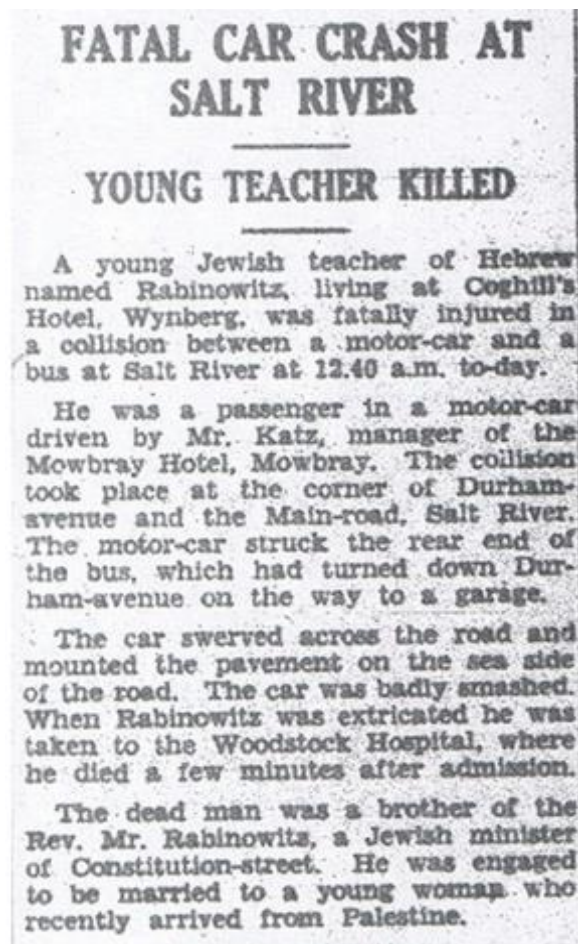


Personal Journeys: Finding Mr Katz by Eli Rabinowitz (Part 2)

This article is a sequel to my earlier article in Avotaynu Online, entitled "From One Photograph Journeys of Research and Discovery", in which I described how I uncovered and researched the romance of my great uncle Moshe and Paula Lichtzier, starting with a single photograph taken in Orla, Poland in 1920. But my search wasn't complete: details about the driver of the vehicle in the fatal accident that resulted in the death of my Uncle Moshe were still a mystery. The 1931 Argus newspaper article reported that Mr. Katz, the driver of the vehicle in which Moshe (Morris) was a passenger, was the manager of the Mowbray Hotel. I tried accessing the archives of the company that once owned the hotel and the bus company most likely involved in the accident, consulted some Cape Town historians, and struck out on all of them, but still hoped for other leads.



The Cape Argus, April 8, 1931, National Archives, Cape Town

In June 2016, I met Professor Colin Tatz and Vernon Katz in Sydney, Australia. Vernon, a Katz from Cape Town, was interested in the mystery of Mr. Katz, the driver. We started a correspondence and on September 3, 2016, Vernon wrote this to his database:

This is a stab in the dark, but can you help Eli Rabinowitz (who has lived in Perth since 1986, ex-Cape Town) trace family of the Mr. Katz who drove the car in 1931 in which Eli's great uncle Moishe Rabinowitz was killed in Woodstock / Salt River? – see (the article in Avotaynu) below. Please let Eli and me know if you have any information.

On the same day, a reply came from Selwyn Katz of West Harrison, New York. He wrote:

SA Breweries had a company called Retco, the holding company for its one- and two-star hotels. At the end of the sixties, they started to offload these hotels and my (Katz) family picked up six of them, including the Mowbray. It is not impossible that this Mr. Katz was family of mine, but I have no way of finding out. My oldest living relation was born around 1931 so she would not know.

On September 2016, I was in the process of replying to an email from Solly Epstein in Cape Town who explained that his friend and author, Ivan Kapelus in London, had suggested I make contact with the National Library and Western Cape Archives to further my research. I decided to go online and do a quick search. One can see only the titles of the documents online and then one must follow up with a visit to the reading room to see the actual document.

