very Orthodox. Most settled in the North 24th Street area. They kept two sets of dishes and utensils, one for meat products and one for milk products, never mixing them. They also kept two sets of dishes for Passover.

At first, most of the Jews that came were very religious, going to both morning and evening services. In later years, attendance began to drop as they started to get accustomed to the new way of life. However, on Friday nights, Saturdays and Holidays, the Jews would walk to services, never driving. They would walk two to three miles depending where they lived.

Most people living in the North 24th Street area had a Shabbos Goy. This was a non-Jewish person, paid to come to their homes on Friday nights at sundown, Saturdays and holidays to turn the lights off and on and put coal in the furnace. Orthodox didn't work on Saturdays or holidays. As Jewish people became more Americanized they started changing, working more as their American neighbors.

During the 30 years of "The Little Sheel" they only had one Rabbi, Rabbi Nathan Feldman. Rabbi Feldman was a typical Orthodox Rabbi with a short facial beard. He spoke broken English, mostly Yiddish. Even I could converse with him in my poor Yiddish. He was a very distinguished looking Orthodox Rabbi. When he died, his wife hired a van and had his body moved to Chicago in the middle of the night to be buried in her family's plot.

"The Little Sheel" had only one Shamos, a caretaker named Mendel Herzberg; incidentally he was Renee Corcoran's great-grandfather.

The Adas Yeshuren Synagogue was a synagogue for 33 years from 1922 to the early 1950s. It is the only structure built to be a Synagogue that still stands after 90 years. I realize that I am probably the only living 95 year old who was a member of Adas Yeshuren from the time it was built. It would be interesting to hear stories about "The Little Sheel" from past member's children, grandchildren and other family members about the Synagogue on 25th and Seward.

Many Jews came from the Kupel area of the Ukraine to the Omaha area. It became necessary to build a Synagogue on 25th and Seward in 1922. Named the Adas Yeshurin Synagogue, it was not large and had a small membership. I still remember most of the names of the founders; Rosen, Falkovich, Mittlman, Rosenbaum, Herzberg, the five Kirshenbaums, with father Keva and his four sons, Joe, Max, Meyer and Abe. Other names were Wintraub, Bush, Somit, Albert, Lindenbaum, Staenberg, Gendler, Fellman,

Gitnick, Krizelman, Shukert, Cohen, Silverman, Shrago, Finkle, Micklin, Potashnik, Rochman Bros, Guss and Yarmulniek. I may have forgotten a name or two but that was 90 years ago. As I wrote each name, their faces became so vivid bringing back so many wonderful memories.

World War II brought many changes in Omaha. The Jews living in the North 24th Street area moved to the western part of the city, joining newer and larger synagogues such as Beth El, Beth Israel, Temple Israel and Chabad. The Synagogue on 19th and Street moved and merged with Beth Israel located on North 52nd Street. The Synagogue on 24th and Nicholas moved to 30th and Cuming. "The Little Sheel" was the only Synagogue left in the North 24th Street area. Soon members started moving out and merging with the Synagogue on 30th and Cuming. Evidently it closed with members joining larger synagogues.

"The Little Sheel" was sold and is now boarded up. The pastor of the church that bought it was blind and walked the streets of Omaha selling brooms. Buying a broom from him made you his customer for life. I once bought 6 brooms from him for my stores. He never missed us when he was in our area.

Having lived next to the Adas Yeshurin for 12 years, I got to know every nook and corner, including the best places to hide when necessary. I was in and out of the Synagogue almost every day and knew every person by name. The members referred to me as "Josele, the Kirshenbaum-Boychic" (Yiddish for boy). There are so many memories and stories I could tell about "The Little Sheel" but the one that still stands out in my memory, even after all these years. On holidays and Saturdays while the Torah was being read, it was like an intermission for the children. The children under 13 would come over to my house next door to the Synagogue and play. Next, the women would come over to rest, socialize, visit with my mother and enjoy cookies and tea. It was the custom after services for the men only to have Kiddish. There was always time for a glass or two of Schnapps, wine, herring, honey cake and chic peas.

There is one service that I can never forget. It was the Kol Nidre service, the night before Yom Kippur. The quietest the Synagogue ever experienced. It was solemn as the Cantor, in his beautiful tenor voice, started to sing, his voice broke down crying the words of Kol Nidre. Before he finished the entire congregation sang and cried with him. One can never forget such a beautiful service.

