

Seasons Of Our Lives:



*Biographical Sketches Of Our
Congregation Dor Hadash Senior Members*

"Seasons of Our Lives" Celebration
Congregation Dor Hadash
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
May 9, 2009 15 Iyar 5769

We honor those who have attained the age of 80 or older
during this year.

Jack Belle
Regina Belle
Edith Belov
Dorothy Braun
Howard Braun
Elizabeth Brown
Harold Chelemer
James Colker
Janice Colker
Libby Elbaum
Arnold Engler
Arnold Freedman
Yetta Freedman
Sidney Friedman
Leonard Kuntz
Mildred Kuntz
Judith Rothstein
Claire Sackin
Milton Sackin
Wilbur Steger
Ernest Sternglass
Eugene Sucov
Esther Tucker
Bilha Witt (special mention)

In the words of the Talmud, it states, "at eighty--the age of strength." What is the strength of eighty years? The strength of eighty is the wisdom that comes from experience and completion. Having run much of the course of life, having seen the follies and passions of the human heart rise and subside, having seen their own and their friends' dreams, limitations and achievements, an adult of eighty years or older is finally able to look at the human condition with compassion and some skepticism.

At eighty, we can review our life, taking stock of how those who cared for us as children paved our paths through life, for good or for ill. The Talmud relates that Rabbi Hanina used to say that one was regarded as healthy "as long as one is able to stand on one foot and put on and take off one's shoes." It was said that Rabbi Hanina was able to do so at the age of eighty. He remarked that, "the warm bath and oil with which my parents anointed me in my youth have stood me in good stead in my old age."

In our youth, someone older cares for us. As links in the chain of the generations, we also care for others who depend on us to transmit what they need to establish lives of purpose, accomplishment and belonging. Judaism is the warm water, and Torah the oil with which to anoint our children and ourselves, the bath to keep away the chill. Then, even in old age, we will flourish like a cedar. Planted in the courtyards of our God, we shall bear fruit, even in old age.

It is with these thoughts in mind that we at Dor Hadash mark this **Shabbat of May 9, 2009** as a celebration of the "*Seasons of Our Lives*" when we honor those members of our congregation who have with thanks to God reached the golden age of strength. This historic event demonstrates the true volunteer spirit of Dor Hadash as so many people have worked diligently to make this occasion a beautiful and memorable simcha. A special thanks goes out to our dedicated committee members for this event:

Judy Grumet, Laura Horowitz, Donna Lenckner and Jen Primack.

I hope you enjoy reading all of the biographical sketches of our honorees in this booklet, which were submitted by numerous individuals who truly expressed their gratitude in being able to be a part of this wonderful simcha. May we all continue to be blessed with strength and good health to enjoy many more joyous occasions together.

B'shalom,

Cheryl J. Klein

Lay Cantor, Congregation Dor Hadash

"Seasons of Our Lives" Event Coordinator and Booklet Editor

We would like to express our gratitude to those who have given tzedakkah to
Congregation Dor Hadash to honor those being celebrated at the
“Seasons of Our Lives” special Shabbat.

Howard Aizenstein and Barbara Baumann

Sarah and Stan Angrist

Allen Baum and Elizabeth Witzke-Baum

Dottie and Howard Braun

Lisa Brush

Jean Clickner and Jon Pushinsky

Alan and Lynne Colker

Ruth and Sy Drescher

Paula Engel

Sidney Friedman

Elizabeth and Jerry Gordon

Janice Gordon and Rob Kraftowitz

Hal Grinberg

Judy Grumet

Melissa and Stephen Jones

David Klahr and Pam Weiss

Cheryl and Mark Klein

Dan and Ellen Leger

Donna and Jim Lenckner

Nancy Levine-Arnold

Carl Fertman and Barbara Murock

Nancy and Joel Merenstein

Brian and Jen Primack

Jerry and Miri Rabinowitz

David and Elizabeth Segel

Jon and Libba Spiegel

Arlene Stromberg

Rita Tauberg

Pat Weiss

anonymous

A LITTLE HISTORY by - Esther Jacobson Tucker – April 2009

Long ago we were a new congregation,
Young and determined to find our own way;
Boldly we called ourselves “New Generation”
Gathered together to study and pray.

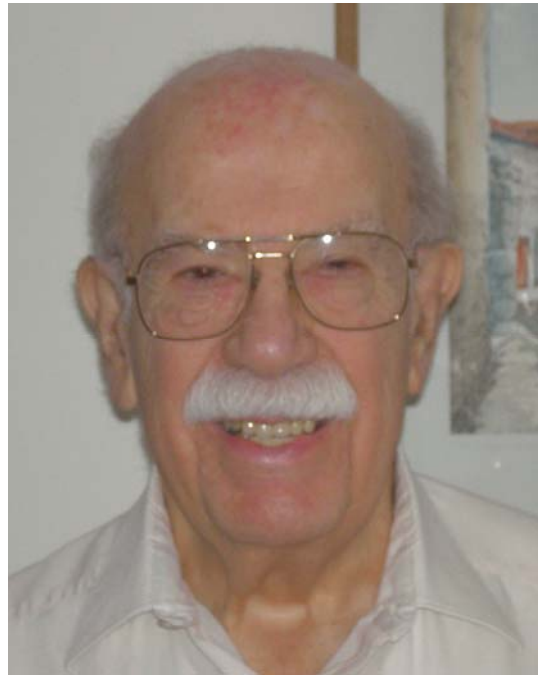
Each of us coming from varied tradition,
Each individual earnest and strong,
Often proposals met firm opposition –
But somehow or other, we all got along.

On through the years, through the happy and sad times,
Younger folks joined us, to lead in their turn;
Still we, the elders, in good times and bad times,
Gather as ever, to study and learn.

Once we brought children to each celebration,
Little ones running around in the hall;
Their children now are the new generation;
We, their exemplars, are proud of them all.

Still, here we are on this fine Shabbat morning,
Part of the shul that we’ll never forget;
Giving the younger folks notice and warning –
Don’t count us out, ‘cause we’re not finished yet!

Jack Belle



Jack Belle was born in Pittsburgh in 1921 in the Hill District on Webster Avenue. He spoke Yiddish as a kid. He spent a lot of time at the Carnegie Library, across the street from the Hebrew Institute, in the Hill. The depression left a great mark on Jack. When he was ten years old (1931) he became aware of its effects. He had two older sisters, one eleven years older than him and the other eight years older.

Jack received his Jewish education at the Hebrew Institute and attending classes there until becoming a Bar Mitzvah. He was never really enthusiastic about attending classes there.

Jack's mother came with her parents, sisters & younger brother from the Ukraine. His father's parents also came from there, with six children. Once in the US they added another child to the family...now there were six sons and one daughter.

Jack's father was a self- educated man. He had a confectionary store, which also sold other miscellaneous items. He handled the heavy work & the customers. Jack's mother worked in the store as well. She handled the presentation of the goods. Jack does not remember his grandparents.

In high school, Jack worked at his father's store and also at a drug store in the Hill District. At Pitt he graded science and math papers as part of the NYA program. He also ushered at the Nixon.

Jack could have gone to Fifth Ave. High School or Schenley but an older cousin encouraged me to choose the latter due to my interest in physics and an outstanding physics teacher there. He did set me on my career. Jack received a scholarship from the Buhl Foundation to attend the University of Pittsburgh. Jack later went on to complete his Ph.D. from Brooklyn Polytech, now part of Columbia University. For a post-doc Jack

went to the National Bureau of Standards in Washington, D.C. From there he went to Columbus, Ohio and the Battelle Memorial Institute and then finally, back to Pittsburgh to the Bettis Atomic Power Laboratory. He also served in the Air Corp of the US Army from February 1943 to July 1946 as a weather officer. He volunteered and was sent to the Pacific.

Professionally, Jack has written and edited two books on materials for nuclear reactors. He was an American delegate to the first two international conferences on peaceful uses of nuclear energy, which resulted in the Belles first trips to Europe, the cities of Geneva and Amsterdam.

Personally, Jack is very proud of his marriage and his children. He would like to be remembered as a good husband, a good father and a physical scientist.

Jack and Regina, his wife, are deeply devoted to each other; delight in each other's company as they continue to enjoy the intellectual pursuits that are the foundations of their lives, in music, theatre, books and movies.

Interviewer: Nancy Merenstein

Regina Heinz Belle



Regina Heinz was born in 1921 in Pittsburgh, in Oakland, but then moved to Brookline where she went to South Hills High School. She had one younger brother. The depression seemed to be a large part of her life. She felt discrimination due to being Jewish. There were few Jews or people of color in the South Hills at that time. Regina did not grow up attending religious services.

Some of Regina's early dreams were to go to college, become a newspaper -woman and live in New York. She accomplished all three of her goals.

Regina's parents immigrated from Lithuania and Poland. They were wonderful parents. Her father owned a jewelry store but he was unhappy that it did not do well because of the economic times. He was sad and felt unsuccessful. He had a sharp, biting humor. Her mother worked in her father's store. In her later years her mother volunteered at Montefiore Hospital. Both of Regina's parents died young, in their sixties. Regina never got to know her grandparents as they remained in Europe.

After high school, Regina went to the University of Pittsburgh where she majored in education. During college she sold hats at Gimbels Department Store and graded English papers. She also ushered at the Syria Mosque entertainment hall. Her first job after graduation from Pitt was at the American Jewish Outlook in Pittsburgh. After moving to New York, she worked for the Joint Distribution Committee. She spent several years in public relations, stayed home when her children were young and then returned to teaching, first as a substitute and then as a permanent English teacher at Baldwin High School, where she also taught journalism.

In 1940, Regina met Jack Belle at a Pitt sorority party. They greatly admired each other intellectually. They were married in 1946, after the war. They have two children.

Deborah has a Ph.D. In developmental psychology and teaches at Boston University and is the mother of their two grandsons. Richard has a business called Belle Communications in Maryland.

Regina and Jack first belonged to Temple Emanuel in the South Hills, but became very interested in the teachings of Mordechai Kaplan. When they heard of Dor Hadash, Pittsburgh's Reconstructionist synagogue, they decided to join.

Regina is most proud of her marriage and children. She would like to be remembered as a good mother, wife and teacher.

Interviewer: Nancy Merenstein

Edith Roth Belov



Edith Roth, born May 25, 1924, spent the earliest years of her childhood in West Natrona, PA, before moving to nearby Brackenridge. This was a quiet place, with very few Jews. Edith was the youngest of three children – her older brother was fifteen years older, and her sister six years older than she. As a result, she remembers her childhood as being almost an only child, after her sister graduated from school.

Edith's father was a gentle, soft-spoken man, who would give her a nickel for ice cream every day. He died when Edith was fifteen years old. Her mother was very observant and strong-minded. She would not allow the children to write or sew on Shabbat, and when she got mad, Edith would run to get out of her reach. However, with time she loosened up a little, and would let her go to Pittsburgh on Saturdays. Later, their relationship warmed up, and Edith was the one to stay with her mother as she got older. When Edith got married and moved to Philadelphia, she would send her mother a cotton dress from the department store every Mothers' Day, which she always liked. Her mother's mother – Edith's grandmother – came from a town in Russia, and was a "prima donna," not afraid to distribute the work among her daughters. She lived with one of her daughters in Natrona, and Edith remembers sitting with her whenever her aunt had to go to Pittsburgh for the day.

Brackenridge was a quiet place, with not many activities for young people. Edith spent much time reading. (She still loves to read, and currently participates in a Hadassah book club, where she has just finished a book about the Spanish Inquisition.) The town was too small for a synagogue, so when they attended services they went to Tarentum. They had no car, so they would walk, along with others from their town and neighboring towns.

Her parents ran a grocery store, where Edith worked as she was growing up. There was no such thing as an allowance; they were just coming out of the depression, and they were very frugal. Once, a salesman from H.J. Heinz stopped in when Edith was watching the store, and she ordered five cases of baked beans. Those beans lasted a long time!

Edith had one Jewish girlfriend growing up, who lived in the next town. They would go into Pittsburgh together – it was a big deal! There was not much dating, as the war was on. New Kensington had a Jr. Hadassah group where she became active. After the war, they had a large party, and numerous shidduchs (match –makings) resulted.

Her mother found Edith her first job – a cashier at a sporting goods store, where she worked briefly. After she graduated from high school, a friend of hers went to take a test to qualify for government jobs, so Edith decided to go along and take it too. She did well, and got a job as an inspector for the Navy. She went to New York City, and got training in how to use various instruments. Later on she came back to Pittsburgh, and worked at Alcoa, still for the Navy, inspecting disks used in depth bombs. When the war ended, her job was over, and her sister talked her into going to business school at what is now Point Park College.

A few years later, she met Len Belov, who was then a young pharmacist in Philadelphia, where her brother was also a pharmacist. She actually met him in Cleveland at a pharmacy convention. She loved his sense of humor. They married and moved to Philadelphia, where they lived for ten years, and where their children, Ann and Charles, were born. She is very proud of them: watching them graduate from college, and seeing them turn out to be 100% Belovs, which can be seen particularly in their abundant artistic talent.

Her most memorable trip was the one she and Len took to Israel in 1995. They spent ten days – she remembers how moving it was to be there, and seeing Ben Gurion's grave, where Len's eyes filled with tears.

The family came to Dor Hadash after a bad experience at their previous temple: their children had been told that they would die young if they were not observant Jews. They had heard about this new group that met at the Hebrew Institute, some time around 1972, and the rest was history.

