



**Community History On-Line      Newsletter #8      August 2024**

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**In this issue: compiled by Gail Lustig [gail@chol.website](mailto:gail@chol.website)**

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**A Note from Israel:**

I believe that it will take us years to understand, work through, come to terms with what has happened in this small country over the last year. Each and every one of us in Israel and you out there, with mindsets swayed and coloured by our South African roots, has been touched in some way or another.

It's been a time to reflect on so many aspects of who we are, what we believe in and how to face the change in the world of today...

Due to the chain of events and unpredictability of these months, I have failed to hold sessions for **'Sharing Your Stories'** and definitely feel sad about that. I do hope that we'll get together soon. In the meantime, it would be great hearing from you and receiving your pieces and this, I'm sure will galvanise me into organizing a meeting.

On a positive note, the CHOL email list is growing all the time. Good news travels fast and South Africans everywhere are starting to ask one another, just how to pronounce CHOL.

Is it CHOL, like in cholesterol or Kol like in Hebrew, or possibly CHOL with a guttural 'ch' that all of us are expert at?

(Actually, the truth is, pronounce it as you wish, although just this morning I had a thought that 'gol', as we'd say in Afrikaans, might be the best! As you know, it means 'SAND' in Hebrew and that's just what we're doing, setting down our footprints in the sand!)

As an active member of CHOL, I wish to thank **Geraldine Auerbach**, the lady behind our amazing project as well as all the contributors to the various sub-sections. And then there's **Bramie Lenhoff** in Delaware without whom there'd be no website and truly, it's been a pleasure working with him and learning what an inspiration he is – our pillar of digital strength out there! Who would believe that I've never met either Geraldine or Bramie personally?!

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## **New Communities – now under construction:**

### **Maitland**

In 2005, Philip Stodel who made Aliya in 2021 from Cape Town, and whose roots are in Maitland, helped in the organization of a Reunion of members of the Jewish community of the town.

The evening was a roaring success. Eighty-six former Maitlanders attended the function!

Philip afterwards, created the website <http://www.stodel.za.net/MaitlandThen/index.htm> where he posted the history, photographs of members and their families.

Philip is now working to create a CHOL website for Maitland to include the records of the 2005 reunion.

### **Bellville**

Stanley Loon, who resides in Israel and whose family were first generation Bellvillites, has taken on the role of 'driving' the Bellville community site. In the good old days, there were about 100 families in the town, some 20 kms from Cape Town and with the help of past residents, the site hopes to capture the narrative of the vibrant community that lived there.

You can see the site under construction here [Bellville](#)

### **Beaufort West**

Our man in Cape Town, Natie Finkelstein, continues to fill the pages of the Beaufort West Community site which he has expertly created [Beaufort West](#)

If you have information on these three places, please contact [info@chol.webite](mailto:info@chol.webite) and we will connect you to the 'driver' of each place.

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## **SAJAC- an exciting new partner...**

Just recently Geraldine and I had a lovely zoom session with Pamela Nathan the founder some 38 years ago of SAJAC (South African Jewish American Community) together with Julius Levin, a member of the group.

All of us, distanced over an arc of 3 continents, felt immediately at home in one another's company and all that was lacking was the physical addition of our entertaining skills. Never mind, hopefully we'll find a way to actually meet one day....

We explored ways of connecting, exchanging information and data and basically letting our members know about each other.

They have a Newsletter on their site and previous ones have been digitized as well. Pamela says:

SAJAC would welcome an approach by any CHOL associate to suggest a project using SAJAC's data (with due legal considerations) expanding the story we know of the first wave from Europe to SA then the second leg of SA outward. The story of South African Jewish emigration is fascinating. Many thousands of well-educated families voluntarily leave a comfortable, middle-class life without being forcibly threatened or violated and create new lives without the challenges of race, language or religion that plague most immigrants by selecting English-speaking countries where white South Africans easily blend in and become outstanding contributors to local professions and communities.

CHOL is the perfect site for sharing memoirs, community histories and stories written by those of us who enjoy writing while SAJAC endeavours to connect the past and present of South Africans in America creating a wonderful format of magazines over the years which share the events and experiences of members of the community.

Have a look at their website here: [www.sajac.com](http://www.sajac.com)

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## **'Our South African Arc' written by a SAJAC member who prefers to remain private..**

**From Latvia and Lithuania via South Africa to Israel and the English-speaking world in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.**

In our collective memory we hold stories of hardship, hurt and humor from many countries and eras. And whether prescient or pushed, the Wandering Jew has travelled over the centuries - lingering or sojourning, tolerated but surviving as scapegoats or footnotes in host countries. There was no long-term home, no roots until 1948 when the birth of Israel transformed wander to wonder.