I trust all of you that read this story about "The Little Sheel" will have memories resurface and will understand the passion and the love I still feel.

GENEALOGY CORNER

Wald Family History – The Long Winding Road

By: Sue Millward

In researching a family history, we start with known details of the family before we can begin our search. It is not always an easy task knowing where to find source documentation. So when Harriet Epstein contacted me regarding information about her father, we did just that. We started with the known facts about her father including:

- 1) In 1912, Nathan "Naftali" Wald was born to Hani Wald in Keckovce, Czechoslovakia. His mother died shortly afterwards.
- 2) A man named Morris Wald raised the boys after the death of Hani Wald. Nathan always believed this person was their father. If this were true, then why wasn't he listed on the birth certificate? Was he really their father? Or, could he have been a family relative of Hani?
- 3) Nathan believed that Hani Wald, died just after his birth, but we had no documentation about her death, or where she might be buried.

I began as I usually do, by creating a family tree online at Ancestry.com. This acts as a road map as we follow Nathan's life from birth to death. Harriet and I found records for Nathan, including his arrival, census records, marriage and even military records. But to our dismay, the only solid information about Nathan prior to his arrival in the United States was the birth certificate, and passport application records that Harriet had in her files. How could we find information on life events prior to his arrival in the United States?

We decided to enlist the assistance of a genealogist in Slovakia. And, after careful research, we contacted Peter Nagy, the primary consultant of the Slovak Genealogical Society, and a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists.

Peter began by acquiring the birth certificates for Nathan and Abraham from the local archives of their birth towns. (Nathan in Keckovce, and Abraham in Bardejov.) He noted on both records that though Hani was listed as the mother, no father was listed for either of the boys.



Photo of Helen Wald Spain, Ethel Kerson Wald, and Harriet Wald Epstein

After speaking to the registrar in Bardejov though, Peter learned an important fact - that on Abraham's record there was a note showing that Moses Rubin was his biological father, but not his legal father. It also mentioned an adoption. (There was no such note on Nathan's birth record.)

What does this mean? Did Hani have both boys out of wedlock? Was the "adoption" by the Morris Wald they believed to be their father? And, why was the adoption necessary?

Peter then attempted to find a death or burial record for their mother, Hani, in hopes of learning more about her; unfortunately, that again proved unsuccessful. The last known records we could find for her were on a census in 1911 in Bardejov, and on the birth certificate of her son, Naftali, in Keckovce on the 26th of September 1912.

In the end, we did not find all the answers to our questions, but Peter was helpful in discovering the fate of Abraham who married Katharina Schlesinger in December 1938. They lived in Bratislava until 1942 when 58,000 Slovakian Jews were deported to the "camps." Abraham died in Auschwitz that year. His wife, Katharina, was sent to a camp in Zilina, a small work camp. No additional record was found as to her fate.

It is interesting to note, there was also a Morris Wald deported from Bratislava to Zilina in 1942. He later was sent to a death camp in Cholm, Poland and died there. This appears to be the man who was their "father."

A reported 6000 Slovakian Jews fled their homeland during 1938-1939. Nathan was among those who survived because on May 20, 1939

he sailed from Hamburg to New York City aboard the S.S. President Roosevelt. In January 1942, he joined the U.S. Army and served overseas in the South Pacific during the war. During this time, he was granted his U.S. citizenship. It was a common practice at the time to naturalize immigrants who served in the military during WWII.

After the war Nathan met and married his wife, Ethel Kerson in Galveston, Texas. They moved to Houston, Texas where they raised their two daughters, Helen and Harriet. (Helen, the oldest, was named for their long-lost grandmother, Hani Wald.) Nathan never returned to his homeland, nor knew of the fate of his brother and family. Like so many of his peers, he spoke very little of what happened in his life prior to his arrival in the U.S.

One of our more interesting discoveries we did find was that Nathan had been married to a Rosa Lang in Prague just a month prior to his emigration. He listed an "uncle," Alex Schaffer as his American contact on his arrival records. This person turns out to be an Uncle to Rosa Lang Wald.