Interviewer: Roye Werner

Dorothy (Dottie) Friedman Braun and Howard Braun



Introduction:

On Wednesday morning, March 25, 2009, I was welcomed into the home of Dottie and Howard Braun to conduct an interview for the Dor Hadash “Seasons of Our Lives” Celebration. All I knew of the Braun’s at that time was that they were 80 or over and were members of Dor Hadash. But as soon as Dottie opened the door, I was introduced to the family of photos on the wall: Howard’s parents when they were married, four small children about the age of 6 or 7; one was Dottie and the others her cousins, the Braun’s children and grandchildren, the dashing portrait of Howard in his Naval uniform and his brother Harold in the Army. “I’m in a ‘Jewish Home,’ I thought.” It was so familiar to me, as I have the same “photos on my wall” as do my sister and brothers, as did my mother and father, aunts and uncles. I was given a brief tour by Howard of the paintings in the apartment, half of what they had in their house on Bellerock St; of the treasures from trips and the sculpted “busts” of daughters Janet and Michele when they were younger, done by a visitor who stayed a week in the Braun’s home. Introductions over, we settled on where to sit. “No, I didn’t want coffee or grape juice, I was fine!” We began to talk.

Dottie Friedman was born in Brooklyn, NY, in the Brownville section on July 13th, 1927. Her father was one of 8 children born in a shtetl in Russia. The family moved to the US en masse. Within walking distance of her house in Brownsville lived nineteen

first cousins! When she talks about her neighborhood and friends, lots of friends, one gets the sense that at a very early age, Dottie knew what it meant to be a GOOD friend. Her grandfather's house was the focus of the extended family. Dottie's father—who was the oldest child in his family-- was also a focus -- he approved all the future husbands of her cousins. They kept a kosher house. Her father manufactured women's coats and he was very creative. He made Dottie's coats and special dresses and she loved being stylish—she had wonderful clothes. Being the only daughter—with two older brothers -- 10 and 12 years older, one can imagine her mother's delight in this as well! She describes herself as a “little - goody-two-shoes” but in all honesty, I detected a twinkle in her eye that hinted otherwise—but I'm just the interviewer!

When she was 10 years old, Dottie met Howard Braun's sister and they became good friends. The Braun family lived a few streets away. When his family moved to the same street, she spent a lot of time at their house. Her future-father-in-law thought she'd make a good daughter-in-law. “They LIKED me,” she laughs. “We had an arranged marriage.” Dottie attended a local K-6 elementary school; then 7th through 9th grade were in a “tough” junior high school, where she was placed in “rapid advancement classes” in this all girls school. She remembers being somewhat shy. The students did not wear fancy clothes to school. Everyone wore a uniform of white blouses and a skirt and a colored tie. The local high school, which she attended, was a one -mile walk from home and had 5,000 students.

When Dottie graduated high school, she wanted to go to college. This was frowned upon by her father. Yet, she started City College and commuted one hour each way by subway to attend classes. After a year, seeing all of her friends working and making good salaries, she quit! It was wartime and she decided to work too. Ironically, her father was actually disappointed, but she got a job as a bookkeeper and worked until 1950. “It never occurred to me to go to college after I got married”, she recalls. I have to say that she has made up for THAT! In the past years she and Howard walked to the University of Pittsburgh to audit classes, first from their house in Squirrel Hill and now from their condominium in Oakland. She guesses that she could have earned a Ph.D. by now, for all the classes she's taken—and is still taking.

Howard Braun was born on May 12th, 1923 in Transylvania/Erde in Magyar-Hungary, where he lived with his mother and her in-laws until he was seven years old. He remembers these early years and paints the tale of post World War I through the eyes of his father. The steamer trunk that his father used to travel to America was the trunk Howard took when he went to college in Iowa. His voyage to America and the symbolic “new beginning” of life in NY as a child are all vividly recalled. Howard was on the football team in high school. He was among the few of the 5,000 in his school to get a football scholarship to Iowa State University where he studied engineering and after graduation, was in the US Navy. His younger brother Harold followed (almost) in his footprints and a photo of the two—in full uniform, Howard in the Navy and Harold in the Army is but one of the family photos on the wall in the Braun's apartment.

Howard's memoirs are so rich in events, from the depression to prohibition to the streets of NYC, one could have easily missed this gem. He recalls a family story that when he was home on a visit, his “pop” asked him if he had ever taken notice of Dottie Friedman, his Pop's pinochle partner's daughter? He trusted his Pop's good judgment

and also, that he had his son's welfare at heart. "With good attractions and luck," he writes, "Dottie and I were married within a year."

The Braun's: Married life for Dottie and Howard is described by Dottie within the context of various houses and moves; each one associated with Howard's employment opportunities and ultimately, new adventures for both he and Dottie. After they were married, they moved to Schenectady, NY, where Howard worked as a nuclear engineer at GE. They were close to their NY family, so could visit often but did not join a congregation. Howard's skills in engineering figured into this first house and move in very unique ways. In Schenectady, he had the foundation and frame of the house built and then, he and Dottie began to do the rest! They lived in an apartment while this was being done. He did all of the electrical work and put up the sheet rock--her job was to patch the sheet rock!

It was during the years in Schenectady that Dottie, Howard, and their young son Steven started camping on vacations. Dottie remembers that as a young girl, her family would rent a cottage at Rockaway Beach for the summer and would also swim at Coney Island. "It was so crowded!" Their first camping experienced involved a fishing trip—Dottie was pregnant—her son was six months old, they had a pup tent, all of the essential equipment and Howard built one of the first "port-a-beds" for kids. It was a square contraption that could fit in the back seat of a car. Two sides could come off or stay up—so little Steven could play safely—or sleep during the day. They had trout for breakfast and it was peaceful and serene. It was not only the fish that got "hooked" on that trip! Their children grew up camping: from the NY Mountains and Parks to Yosemite, Yellowstone, Canyon lands in Utah, and the Seattle World's Fair, just to name a few highlights. As the camping continued, Howard's inventions got more elaborate. The tent that was mounted on the top of the car, that could be easily pitched when they got to their destination, seems to be a forerunner of those campers that are now so common. When the kids were grown—camping was traded for Elder Hostel. But, this gets ahead of the story.

After one to two years, the house in Schenectady was still under construction. Dottie was pregnant with her second child and Howard took a position in the new GE plant in San Jose, California. Joining IBM and Lockheed, San Jose was becoming a hub of new technological opportunities. This was in 1955, a time when the promise of using atomic energy to fuel our nation was hopeful and marked "progress." Dottie was pregnant with her daughter Michelle and she remembers telling Howard that she would NOT go and moved in with her parents. But when they visited San Jose and got off the plane—she said, "We both fell in love with it! " They lived there for eight years, bought a ranch house with a dishwasher and a powder room right on the first floor. (Oh the details we remember.) It was in San Jose that they joined a Reform temple and formed long-lasting friendships. Both the cantor and rabbi were warm and welcoming. Away from family, they found both a geographical and a spiritual home!

The next (and to this day, the last) move was in 1963 to Pittsburgh, Dor Hadash, and Westinghouse where Howard had a prestigious and accomplished career in the atomic power division until his retirement in 1989. When Howard retired, their friends in San Jose asked, "Now are you coming back?" When they sold their house on Bellerock St. the call was repeated... "NOW, are you coming back?" Their three children, Steven,

Michele and Janet all “grew up” in Pittsburgh, had left the “nest”, but Pittsburgh remained home to Dottie and Howard. Michele works for the Federal Reserve Bank and Janet is an event planner. Steven is an economist, and was appointed by President Clinton to be on the President’s economic advisory panel. He stayed through the last 8 years of the Bush administration and is still in the position. All live in the DC area, as do the seven grandchildren—close to their Gramma and Grampa!

During the first part of the interview, Howard was very attentive, correcting or adding a detail here and there but Dottie did most of the talking. That was until I asked the question about when and how they got involved with Dor Hadash! I wondered if they had been part of the original small group that started the congregation or did they join recently? “I was the first President”, Howard announces. It’s all written down—and he leaves for just a few minutes and returns with a spiral bound book entitled, “ Snippets of My Skin: More than an Engineer’s Story” “ and some copies of the stories he wrote for Dor Hadash’s publication “Growing Up Jewish Or Not!” Since these vignettes are to be from the interviews, I’m relying on my visit, not the books, but I can vouch for Howard’s knack for storytelling in stark, sometimes funny, sometimes cynical but always engaging, honest, detail. Here’s Howard’s story about Dor Hadash.

It began with a “cheap book” he laughs... \$1.65 for 40 prayer books. He and Dottie were new to Pittsburgh and were looking for a place for their son, Steven, who was 11, to study for his Bar Mitzvah. They learned about the new location of the Hebrew Institute on Forbes Avenue and met with Dr. Sol Abrams, its executive director, who suggested that Steven attend classes there. This was in May 1963. Abrams told the Braun’s about a small group of people who were organizing to hold High Holiday services at the Institute. Both Howard and Dottie joined this very small group and after the High Holidays, there was forward motion to continue and expand the work/offerings. A founding document was created and a charter from the State of Pennsylvania was obtained. In truth, Howard did not have any particular knowledge of Reconstructionist philosophy at the time. It was Sol Abrams, who wanted a “modern” shul. He had a son who was not interested in gaining a religious education and Sol thought if he created a Reconstructionist shul, it would appeal to him. It never did, but a structure was put in place for holding services every other week; orthodox students from Taylor Allderdice High School served to read and comment on the Torah portions and four times a year, rabbinical students from Temple University would travel to Pittsburgh to share their wisdom with the young congregation. Dues were \$15.00; the students received \$100.00 towards transportation. They were housed and fed—almost exclusively at Dottie and Howard’s house. It’s clear that this early time at Dor Hadash has remained near and dear to the hearts of both Howard and Dottie. They were involved, knew everyone in the congregation and again, found a “home” to share their religious ideas and ideals.

After about an hour and a half into the interview, Howard stood up, towered over me and said, “Now for an important question. Are you staying for lunch?” “What time is lunch?” I asked? “Now.” I readily agreed and Howard disappeared into the kitchen. I could hear the fridge opening and closing, dishes being set on a table, cans being opened—the bustle of the food! Dottie and I talked a bit more and then sat down to the perfect lunch: bagels (warmed), lox, hard-boiled eggs, a delicious fresh salad and hot coffee.

It was over lunch that I learned of Howard's current writing project. The second and more detailed version of a plan to introduce nuclear power into the mid-east to provide needed electricity and to conserve the dwindling water supplies. This was a "how to" piece to follow the more philosophical tract he wrote years earlier. The idea of focusing on the common needs of the area (Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia)—to force/prompt political cooperation ---is something he's thought about for many, many years. We talked about Dottie and Howard's upcoming trip to Israel (add that to one's they have taken to China, Japan, and Alaska), their grandson's visit the coming weekend and what his job options were, about loved ones that have died and about the mitzvah of good health! Are Dottie and Howard so active because they are basically in good health or, are they healthy because they walk to classes at Pitt, travel, swim in the condominium pool, and remain engaged in writing and baking and entertaining friends and family?

Regretfully, it was time for me to leave, although I do hope to continue our conversation sometime! As I left, I was given half of one of Dottie's delicious chocolate chip bars (which I ate as soon as I got into my car). Dottie walked me out to the elevator—with Howard calling after me "Don't forget your coat!"

Interviewer: Rosa Lynn Pinkus

Elizabeth Brown



Elizabeth Klein Brown, born December 13, 1918, remembers following her dear father, Josef as he planted trees all around the family's large home on Oshterosh, a village in Hungary. Elizabeth always wanted to help her father and he was very patient. As the trees grew outside the home, the family grew within.

There were vineyards not far from the house and the animals lived in the barn--- a horse and a cow. In the summer, there were sheep that had been purchased in an outdoor market. Elizabeth played in wide- open fields filled with grass and trees. In the spring, the garden near the house burst into bloom.

Elizabeth's dearest memory of her happy and peaceful childhood is of her family gathered around the table laden with chicken soup and gefilte fish on Friday nights. Her beloved father placed his hands first upon the head of her older sister, Elonka, and then upon her own head as he blessed them. On Shabbos, the family rested.

Everyday, Josef put on tefillin. On the High Holy Days, the Kleins opened up their home for services. Jews came from nearby villages to daven together. Everyone knew the Kleins. Her father was known for inviting those he saw walking along the road to ride with him in his buggy. The illiterate peasants came to see her mother, Serena, so she could write letters in Hungarian to their family members who lived far away.

Josef and Serena were so respectful of the villagers that they spoke only in Hungarian—not in Yiddish—because they did not want people to feel hurt if they could not understand. In return, although the Kleins were the only Jews in the village, all who met them treated them respectfully. They were invited to every wedding and every funeral. Elizabeth's parents were well known for their kindness to people in need.

But the peaceful life that the Kleins enjoyed ended in March of 1944 when the Germans invaded Hungary. Prior to this time, on the advice of a friend who had escaped

a forced labor camp, Elizabeth and her family went to the next town to get fitted for boots.

These boots saved Elizabeth's life. She wore them through her imprisonment at Auschwitz. She wore them during the Helmsbrechts Death March---1300 miles through Czechoslovakia. She wore them during the second Death March through Dresden before the bombing and then back through Dresden after the bombing.

After the war, Elizabeth was taken to an emergency hospital in Volary, Czechoslovakia. There she was diagnosed with gangrene, malnutrition and dehydration. The army doctor wished to amputate both legs but Elizabeth did not consent to this. After three months, she released herself against the doctor's wishes. She was determined to return to Hungary and find her father who she believed was still alive.

Elizabeth returned to her village, the only one alive from her family. She dug up the family's jewels from the garden where her father had buried them in jars. She saw the stumps of the beautiful trees that had once stood so proudly all around the Klein home.

From the ashes, Elizabeth rebuilt her life. She tended the Klein vineyards and in this way met Paul Brown, a fellow survivor who returned to Hungary to open an inn. They married and had a son Peter.

