

# Looking Back

*Newsletter of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Tampa Bay (JGSTB)*

## *Special Highlights:*

- First Issue from Rita Rubin
- June 28<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting
- Next Meeting September 10<sup>th</sup>

## **The Prez Sez – By Bill Israel, president JGSTB**

A summer Shalom to you! Here we are in the middle of our July-August shutdown (it's a good time to be in North Carolina), but your Jewish Genealogical Society is staying busy behind the scenes. Your officers had a mid-term business meeting to review our status and take a look at plans for the rest of the year. We made progress in several areas this year, and we hope to keep the ball rolling. Here is a brief "state of the JGS" mid-term report:

The best news (for me and for you) is that we now have a newsletter editor other than myself. Rita Rubin took on this responsibility, which means you will now see a newsletter more regularly than you did when I was (occasionally) doing it. Kudos to Rita, and also to Clint Elbow who will help Rita with the formatting and publication. We started up a newsletter, and now it has an editor. I feel very good about that.

We participated in Tampa's Israel Independence Day Festival with an exhibit booth in Plant Park. This was our first venture into the outside world, and it was a successful one. Many people stopped by our booth to look and to chat, and 45 of them signed up for more information. My thanks to Clint Elbow, Rita Rubin, Larry and Florry Blum, Betty Lou Rosen, and to Sally Israel for coming out to help that day. Rita has some photos of our exhibit crew elsewhere in this issue.

In preparation for the Jewish Festival exhibit, I designed and printed a long overdue information brochure for our JGS, and Rita Rubin prepared a very nice beginner's packet to help newbies get started in Jewish genealogy. We needed these and will make further use of them.

After several years of operating unofficially, we published bylaws for our JGS, and the membership approved them. This was a significant accomplishment. We are now legal!

Rita Rubin has been a busy lady on our behalf. At the request of Sallyann Sachs, Rita signed on as one of the authors for a new book to be published by Avotaynu documenting Jewish genealogical resources including Tampa Bay. Rita researched, identified and documented most of the major Jewish resources in the Tampa Bay area including synagogues, cemeteries, day schools, funeral homes, community centers, federations, and other Jewish-related organizations that may have information of interest to Jewish researchers. This task started out as a simple cemetery project, but it grew into a much more comprehensive effort, and Rita stuck with it. The payment Rita will receive for this work will be donated to our JGS. Thank you Rita for your generosity and for a job well done.

Other accomplishments are that Clint Elbow is keeping our website maintained (check it out at <http://www.rootsweb.com/~fljgstb/home.htm>). Clint is also keeping us educated and informed with monthly programs, and Emil Isaacson keeps adding new materials to our library. I give thanks and appreciation to all the volunteers who are keeping our JGS going, and I look forward to seeing all of you at our September meeting.

## First Issue from the Desk of Rita Rubin

This will be the first issue from the desk of Rita Rubin, who is the new editor for, "Jewish Genealogical Society of Tampa Bay". I will aim for the high excellence, which has proceeded me and look for their guidance in shaping our future. I also

call upon our membership for their help, by submitting ideas, articles, latest resources, etc. in the field of Genealogy, which can be included in our newsletter. Each of us has a story to tell, which can interest our group and your story will

let the rest of us know that we are not alone in trying to solve our family's mysteries. My email desk is [Ritar@atlantic.net](mailto:Ritar@atlantic.net).

## June 28th Board Meeting

On June 28th, a board meeting was held, with the purpose of setting up our programs and goals for the coming season. We agreed that our focus must be twofold; attracting beginners to our group, while still keeping things interesting for more seasoned genealogists. We also would like to help

with projects, here at home, that might have a global reach. With our forthcoming programs, we are hoping to boost community interest and increase our membership. Some upcoming proposed programs are; Lunelle Siegler, "Jews of the Civil War", Larry Domnitch, "Children Who Served in

the Russian Army", Bill and Sally Israel, "Trip to Lithuania and Latvia" and Emil Isaacson, "How to Get Started in Jewish Genealogy", a two part seminar.