We also found an arrival record for Rosa Wald, going to the same uncle, just a year after Nathan arrived. But, by this time Nathan had moved to Texas and joined the army. He had also filed for a divorce from Rosa. We believe the marriage may have been a marriage of convenience – as the United States required an immigrant to have a contact name of someone, usually family, to meet him when he arrived.

Our research brought Nathan's daughters a bit more insight into their family history. Though there are still gaps in our understanding of the facts, we did learn a lot along the way. We hope that one day someone will find the Wald Family Tree online at Ancestry.com and contact us with more information about Nathan and his family.

467	Wald אברהם ברדעוו	אברהם וואלד האני וויזשני	בראטיסלאווא	26	לדיג	קאטארין שליסינגער קעסל בראטיסלאווא	אדאלט שליסינגער אברהם בראטיסלאווא פראנץ בראטיסלאווא	בראטיסלאווא	27	לדיג
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Example of document used to discover important facts about Abraham Wald. Marriage record for Abraham Wald, born in Bardejov and Katharina Schlesinger, born in Bratislava. It also shows his mother as Hani Wald (deceased) who was born in Uzhorod.



Passport photo of Nathan Wald, about 1930.



Janie Kulakofsky and Denise Silverman visited Golden Hill Cemetery to research their family's genealogy.

Share Your Family Story

Submit articles about the history of your family for our Genealogy Corner.

Call us at (402) 334-6442 or e-mail us at njhs@jewishomaha.org

The Fifties and the Sixties Looking Back in Order to Look Forward

By: Michael Gendler, NJHS Board Member

This fall, the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society will look back at the remarkable decades of the fifties and sixties. I appreciate the opportunity given to me by Renee Corcoran, President of the NJHS, to write a few (thousand) words about this period in order to place it in perspective for us in 2015. I would also like to address how the legacy of these decades affects us today.

Among other classes, I taught a course on the 1960s regularly for nearly forty years as a history professor at College of Saint Mary. It never became tiresome, due to the richness of the overall culture of the 1960s and the degree to which this decade, both for better and worse, made us what we are today.

Even with its share of recessions and periods of inflation, by and large, the period from the end of World War II up to 1973 and the OPEC oil embargo, was a time of tremendous prosperity for America. The great French historian, Fernand Braudel, argued that America, in the years from 1946 to 1973, dominated the globe economically to a degree that had never been equaled by any power in the history of the planet! Indeed, Americans in the fifties relished turning from war to enjoying the fruits of relative peace and prosperity. General Motors could now run automobiles off their assembly lines! (Note the photo of the 1959 Cadillac Fleetwood on page 12.) Our cars in the fifties with their enormous tailfins reflected the desire to indulge in material muchness. Those fins also conveyed a kind of futuristic design suggesting space travel and the rejection of limits. Gasoline was running about 25 cents per gallon in 1959. Even allowing for inflation, we only spent half as much on gas then as we do today. This helps to explain why the suburbs grew so quickly during the fifties, including the movement of the Jewish population of Omaha increasingly west from downtown. Driving to jobs from the suburbs was not a burden due to the price of fuel.

Something unique about this time period was the degree to which so many families lived with one full-time breadwinner, almost always the husband, with the wife often staying at home, full-time, without the home being a place of production as it was in previous decades. This was something that the relative prosperity of the time made possible. Such family life was portrayed on television in programs like *Ozzie and Harriet* and *Leave It to Beaver*. For lots of details regarding what an aberration family life during the fifties really was, see Stephanie Coontz's book, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*.

Increasingly, American families were moving to the suburbs. Cheap gasoline made it easier to move away from the central city and out to the fresh air and large lawns of suburbia. The Jewish neighborhood nicknamed "Bagel" was a classic example of this movement and its manifestations.

So what? Why should we care about the widespread move to the suburbs? First, the suburban population was mostly white while the inner city became increasingly populated by minorities. Suburban schools were segregated in fact if not by law. This was seen by a vocal minority of college-age youth (many of them Jewish) as unfair and played a part as a motive for participation in the civil rights movement. Some historians have also argued that with the relative isolation of the suburbs from the turmoil and grit of the central city, young men had difficulty finding ways to prove themselves as "men." Joining the civil rights movement was, for some, a way to affirm that identity. For women, the suburban life, along with

labor-saving devices such as washing machines, dishwashers, etc., made the role of homemaker seem less than fulfilling, especially after the children left. Betty Friedan, in her book, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), would document what came to be called "the problem that has no name," the feeling that many women had that they needed to do something more than just stay at home. Hence, the beginning of the "Second Wave" of the feminist movement.