One of Elizabeth's aunts who lived in Pittsburgh had written to all of the Klein relatives but Elizabeth was the only one alive to receive the correspondence. It was extremely difficult for Elizabeth, Paul and Peter to get visas to allow them to come to the U.S. but they finally arrived in New York on February 15, 1951.

Paul worked at Rosenbloom's Bakery in Squirrel Hill for thirty-five years. Elizabeth's happiest job was to work outside as a crossing guard for twenty-seven years. She greeted children at Colfax School, St. Philomena's at Wightman and Forbes Streets and at the Starrett School in Point Breeze.

When children had no "milk money", she would have them meet her at twelve noon where she would distribute peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. She would get the bread from Paul's bakery. Like her parents, who were known for their kindness to villagers, she was known for her kindness to children.

Interviewer: Sydelle Pearl

Harold (Hal) Chelemer



Harold's father, Ben Chelemer, was 23 years old when he arrived in the US around 1910. He entered the US in Galveston, Texas, as a result of public pressure from Italian and Irish politicians. They felt that their political clout in the large Eastern cities was being diminished by the political activity of the large number of Jewish immigrants. As a result at this time large numbers of Jews entered the US in southern cities such as New Orleans and Galveston.

Harold's mother, Jenny Weiss, coincidentally came from the same shtetl in Poland, but they had not known each other there. They met in Kansas City, Missouri, where a mutual friend introduced them. In 1912 they married in Kansas City. Harold's father was an insurance salesman working for Metropolitan Life. He was, however, also a socialist active in the "Arbiter Ring" (Workmen's Circle). When Eugene V. Debs was arrested during a visit in Kansas City, the elder Chelemer went to visit him in prison. As a result he was blackballed and unable to work for any of the major insurance companies for many years.

Harold remembers his father as being both strong and gentle. He was good with numbers, and above all he was a wonderful father. He remembers his mother as being very caring, never having left his side when he was bed-ridden with a serious burn. She also had a wry sense of humor. For example, if anyone complained about her cooking, she would retort, "so, don't leave me a tip."

A poignant memory Harold has about his parents is that while his father was an educated person with a responsible position, his mother, never had the opportunity to acquire a reading knowledge of English. Harold has fond memories of his father reading to her "Bindle Brief" selections and other stories and articles in Yiddish from the Jewish Forward.

Harold was born in Green Bay, Wisconsin on November 28, 1928, the youngest of four siblings. He and one of his brothers were the only ones fortunate enough to be able to graduate from college. Harold always liked school, having had a particular interest in mathematics and science. He attended the University of Missouri, and graduated with a BS in chemical engineering in 1949. Even though he was 5th in his class, there were very few jobs in his field at that time, so, like many others of that era, he continued his education. He earned a Ph.D. in chemical engineering from the University of Tennessee in 1955. Though he had managed to avoid the draft, he was ultimately drafted in October of 1954 one month before his 26th birthday, and because of his scientific background he spent two years at Pine Bluff, Arkansas in the department of munitions and bacteriological warfare.

After he was discharged from the army, he came to Pittsburgh to interview with Westinghouse. He looked up an old army buddy who lived here, who introduced him to Joani Hirsh, whom he began to date. In 1957 Harold introduced Joani to a cousin of his and his wife whom he visited in Washington, DC. They took an immediate liking to Joani and while there, Harold decided to propose marriage by saying: "Would you be willing to spend the rest of your life with me?" He was overjoyed when she said: "Yes." They married in June of 1957.

Harold got the job at Westinghouse and retired from Westinghouse in December of 1990.

The Chelemers had four children: Marc, born in 1960; Scott, b. 1962, Bruce, b. 1964, and Todd Bennett who died of SIDS a few weeks after he was born in 1967. Their three sons all enjoy successful careers. Marc is an AT&T engineer living in Tenafly, New Jersey. Scott is a physician in Mt. Laurel, New Jersey, and Bruce works for a large wine company in Moscow, having lived there for 20 years. Harold and Joani take great delight in their six grandchildren (two from each of their sons and their wives), who range in age from 3 to 17.

Harold's Jewish upbringing has an interesting history. Harold's father had been something of a radical, and as a part of that period he was very much opposed to organized religion. He belonged to a rebellious group, which took delight in having dances on Yom Kippur. But as the years passed he was drawn into Judaism and became involved in an Orthodox synagogue. Harold attended "cheder" and became a Bar Mitzvah in November of 1941, one week before Pearl Harbor.

Harold and Joani explored various synagogues, but found their Jewish home with Dor Hadash in 1996 through Joani's brother, Chas Hirsh and his wife, Elissa. Harold and Joani have both held board positions and have been very involved in the work of the congregation.

Professionally, Harold is proud of his work in using statistical methods in the development of safe nuclear power plants. On a personal level, he is proud of having played a part in raising three successful, productive children (who in turn produced six wonderful grandchildren). Harold wishes that he had learned more about his ancestry – about his grandparents and great grandparents. He would then be able to answer more of his grandchildren's questions.

Harold would like to improve his guitar and mandolin playing. He really enjoys sailing and is sorry that he had not taken up the sport earlier in his life. In addition, he would like to improve his skills in bridge and billiards. Harold's most memorable

vacation was a cross-country road trip that the family took in 1968 when their kids were 8, 6 and 4. They went from Pittsburgh to California and back, and hit all the highlights.

When he was young, Harold was a great admirer of Thomas Edison and his many inventions. As an adult and as a scientist, Harold was inspired by Einstein and his ability to think in a theoretical, non-conventional way. Today, Harold admires his wife Joani for her resiliency, having to have confronted a number of illnesses and surgeries, yet remains a buoyant, ebullient person.

Interviewer: Ruth Drescher

James Colker



Born on February 18, 1928, James Colker first lived in the Morningside section of Pittsburgh until he turned eleven and the family moved to Mt. Lebanon, PA where he stayed until he was married in 1950. Jim's father was born in 1898 in the City of Allegheny, was considered a very good athlete and turned down a college scholarship because he had to help the family out financially. He opened a boys and men's clothing store on Penn Avenue and later went into the dry cleaning business. His last business venture was a women's clothing store on the Southside. Jim's mother was a sweet, beautiful woman born in Pittsburgh in 1902. She worked as a secretary in her young 20's, raised her two sons Alan and Jim, and later worked at the clothing store owned by her husband. Jim was privileged to have known his grandmothers and was particularly close to his Lithuanian maternal grandmother who showed him how to garden.

Jim's family belonged to Beth El synagogue, which was first located in Beechview. Jim was not enamored with going to Hebrew school so he would take his mind off of the idea by bringing a science book to read on the streetcar ride there and back.

Classifying himself as a lousy athlete, Jim gravitated more towards an interest in the sciences, arts and literature as a youth. He became fascinated with electronics and began making his own radios. He built a radio station in his home and did dramatic skits, which he recorded onto albums, which he created from scratch. He even made the machine, which created the disks albums. He has a huge collection of jazz and classical records. Jim's love of the theater and movies led him to perform in his high school drama productions and a lifetime hobby of watching movies daily. When he wasn't busy working on his own inventions, Jim earned a bit of spending money working at his

uncle's Mutual Furniture Co. on Penn Avenue and cutting the lawn and doing the gardening at his parent's home.

Having attended Carnegie Mellon initially for his studies, Jim later transferred to the University of Pittsburgh where he graduated with a degree in physics in 1949. He worked as an electronics engineer for several companies and in 1957 Jim joined the J.W. Fecker Division of the American Optical Co., where he became chief engineer and product manager. In 1964, Jim and two other associates purchased the Goerz Optical Co. of Inwood, New York with the help of some venture capital. The company produced a range of photographic lenses. As acting executive vice president, Jim was instrumental in opening a Pittsburgh division of Goerz Optical, which utilized the company's technology in military and aerospace markets. The company merged with other companies over the years and continued steady growth when by 1987 Jim was presiding over an operation that employed nearly 1,000 workers and had sales of \$90 million. Jim's expertise in business and technology led him to become the founder of the Pittsburgh High Technology Council.

With all of his success, Jim insists that his greatest joy in life has been his marriage to Janice and the pride he takes in seeing the success of his children. As an avid reader, Jim really admires the modern writers. He is much more influenced by people's ideas than he is by those whose personalities are larger than life.

Interviewer: Cheryl J. Klein

Janice Seiner Colker



Growing up in the heart of Squirrel Hill was a wonderful life for Janice Seiner who was born on July 7, 1929. The daughter of Russian and Lithuanian parents, Janice came from a very loving and compassionate family with several siblings, including twins, which run in the family. Her father was in the wholesale clothing business and was the first president of the Hebrew Free Loan Association. Janice describes her mother as trusting and welcoming. Janice has fond memories of her maternal grandparents with whom Saturdays were so special going to Isaly's followed by a trip to the library.

Janice realized at an early age that she was destined to be an artist. She loved to draw as a child and took classes at the Carnegie Museum with the Tamoshanters. Having studied dance with Gene Kelly and cutting the rug with a good rumba, Janice enjoyed a great social life and attended many parties with her friends, many that she still stays in touch with to this day. Janice was elected as the first president of the student council at Taylor Allderdice High School and was honored with the "Unselfish Service Award" at graduation where she was asked to speak as well.

When Janice was seventeen years old, she was visiting the Beta Sigma fraternity where she met Jim Colker who was then a junior physics student at the University of Pittsburgh. Janice attended Carnegie Mellon University and their continued dating later led to marriage and a move to Syracuse, New York. Their oldest son David was born there in 1953. When Janice and Jim moved back to Pittsburgh they settled in Mt. Lebanon where their family grew with the addition of Hank, Ruth and Sara who have given them seven beautiful grandchildren. Janice worked as an art teacher for seven years at the Nixon School in the South Hills. In 1978 the Colkers moved to Point Breeze and began searching for a new synagogue. Janice's sister Marilyn introduced them to Dor Hadash. They joined and have remained members since then. That same year would

bring an exciting opportunity Janice's way when she sought employment with the Pittsburgh Pirates in their sales office. She was always a huge baseball fan. She worked for the Pirates for two years and went to Baltimore in 1979 for the World Series where the Pirates became the champions. Janice designed the cover of the Pirates' media guide in 1979.

After that great victory, Janice decided it was time to leave the Pirates so that she could dedicate more time to her art and travel to Europe with Jim where he frequently went for his job. That decision led to more than thirty visits to San Tropes, France, where the ambiance, serenity, and hospitality beckoned them to return time and again. Janice's acrylic artwork also became quite desirable and her pieces are in public and private collections in the U.S., France, Switzerland, China and Israel.

The Colker children take great pride in the accomplishments of their parents and truly appreciate the close family life they share. Janice would like to be remembered as a good wife, mother and grandmother and for the happiness she derived from having chosen art as a vocation.

Interviewer: Cheryl J. Klein

Libby Roth Elbaum



If you have lived a quiet uneventful life, then yours cannot compare to the one lived by Libby Elbaum's. From her childhood days in West Natrona Heights, PA to her current home in Squirrel Hill, Libby has gone through anti-Semitism, robberies, tragedy, adventure, and running a store as a high school teenager.

An early experience with anti-Semitism eventually cost the life of one of her brothers. Ganged up on and beaten with sticks, her brother Saul never fully recovered from the spinal meningitis contracted from the severe beating. Without the proper medications that are available now, he died several years later, never having fully recovered. He was just a teenager. Another event followed his death—the windows of their home were shattered with rocks. This prompted the Roth family of five to move to Brackenridge, which is just north of West Natrona Heights on the Allegheny River.

Libby and the family always believed that the anti-Semitism of the Polish people in Natrona Heights caused their terrible experiences. However, in Brackenridge, Libby, her mother and father, sister Edith and brother Oscar lived a substantial, stable life, with no further ethnic problems. In fact, a friendly Italian shoemaker whose shop adjoined their newly opened grocery store, would loan them money when they ran short of funds.

During a robbery at the grocery store, the robber forced Oscar, his wife Julie and Libby at gunpoint to the basement, tied up Oscar, and stole all the cash. Word had it that a competitor of her father had hired the thief. When the “gonif” was apprehended and put behind bars, he hailed the Roths, who came to identify him, with a friendly “Hi!” Libby has always remembered that moment vividly.

As the “next” oldest child, Libby had many responsibilities. Working in the grocery store was one of them. In fact, when Oscar was hospitalized with a flare up of

diabetes, Libby ran the store by herself until he was able to return. She was just a teen in high school.

Judaism was a big factor in her life, Libby claims, especially “when you are an unwanted minority in a small mining town.” To maintain their Jewish ties, the Roths joined a shul in Tarentum, another town adjoining Brackenridge, and celebrated all the holidays. Observing Orthodox Judaism “kept her together “when she felt vulnerable as a young Jewish woman among so many gentiles.

After graduation from Harbrack High School (where she fell in love with theater and had the lead in the senior class play), Libby went to night school to become a bookkeeper. Brother Oscar, a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy, moved to Pittsburgh with Julie and opened a drug store in the Sheridan area. Libby joined them in Pittsburgh and worked in the store.

Libby went on to become a bookkeeper with Harold’s Flower Shop. Knowing she had a good singing voice, she auditioned for Harvey Gaul, the noted musical director, and leader of the chorus at the YM&WHA and was accepted. During the same period...never slowing down...she worked behind the scenes and acted in plays produced at the Y after work. It was at the Y where she met her husband Nathan, who also loved the theater and fell in love with Libby. When she saw Nat, she knew he was “the one for her.” They were wed in 1941 at Beth Shalom synagogue. Married for 47 years, they raised two adopted children, a son Charles and a daughter Lenore. By profession, Nat was a businessman, owning American Auto Parts. By avocation, he was an actor, working at the Y Theater and the Pittsburgh Playhouse. He was a good friend and colleague of Eddie Steinfeld, another great Pittsburgh actor.

