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In this Edition:

- President's Message
- Update on Oral History Project
- Beverly Gersfeld's Comments
- Financial Update
- Cemetery Update
- Centennial Memorial
- Missing Persons
- Additional Items of Interest

The Felshtin Society: Copyright 2016

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Dear Felshtiner,

Please accept my apologies for not being in touch as usual over the New Year holidays. Personal and business issues have kept me from my schedule so, belatedly, please accept my best wishes to you and your family for a sweet year, peace in the world and much joy in your life for the coming year and many years to come.

In spite of this gap in communication, things have been very busy with the Felshtin Society over the past several months. We have completed the videotaping of two more oral histories. By the time you get this, they will be on the Felshtin website, www.felshtin.org along with several other new articles and other items of interest.

Sid Shaievitz continues to work on completing the book and is going through the process in a meticulous fashion utilizing all of the available resources to make sure that we come up with a finished product that will represent the Society in a wonderful way. We have also made contact with some new Felshtiners who are happy to be reconnected with us. Their names are listed below.

- Victor Parsonnet
- Dr. Jeffrey Parsonnet
- Dr. Julie Parsonnet
- Brian Parsonnet

- Sandy Linger Mines
- Seymour Linger Mines

Update On The Oral History Project

The Oral History Project is moving along nicely and in keeping with our goals of memorializing family stories and increasing member participation. The most recent histories are a mixture of video and other media that add to the interest of the presentation.

As we proceeded with the project, it became clear that our volunteer subjects for those interviews did not necessarily have all the facts of their families at their fingertips. Some were more familiar with the facts of their families than others. Simple things like dates, places, names are not always easy to remember from many years ago. So, as the project progressed, it appeared that we needed to be better prepared with accurate information so the story would flow more authentically.

As we gathered information, other ideas began to emerge about how to organize, present and, preserve what we found. It seemed to make no sense to make the effort for this single purpose if we could get more use out of the information. One way

to do this seemed to be to create a family tree for each subject so that information gathered could be found in one place and available for all. While this made our job more complex, it seemed to open up a number of new doors. Our subjects could feel more confident about what they were saying and a family tree placed directly in the video as a picture would make the story more visually interesting. So, the most recent histories contain iconic family pictures of ancestors and actual historical documents as well as basic family trees for the subjects. Together, these items appear in the video and add to the story's impact.

So, we now have a basic template for enhanced videos by using the information gathered from the genealogical archives and other sources. Please let us know your thoughts when you have seen the latest histories on the website, (www.felshtin.org) or Youtube www.youtube.com (Felshtin channel).

The two new videos online have been done in this fashion. One features Anita Uberman Goldman and the other is the story of the Stillerman family, as told by Beverly Gersfeld, Gail Dick and Stuart Habenstreit. Both are interesting stories about the

development of these families and their path toward a future in the United States.

The information that was gathered has been included in family trees that are viewable on Ancestry.com. At this time we have an extensive family tree for the Oksman family, another one for the Ubermans and the Stillermans. Also, Burt Brenman's colossal family tree will be on the site shortly. If you have a family tree on Ancestry.com and want to share it with others, we are looking for a way that we might be able to create a Felshtin family tree site. Please let us know if you have a family tree or an interest in helping us with this project. The families are interconnected in surprising ways and it is fascinating to see where the intermarriages occurred that brought them together.

On another, but related, note, several people with roots in Felshtin have recently come forward. This is great and we are hoping it represents a trend and that our continuing efforts to gather information, family trees, and the oral history videos will stimulate more connections that will involve people in the Society's activities. Please let us know what you think.

We are grateful that Beverly Gersfeld, Gail Dick, Anita Uberman, and Stuart Habenstreit were willing to volunteer to tell their stories. Should you be interested in sharing your thoughts as a first born American from a Felshtin family, please don't hesitate to let me know. We will make every effort to try to arrange for a way to conduct the interview.

All of this effort is focused on our fielding a wonderful and exciting event in 2019 where we hope to be able to memorialize the centennial

Yurtzeit and celebrate 100 years of living in a world here in the West mostly free from the horrible oppression that shaped our ancestors' past. Every oral history seems to point clearly to the importance of family, education, and community resources that have supported each person's growth and development. These are lessons for the ages and as relevant for the refugees in the world today who are just beginning to face the difficult trials of resettlement and reestablishing solid family lives as they were for our forebears. There is also potential academic interest in the study of the intergenerational transmission of trauma. We have reached out to several scholars such as Rachel Yehuda, Professor of Psychiatry and Director of Traumatic Stress Studies Division at the Mt Sinai School of Medicine among others to share our efforts.

The memorial event is expected to have a broad appeal including the opportunity to reconnect with our music, artistic, literary, and culinary past. If you have poetry, pictures, recipes, stories, artwork, or other memorabilia that you think would be interesting, please let us know so that can begin to build our collection for the event.