South Africans, in three short generations, encapsulate this historical Jewish experience. In the late 19th and early 20th Century, immigrants from Lithuania and Latvia arrived in the country carrying samovars and feathered *perinas*. Mostly Yiddish speaking and steeped in their religion and culture, they created their familiar shtetl footprint on yet another foreign soil. Their children matured in relative safety never having experienced their parents' tenuous hold on life.

But then in the '60s, Apartheid began unravelling and unrest in the country accelerated. A two-thousand-year-old scar began to itch, as unrest was generally a precursor to victimization. Other than to Israel, South African Jews started spreading out to English speaking countries where their talents and education were recognized, accepted and welcomed. And being white was a plus.

An abundance of existing literature documents all facets of activity and contribution, beyond their numbers, they made to South African society, but the fascinating story still needing to be told in more detail, is how the fortunate few, evading the horrors of the impending holocaust, established a thriving community 120,000 strong at its peak, educated their children, prospered in all fields, then, at the height of their economic heft, started another exodus carrying Persian Carpets and Kruger Rands. This, as well as the impact they have made on their latest homes wherever they be.

So, in three generations, the restless Arc of History moved its children from Europe to South Africa and then to yet another diaspora, where familiar founding customs and organizations were again re-established and "Jewish Geography" predated Facebook.

However! With antisemitism rife world-wide, the next chapter of the Jewish caravan awaits to be written.

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## Next CHOL Events

**An important reminder of the CHOL September Seminars which promise to be really interesting and enjoyable.**

### **Please Note the Dates:**

#### **Tuesdays 10, 17 and 23 September 2024 7.00pm South African time**

(10.00am California; 1.00pm New York; 6.00pm UK; 7.00pm South Africa, Europe; 8.00pm, Israel and some ungodly hour downunder)

- **10 September:** Naomi Schamroth Rapeport  
**South African Second World War veterans' role in the fledgling State of Israel**
- **17 September:** Danielle Lockwood  
**Herbert Kretzmer OBE - From Kroonstad via Fleet Street to Les Mis**
- **24 September:** Professor Richard Mendelsohn  
**Commemorating the Jews of Parow, a microcosm of South African Jewry.**

(More details below) To join the zooms, ask for the link by emailing [info@chol.website](mailto:info@chol.website).

(Those already on this mailing list will receive the link in due course) We hope you will join us on zoom to add to the discussion, as we get to know each other, from around the world.

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## **10 September: Naomi Schamroth Rapeport** **South African Second World War veterans' role in the fledgling State of Israel**

During the Second World War, over 10 000 Jewish men and women volunteers served in the Union Defence Force. Many had distinguished military careers. In 1948 when the State of Israel was proclaimed, amongst 800 volunteers from South Africa were numerous war veterans, who contributed to the military success of the State. Many held major positions, particularly in the Israeli Air Force, 505 Squadron – Radar, and in the field of medicine.

**Naomi Schamroth Rapeport**, was the first woman clinician in private practice in Johannesburg where she was active and honoured in medicine and medical politics uniting clinicians of all races. She is married to cardiologist Colin Schamroth, (son of Professor Leo Schamroth) and mother of cardiologist and financial analyst daughters. Since retirement, Naomi has volunteered at the South African Jewish Museum archives and was an advisor to Mark Wade and Alan Swerdlow who produced the film series *Legends and Legacies*. For the past 3 years she has been collating the profiles of over 3,000 Jewish South African men and women who served in the Second World War, for the Chaim Herzog Museum in Latrun, Israel. She has also written about the Jewish doctors who contributed to Baragwanath Hospital.

## **17 September: Danielle Lockwood** **Herbert Kretzmer OBE – From Kroonstad via Fleet Street to Les Mis**

Journalist and lyricist Herbert Kretzmer was born in Kroonstad. For 70 years until his death in 2020, he lived in London – at the very heart of British culture. He contributed to the 1960s BBC satirical TV programme *That Was the Week that Was*. An award-winning Fleet Street journalist, he was TV critic of *The Daily Mail* and theatre reviewer of *The Daily Express*, attending over 2,500 first nights. As lyricist he worked with ABBA's Bjorn Ulvaeus and Benny Anderson on the musical *Kristina* and wrote the lyrics for the musical 'Our Man Creighton'. He is best known for writing the lyrics for the musical phenomenon *Les Misérables*, and his chart-topping collaboration with Charles Aznavour. This talk encompasses his life, both professional and personal through the eyes of his daughter, Danielle.