Another new adventure began when Nat was drafted in 1943. When Libby learned that he was going to be moved to different locales during his stint at Officer’s Training School, she moved, too. She scouted every town where her husband would be stationed to find suitable living quarters for the two of them...very unusual for a woman to look for housing in an unfamiliar town, unaccompanied by her husband—at least that’s what people thought. Lawton, Oklahoma as well as towns in California, Louisiana, and Virginia were the places that Libby and Nat called home during the war, staying six to nine months in each community. The war sent Nat to Europe and Japan. Libby remembers those occasions as she looks at the beautiful drawings and paintings he brought back, which are creatively hung in her current home.

One of her fondest desires was to have graduated from Pitt, which she attended at night after she and Nat were married. Libby also wanted to join a congregation. When her sister, Edith and husband, Leonard Belov joined Dor Hadash, they joined, too.

In reminiscing, Libby recalled her determined mother who got on a ladder and painted the roof of her house when she was in her 80s. Her mother went on to live more than twenty years beyond that feat until she died at the age of 105.

Libby’s most historical moment came when her husband arrived home from the war. Nat had been part of the occupation. The person she admired most was President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Libby referred to him as FDR. This writer understood who FDR was, but there may be younger Dor Hadash members who do not.

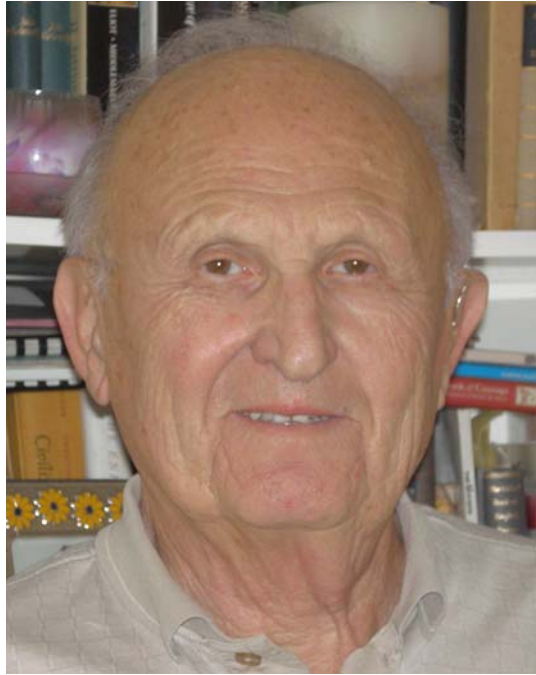
Libby is proud of having her two adopted children who have become “marvelous people.” Her daughter Lenore, married to an African American, now deceased, lives in Swissvale and is a “marvelous artist.” Son Charles lives with his wife in New Jersey on a

farm where they own and board horses. Her three grandchildren are the parents of Libby's five great-grandchildren, one of whom is getting married in Florida in June. Her only regret is that they all live everywhere but Pittsburgh.

Libby Elbaum is a woman who has lived and continues to live anything but a quiet, uneventful life. Don't you agree?

Interviewer: Joan H. Chelemer

Arnold Engler



My heart is pounding. I have just spent an hour with the most charming gentleman, and I feel as if his life story runs parallel to the fattest modern history text in an undergraduate survey course of the WWII era. Movies that claim to be action packed cliffhangers are pale in comparison to Arnold Engler's real life adventures. However, the drama was far from entertaining.

Arnold was born in 1927 in a small town, Czernowitz in Rumania. This town was home to 80,000 Jews. During his childhood, tensions were building in Europe. Anti-Semitism was on the rise. When planning his Bar Mitzvah, the worry was not about guest lists and menus. Arnold's family was concerned about someone standing guard at the door. Over time, the situation worsened. Quite fortuitously, his father's business brought the Engler family from Czernowitz to Bucharest at a critical time. Adding to this drama, days after they left Czernowitz in that spring of 1940, the German's took over this small town. Fifty thousand people were confined to a ghetto that encompassed several side streets.

In Bucharest, tensions mounted. The writing was on the wall. They needed to get out! The family was scheduled to go by boat to Palestine. In another near miss, at the last minute, his mother had second thoughts. The decision was not to sail. The cinema-like twist in this chapter was this boat's fate on this missed trip. "The Struma was a ship chartered to carry Jewish refugees from Axis-allied Romania to British-controlled Palestine during World War II. On February 23, 1942, with its engine not working, the ship was towed from Istanbul through the Bosphorus out to the Black Sea by Turkish authorities with its refugee passengers aboard, where it was left adrift. Within hours, it was mistaken for an enemy cargo ship and torpedoed and sunk by a Soviet submarine,

killing 768 men, women and children, with only one survivor. This was amongst the largest maritime losses of civilian life during World War II.”

What next? Arnold’s parents, as many other Jews, tried desperately to find a way out of Eastern Europe. Romania was corrupt, but Arnold reports this as not entirely bad. This corruption allowed money to speak. The Engler’s were able to purchase a train ticket for Arnold. He was put on a train with seventy-five other children to go to Bulgaria and then Turkey. They went from Turkey to Syria to Haifa. The trip was arduous and lengthy. There were two Gestapo stops; most of the children made it to Palestine.

Arnold lived with uncles, already in Palestine. His parents eventually joined him. He finished high school there, and later studied at the Hebrew University. But this was not to last for long. The action continues, when on November 29, 1947 the shooting started in Israel. Arnold served with the Haganah in the Etzion Block, until it was attacked.

Not being able to return, Arnold ended up in Tel Aviv. In May of 1948, the Haganah, (which began as a loose organization for defense and grew to a well organized military unit), was transformed by the provisional Government of Israel to the regular army of the state. When he left the Army in 1949, there was a general cease-fire. He got a leave and went back to Jerusalem.

Hebrew University was no longer an option. The chemistry labs on Mount Scopus were no longer accessible. The make- shift labs in Jerusalem were inadequate. In addition, so many of his classmates had been killed that it was difficult to return to the field of chemistry. With ambivalence, he left his parents in Israel where they lived out their lives. Arnold took his father’s advice, and the encouragement of his Israeli friends, and went to the University of Berne. If it had been good enough for Albert Einstein, it would be okay for Arnold, too! In Switzerland, he finished his undergraduate and graduate work in physics. Professor Josef Mattauch, a highly regarded Austrian physicist, served as his thesis advisor. Recognizing Arnold’s academic promise, Mattauch shared this fact with his friend, Otto Hahn.

Otto Hahn, the 1944 Nobel Prize winner in chemistry and the founder of the Max Planck Society invited the new graduate to work at the prestigious institute in Mainz, Germany. Arnold was sure that his Israeli passport’s stamp prohibited his entrance into Germany. Dr. Hahn told Arnold to write a letter to the Israeli consulate and tell them that Otto Hahn requested his being there. The passport was promptly stamped okay, and Otto Hahn personally welcomed Arnold to the Institute.

The rest of Arnold’s professional career in physics is stellar. From Mainz, in 1954, he went to the Bristol Labs in England, having been warned not to come to the US during the McCarthy era. Although the Bristol winters were cold, the atmosphere was warm. It was a wonderful place to be at that time. After that, he worked in a variety of universities in both the US and Europe. On a working visit at the University of California in Berkley, Arnold met the British Nuclear Physicist, Sir Denys Wilkinson who extended an invitation to Oxford in 1958. From Oxford, he returned to the states. Here, he spent time in several prestigious universities. In 1966, Arnold came to Carnegie Tech. How lucky for Pittsburgh and for us at Dor Hadash. However, until his recent retirement he regularly crossed the Atlantic to work. Among other travels, he with his wife Eva, and sons Jon and Nick went to CERN each summer. Just an aside, one Sabbatical took him to the Weitzman Institute in Israel in 1973-74, at the outbreak of the Yom Kippur war.

His dual citizenship compelled him to step forward. Because of a paperwork snafu, Arnold was released from his assigned military support position. Instead, he served by teaching high school students whose teachers were drafted for the war.

I have known Eva and Arnold since we joined Dor Hadash in the early 70's. I knew they were from abroad; I love their accents. I have since found out that Arnold and Eva met on the west coast. As a young British woman, she was temporarily living in San Francisco where they met. They were married in 1961. I only knew that Arnold was in the Physics Department at CMU. He is a skier, swimmer and speaks four languages. The Englers lived on Woodmont Street. Eva and I met regularly for walks and enjoyed chatting about her travels, her Mother in England, kids and whatever! Their sons Jonathan and Nick were friends of our kids. The boys became B'nai Mitzvah at Dor Hadash. The course of the family's development was similar to ours. More recently, since Arnold retired, he and Eva moved to a condo in Oakland and go to Florida in the winter. They have three beautiful grandchildren in the DC area. This part of their life is very much like other Dor Hadashers! Thanks, Dor Hadash for inviting me to learn about my friend and opening a door to learn even more. These are topics that do not come up in social settings.

When I asked what advice he would offer to the younger among us, Arnold replied, "Carpe Diem...Seize the Day". I am glad for this day. And I am glad to have Arnold as a friend. His big smile, enthusiasm for life, and caring about others has always been dear to my heart. Thanks for sharing your story, Arnold. I am relieved that your adventurous tale has such a positive outcome. May only good things come to you and Eva.

Interviewer: Avis Kotovsky

Arnold Freedman



Arnold Freedman was born, January 7, 1927, in Wilmington, DE and is proud of his roots in Delaware. At the age of three his family moved to an old house in a part of Wilmington much like Pittsburgh's Mexican War Streets, very diverse ethnically, generally working class. His father was a stereo-typer in a newspaper plant. Although Arnold's father only went to school through the seventh grade, he was a voracious reader and lover of learning, a passion that was passed on to Arnie. Arnie's memories of those times include swimming in Brandywine Creek, picnicking with his family, and going to the movies for 10 cents a show. Flash Gordon was a favorite. Life was not all fun and there were chores that needed to be done. A major responsibility was to put coal in the furnace, shake it down, and remove the ashes. Outside the house, he collected newspapers, rags and metal, which he sold to the junkman, sometimes making the huge sum of fifty cents for a big load.

Arnie was and is a hard worker but he always left time to have a good time. He worked as a busboy in the Poconos for seven summers, making money to supplement his GI Bill benefits in college and graduate school, and in his free time swam and listened to music, activities he continues to this day. It was in graduate school that he met Yetta, who was to become his wife and the mother of his three children, Maia, Amy, and Aaron. Arnie is not only a proud papa, but also a proud grandfather of ten and still counting. His face lights up when he talks about them. The Coburns had introduced Arnie and Yetta to Dor Hadash but it was their desire to give their children a good education that really began their involvement with Dor Hadash. Arnie's own father was not particularly observant until late in life; it was with his maternal grandfather that Arnie attended shul as a child. After several false starts at Hebrew School, he met Rabbi First, a man that

today Arnie ranks as one of his top five teachers and with whom he studied until his Bar Mitzvah, an event that is one of his most memorable, as is his marriage.

Arnie's interest and attachment to Judaism that began with his grandfather was transferred to Dor Hadash. He became an active participant, including a stint as vice-president of the board. He had Rabbi First; his children had Lew Gumerman; Arnie remembers with great fondness the sweet, gentle qualities of Lew. Arnie has remained impressed with Dor Hadash, the active participation of its members, and how many children have maintained a sense of Jewishness and connection to Dor Hadash.

A few years ago Arnie received a Legacy award from the Greater Pittsburgh Psychological Association. Arnie earned a Ph.D. in clinical psychology and went on to work for several decades at the VA Hospital on Highland Drive. In addition to this work, he developed a private practice, which he continues to this day. Although classically trained, Arnie has maintained a far ranging interest in alternative and complementary medicine, and is one of the founders and mainstays of the Western PA Society for Clinical Hypnosis. His interest may go back to when he was a child and had a cat, Schmulke, whom he believed knew how to heal itself. In his professional life and in his personal life, Arnie has continued to be open to learning and trying new things.

Despite an early negative experience with a dog, Arnie is a confirmed dog lover, his beloved sheltie often at his side. While he has said that he often prefers a world with dogs vs. one with humans, this would not be evident by his continuing desire to be of service in this world, service to his community, to his family, and to his congregation. It has been and still is his goal to help people in distress, to do what the Torah says, "tzedek, tzedek, tirdof" ...justice, justice shall you pursue.

Interviewer: Judy Grumet

Yetta Skolnick Freedman



Yetta Skolnick was born in Chicago, Illinois, March 6, 1929, a ray of light in an otherwise not so great year. She was the oldest sibling in a family with children whose loving home often included a grandmother and a bachelor uncle. The family was loving, but crowded until Yetta turned 14 and the family moved out of its small apartment into its own three bedroom house. Moving meant giving up street games with old friends for the rigor of high school and the opportunity to make new friends. In addition to school and friends, Yetta enjoyed listening to radio dramas, going to the movies, and visiting the beach at Lake Michigan.

Yetta's parents were immigrants from Eastern Europe. Her father was a furrier, specializing in women's fur coats, and her mother took care of the home and family. The family was not shul goers but holidays were celebrated and the cuisine, kosher. Yetta's father was a socialist and her mother a strong believer and teacher of everyday ethics and morality. Given this, it may not be surprising that in addition to her mother, Eleanor Roosevelt was one of Yetta's role models.

Yetta came from a loving, supportive family and then went on to create one of her own. She met Arnold Freedman on a blind date when both were students at the University of Illinois. They met, married, and moved to Pittsburgh where Yetta and Arnie created their own family with three children, two daughters and a son, the same as Yetta's nuclear family. Raising Amy, Maia, and Aaron has been a major focus of Yetta's life, and a major factor in the original decision to join Dor Hadash, encouraged by the Coburns. Yetta describes herself and Arnie as part of the third wave of Dor Hadash members. It was a great choice, providing an integration of Arnie's more religious background, with Yetta's lack of formal connection. Not having roots or family connection in Pittsburgh, Dor Hadash became an important source of community for

them. Within the Dor Hadash community, Yetta made good friends and was especially appreciative that the congregation made allowances for people with a wide range of observances.