Kids feeling a sense of freedom on their bicycles in the suburbs.

Technology in the form of the birth control pill (with the appearance of Enovid, by G.D. Searle and Co. in 1960) would play an indispensable role in making modern feminism possible, regarding the ability of women to reliably plan when or even whether they wanted to have children. The pill also doubled the rates of premarital sex for women from 1960 to 1970 (not for men, who had always been, well, animals).

So, we see that those seemingly innocent "suburbs" set the stage for real fireworks during the 1960s. In fact, this includes getting involved in what came to be called the "counterculture." That is, a set of values that were posed by a vocal minority in the United States against mainstream American life. What were these values (a "value" defined here as that which is regarded as a good thing for society to embrace?). Here are some of the most significant ones that I saw during the sixties: anti-establishment, egalitarianism (stress on the notion of equality in virtually all aspects of life), anti-war, anti-authority, anti-materialism, bias in favor of the Third World, change over tradition, cooperation over competition, community over the individual, the natural over the artificial, anti-anti-communism, reassertion of the value of being and living like so-called "primitive" people, moral relativism (there is no actual right or wrong), criticism of American culture in general, and anti-hypocrisy with an emphasis upon sincerity. These values reflected so much during the decade of the sixties that helped to make America into a more tolerant and more just society, especially with legislation such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its establishment of the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission). This changed, sometimes literally overnight, policies that excluded minorities from public accommodations, from many jobs, and from higher education. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 transformed American politics by making sure that blacks were allowed to vote and that those votes were counted!

As a college student I witnessed just how dramatic the clash of values could be in these years. In the dorm, one of my acquaintances, during a discussion (in 1967) about the Civil Rights Act of 1964 took a chair and threw it against the wall when I and a couple of others defended this legislation. He argued that it was wrong to force his dad, who owned a restaurant in Scottsbluff, NE, to permit minorities to eat at his place if his dad did not want them to, thus violating his father's liberty. When we argued that this was a case where liberty needed to be restrained so that all citizens could fully reap the benefits of their labors, that's when the chair took flight. Another example happened in 1968, when I signed up to participate in an exchange program with the all black college, Stillman, in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. It meant that I would have a black roommate from that college for one year. His name was Isaiah Lawson, a brilliant math major who happened to be taking the same American history class as I. One of the books we were assigned was Kenneth Stampp's *The Era of Reconstruction*, about the period just after the Civil War. As we were reading the book one evening, Isaiah said to me that he was getting angrier as he thought about how the 14th Amendment as well as other civil rights legislation was not often enforced by the 1870s in the South. He then said that this made him want to kill a white man, or at least throw one out the 5th floor dorm window where we lived. At first, I thought he was joking. Then, he jumped on me and we began to wrestle. He was 6 feet tall and weighed about 190 lbs. to my 5'6" and 140 lbs. I had been a high school wrestler, so I had some experience, and he and I had done some wrestling before and had come out pretty even. However, he also had a brown belt in judo which he used for the first time and got me close to the open window. I thought he was serious at that point. He sensed this and started laughing as I made a fist and was about to hit him in the throat, hoping to disable him! He said that he just wanted to keep me thinking. He did.

But the counterculture also has created problems. The reason that I listed so many distinct values is because they are the core of what has been passed down to us by the sixties. What was once part of a small minority during the sixties (radicals and hippies), has now become the view of close to a majority in America. Unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of high school teachers and especially college professors, especially in the area of the humanities, embrace virtually all of these values today. As one of my former professors from college, the internationally respected scholar of colonial America, Dr. Jack Sosin, said to me in the 1980s, "the kooks have taken over!"