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## Rita Rubin Takes a Central and East European Trip



Krucienko, Poland



Abrahamovce, Slovakia

*"I have just returned from a trip to Central and Eastern Europe."*

*- Rita Rubin*



Berlin Holocaust Memorial



Berlin Holocaust Memorial

I have just returned from a trip to Central and Eastern Europe. It was a fast paced planned tour by bus with a guide. The countries and cities were behind the "Iron Curtain", when I last visited Europe, so I was eager to see a lot of area in a short amount of time. I did however get to take one day, with a private car and driver and visit towns and villages unique to my family history. The places were south of Krakow in a very picturesque region, just above the Tatra Mountains, in the Pheniny's, a favorite resort area, with skiing in the winter and river rafting in the summer. The family had traveled over the mountains and down into Slovakia, before coming to America one hundred years (100) ago, where I visited as well.

Economically speaking, the Polish region is doing far better than the Slovak side. When you travel the roads, you see fewer cars but more horse drawn wagons in Slovakia. I could really get the feel of what things were like in that era, as probably the only difference being, no Jews are there now. In all the places that I visited, that was the sad reality. The German plan was to erase all traces of Jewish life and as long as there are those among us working on Jewish Genealogy, they will not have succeeded, is my personal thought.

Although going to Germany, was my least favorite part of the trip, it was a history lesson. I saw how Berlin was divided into East and West and was amazed at how the Russians managed to build a wall in one day, around the entire East section. Where you were when the wall was built, determined your future. Families were separated, jobs were out of reach and lives were no longer, as they were, just the day before. A united Berlin is trying to rebuild the city but it is not very impressive. They have built a Memorial, to the Holocaust, which leaves you feeling that they could have done more but I guess that nothing would be enough, to grasp the enormity of what happened to six (6) million Jews. It is important that we never forget and the Memorials, Museums and stories in books and on film should reach as many people as possible. The trip was by no means, a depressing journey to find my roots but had many positive experiences. I learned about the cultures of these countries, saw their cities, listened to the music of Chopin, Mozart and Strauss, who lived in these areas. I visited the palaces of the Hapsburg Family, who reigned for 600 years. In the city of Vienna, they had a Winter Palace and Summer Palace, in the same city. Both were enormous

beyond your imagination and far larger than any residences, that I had previously seen. I was interested in Franz Josef, who lived from 1830 to 1916, as I was told that my great grandfather, who was born in 1830, was named for him. Prague is one of the few cities, not ravaged by the war and it is very impressive. The Jewish Section is quite inspiring. I would also recommend Budapest, which is quite lovely. They are trying to compete with Paris and have adopted much of their style. A Danube River Dinner Cruise at night was very picturesque. Eastern Europe can compete with Western Europe, in terms of tourism but since most of the area, had been under Communist Rule, the people need to develop a different mindset. They have been told what to do and how to think for so long, that it will take a few generations, before they can change in order to compete. There is a big graffiti problem in all the cities, which is on most of the buildings and you have to look beyond these imperfections. Maybe one day they will solve that problem.

## University of Minnesota Immigration Research Center

Before going to Europe, I visited the University of Minnesota Immigration History Research Center and was impressed with their facilities, [www.ihrc.umn.edu](http://www.ihrc.umn.edu). They also house Upper Midwest

Jewish Archives in the Elmer Anderson Library, [www.jhsum.org](http://www.jhsum.org), which has a huge map collection. I was able to get some old maps before my trip, which I wasn't able to get anywhere else. They have

some very old and rare maps, dating to the 1600's stored there. If anyone is interested in old maps, that is a great place to visit.