Now grown and with families of their own, Yetta can rightly kvell over her 10 grandchildren, disappointed only that none are in the Pittsburgh area. With children grown and out of the house, Yetta has had more time to devote both to Trudy, the family sheltie, and to her passion of painting. A visit to their home on Murray Avenue allows one to see and admire Yetta's work in a variety of media. She continues to study painting and art, and to produce additional pieces. However, Yetta measures her success in life not by her art but by her children. She desired and succeeded in teaching her children to get along, to have a Jewish education and identity, and to carry on her family tradition of ethical, loving parenting.

Interviewer: Judy Grumet

Sidney Friedman



Sidney Friedman was born in Union City, New Jersey on January 24, 1926. He claims that after one year he convinced his parents to move to the Boston area, where he lived until he graduated from high school. He did not know his grandparents well. Both sides of his family were Orthodox Jews and came from Eastern Europe. In the area of Massachusetts where Sid and his family lived, there seemed to be only two kinds of Jewish communities, Reform and “modern” Orthodox. The modern Orthodox considered themselves orthodox, but if they needed to work on Saturday, they did.

Sid’s parents were both raised in New York City. His mother was very protective of her children and very much a Jewish housewife. His father was a salesman. Sid attended Hebrew School where the philosophy was to learn Hebrew so that you could participate in services. However, when Sid was ten or eleven, a group from the Workman’s Circle managed to have Yiddish taught instead of Hebrew. The Yiddish teachers did not seem very good to Sid. However it may have helped him later in life when Sid studied German in college. He found learning German easy.

As a child, Sid made his own laboratory in his parents’ basement. Sid read all of the chemistry books in both public libraries in his hometown. By the age of thirteen or fourteen, he knew he wanted to be a chemist. Sid’s family could not afford to send their children to college. After high school, Sid was drafted into the army and stationed initially in the Philippines. When World War II ended, he was part of the first occupation troops in Japan. Sid found his first real experience away from home to be somewhat isolated, as soldiers experienced each other, but not much of the culture of the country where they were stationed. Sid jokingly makes note of one distinctive change in his life after being drafted. It was the first time in his life he did not take orders from his mother.

Sid recognizes the army as a turning point in his life, noting that after discharge he was able to pursue his dream of becoming a chemist through the GI Bill. He attended Purdue University for undergraduate work then went on to earn a doctorate from Harvard. Sid came to Pittsburgh in 1953 for his first job to do research in the building that is now called the Mellon Institute. A devastating mine explosion led the federal government to get involved with mine safety. It was then that the Bureau of Mines was created. The Bureau acquired a working mine in South Park, which became a research center. Sid left the Mellon Institute to work for the Bureau of Mines in 1955. For the next forty years he worked at the South Park research facility as it transitioned to the Department of Energy and expanded to do research in all forms of energy.

It was between those first two jobs in 1955 that Sid got the travel bug. There was a sixty-day break between jobs and a friend suggested that he would never again have such time to travel. Sid challenged himself to see Europe on \$10 a day. Upon landing in Europe he wondered briefly “What am I doing here?”

On that first trip in 1955, Sid fell in love with Renaissance Italy. Italy was empty of tourists then and afforded Sid a rich and personal exposure to the culture of the Renaissance and the romance of Italy. He especially loves Florence, recalling how one morning as he walked down an empty narrow cobblestone street, he had a strong impression that at any moment he would hear the footsteps of the Medicis walking ahead of him on the same stones.

Sid and his wife Sally met here in Pittsburgh. They were married in 1958 and had three children, Neal, Amy and Daniel. In 1979 when Amy graduated from high school she traveled with a group to Israel. Shortly after returning, she persuaded her parents to join a Reconstructionist congregation. Sally knew some members of Dor Hadash and was interested in being more involved in a congregation. Sid was flexible, so the family joined Dor Hadash.

Sally was not initially a fan of traveling. In 1988 Sid was to present a paper in Europe. With help overcoming her fear of flying and the motivating factor of visiting their daughter Amy in England, Sid and Sally took their first trip together to Europe. For the next eight years they traveled annually, visiting much of Europe. For most of these trips Sid was his own travel agent. One of their last trips together was back to Italy where they spent three weeks. Sally passed away about a year later.

Since Sally passed away, Sid travels more often with group tours, although he always pursues independent exploration during his travels. Sid has been to Russia and to Cuba, where he and another couple ended up being welcomed to a Sukkot service in a Cuban synagogue.

Sid is very proud of his three children. He focused on instilling in them good language skills, and inspiring them to travel as much as they could. In 1999 Sid visited his son, Daniel, who was living in China at the time. The two of them were able to travel extensively as his son speaks fluent Chinese. Sid was rather disappointed to find much of the history and antiquity of China gone.

Sid’s den is filled with reading materials; including lots of magazines, newspapers and travel brochures. Sid admits he probably has a basic curiosity – a major force in his life wanting to know “what’s on the other side?”, “why?”, and “how?”. He asks these questions as a scientist, and as he travels he asks these questions about the history and antiquity of the places he visits. He calls himself a blotter for information. He enjoyed

Egypt because of the strong connection to the past; Israel was a pilgrimage to biblical antiquity.

In March of this year Sid visited his seventh continent, Antarctica - after recovering from hip surgery. He is already considering his next trip, which might be with an organization that visits areas where there is an historic Jewish presence. Sid feels he will continue to travel until he is too old to move.

Interviewer: Donna Lenckner

Leonard Kuntz



Leonard Kuntz was born on the North Side of Pittsburgh on January 29, 1924. Having a sister that died in childbirth, Leonard was raised as an only child. Max and Clara Kuznetsov, Leonard's parents came to America from Russia. The family name, Kuznetsov (later changed to Kuntz) means 'smith' in Russian and indeed Len's paternal grandfather was a blacksmith. Len's parents ran a 'mom and pop' grocery store, which was open from 5:30 in the morning until 10 p.m. The family lived above the store. There was a very small Jewish presence on the North Side, but there was a little orthodox synagogue called Beth Yehuda in Manchester where the family attended services. Like Dor Hadash, the shul had no rabbi and hired someone to lead the High Holy Day services. They usually relied on volunteer leadership.

Len's father was a traditional Jew who always wore his hat in the house. He was a quiet man who had a bit of a stutter. He made it a habit to read the Yiddish Forward from cover to cover. Len's mother was a strong and humorous woman. Len believes that he acquired his sense of humor from his mom. Len's maternal grandmother died when Len's mom was one year old. His grandfather remarried and his new wife never demonstrated any love towards Len's mom throughout her childhood. Len's mother left Russia on her own when she was sixteen. She arrived in Pittsburgh and began working in a deli in the Hill District.

Growing up on the North Side meant that most of Len's friends were not Jewish. He experienced very little anti-Semitism. He knew as a teen that he would eventually marry a Jewish girl, but there were no Jewish girls in his neighborhood to date. For Len it was a bit of a lonely time seeing his friends start to date. He refused to date a non-Jewish girl.

After high school, Len signed up for the ROTC at the University of Pittsburgh. He began his studies there and later went into the advanced division of ROTC. In 1943, Len's division was called into active duty. Len was selected for Officer Candidate School and rose to the rank of second lieutenant. The men who were in Len's original ROTC program have continuously met for an annual reunion since 1946.

After the army, Len returned to Pittsburgh, resumed his studies and graduated from Pitt with a degree in political science. He continued his studies there and received a Masters degree in political geography. Len met Mildred Hineck at the Nixon Theatre when they were on dates with other people but happened to end up sitting next to one another. They chatted a bit and he got her phone number and later called her for a date.

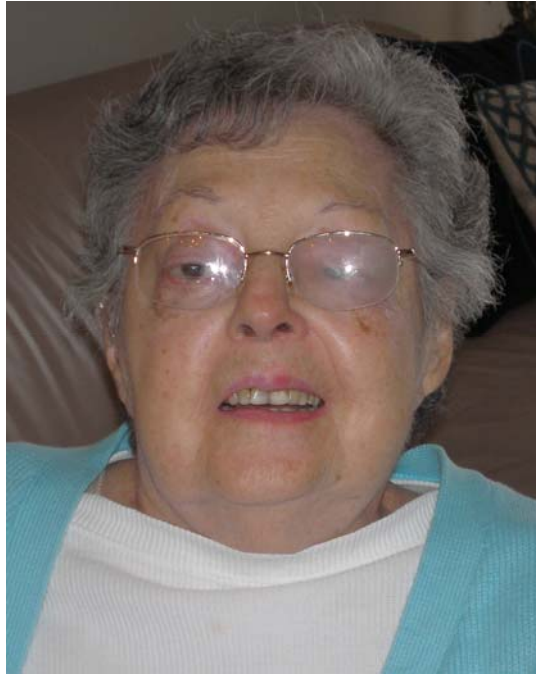
Leonard and Mildred were married on December 25, 1951. They moved to Louisiana where Len would pursue his Ph.D. in geography. Upon completion, Len was offered a teaching position at Pitt in the geography department. The Kuntz family began to grow as Leonard and Mildred became the parents of Steven, born in 1956 and Leslie , who was born in 1960. Len took some time off from teaching to learn more about urban planning and returned to Pitt in a different capacity. Len became the assistant dean of the faculty of arts and sciences. After five years at Pitt, Len accepted the position of dean of the college of liberal arts and sciences at Hofstra. After two years there, he returned to Pitt as the associate director of the "office of research" and later became its director. Len retired in 1990.

It was Esther Tucker who introduced the Kuntz's to Dor Hadash. Steven and Leslie both became B'nai Mitzvah at Dor Hadash. Steven is the father of Joshua , who is Len and Mildred's only grandchild.

Len said that they did not travel much when their children were growing up because they did not have much money. He used to think, "We'll travel when we retire." Now that they have retired and their health is not great, it is too difficult to travel. Len advises his children to make time to travel now if they desire because "no one promises you tomorrow".

Interviewer: Cheryl J. Klein

Mildred Hineck Kuntz



Mildred Hineck was born in the East End of Pittsburgh in 1926. Her family moved to McKees Rocks when she was five and she lived there until she was twenty-two. Her parents were immigrants from Rumania. Mildred had an older brother and sister, Sol and Irene, and a younger brother, Danny. Danny was fifteen months younger than Mildred. They were like twins. Her parents also semi-raised her cousin Edith after Edith's mother, her mother's sister, died. Edith was four when her mother died and her father could not take care of her. Edith would come to the Hineck home off and on. When she was thirteen, Mildred's mother said, 'It can't continue like this', and Edith came to live with them. Her parents felt she was like an orphan and that her needs became a priority. She was six years older than Mildred. She stayed until she got married.

Mildred's parents were small business people with a good reputation. Her father was a gregarious man who was well liked. The family lived on the main street in the town and it was quite busy with vehicles. Mildred's mother would go outside in her apron and stop the traffic so we could cross. She was a feisty woman!

Mildred's mother worked in the store. It was a grocery store, an early superette. At the age of thirteen Mildred learned to use the checkout register. When she was sixteen, Edith went to work as a secretary in munitions in Detroit. She had kept the store's books. Her father now gave Mildred the books. When she was sixteen, the income tax people would come around and her father would send them to Mildred. It was like a farm - if you were big enough, you were old enough. She disliked working in the store, but did it.

Mildred's mother was a watchdog. She knew what was going on all the time. Mildred inherited that trait. In the store, when people did not do things right, the Hinecks

heard about it. Her mother would question them on their decisions and make them consider the ethics of what they did. Her mother was honest, forthright, and did not mince words.

During the war, there was a lot of black marketing. They were looking for violators, merchants who violated the laws. Violators were named publicly in the newspaper. My father and uncle were merchants, but they were never listed. We held our heads high. We had moral standards. We had big values, big ideas. No one had to tell Mildred how hard it was to make ends meet. It was the Depression. Her mother became a dressmaker's assistant. She was very particular; everything had to be fitted properly. Mildred's cousin Edith had a hard figure and her mother always went with her to make sure her clothes were fitted properly.

In her last year of high school, Mildred had a problem. She wanted to go to college and had even won a Scholarship for Able Youth. Her mother approved of the idea. Her father, who was nice but old-fashioned, was adamantly opposed. He was convinced that if Mildred went to college and realized her dream of becoming a teacher, she would be an old maid. He did not want an old maid for a daughter! Mildred decided to write to her brother Sol, who was eight years older and was away in the service. Sol and Mildred saw eye-to-eye on most things. He was her mentor. In her letter, she told him the situation and said, "I don't know what to do." Sol wrote back, sending a check for \$500 and a note, "I will send you to college." In 1944, \$500 was enough to cover a year's tuition and books. Mildred showed the check to her father. He tore it up. "I will send you to college," he said. Once he became reconciled to it, her father was very proud when she became a teacher. He would send things to the kids, sometimes a bushel of fruit. He carried their thank you notes in his pocket.

Mildred met Leonard Kuntz on a double date during the War. He was home on leave. They went to the Nixon Theatre to see a farce, "Hell's A Poppin'." As they were sitting down, Len said to her, "You'd better watch out, there's a time bomb under your seat." She liked his sense of humor. She liked his feeling for people, his humanity. To this day, he thinks things that are morally right are important. They have been married fifty-seven years. To be married so long, love is not enough. You have to have respect for someone's values and their acting on those values.