**Danielle Lockwood's** professional career in the film industry culminated in the position of Head of Publicity for Warner Bros Film Distributors, where she compiled and supervised the UK press and publicity campaigns for amongst others, Clint Eastwood, Warren Beatty, Robert de Niro and Oliver Stone. Relocating from London to the south coast to bring up her young family, Danielle focused on her own education, completing a BA Hons in History at the University of Chichester, and, as a recipient of the Karten Scholarship, a Masters in Jewish History and Culture at the Parkes Institute, University of Southampton. Danielle also lectures on history through film and organises Southampton's annual Holocaust Memorial Day commemorations and is a consultant for London's annual Jewish Film Festival.

## **24 September: Professor Richard Mendelsohn** **Commemorating the Jews of Parow, a microcosm of South African Jewry.**

September sees the launch in Cape Town and Ra'anana of a deeply researched book on the Parow Jewish community; of a richly documented state-of-the-art Parow website; and of a novel

and immersive Parow exhibition at the South African Jewish Museum. Richard Mendelsohn, historian and Parow boy, reports on these.

**Richard Mendelsohn** is a retired former head of the Department of Historical Studies of the University of Cape Town and Deputy Dean of the university's Faculty of Humanities. He is the author of *Sammy Marks: The Uncrowned King of the Transvaal* (1991) a biography of the pioneering South African Jewish industrial and mining entrepreneur; co-editor of *Memories, Realities and Dreams: Aspects of the South African Jewish Experience* (2002); and co-author with Professor Milton Shain of *The Jews in South Africa: An Illustrated History* (2008 and 2014) the first comprehensive history of the community to appear in over fifty years. As Richard grew up in Parow in the 1950s and 1960s, its Jewish heyday, the social history of its Jewish community is a project that is both professional and personal.

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## SA-SIG Newsletters

CHOL and the South African Special Interest Group (SA\_SIG) of Jewish Gen have much in common. In these CHOL Newsletters we flag up the articles in the inspiring journals they put together between the 1999 and 2018. This month we look at the edition of March 2001.

Mike Getz, their editor was saying that community history should be considered:

### Projects to Consider

Mike Getz

Beryl's initiative and work has given us another opportunity to create a representative record of our communities in Southern and South Africa.

We are encountering a similar problem to that of a number of SIGS. There is often more comprehensive material on little shtetlach than the urban locations. In the limited history of this newsletter we have had no accounts of a number of important centres of Jewish life in our region. The following is a list of a few key examples.

Port Elizabeth  
East London  
Durban  
Bloemfontein  
Pretoria  
Salisbury  
Bulawayo

Of no lesser important for their significance are:

Oudstroom  
Grahamstown  
Uitenhage  
Kimberly  
Vereeniging  
Springs  
Brakpan  
Benoni  
Krugersdorp

As well as many others with as much merit. It should be a goal among us to include a history of at least one new community in every newsletter and to actively recruit for such a project among those who know. Beryl has set an example with the Strand. It is a model that can be adapted to suit almost any perspective.

Please advise Beryl if you know of South Africans who can add to a record their communities each of which was vital to the spirit and character of Southern African Jewry

He requested that in each edition of their journal, they should include the history of at least one new community. Beryl Baleson set an example by talking about 'The Strand Jewish Community' in that issue.

We hope that Jewish Gen members are pleased to see that almost all the communities they list, have some sort of web presence created since that time, perhaps inspired by their suggestion, and now listed the CHOL community pages. Alread there are 51 communities (and the number is ever growing). Some are fulsome records of the community – some still stubs needing 'drivers' who will find more information – while it is still possible.

**Your feedback to the Newsletter** would be welcome. Please send to [info@chol.website](mailto:info@chol.website) Please keep us informed of your own 'Community History On-Line' activities and interests. If you know people who might be interested in CHOL activities, please forward this Newsletter to them or pass on their details to CHOL. You can also say if you would prefer not to receive post from CHOL

**CHOL Newsletter no 8** compiled by Gail Loon Lustig, Tel Aviv, August, 2024, comes to you with warm wishes as we round up our year and go forward, hopefully, to happier times.

Checkout the CHOL website: [www.chol.website](http://www.chol.website) which now has on it:

- 51 communities <https://chol.website/communities.htm>
  - 53 Memoirs <https://chol.website/memoirs.htm>
  - 142 original stories <https://chol.website/stories.htm>
  - 30 Videos of presentations <https://chol.website/presentations.htm>
- also on the site are resources and journal articles and all our CHOL newsletters

**CHOL – Community History On-Line** is a forum set up in 2020, under the auspices of the Kaplan Centre at UCT and the South African Jewish Museum – bringing together all those working on / or interested in creating an online presence relating to the **History of Jewish Communities in Southern Africa**. see [www.chol.website](http://www.chol.website) contact [info@chol.website](mailto:info@chol.website).



**SAJM**  
South African Jewish Museum