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*"This is a great place to visit."*

## Israel Independence Day Community Festival

This year's "Israel Independence Day Community Festival" was held in downtown Tampa on the grounds of Plant Park at the University of Tampa, which was a great location in order to engage, not only the Jewish Community but

non Jews as well. Our Jewish Genealogy Club, rented a booth for the day and met many people, who showed interest in joining our group (43 signed in our book). We hope to get some to come to future meetings. It was well worth our effort, even

if only to connect with our Jewish Community. William & Sally Israel, Clint Elbow, BettyLou Rosen, Larry & Florry Blum and myself manned the booth.



Sally Israel and Betty Lou Rosen at Festival



Larry Blum Manning the table at Festival

## Family Tree Magazine: Hebrew Heritage

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*"Hebrew Heritage"*

Family Tree Magazine's August 2006 issue, has an eight page article, titled "Hebrew Heritage", which has some helpful resources for tracing your Jewish roots. Even though it may be geared

more to beginners, it is nevertheless, an interesting article. Included in this magazine are many helpful sites to check out and other genealogy related information.

## Family Reunions

I would like to mention holding family reunions and how important, I think they are. I just recently lost a cousin, my father's first cousin's child and if I hadn't put together a family reunion, the year before last, I would not have met this wonderful, gifted person. He was a Doctor of Psychiatry at Harvard University, who was involved with innovative drug treatment for mental illness. He was very full with his own family and career, yet managed to call his mother every day. She is

101 years old but too senile to realize his passing. It is important to find your relatives and try to meet with them as it is a rewarding experience. The cousins who also attended the reunion are thanking me, that they were able to meet him, either for the first time or to see him again. Some sites to help with your planning are; [www.Family-Reunion.com](http://www.Family-Reunion.com) and [www.genealogy.about.com/od/familyreunions](http://www.genealogy.about.com/od/familyreunions) I will offer advice to anyone who wants my help.

Speaking of meeting family members, one of our members, Al Koenig and his wife Sharon recently connected with her Holocaust survivor cousin and got to spend Passover together. Using the Yad Vashem Database, they traced a cousin, Leon Tsevery, who was living in France. He had no idea that he had family members living in America. It was a happy and tearful reunion. Al, I am sure will be glad to give you advice on using that database.

## JGSTB Library Holdings

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*"We are very proud of our library holdings..."*

We are very proud of our library holdings, which is managed by Emil Isaacson and is quite extensive in the field of Jewish Genealogy. One of our very important holdings is "Where Once We Walked" by Gary Mokotoff and Sallyann

Amdur Sack, BK046 in our library. It is a Guide to the Jewish Communities destroyed in the Holocaust and documents more than 21,000 towns in Central and Eastern Europe, where Jews had lived and provides Jewish population figures before

the Holocaust and information about those towns. Using the Daitch-Mokotoff Soundex System, it allows you to find a town based on how it sounds rather than how it is spelled.

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## Technology and Family History

Technology is coming faster than ever in the field of Family History, as told in a recent Wall Street Journal article. Records are being indexed and digitized at record speeds. [www.FamilySearch.org](http://www.FamilySearch.org), is expanding their on line collection, digitizing records that were previously only on

microfilm. [www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com) is expanding their services to include all census records and going into more international markets. [www.MyHeritage.com](http://www.MyHeritage.com) uses face recognition technology and [www.myHeritageResearch.com](http://www.myHeritageResearch.com), allows you to

search a name across 400 databases simultaneously, while [www.Legacy.com](http://www.Legacy.com) holds nearly five million obituaries. The problem is that I am still trying to understand the old technology.

*"Check out these helpful websites."*

## Shtetl Schlepper Trip for Bill and Sally Israel

Bill and Sally Israel, just returned from their Shtetl Schlepper trip to Lithuania and Latvia. They had made this same trip thirteen (13) years earlier but at that time, they went on their own. This time, they were led by Howard

Margol, refer to our previous newsletter, in which he is featured and it made a world of difference. It far exceeded their expectations, much because of the excellent guides, who set up much

of the work in advance of their visit. We await the details, which they will share with us at a future meeting.