After Len and Mildred were married they moved around a bit. Len went to LSU for his Ph.D. Then Pitt, where he had been a student, hired him back. Once they had children, Mildred decided to stay home to raise their children. She tutored other children from her home. She loved teaching. She pursued a Master's in Elementary Education and went back for to earn her Ph.D. in teaching and language arts. Len took a job in Hofstra in N.Y. and Mildred became a supervisor for the public schools on Long Island.

They returned to Pittsburgh after two years. Mildred got a job in the Clairton School District. At that time, things were different. The mills were working. She became the Director of the Reading Program. Her life centered around her work. She was in one of the poorest school districts with diminishing revenues. As jobs got consolidated, Mildred also became the Liaison for Special Education and later the Federal Coordinator. She was there seventeen years and enjoyed every minute. The teachers were receptive to her position. Most children were poor and needed the assistance of the special education workers very much. In 1990, Mildred developed a

neuromuscular disease and retired in 1992. This disease has had its toll. Mildred also has arthritis.

Hobbies? Mildred loves art, music and books. She played the piano. She just got rid of her piano just a few years ago. She studied piano for many years. She loved reading. There was no library in McKees Rocks. When her brother went into the city, he would stop at the Carnegie Library and bring home books for her. The first adult book she read was David Copperfield. It made her feel grown up.

Mildred and Len have two children, Steve and Leslie. Their children are very different. Steve is a scientist, Leslie a writer and storyteller. They both have wonderful hands. They are good kids.

Interviewer: Elizabeth Gordon

Judith Polak Rothstein



Judith Polak Rothstein, a member of Dor Hadash for over 40 years, has three daughters, ten grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. Judith was born in Tilburg in 1923, an industrial city in the southern part of the Netherlands.

One of three daughters of a successful hide broker, Judith and her family were part of a community of approximately 100 Jewish families in a city of about one hundred thousand people. The population was predominantly Catholic. The Jews were totally integrated into the general population. She remembers very little anti-Semitism.

Judith and the other Jewish children went to public school with the Protestant children. She also went to Sunday school and learned Hebrew there. The Catholic children attended parochial schools. She is still in touch with a friend she made as a child, and they exchange birthday greetings. Judith's parents liked this girl, who was not Jewish, very much. Judith said that throughout their life-long relationship, her friend has pursued an interest in Judaism and Jewish culture.

There was one synagogue in the city, an Ashkenazic orthodox shul, where all the Jews in Tilburg attended. As a young child, Judith sat downstairs during services with her father, but as she grew older she sat with her mother upstairs. She remembers it was difficult to follow the service from the gallery. Her parents' home was strictly kosher. They observed Shabbat with a dinner on Friday evening. Her father went to shul on Shabbat morning and then went to his business in the afternoon. The High Holy Days were traditionally observed. She has very nice memories of the holidays, particularly of the Seder, where they had a large table and many guests. The Haggadah was read from beginning to end. Her parents were ardent Zionists.

Judith says that as the youngest child in the family, her father spoiled her. Her mother did not work outside their home. Judith and her sisters would come home from

school and call to their mother to confirm that she was there. When she assured them that she was, the girls felt comfortable to pursue their own activities.

On May 10, 1940, the day that the Nazis invaded Holland, Judith's family fled to Britain. The parents, Judith and her sisters, and an uncle and his family escaped. Although some of her extended family survived the war in hiding, most perished. Because of his business, Judith's father had resources in the United States to support the family, so they waited only a short time for their visas. When they had the appropriate paperwork in hand, they boarded a ship with children being sent to Canada. They then went to New York, where Judith lived for the next 13 years.

Judith remembers the difficulties of entering a large high school because she did not know English at that time. Despite the number of German-speaking Jewish refugees in the school there was no English taught as a second language. Instead, she took German and French, which helped her learn English. During high school, she met Harry Rothstein, on a blind date, whose family had fled Vienna in 1938. Judith graduated from Queens College as a dietician, with a degree in home economics. She went to work in a hospital. After a year of college, Harry went into the service. When he returned from the war, he and Judith married.

After the war, Judith's parents and sisters returned to the Netherlands to their home and business. It was very difficult for Judith to see them go, but she was married, and she and Harry wanted to remain in the United States. Judith visited them in Holland. Eventually her sisters and their families moved to Israel where they still live. After Judith's father died, her mother joined them there.

Judith and Harry's first two daughters, Naomi and Edna were born in New York. After an unsuccessful attempt to start a business, Harry answered an ad in the New York Times for a job in the drapery department at Colonial Art, a store located at South Negley and Centre Avenues in Pittsburgh. After they arrived, Judith worked at West Penn Hospital as a dietician for four years. During this time, a third daughter, Beri (Beryl) was born. Judith continued working, supporting the family for a year while Harry started a business. Rothstein Decorators moved several times between locations in downtown and in the East End. In addition to its other merchandise, it was the only store in Pittsburgh with a quilting machine that could make custom quilts.

After living for a year in Squirrel Hill, the Rothsteins moved to Stanton Heights where they raised their three daughters. Judith moved from her home there only in the past year. They belonged to B'nai Israel Synagogue. They were ready to change congregations and Nathan Witt, their dentist, told them about Dor Hadash. They joined the congregation.

All three daughters went to Israel on Young Judaea Year Course. Naomi made aliyah and lives in Israel now. Beri lives in Potomac, Maryland, and Edna and Michael Jaron and their sons, Steve and Ross, live in Pittsburgh.

Two events stand out in Judith's memory. One is fleeing Holland. The other is Harry's death in 1972, from a heart attack at home. That morning, as a past president of Dor Hadash, he had presented the congregation's gift during a bar mitzvah. Following Harry's death, Judith continued with the business for a year and then sold it. She began to work at Rodef Shalom, assisting caterers and helping with luncheons. After retiring, she worked for a while providing childcare.

Judith is proud of being an active member of the community. She has served in various capacities for Dor Hadash. She volunteers in the West Penn Hospital kitchen, at the East End Cooperative Ministries' soup kitchen, and tutors children at Minadeo Elementary School. She continues her family's dedication to Zionism and is a life member of Hadassah. She takes pride in working to remain strong and goes regularly to the JCC to swim and exercise.

Interviewer: Susan Melnick

Claire Sackin



Claire Sackin's life has been one of contrasts. She was born into a world in which women were mothers and homemakers. Claire has been that, but she has also been a successful professional, a tenured university professor. Raised in a traditionally observant household, she gravitated towards Reconstructionism, and together with her husband Milt, was one of the original founders of Dor Hadash. A Jewish woman born and raised in New York City, she has lived in the suburbs of Mt. Lebanon for many years, and worked in rural central Pennsylvania, teaching at a Catholic university.

Claire was born in the Bronx, New York in 1925. As a child her family moved a lot, living in a series of apartments. She was raised in an Orthodox home in which only kosher food was served, there were 2 sets of dishes, and the light was left on Friday night. Her father was in the rag business in the Bronx. He later went into the grocery business in Harlem. Her mother was very concerned about social status (yichus in Yiddish). Her maternal grandfather was a rabbi. Her maternal grandmother was the only child of a wealthy family and was a very aristocratic lady, whose father was a chochem. Both of these grandparents went to die in Israel in the 1930s, when Claire was a child.

Claire's mother was determined that her children would rise in the world. Claire studied the piano under a series of mediocre teachers. Her mother wanted her to go to Juilliard, because she had heard that that was how you became somebody, but Claire did not want to be singled out, did not want to be a "somebody". She wanted to go to high school with her friends, have fun and play.

As a child, the street was her playground. Kids played ball and jumped rope. On summer evenings they sat on the stoop and sang popular songs. You could buy a little green sheet with all the popular song lyrics, and everyone sat around singing. Boys played stickball in the street, and the girls sat on the side and applauded. Not many

people drove cars, so the dangers of traffic were not an issue. In the winter it was paradise. They lived across from St. Mary's Park in the South Bronx, and there were many hills where the children went sled riding. Later, all of her classmates were her buddies, both girls and boys (pre-teen). They used to hang out Friday night outside a candy store. Her best friend had the apartment across the hall.

Claire read all the time, and that has continued to this day. There were books everywhere. Her father worked seven days a week for a pittance and was rarely home. Her mother ran the house, and made the decisions about the children's education. This was very common. On rare occasions, they all went to the movies. They all went to see 'Gone with the Wind'. That was the only time she remembers her parents going out!

In the South Bronx, there was always some tension between the Jews and their Irish neighbors, but there were so many Jews you could avoid it. The press was very anti-Semitic. They used to get leaflets that were anti-Semitic, going into physical attributes of Jews. Father Coughlin was the Haman of the time. He was on the radio. You knew that Jews were not welcome, but there was no physical violence. At that time, neighborhoods were really separate. You did not mingle. You did not mix. You did not invite people to your home who were not Jewish.

Claire was sickly as a child -- forever dying of something in the hospital. Whatever came along she got it. They did not know what to do with her. She thinks that one of the reasons she survived was that the medical technology was limited and there was not much they could do for her, so they sent her home. Claire had whooping cough for ten years practically, and one of the neighbors told her mother that it would be good for her to go to the gas station to breathe in the fumes, so they did. The doctors prescribed iron medicine, which did nothing but rot her teeth. Her brother was also sickly and in and out of hospitals. They changed his name to ward off the evil eye.

There was no medical insurance. There was no money for doctors. The medical problems she suffers from today are believed to be directly related to what was never properly attended to in her childhood. This is by no means unusual and quite common. Even though times were rough, she always could look forward to the future. One was expected to progress. Everything was nisht tzu farshemen, not to bring shame to the family.

Eleanor Roosevelt was her idol. There was a subtle rule. As a girl, if you were too smart you would not get married and that would be shameful. There was very little sympathy for girls who were too ambitious. Eleanor Roosevelt, an aristocrat, did good things and inspired many to do good things in the world.

Claire got her bachelors degree from Hunter College, earned her first masters degree from NYU in education, and a second masters from Pitt in education. The example of Eleanor Roosevelt led her to study social work at the University of Pittsburgh, where she obtained her Ph.D. After receiving her Ph.D. she accepted an appointment as a professor at St. Francis University, where she taught until her retirement at age 72. When she started, women had a very rough time in academia. She had to travel to St. Francis from Pittsburgh. She would go out Sunday night and come back Thursday night. It was a very unusual life. Claire likes to think that she was a role model for her students. She thinks she taught more outside the classroom than inside the classroom.

Claire is justly proud of her professional accomplishments and her family. She remains intellectually curious and an avid reader. She feels she has done well, been rewarded, and hopefully has not done any harm. As a child of poor Jewish immigrants in the Bronx, her future life would hardly have seemed real or possible, but Claire has achieved much and given much. Congratulations to Claire from Dor Hadash as we celebrate “Seasons of Our Lives.”

Interviewer: Martin Gaynor

Milt Sackin



Milt Sackin has led an eventful life. Orphaned at an early age, he was raised by foster parents and was drafted into the U.S. Navy during World War II. Milt served in the Israeli Air Force during the War of Independence in 1948. Upon returning to the United States he obtained bachelors and masters degrees in electrical engineering on the GI Bill, married his wife Claire, and went to work. Milt came to Pittsburgh almost 50 years ago when the company he was working for was bought out by Westinghouse and has been here ever since. He and Claire are among the founders of Dor Hadash.

Milt was born in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, New York in 1925 to immigrant parents and was orphaned at a young age. Milt's father died when he was 6, with his mother following when Milt was 7. Milt and his sister were taken in by his mother's sister and her husband, who were in their fifties and already had grown children. They lived in Boro Park, Brooklyn. Milt's father had worked in the garment business. His foster father was ill and never worked while Milt lived with them. Both his parents and his foster parents spoke Yiddish exclusively. Milt learned English in the street and at school.

As a child, Milt enjoyed reading a great deal, including history and novels. He also played baseball. The school he attended was about fifty percent Jewish. There was a Jewish baseball team and an Irish team – the Firemen Hats vs. the Anteaters. In high school, Milt learned to play the flute, an avocation that he has stayed with up to this day.

His foster parents kept a "standard" Orthodox home. There was great emphasis on ritual observance, for example, not turning on lights on Shabbos, but nothing about what was behind this. Milt remembers that the first year that he came to live with his foster parents he went to synagogue every day to say Kaddish. He used to stand on a

bench to say Kaddish and was very self-conscious -- everyone was staring at him. After a month he could stand on the floor. He was 7 years old.

One of the chores he had as a child that he remembers most was getting ice. He used to go with a little wagon and bring back a cake of ice. That was a big thing. He used to polish the furniture. He had a small allowance. Then when he was about 13 or 14 he got a job as a delivery boy and a helper in a florist shop not too far away from home, earning two dollars a week.

In 1943 Milt was drafted into the Navy and served as an Electronic Technician doing radar maintenance. He served through the end of the war and participated in the actions at Kwajalein, Guam, and Okinawa. Just a few months after he came back from the Navy, both foster parents died within a few months of each other. He was orphaned again, for the second time. This time he was 21 and now on his own.

Learning about the Holocaust had a profound impact on Milt. He lost his religious belief when he found out about the details of the Holocaust. He could not find any connection between religion as described in the Bible and that event. When he became more familiar with Jewish history, the Crusades, Kishinev, etc., that was the end of his religious belief. The Holocaust also influenced Milt to volunteer to go to Israel during the War of Independence. In 1948 he volunteered and served for 13 months as a Pakid-Avir (flight officer) in Squadron 505 of the Israeli Air Force doing radar maintenance during 1948-49. Milt knew enough Hebrew from Hebrew school to get by. In 1976 Milt was awarded the Ot Kommemiyut (Victory Ribbon) and the Fighters Decoration by the Israeli Government for his service.