Remember, buried somewhere in cartons that are stuck in the attic or buried under mounds of forgotten old clothes, there may be records of the Society or other important items of interest. Our oral histories have already revealed regular Society activity that extended over many years that included meetings of the officers, annual events, and fundraising efforts that all must have been documented. If you have any papers related to the Society please make an effort to

find them and send us the information. Thanks very much for any help with this.

Beverly Gersfeld Comments on Her Oral History Experience

Participating in the Oral History Project for the Felshtin Society was a very rewarding experience for me. When Alan Bernstein approached me about doing an oral history I was intrigued because I had a very close relationship with my grandfather, Max Stillerman and the idea of telling his story struck me as a great thing to do.

He emigrated to America from Felshtin when he was 17 years old with his brother Sam and one sister, although they were from a family of 21 children. The story of how our family managed through all of the struggles was a good one and contained many wonderful memories and feelings that I thought would be good to share in this way. So, we made a plan with Alan to videotape our family story.

My cousin Gail Wasserman Dick and my brother Stuart Habenstreit also participated. Gail's parents were both born in Felshtin and immigrated to the United States as children and later married. Since our grandfathers were brothers who came to America together the families have remained close to this day. During the interview Alan Bernstein prompted us with insightful questions which helped us focus on the facts and how we remember things that happened. Overall, it was a free flowing conversation about our memories regarding our families and how our life was in the 1950's and 1960's growing up with immigrant parents.

The Wasserman and Stillerman families were very involved in establishing the Felshtin Society in America. My grandparents helped raise me and my brother and we lived together with my parents

as an extended family until their deaths. I have vivid memories of the Felshtin Society meetings in our living room because my grandfather held the position of secretary.

Reminiscing about my life with my grandparents evoked many emotions. During the oral history I smiled a lot and felt a renewal of my bond with my grandfather. Recalling all the joyful holidays and events shared with my parents, grandparents and cousins filled me with joy. I am very grateful that my children and grandchildren will be able to hear about their family background. The Oral History makes it possible for future generations to know how their ancestors lived when they first came to the United States.

Beverly Gersfeld

Financial Update

Sid Shaevitz and I continue to shoulder a significant financial burden to keep the Society alive and to continue to sustain our proud legacy. Your dues and other contributions have been critical in helping us maintain the website, pay insurance, and other filing fees, and all of the sundry things required to keep things moving forward. Fortunately, we are solvent at this time. If you would like to see details about our financial situation, please let us know. Send your dues and contributions to Sid Shaevitz at your earliest convenience.

Sid Shaevitz
Shaevitz and Berowitz
299 Glenwood Avenue
Bloomfield, NJ 07003

Also, we continue to seek a major donor who can offer the

assistance that would make our centennial memorial event a successful one. If you know anyone or any institution that might be able to help in this capacity, we hope you will direct them towards us so that we may be able present them with our plans and gain their support.

Cemetery Update

One of the tasks that I inherited from the Hoffman family was that of taking responsibility for the cemetery. As I'm sure you're aware, this cemetery is located in the far western edge of Staten Island. When I recently was in touch with the cemetery administrator I learned that a number of monuments and headstones in the old Felshtin section had been damaged. As you can see from the picture, the damage is basically to the portal stones that were the entrance to the main plot. It is impossible to determine just how the stones

were damaged. In addition to the overturned portal stones, a number of headstones have fallen. Some of the damage may have been caused by the vegetation that may have undermined the stones with their roots. When I was there I met with a professional stonemason who could offer his services in restoring things. I am waiting for his detailed estimate. I will keep you apprised of the developments. However, we will be doing a direct mailing to all those who have family buried in the effected area.

It seems that the best way to deter future problems is to keep the area cleaned of excess vegetation. If you have a relative there with a care contract at the cemetery, please let me know. If you have any ideas about how such a problem might be addressed, don't hesitate to call me. Also, if you might be able to assist with the oversight of any necessary repairs, your help would be greatly welcome.



What follows is a list of names of people whose graves are in the area. *Please note that there may be errors in the spelling of names and some names may have been omitted.*

Abe Hoffman
Zweig Mordechai (RAX)
Rose Hoffman
Ruth Hoffman
Jack Oksman
Abe Seigel
Sophie Hochman
Gussie Copper Irelz
Kate Kruger
Dora Greenberg
Jennie Levine
Max Rosen
Isidore Stimer
Jacob Stimer
Leibish Brenman
Joe Levine
Esther Weintraub
Menachem Werbuch
Max Nerenberg
Isidore Fuchsman
Rose Newman
Cecilia Kumm
Sarah Oksman
Toby Josephson
Rose Rosentstein
Max Rosenstein
Sadia Goldsmith
Lizzie Rosenbaum
Pinchos Hoffman
Gussie Urbont
Fannie Greenberg
Minnie Cohen
Sam Silverman
Philip Boelinsky
Abraham Kuris

Louis Nash
Abe Cooper
Bertha Saffem
Dora Schoffer
Anna Partiby
Rose Portnoy
Becke Forman

Joseph Newman
William Kum
Branye Finegold
Dora Wasserman
Fanny Portnoy
Pearl Goldberg
Gussie Wasserman
David Feldman
Oscar Siberman
Abe Schwartzberg
Sam Wasserman
Harry Olstein
Minnie Ostroff Kumm
Mollie Hoffman
Meyer Hoffman
Sam Portnoy
Joseph Urbont

We are hoping that those among you who can help with this project will do so. At the current time, we have a balance of \$550 in the cemetery account.