## German Cabinet to release Holocaust Records

The German Cabinet, under pressure, has agreed to release an archive of millions of Nazi files about the Holocaust. The archive is said to contain everything they recorded on the concentration camps and the prisoners held there.

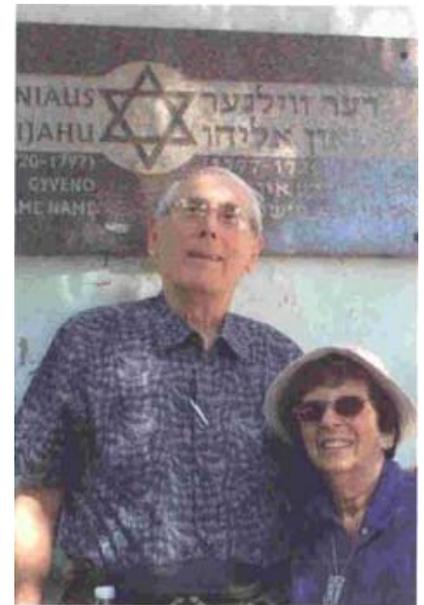
There is no date set for the release of the records, as after Germany signs on July 26, eleven other countries have to ratify it. The information is eagerly awaited by family members and those working on genealogy.

## The Rest of The Year

The rest of the year for JGSTB will round out with three presentations at the September, October, and November meetings. In September we will have Lunelle Siegel speak on 'Researching Jewish Confederate Ancestors'.

In October we will have Bill Israel, our president, speak on 'How to publish & present genealogy research (print & digital)'. In November we will have Larry Domnitch speak on 'Children who served in the Russian Army'. In

December we will have a social and the election of officers for 2007. We hope to see all of you at each of these meetings.



Bill & Sally Israel in Vilnius, Lithuania  
Historical marker shows that Vilna Gans  
prominent Rabbi lived here

Bill and Sally Israel in Vilnius  
Lithuania

## Jewish Genealogical Society of Tampa Bay

Meets at the Gulf Coast Family Services:

14041 Icot Blvd.,  
Clearwater, Florida

E-MAIL:

[jgstb@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:jgstb@tampabay.rr.com)

Meetings 2nd Sunday of  
each month, except  
July and August.

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We're on the Web:

[www.rootsweb.com  
/~fljgstb/home.htm](http://www.rootsweb.com/~fljgstb/home.htm)

## Messages from our e-mail bag:

Larry Blum of our group, is willing to help anyone interested in Polish Roots, specifically the towns or Shtetl; Kielce, SZwolen, Radom, Nowe, Misto-Pilica, Cheim, Kalisz, Bielsk, Sochocin, Ciechanow, Plonsk, Drobin, Mlawa, Plock, Nadarzyn to name a few.  
[Lblum1@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:Lblum1@tampabay.rr.com)

Bettylou Rosen has been in contact with Jules Duga from Columbus, Ohio and he has done a Cemetery Project for that area and will make it available to anyone seeking information on internments in and around that part of Ohio,  
[Julesduga@columbus.rr.com](mailto:Julesduga@columbus.rr.com)

## Feedback

Our newsletter is called "Looking Back" but would like suggestions as to changing the name. Something which tells our readers that we plan to go forward with some positive ideas for our future.

## Israel Daily Alert

For those interested in the day to day happenings in Israel and related news stories, [www.dailyalert.org](http://www.dailyalert.org) has the most current information.

## About Our Organization...

The purpose of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Tampa Bay is to assist interested individuals in learning about Jewish genealogy and how to research and document their own family histories. The Society does this by facilitating the exchange of research information, encouraging and

facilitating research activities, educating members to help themselves and others, making available research resources and materials, arranging genealogical research tours and presenting monthly programs of interest to Jewish genealogical researchers. The

Society's library and research resources include both printed materials and Internet access as well as guided assistance from experienced researchers. Special emphasis is given to helping beginners.