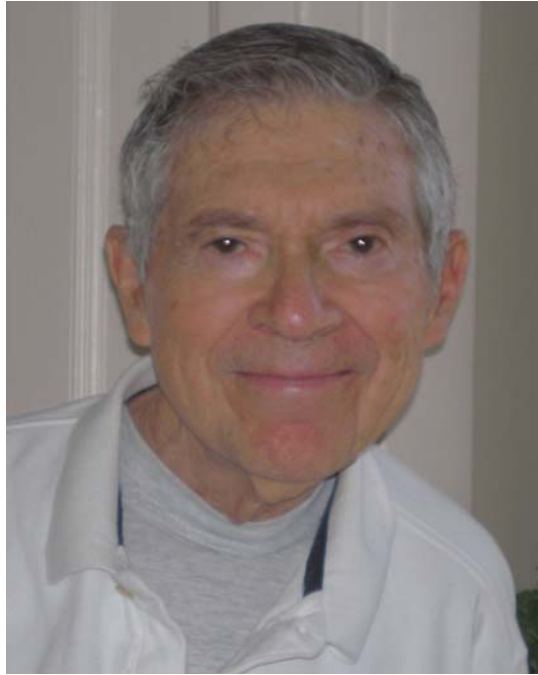
Milt earned a BSEE (cum laude) from Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn and a MSEE from New York University. He worked as an electrical engineer for a number of different firms over the years before ending up at Westinghouse. Over his working career he received nine U. S. patents in the areas of low-level amplifiers, optimized motor usage, elevator systems, electromechanical recording devices and protective relaying. He wrote four published papers and a chapter in a textbook.

After moving to Pittsburgh, the Sackins were initially affiliated with Congregation Beth El in Mt. Lebanon, but felt they didn't really fit in to any of the existing congregations in Pittsburgh at that time. They had more academic interests than most of the people who belonged to the other synagogues. Milt read a lot about religion, even though he is an atheist. Strange as it may sound for an atheist, Milt has been studying the Bible, and other religious works, most of his adult life. He had come across Kaplan, and he found Kaplan's description of G-d, and his strong attachment to the Jewish community very appealing. A small group, the Sackins among them, started Dor Hadash.

Milt has lived a life of both the mind and of action. He has been a professional engineer and a participant in Israel's War of Independence. Orphaned twice over, he went on to college and graduate school and a professional career. His has truly been an eventful life. Congratulations to Milt from Dor Hadash as we celebrate "Seasons of Our Lives."

Interviewer: Martin Gaynor

Wilbur (Will) A. Steger



Wilbur A. Steger is one of the founding members of Dor Hadash. But this is just one among many initiatives taken by this dynamic, engaging man in his lifetime. He has earned advanced degrees from prestigious universities, founded his own company, moved across the country, and worked with presidents. He married the love of his life, raised four children and continued to be physically and mentally active through 79 years so far.

Will says that he learned determination from watching his father Harry Steger, whom Will has tried to emulate. As a child, Harry immigrated to America with his family. The family story is that at only four years old Harry was on the ship finding items to sell the rich people. Although he had to leave school in the seventh grade, Harry Steger became a successful businessman, first in the textile industry and later in building houses for returning veterans. Will also remembers who, during the late 30's and 40's, his family considered the most important, non- Jewish person in the world: FDR, and the great loss everyone felt at his death.

Harry's father, Will's paternal grandfather, was a wise and learned man who spoke Hebrew and Yiddish. Harry used his financial success to help to build a temple for his father's congregation; he gave money for the bima and the ark. Will's maternal grandparents were also orthodox and lived with Will's family. He remembers walking the two miles to the conservative synagogue for holidays. In the home, his family kept kosher "to a point."

One of the biggest influences Judaism had on Will was the importance of education. His father wanted him to attend Yale. Will was precocious and skipped grades. In 1946 at the age of 16, he applied to college. In those days, students needed some "pull" to be accepted at Yale. This was especially true for Jewish students. Thanks to the intervention of former Governor Lehman of New York and Abe Ribicoff (who would

later become Governor of Connecticut), Will was admitted to Yale. He was part of the same class as President George H.W. Bush, and a classmate debater with William (Bill) Buckley. Will remembers a critical step in Buckley's debating skills, which Will helped to "engineer"!

During his freshman year at Yale, Will was fixed up on a date for a surprise party with a girl from the Bronx. She was beautiful and there was something about her that drew him to her. Within minutes of meeting her, Will knew he would marry her. Lucky for Will, Sheila Lichtblau felt the same way about him. "It was just through an accident that my friend needed a date for this girl. It was the best thing that could have happened. She became the guide for all of the things in my life not related to business. Meeting her was easily the most important thing that happened in my life."

Three and a half years later, they eloped to New Hampshire. According to Will, it was Election Day and he and Sheila were looking in a jewelry store window. Everything was closed. Suddenly, there was a shadow over their shoulders. They turned and there was the owner of the jewelry store who was also the local Justice of the Peace. He sold them a ring and married them the same day. The couple moved to New Haven and lived in the home of one of Will's professors while he finished college. It was from that house that Will remembers calling his father and telling him that he didn't want to run a company after he graduated and would his father mind if he went to graduate school instead.

Will chose to study economics. He went to the University of Chicago briefly and was in the same class with Milton Friedman. There he learned about markets. "America should be a market economy but with a lot of government oversight." Will only stayed for the summer because he was accepted at Harvard. He earned his Masters and Doctorate degrees in Economics at Harvard.

While he studied in Cambridge, MA, Sheila earned her degree in library science. Their son Edward and daughter Fran were born during this time. When Will was nearing graduation, a teacher took him aside and told him that the world will be different in the second half of the century and economics would be important outside of universities. Will took this message to heart. He accepted an offer from the Rand Corporation and moved to Pacific Palisades, CA in 1955. Their sons Hal and Jeffrey were born in California.

While in California, the Stegers joined the only Jewish congregation in the area. It was a Reconstructionist congregation led by Rabbi Winikur. They found that the combination of conservative ritual with progressive thinking was perfect for them. When the family moved to Pittsburgh in 1963, they met other people who were also interested in Reconstructionist thought and practice. This was how Dor Hadash was founded.

Shortly after the Stegers moved here, their youngest child Jeffrey contracted spinal meningitis. Will credits the extraordinary care he received at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh with Jeffrey's recovery. This experience of having a critically ill child probably gave him the need to tie himself to religion. Will says that Sheila in particular was active in the congregation, but mostly behind the scenes. "Sheila did everything Dor Hadash could have wanted that didn't involve being in the public eye."

Will had a spectacular career at Rand Corporation. He built on that experience by founding CONSAD Research Corporation, an independent think-tank, when he moved to Pittsburgh in 1963. One of his first projects was to build a simulation model of the city.

He worked with Herb Simon of Carnegie Mellon, who loaned Will both of the programmers the college had at that time. This model eventually became the core of the game "SimCity." Another early Pittsburgh happening evolved: a cofounding (with a Pitt faculty member) in 1963 of what has grown to be one of the largest GIS (Geographic Information Systems) professional associations, the Urban and Regional information Systems.

At CONSAD, Will consulted on tax, health care reform, environmental and energy issues, and other critical public policy matters. His economics background helps Will to study the unintended effects of public laws and the impact on small businesses, which are the heart of our economy. He has performed policy analysis for (and met) every president since Kennedy. According to Will, LBJ was good at finding a way to use whatever information Will gave him, although not always as intended. Will and Sheila became friends with the Clintons at Renaissance weekends at Hilton Head.

Sheila died of lung cancer in September 2000. After 50 years of marriage, Will said, "That was the only thing she did that I didn't agree with – dying first." Will has continued to work, exercise, stay in touch with his children and grandchildren, and indulge in his passion for sports. A few years after his wife's death, he began to date. Once again, his friends and family have helped him out in this endeavor. Will's sister fixed him up with her best friend of 30 years, Sheila Kaufman. She is a writer who used to write for the TV show "Family Matters." Will and Sheila are also members of her conservative congregation. It has been very important in her life.

When asked about his goals for the future, Will replied, "I want to make Sheila happy. I want to help my kids in every way. I'd like to leave a gift to Dor Hadash. I want my company to go beyond me. I turn 80 in a couple months. I'm extremely happy with my life."

Interviewer: Beth Silver

Ernest Sternglass



Ernest was born in Berlin in 1923. His parents were both medical doctors. His family had to leave Germany due to Hitler when Ernest was fourteen years old. They were barely able to get out in 1938. They were only able to get out because a friend of Ernest's father Joseph, one of his patients, was an officer in the SS who was able to sneak him out of the area of the doctors offices, where Jews were being rounded up. This was enough to convince Ernest's mother Ella that it was time to leave.

While there were in Germany they had a pretty good life. Ernest's parents had a summer cottage, and they had a small sailboat, from which he acquired a lifelong passion for sailing that he passed on to Dan, his son.

Ernest's mother was a pediatrician, and his father was a dermatologist. Ernest recalls a lot of discussion around the dinner table about the general subject of caring for their patients, and their general concern with the human condition, which he feels influenced him towards his extensive work in public health and environmental issues.

Once in the U.S., Ernest completed high school at the age of sixteen, then entered Cornell, registering for an engineering program. His family's financial troubles forced him to leave school for a year; by the time he returned to Cornell, the U.S. had entered World War II. Ernest volunteered for the navy. He was about to ship out when the atomic bomb was detonated over Hiroshima.

After the war, Ernest met and married Marilyn Seiner. In Washington, D.C. he worked as a civilian employee at the Naval Ordnance Laboratory, which researched military weapons. Ernest began studying night vision devices, which led him to work with radiation. In 1947, his son Daniel was born. That same year, Ernest got a chance to meet Albert Einstein.

From 1952 to 1967 Ernest worked at the Westinghouse Research Laboratory followed by his work at the University of Pittsburgh. Professionally, he was the inventor of TV Tubes at Westinghouse that sent back the first pictures from the moon, also used in the Hubble space telescope. At the University of Pittsburgh, he played a leading role in the development of digital radiography, which is now used almost universally today to take highly detailed digital X-Ray images with a minimal dose of radiation.

Ernest has pursued two other major areas in his professional life, these are the two most important things to him, and he continues to pursue these actively to this day. The first deals with the public health effects of the first nuclear weapons and bomb testing. In that capacity, he testified before congress in the 1960s and contributed to the passage of the Test Ban Treaty that ended atmospheric bomb testing. He has also been one of the world's leaders in opposition to Nuclear power plants, where he has cited major public health effects in the incidence of cancers and other diseases caused by low-level emissions from these plants, as well as increases in infant mortality and more general public health problems. He has traveled the world in pursuit of this concern, and is a co-founder of one of the major anti-nuclear groups, the Radiation and Public Health Project, RPHP (www.rphp.org). He has always felt that this work was his highest priority.

A second major pursuit of his has been elementary particle physics and cosmology. In this area, he has had the opportunity to correspond and meet with Albert Einstein, Richard Feynman, Louis De Broglie and many other famous physicists. The essence of his theory is that all matter is composed of only electrons and positrons (a positron is, in essence, the mirror image of an electron, a point particle with a positive charge). With this theory, he is able to calculate the values of the major physical constants that govern electromagnetism and gravity. Also, this theory describes the structure of the universe as having descended from a primeval rotating electron-positron pair, and it explains recent observations from large space telescopes that are not currently explained by the existing theories, such as the appearance that the entire system is rotating. His approach, however, does not fall in with the currently popular purely statistical approach, so it remains to be seen whether the experimental data will continue to support his model as it has so far. Being well acquainted with the study of the history and philosophy of science, he does not expect it to be accepted in his lifetime, but it is very exciting in terms of the model's agreement with the experimental data and astronomical observations to date.

Ernest's late wife, Marilyn, went back to graduate school when their children Daniel and Sue were in elementary school. Marilyn had a very successful and interesting career as a linguist. The thrust of her work was in helping under-privileged students learn writing skills by writing in their own "non-standard" dialects of English. She and her co-workers found that this was a very successful way in which writing could be taught, and used as a platform to underpin all areas of study. She wrote several books and published a longitudinal study of the success of her students, and she was consistently an advocate for teaching writing as the key to success in any area of study. She received numerous professional awards for her work.

On a personal level, Daniel feels that his parents both felt extraordinarily fortunate that they were able to help each other pursue their interests, in turn supporting each other, and being able to move to locations where one or the other of them could

pursue their interests, while the other was also able to continue his/her work. Ernest feels that the spirit of Marilyn lives on in the universe, and is a great support to him.

This spring, Ernest moved to Ithaca, NY, nearby his son Dan and daughter-in-law Casey Carr. He continues to work on his environmental and public health anti-nuclear work, as well as his particle physics. He will begin working with archivists at Cornell University who are cataloging his papers. He also looks forward to sailing with Dan on his sailboat.

Dan recalls his parents joining Dor Hadash in the mid or late 1960s. He believes that Ernest and Marilyn were drawn to the very interesting people and the progressive political outlook of the group. Dan and his sister Sue became B'nai Mitzvah at Dor Hadash.

Interviewer: Daniel Sternglass

Eugene (Gene) Sucov



Let's go back a few years to 1922 in Waterbury, Connecticut where Gene Sucov was born and spent his earliest years. Until he was seven, Gene attended a one- room schoolhouse. While one grade was receiving instruction from the teacher, the others in the classroom were expected to keep quiet. Although Gene was just in first grade, he listened attentively to what the teacher had to say to the older children. He soaked up so much of what the teacher said, that he was able to pass all the second grade tests and ended up skipping second grade as a result.

A great change occurred for the family in 1929, when the Great Depression hit. Gene's parents suddenly decided to move to Brooklyn to be near his mother's family. They did not discuss the reasons for this move with Gene and his younger brother. Prior to this time, Gene's father was a naturopathic physician. After they moved, however, he took a job in a travel agency run by a relative. People were not able to afford to travel at that time, so the main task of the agency was to help Polish families send packages home to family members.