I entered "Katz" and "1931" in the database search. The following was the last of four results:

National Archives of South Africa (NASA)		
Database: Cape Town Archives Repository		
NAAIRS - Result Details		
Frames	Document 4 of 4	
Previous	DEPOT	KAB
Document Number	SOURCE	CSC
	TYPE	LEER
	VOLUME NO	1/1/1/162
	SYSTEM	01
	REFERENCE	18
	PART	1
Print Document	DESCRIPTION	RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS OF CRIMINAL CASE. CRIMINAL SESSION, JULY 1931.
		REX VERSUS LEO KATZ, CHARGED WITH CULPABLE HOMICIDE.
Result	STARTING	19310000
	ENDING	19310000

The accident had occurred on April 8, 1931. Although this citation was not definitive., it did sound like the Mr. Katz I was seeking. Until I saw the court document itself four weeks later, I had no proof that this court case related to the death of Morris Rabinowitz. It might have been a death caused by Leo Katz in another set of circumstances; this court case was in July.

That same day, I sent email messages to several people, telling them about the archival record. Ann Rabinowitz of Miami replied:

If the Leo Katz in the Archives is the correct one, there is also a record in the South African Jewish Rootsbank that lists a Leo Katz who was born 1902 and died May 3, 1961, and is buried in Pinelands #1. He would have been 29 in 1931. His tombstone has his name as Yehudah Leib ben Reuvain HaKohain Katz.

On the Cape Town Jewish Cemeteries Maintenance Board website, <http://www.jewishcemetery.co.za> I found this photograph



Taking the two names Leo and Lily Katz from the tombstones I searched and found the family details on the Geni.com website <http://www.geni.com/people/Leo-Katz/6000000011738063296>. Geni enabled me to track down Mr. Katz's grandson, Leo Fainsinger in Sydney. I called, asked if his grandfather was Leo Katz ("yes")

and what his grandfather had done for a living. When the grandson said, "in the hotel business" I asked, "the Mowbray Hotel?" He answered "yes." I had found my man.

Fainsinger was quite cooperative. He knew that his grandfather had been involved in an accident in which, he said, a hitchhiker had been killed. That was the first I had heard of a hitchhiker, and I was puzzled. Fainsinger sent me a photograph of Mr. Katz. My brother-in-law, Anthony Reitstein, visited the Western Cape Archives and Records Service in Cape Town on my behalf and called for the document, Rex vs Leo Katz. He sent me two emails, totaling 33pages, of the court proceedings of Rex versus Mr. Leo Katz.

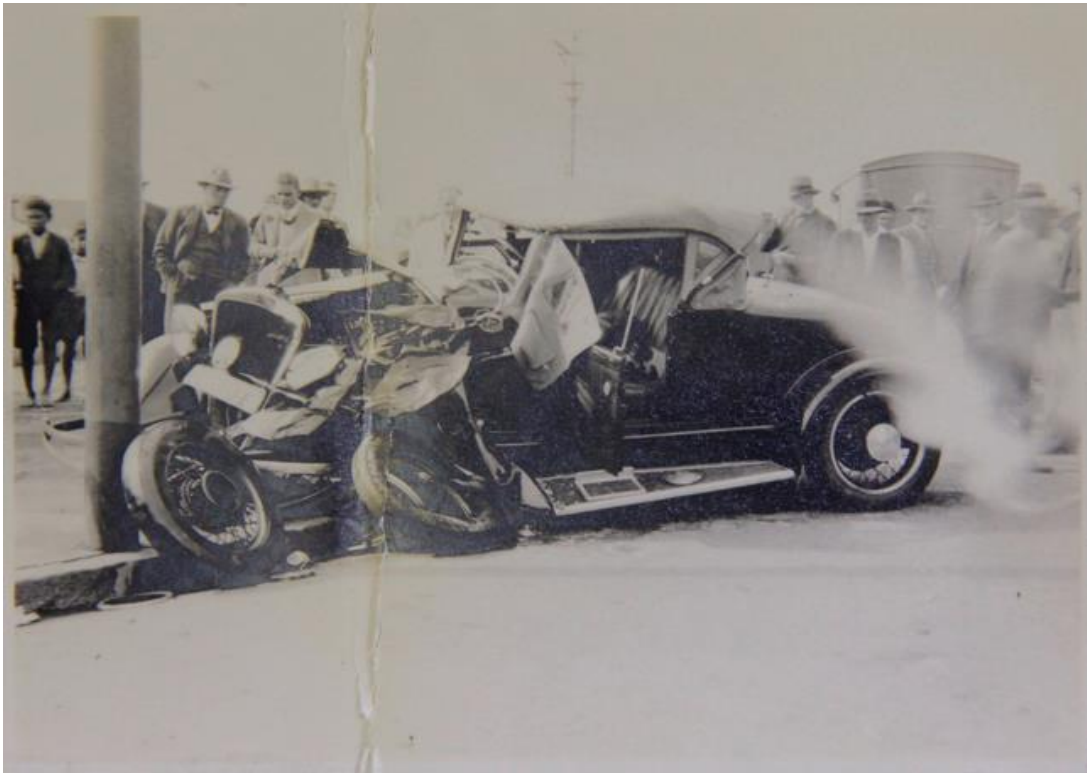
There were many technical details in the evidence given, but the following grabbed my attention and shocked me:

LEO KATZ (ACCUSED), sworn states. :

BY MR. THOMPSON. : I am manager of the Mowbray Hotel, Main Road, Mowbray. I live there. I am the accused in this case. I own the De Soto car in respect of which we have photographs here. On the night of this accident I had been out to see some friends at Sea Point. I have driven over four years. The weight of my car is about two-and-a-half thousand pounds. I left my friend's house in order to return home. I came into Cape Town and then went out on the Main Road. As I left Adderley Street and proceeded along Darling Street the deceased was standing in the middle of the road outside the Opera House and he put his hand up and asked me where I was going. He told me he had missed the last bus and he wanted me to give him a lift as far as Wynberg so I told him I only live at Mowbray and if he wants to go as far as there he is welcome. I had never met him before but I knew him by sight. He got into the car. It was raining that night. My car is not closed. It is an open roadster. I had the

My great uncle, Morris Rabinowitz, had missed the last bus; he had hitchhiked to get home to (the Coghill's Hotel in) Wynberg; Katz stopped to give him a lift in the city outside the Opera House; it was raining; Katz was only going as far as Mowbray; Katz and Morris did not know each other; the distance from where Morris was picked up to the accident was about 4km; they hit a bus that was turning to go down Durham Rd; the time from which Morris was picked up until his death was at most 10 minutes; this was the total time that they were together. Such was their fate! Katz was found guilty of culpable homicide, fined 40 pounds sterling and lost his

driver's license for a year. Morris was dead! Morris's fiancée Paula Lichtzier's life was in turmoil just a few weeks before her planned wedding. This is the sad conclusion to the mystery of Katz, the driver, and the accident, which killed Morris Rabinowitz, but something special is developing. I called Leo Fainstein to tell him the outcome of the case and to arrange to send him the emails of the court proceedings. He told me that as his grandfather, Leo, was a good-natured and genteel man and that by giving my great uncle Morris a lift, Leo was performing a *mitzvah* (good deed) but had turned it into a tragedy. Fainsinger and I have realized that the discovery of this tragic event has forged a meaningful connection between us we have committed ourselves to creating a positive outcome, a completion of the mitzvah Leo begun 85 years ago. We have several ideas to discuss between now and when Brian and I meet for the first time in Sydney in February 2017. Whatever project we choose, we will name in honor of Leo and Morris.



Leo Katz's motorcar at the scene of the accident in Salt River.

(Supreme Court documents from Western Cape Archives and Records Services, Cape Town)



Leo Katz – photo from his grandson, Brian Fainsinger



Morris Rabinowitz. Family Photo.

Finding Mr. Katz by Eli Rabinowitz, Perth, Australia

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