It is important that we continue to be active in the maintenance of these plots because, if we are not, there is a chance that the state will insist that the cemetery management be allowed to sell of the remaining burial plots to the public. I don't think that this should happen and I'm hoping that we can garner the necessary support to keep these areas as they have been for Felshtiners. Any thoughts you have about this situation would be greatly appreciated.

On a related note, it was fascinating for me to have discovered two distant relatives whose descendants may not be connected with us at this time. The discovery of the graves of Jack Oksman and Bessie Oksman, possibly both children of Morris Oksman, was extraordinary because it opens up a whole other line of our family - the Oksman family - and is evidence of the connection between the families

that had been in some doubt. None of us in the Oksman family had ever heard of a branch in Brooklyn but these graves are proof that indeed there was.

Centennial Memorial

Unfortunately, direct activity on the centennial memorial project has been temporarily slowed down due to our focus on other things. However, we have developed an extensive list of contacts who we feel represent potential colleagues, interested scholars, and NGO's that might be willing to participate with us in this endeavor. We continue to look for people who might be interested in joining with us in this endeavor and, of course, for other Felshtiners who might not currently be connected to us at this time.

I anticipate that we will be able to go back to a more vigorous outreach effort after the holidays and the new year begins. Once again, if you have potential contacts for support or assistance with this project, please don't hesitate to be in touch. Also, we are continuing to look for a major donor who can help us with honorariums, the cost of space, and other things that would greatly enhance our efforts. While there have been a number of generous individual donors who have stepped forward during the course of the year, we are still seeking someone who might be willing to contribute up to \$25,000 to make our effort in keeping with the spirit of the event.

Missing Persons

What follows is a list of people who we have not been able to contact. If you have any idea on how we might be able to reach these people, please don't hesitate to send their contact information forward or have them get in touch with me directly

- Fina Felman & Family – Port Washington, NY
- Beatrice Rosofsky – Delray Beach, FL
- Pearl Schuloff- Boynton Beach, FL
- Morton & Jeffrey Hoffman – Austin, TX
- Herbert Rosofsky – Pompano Beach, FL
- Joseph Hoffman – Scottsdale, AZ
- Lenora Richman – Raleigh, NC
- Shirley Held – Bayside, NY
- Gloria Greenberg – New York, NY
- Dr. Rhoda Fisher – Manlius, NY
- Rubin Kramer – Rancho Santa Margarita, CA
- Morton Buchalter
- Adam Arenson – El Paso, TX
- Rabbi Daniel Nevins – MI
- Zelda Karlin – West Bloomfield, MI
- Jane & Seymour Hoffman – Clifton Park, NY
- Edward J. Nevins – NY
- Barbara Brzowsky – NY
- Carol Cohen
- Donald Davis – Seminole, FL
- Yehoshua Novoseller – Lakewood, NJ
- Alice Olstein – Pacific Palisades, CA
- Jay Greenburg – New York, NY
- Jonathan Banner – Forest Hills, NY
- May Mirel

- Ira A. Cohen
- Goldie Kleiner
- Gilad Tzori – Palo Alto, CA
- Caren Spinner – Palm Coast, FL
- Miriam Cohen
- John Bates – Torrington, CT
- David Baum – Merrifield, VA

Additional Items of Interest

FELSHTIN WEBSITE

There have been several suggestions for changes to the website. If you have thought on how it may be improved, please let me know. At this time we are planning to improve the "Site Map" function and change the order of various resources. Your thoughts are welcome and we will do the best we can to incorporate changes that improve the site (which gets many kudos from most people I speak to).

GENERAL MEETING

It is hoped that we can have a meeting in the spring of all those willing to help with the centennial. If you are interested, please let me know. It will undoubtedly take place in the New York City area. Date and venue will be determined at a later date.

DUES & DONATIONS

It is vital that all of you who have an interest in sustaining our efforts at least pay annual dues of \$50. Contributions beyond that are welcome and may be directed to the area of our efforts that you would like to support. The Yisker Book fund is one such place that funds are needed to complete and publish it. As you may be aware, we operate on a shoestring and both Sid Shaievitz and I use much of our personal and business

resources to keep things moving forward. Your support is very important. Please send dues and donations to Sid at:

Sid Shaievitz
Shaievitz and Berowitz
299 Glenwood Avenue
Bloomfield, NJ 07003