About a year after moving to Brooklyn, Gene's father bought a summer resort where people of modest means were able to stay in the summer. Gene's family lived there during the season and returned to Brooklyn when the resort was closed. Because of this, he spent time in yet another one- room school in the Catskills. He became a local celebrity when he won a spelling competition and was sent to the county seat to compete against other spelling champs. Gene was one of the last of two standing, and he vividly remembers the pain of losing on the word "heresy".

Gene eventually started high school in Brooklyn. Because he had skipped second grade and had also started school a year early, he was two years younger than the others. The student body primarily consisted of Irish, Italian, and African-American students.

There were only 12 Jewish students in the entire high school. Although the hallways could be intimidating between classes, the Jewish students were generally treated well. They were all in the group that was designated as college preparatory. In this small group there was one African-American student and one white Christian student. Gene got good grades except for Latin, which he flunked twice. One of the more exciting activities of the school year was that word would get around that there would be a fight after school, and kids would stay after school to watch.

Gene did not have a strong Jewish upbringing, although his parents eventually affiliated with an Orthodox congregation in Brooklyn where he learned a little bit of Hebrew and became a Bar Mitzvah.

Gene was expected to go to college and at the age of 16, he started classes at Brooklyn College where tuition was free. Once again, he was a great deal younger than his counterparts, and this made him feel out of place. Because of this, he focused on his studies and did not attempt to socialize. His earlier schooling had not prepared him for the challenges of college courses. Although he majored in physics, he did not do very well. He lived at home during college, just like everyone else who went to Brooklyn College. In order to make some money, he worked in a soda fountain and as a delivery boy for a tailor and a druggist. One of his most memorable jobs was setting up pins in a bowling alley before automation eliminated this line of work. During this time period, Gene's mother started a massage business in their home, which was quite successful. Many of the women in their neighborhood took advantage of her skills.

After Gene graduated from college, World War II started and he went for his army physical. To his surprise, he was rejected and classified as "4F" because of his frequent ear infections. Whereas Gene had been eager to enlist, he was both amazed and relieved when this happened. He got a job working in war industries on the technical aspects of radio and TV electronics, and he began to take night classes at City College toward a degree in electrical engineering. One nice perk of this work was that there were many young women working in these industries during the war. Now that Gene was older and more confident, he made the most of this situation.

Unfortunately, during this period of time, tragedy struck Gene's family. His brother left for Europe in 1944. After being injured, he was put in a POW hospital in Germany. In January of 1945, an Allied bomb went astray and hit the hospital by accident, and Gene's brother was killed. Gene has two surviving siblings who were born many years after Gene and his first brother. There was such a large age difference between the two youngest and the two oldest, that the younger brother and sister never had a chance to really get to know the brother who died.

During his twenties, Gene became involved with a number of left-wing organizations. These organizations were fronts for the Communist Party, although not everyone realized this. He believes that his father had also been involved with similar activities, although this was never made explicit. Many Jews at that time were affiliated with the kind of thinking and politics that these organizations promoted.

It was around this time that Gene met his first wife, Mildred, through the Zionist activities they were both involved with. They married in 1949 and, at Millie's urging, they moved to Israel two years later. It was a time of great hardship in Israel; both food and housing were in short supply. Gene felt fortunate to get a job at the Weitzman Institute and Millie got a job teaching English. They ended up living on a kibbutz.

With the encouragement of people he met at the Weitzman Institute, Gene decided to get a Ph.D. and returned to New York to go to graduate school at NYU. After he completed his degree, it turned out that most jobs in his field required security clearance from the U.S. government. Gene's colleagues said that he should not even bother to apply, because the left-wing activism of his earlier years would automatically disqualify him. This was why he ended up in Pittsburgh - he got a job at PPG, which did not require security clearance, because the company did not have any government contracts. Despite the left-wing involvement of his earlier years, when Gene left his job at PPG and went to work at Westinghouse in 1963, he was amazingly given security clearance by the FBI.

Gene's political leanings never left him, however. In the same year that he was granted security clearance, he founded the 14th Ward Democratic Club to support the candidacy of Molly Yard for State Legislator. They beat the "machine" in the spring primaries, but she lost in the fall election. The members of the club continued to fight, and they won the seat with Gerry Kaufman in 1965. Since then, the club has controlled Democratic Party politics in the 14th Ward. When Gene moved out of Squirrel Hill, his connection to the club ended.

In 1973, tensions in Gene and Millie's marriage led them to make the decision to divorce. This process took several long years. They had three sons by this time. Gene moved out of the family home, but chose to live close by.

It was during this period that Will and Sheila Steger encouraged Gene to join Dor Hadash. He found that he was attracted to the fact that it was led by the people and not by someone you hired. It seemed a good fit, especially since he had a growing need to know more about being Jewish. He felt that Dor Hadash would be a good place to learn.

It was around this time that Gene met Ellen. Whereas friends had mentioned her to him, he did not pursue getting to know her until he saw a picture of her in the Jewish Chronicle. She was publicizing the group that she was involved with, the Association of Mental Health Affiliation with Israel (AMHAI). The notice in the Chronicle invited people to an informational party on the front lawn of her house. Gene was president of Dor Hadash at the time and knew that a number of people from the congregation who were professionals in the mental health field had been invited to attend this event. He decided that this would be a good excuse to meet her, so he decided to come as well. He called her for a dinner date the very next week and the rest is history. Their wedding ceremony in 1982 was created by the two of them and included the influence of Native American traditions and readings from Kahlil Gibran.

At this point in his life, Gene and Ellen divide their time between their home in Jerusalem and their home in Fox Chapel. In Jerusalem, they live in a mixed Jewish neighborhood where people run the gamut from non-religious to extremely observant. This even applies to the particular apartment building that he and Ellen live in where this mixture sometimes sparks controversies. In Jerusalem, Gene belongs to a Reconstructionist synagogue that is located nearby. Just like Dor Hadash, it has no rabbi and is run by the members.

Gene describes himself as less left wing these days in that he has lowered his expectations that his ideals will become reality. His short-term goal is to hit 90 years of age. To help this happen, he regularly lifts weights and walks, but reading is what he

likes to do the most. He is a man of strong feelings who likes both his coffee and his tea black and with caffeine.

Interviewer: Janice Gordon

Esther Jacobson Tucker



It was my great pleasure to talk with Esther about her life in preparing for this project. Although I knew several bits and pieces from our friendship, there was more to learn and admire. Esther's been a pillar of the Dor Hadash community since the year after its beginnings and it is a privilege and honor to share her story.

Esther grew up in London, England and spent the first ten years of her life there. She is an only child. Her family had been fairly well to do, her father having worked in the textile industry. Esther's early exposure to religion was at the orthodox shul down the road where her family had gone to High Holy Day Services but Esther had not cared at all for sitting upstairs separately from the men and especially her Dad.

Esther was ten when she moved to the U.S. because of the war. She and her mom joined her mom's sisters who were already here in Pittsburgh and they lived together – three women and Esther. Her Dad had to stay behind because of his business and then later, because of the war. Esther did see him from time to time. Tragically, her dad died during her junior year of college.

In Pittsburgh, Esther attended the Wightman Elementary School, then Taylor Allerdice High School and ultimately Pitt. She graduated from Pitt in 1951 with a major in psychology and a minor in speech and English.

Although Esther and her mom's standard of living were now more modest, Esther's mom made a living by being a speaker. She started out by speaking for Hadassah on the differences between life in England and life here and moved into many other speaking arenas. Of note to all you folks who grew up with Mr. Rogers Neighborhood, Esther's mom was Miss Emilie the Poetry Lady right up till her death. Although, Esther's mom was loving, she was also very exacting and she wanted Esther to be better than she was. She kept a tight rein on the movies Esther saw in England, mostly those of

Shirley Temple, and she was only allowed to see one a year. The irony was that when Esther was invited to a birthday party shortly after they moved to Pittsburgh, they were taken to a horror movie, which she remembers vividly. So much for parental control!

Esther's teenage years were difficult as she said she was "an unnoticed person", but she quickly adds, "It did mean she was a 'hot ticket' as a babysitter though, especially on New Year's Eve".

On the religious front, Esther and her Mom went to Rodef Shalom for the High Holy Days, as her aunt and uncle were already members there. She had a very unsatisfactory experience in religious school, which she started in the sixth grade. She remembers being taught the Hebrew alphabet for the whole first year and reviewing it the whole second year. That was all they did.

Esther had other loner friends in high school and college, but it was not till she attended graduate school at Purdue University that she met people she could really say were incredibly wonderful. These new friends were left-wing New Yorkers and, she said, some were even card carrying Communists! If you are very nice to her, she might even sing you a stanza of "The Banks were made of Marble" that they would often sing as they sat around a campfire. As much as she loved these campfire events and these friends, she was also fearful that Senator McCarthy would jump out of the woods and grab her.

Esther graduated from Purdue in 1953 with a master's in speech pathology. She went on to work in Nashville for a couple of years. She attended Friday night services at the temple there and was adopted by a lovely older couple with whom she became life-long friends.

When back again in Pittsburgh, Esther was attending only the High Holiday services at Rodef Shalom as she did not like it there. At some point when Esther was taking classes at the Jewish "Y", she took one on Reconstructionist Judaism taught by Dr. Aharon Kessler and was immediately hooked. She started subscribing to the magazine and also read the book by Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan and was impressed.

In addition to taking classes, Esther was now working on her social life. Her friends took her to the Unitarian Church, to the Jefferson Club, which had a speaker, discussion and social hour afterwards. She was attending one of these meetings when she spotted a very Jewish looking young man sitting by himself and she said to herself: "There's a perfectly good Jewish man going to waste!" She introduced herself to him after the meeting and 'chatted him up'. They got along so well they went out for coffeecake at the old Webster Hall. She gave him her phone number that evening, but heard nothing. He showed up again at the next Jefferson Club meeting, and again they had a very good time talking together. They started dating and Esther pursued Ray for two years before they finally got married in 1959. It was a good thing she did, too, because they had forty-four excellent years together. From Ray and Esther's marriage came two wonderful daughters, Naomi and Miriam and ultimately, three grandchildren. Currently Miriam lives in Washington, DC and is a medical writer. Naomi, a social worker, lives in Pittsburgh and is raising a son and two daughters.

Ray was an optometrist and Esther owned a store. She began it after the children were a little older. The business was selling antiques, an enterprise, which later turned into an antiquarian book business. Esther also had a weekly column on antique collecting in several community newspapers. She and Ray loved going to antique shows and

making good finds. Her store, called The Tuckers, was on Murray Avenue and was a well-known fixture in Squirrel Hill for many years.

When their daughter Miriam was a year and a half old, Ray and Esther joined Dor Hadash, which was then meeting at the Hebrew Institute. She and Ray had been taking classes there when they learned about it. She says it consisted of a small group of about 20 people, was very casual, and that the meetings (before there was a board) were for everybody. The Reconstructionist prayer book was used, though most of the people did not know what Reconstructionism was. This was in 1965, three years before the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College started up in Philadelphia. Esther has been a member of the congregation ever since, over 40 years! Her contributions to it are a vital part of what we as a congregation are now, and I salute you! I am honored to be counted among your friends and wish you very many years ahead filled with great happiness and good health.

Interviewer: Melissa Jones

Bilha Richler Witt

Bilha Richler Witt was born in 1913 and grew up in rural Lithuania in Gelvan, a very small town in the Vilna area. Bilha learned her love of gardening as a young girl in her home village and gardening has remained her special pleasure throughout her life. There were very few Jews in her town. Her father had a sock company. Her mother died when Bilha, the oldest child, was ten years old. She helped her father raise the younger children. Bilha's father remarried and had additional children. Bilha had about seven siblings - including the half siblings.

She had a cat that was very special to her. When she went to Hebrew school in a different town, (there not enough Jews to have one in her town) she had to give the cat away. She got the town butcher to take it. The cat was very well taken care of but, sadly, did not remember Bilha when she came back to visit.

Bilha was always an excellent student, and by the time she was an adult, knew Polish, Yiddish, Lithuanian, Hebrew, German and English. She thinks one reason she learned so many languages so early was because of political shifts that changed the "official" language at the schools she attended. She loved gardening, pets and entertaining, has written and published poetry and is supportive of Israeli and other Jewish causes.

Nathan came to Lithuania as a carpenter's apprentice with a Zionist group that was providing ways out of Germany for Jewish refugees as well as training folks to go to Palestine. Bilha was living and working in Mamel in the youth group that sponsored emigration to Palestine and that is where she met Nathan. They got married and went to Palestine in 1933 together. They immigrated to the United States in 1937, choosing Pittsburgh because Nathan had relatives there.

While Nathan went to dental school to complete the training he had started in Germany, Bilha taught Hebrew in several schools including Rodef Shalom and the Hebrew Institute. In addition to her many years as a Hebrew teacher in Pittsburgh's religious schools, Bilha taught Hebrew to several adult members of Congregation Dor Hadash.

The couple had two sons, David married to Leslie, and Don married to Paula. Bilha has three grandchildren: Benjamin, Max and Erika. She is a fiercely independent person and continues to live alone in her Amberson Garden apartment.

Bilha and Nathan were among the small group of founders of Dor Hadash in 1963, when they and several others organized a Jewish discussion group, which became a Reconstructionist congregation. They were intensively active, with Nathan leading services and giving talks, and Bilha helping celebrate holidays and teaching children songs. Bilha also established a fund in memory of her late beloved husband Nathan Witt to support Dor Hadash's annual observance of Shavuot, as it was one of Nathan's favorite holidays.

Composed by Sarah Angrist with input from David Witt and Doris Dyen