One of the best examples can be seen in a 1962 folk song written by Malvina Reynolds, called "Little Boxes." Pete Seeger made it a hit in 1963. It is a song (see lyrics at right) that mocks the sameness of the suburbs, their conformity, and the lack of imagination of those who live there. Here we find one of the most significant cultural documents of the time! The melody is catchy. I love listening to Pete Seeger! But the lyrics! Ouch. What arrogance on the part of Reynolds to look at tract housing and assume that she knew about the lives of everyone who lived there, and in addition, gave people a chance to live for the first time in a home of their own. The song even mocks sending children to get a college education, allowing them to become professionals who can make a good life for themselves. Again, what a great example of how those espousing the counterculture could be exceptionally foolish at times, taking prosperity for

granted, and not appreciating their good fortune and the hard work of those who came before them that made it possible.



American Suburbs in the 1960s

"Little Boxes" by Malvina Reynolds

*Little boxes on the hillside,
Little boxes made of ticky tacky
Little boxes on the hillside,
Little boxes all the same.
There's a green one and a pink one
And a blue one and a yellow one,
And they're all made out of ticky tacky
And they all look just the same.
And the people in the houses
All went to the university,
Where they were put in boxes
And they came out all the same,
And there's doctors and lawyers,
And business executives,
And they're all made out of ticky tacky
And they all look just the same.
And they all play on the golf course
And drink their martinis dry,
And they all have pretty children
And the children go to school,
And the children go to summer camp
And then to the university,
Where they are put in boxes
And they come out all the same.
And the boys go into business
And marry and raise a family
In boxes made of ticky tacky
And they all look just the same.
There's a green one and a pink one
And a blue one and a yellow one,
And they're all made out of ticky tacky
And they all look just the same.*

So much of the fifties and the sixties in terms of "headlines" involved the civil rights movement. As part of this, Black Americans increasingly affirmed the value of their own racial identity. Black children were taught by some civil rights leaders to chant "Black is Beautiful." Other groups would practice similar approaches to their own ethnic identity. Jews in the

sixties began to feel more comfortable asserting themselves, especially after the capture, trial, and execution of the Nazi war criminal, Adolf Eichmann, who was hanged (1961) convinced that he had done the right thing in helping to murder millions of Jews. The internationally televised trial of Eichmann had a major impact upon American Jewry and even more so, Israel's stunning victory over Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon during the Six-Day War in 1967. (See illus. below) This was also the decade when Exodus appeared on television (below) and Sandy Koufax, the great Jewish pitcher for the Los Angeles Dodgers, (see below) refused to pitch on the Yom Kippur holiday for the first game in the 1965 World Series.



Above: Paul Newman, center, looks at Eva Marie Saint. He convinces her of the importance of recognizing that people throughout the world are not all the same & that different identities which should be respected. (From the movie, *Exodus*, 1961.) Below: Sandy Koufax, pitching for Dodgers, 1963.



Left: Betty Friedan in 1960 (born Bettye Goldstein, 1921, in Peoria, Illinois). Her passion to fight injustice, she said, originated with her confrontation with anti-Semitism as a young girl. Her blockbuster volume, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) continues to be required reading in college courses about feminism.



Moshe Dayan (center) enters Jerusalem on first day of liberation (June 1967)

All of these events and personalities reinforced the trend to feel more comfortable with being Jewish, with the understanding that this would not likely result in hostility from American people as a whole. I still recall reading in the 1967 Omaha World Herald a wonderful letter by my high school world history teacher, Paul Andreas. He was one of my favorites and the first words from his letter were as follows: "Hats off to the Israelis!" He went on to praise Israel for overcoming the odds against them, given the aggressors who wanted to push them into the sea.

There is no doubt that technology was moving quickly in the fifties and sixties. We saw the invention nuclear power (1955), the hydrogen bomb (1952), the first satellite (Russia's Sputnik in 1957) and the transistor radio in 1953 which would revolutionize the ability of people to carry music around with them at all times. This became especially important when it came to the younger generation and the playing of rock music! Interestingly, the development of the peace sign came about in Britain as part of a campaign against nuclear weapons during the late 1950s. The peace sign stems from the naval semaphore signs for "N" and "D" standing for the "nuclear disarmament." During the sixties, major innovations included the first manned space travel, the internet (by the U.S. military), and of course the manned moon landing by Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin in 1969.

Rock music itself got its trade name, "rock and roll," from the Jewish disc jockey, Alan Freed, who, in the early fifties, decided to use this name rather than rhythm and blues for the records he was playing on the air in Cleveland and then NYC. He encouraged songs that concentrated on a strong beat or rhythm, rather than the blues. Hence, the widespread playing of songs such as "Rock Around the Clock" by Bill Haley and the Comets." The inimitable performer, Elvis Presley, took the black musical tradition of rhythm and blues and helped to make this music acceptable to white America.

GENEALOGY CORNER

Wald Family History – The Long Winding Road

By: Sue Millward

In researching a family history, we start with known details of the family before we can begin our search. It is not always an easy task knowing where to find source documentation. So when Harriet Epstein contacted me regarding information about her father, we did just that. We started with the known facts about her father including:

- 1) In 1912, Nathan "Naftali" Wald was born to Hani Wald in Keckovce, Czechoslovakia. His mother died shortly afterwards.
- 2) A man named Morris Wald raised the boys after the death of Hani Wald. Nathan always believed this person was their father. If this were true, then why wasn't he listed on the birth certificate? Was he really their father? Or, could he have been a family relative of Hani?
- 3) Nathan believed that Hani Wald, died just after his birth, but we had no documentation about her death, or where she might be buried.

I began as I usually do, by creating a family tree online at Ancestry.com. This acts as a road map as we follow Nathan's life from birth to death. Harriet and I found records for Nathan, including his arrival, census records, marriage and even military records. But to our dismay, the only solid information about Nathan prior to his arrival in the United States was the birth certificate, and passport application records that Harriet had in her files. How could we find information on life events prior to his arrival in the United States?

We decided to enlist the assistance of a genealogist in Slovakia. And, after careful research, we contacted Peter Nagy, the primary consultant of the Slovak Genealogical Society, and a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists.

Peter began by acquiring the birth certificates for Nathan and Abraham from the local archives of their birth towns. (Nathan in Keckovce, and Abraham in Bardejov.) He noted on both records that though Hani was listed as the mother, no father was listed for either of the boys.



Photo of Helen Wald Spain, Ethel Kerson Wald, and Harriet Wald Epstein

After speaking to the registrar in Bardejov though, Peter learned an important fact - that on Abraham's record there was a note showing that Moses Rubin was his biological father, but not his legal father. It also mentioned an adoption. (There was no such note on Nathan's birth record.)

What does this mean? Did Hani have both boys out of wedlock? Was the "adoption" by the Morris Wald they believed to be their father? And, why was the adoption necessary?

Peter then attempted to find a death or burial record for their mother, Hani, in hopes of learning more about her; unfortunately, that again proved unsuccessful. The last known records we could find for her were on a census in 1911 in Bardejov, and on the birth certificate of her son, Naftali, in Keckovce on the 26th of September 1912.

In the end, we did not find all the answers to our questions, but Peter was helpful in discovering the fate of Abraham who married Katharina Schlesinger in December 1938. They lived in Bratislava until 1942 when 58,000 Slovakian Jews were deported to the "camps." Abraham died in Auschwitz that year. His wife, Katharina, was sent to a camp in Zilina, a small work camp. No additional record was found as to her fate.

It is interesting to note, there was also a Morris Wald deported from Bratislava to Zilina in 1942. He later was sent to a death camp in Cholm, Poland and died there. This appears to be the man who was their "father."

A reported 6000 Slovakian Jews fled their homeland during 1938-1939. Nathan was among those who survived because on May 20, 1939

The race issue would continue to be a critical problem, including the horrific scenes of the race riot in Watts (Los Angeles, 1965) over an argument between a police officer and a member of the black community in that area. At the same time, the ideas of non-violence expressed by Martin Luther King were being overshadowed by the voices calling for Black Power and what amounted to a call for violent resistance from Malcolm X and the Black Muslims, as well as the Black Panthers. Eldridge Cleaver and Frantz Fanon would both argue that white America was the enemy—to people of color both at home and abroad. Just as blacks fought against whites in the U.S., so Third World people were fighting against American imperialism in Vietnam according to Fanon in his book, *Wretched of the Earth*. This misleading, inaccurate, and dangerous analogy so enamored by the counterculture of the sixties caught fire and to this day continues to influence some people to rail against the United States of America (including Obama's minister for 20 years, the Rev. Wright and, according to some, even Obama himself).

A significant minority of mostly young Americans would, during the late sixties and early seventies, act on their counterculture values by moving to one of thousands of communes, often outside any urban area. They wanted to be close to nature, (natural over the artificial); they often rejected modern industrial life (neo-primitivism) and sought to live more by their intuition than by scientific reasoning (feeling over thinking). Of course, the whole enterprise represented the stress upon cooperation over competition. We should not be surprised that Earth Day was first observed in 1970! Nor is it surprising that the Unibomber (Ted Kaczynski) embraced the counterculture icon Herbert Marcuse and his ecological radicalism. Obama's statement shortly after his election that he wanted to put the coal industry out of business is another example of a person with great power who was profoundly influenced by the counterculture's preoccupation with nature over the human business of production.

Personally, I can recall many instances where I witnessed the influence of the counterculture during the sixties, especially among some of my Jewish friends. In one case, the young man became alienated from his parents due to his position on the war and his rejection of what he called "materialism." He rejected the "middle-class values" of his parents, including such things as making his bed in the morning. They cut him off financially and he made this known. When I ran into him once in Lincoln I asked him how he was doing in terms of food. He said that he was getting tired of steak. "What?" I inquired. He remarked that he was "liberating" steaks from a local chain grocery. After all, he said, it was not stealing if you took it from "The Man." My arguments against this made no headway with him at all as he embraced the "anti-establishment" value as well as that of moral relativism—nothing could really be considered right or wrong. This is all too common a view among young people (and not so young) today.

Even more sadly, he thought that using hallucinogens could bring him closer to nature. After all, he valued the natural over the artificial and when he went to Colorado he used LSD and tried to immerse himself into the mountains by leaping off a ledge. He died.

In 1969, not too long after the moon landing, I went on a blind date with an exceptionally bright young lady. We went to a movie and afterwards, I asked if she wanted to get some Lunar Cheese Cake flavored (due to the July 20, 1969 moon-landing) ice cream at Baskin-Robbins. She said, "Absolutely not. The United Fruit Company, which owns a major part of Baskin-Robbins, was involved in the overthrow of the leftist regime in Guatemala in 1954. Therefore, they are part of the problem when it comes to American

imperialism." Here was a great example of the counterculture's influence regarding culture criticism and a general bias in favor of Third World nations over the United States. My response, in its entirety was "How about Goodrich?" Which is where we went.

I walked to class from my apartment in 1970 to watch the action when about 300 students, led by their political science professor, Stephen Rozman, occupied the ROTC Building (due to Nixon's order of an "incursion" into Cambodia) and proceeded to set fire to the basement with kerosene. This took place late at night. Police surrounded the campus and did a superb job preventing any violence from breaking out, including the exiting of the students from the building. This was one of many such examples all over the country, including Kent State, where four students were killed by the National Guard during "anti-incursion" demonstrations.

As the years went by, "counter-culture values" came to be embraced by many, but especially in the world of academia. The result has been, increasingly, more and more college and high school teachers who adopt these values and pass them on to their students. To some degree, these values have their positive points, but in so many ways, they have been and still are dangerous to our future as a strong, united, just, nation. I have actually been asked, more than once, by fellow Jews, how it was possible for me to be Jewish and also be a gun owner! After all, one must be anti-violence even though it is violence for a just cause which defeated Nazi Germany and keeps Israel alive today.

Such views help to explain the sad story of why some schools in America have actually stopped playing dodgeball, my favorite activity in elementary school gym. Too competitive. Heck, some today have even stopped having valedictorians since this discriminates against all the other students. And look what happened this week in the name of equality gone mad: Target has stopped separating boys' and girls' toys in their stores. How pathetic can one get? But the power of ideas is very real and must not be ignored if we want to address the consequences that they entail. So, please go see the Nebraska Jewish Historical Society's exhibit on this period, and see this seminal time through your own eyes.



A 1959 Cadillac Fleetwood with tailfins conveying a kind of futuristic design suggesting space travel and the rejection of limits.

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Renee Ratner Corcoran
(402) 334-6442
njhs@jewishomaha.org

NJHS ASSISTANT:
Kathy Weiner
(402) 334-6441
kweiner@jewishomaha.org

Fax: (402) 334-6507

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