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President's Spiel

by Kim Sheintal

Genealogy has given me satisfaction beyond discovering new relatives. As I contact my DNA matches, my goal is to add people to my family tree. I contacted someone in Oklahoma on September 1, 2024 when I discovered that we share 82 cM of DNA. After sharing photos, family trees and vital record documents, and communicating numerous times on the telephone, we have no idea how we are related. However, we have a phone conversation every Friday. Just hearing how I inspired others to trace their families brings me joy. I am never bored because I can always work on my genealogy. Sometimes when I least expect it, I learn about my family history.

I attended program "The Role of Jewish Music in Jewish Worship" at Temple Emanu-El in Sarasota on August 7. Scott Sable, Music Director of Temple Emanu-El, explained how music has been used in Jewish rituals since the days of the bible. Gary Kurnov, a member of Temple Emanu-El, sang many of the melodies. My ears perked when I heard Scott mention Rabbi Shaul Yedidya Elazer Taub in connection with a melody called Ani-Maamin written by Azriel David Fastag. I have several rabbis on my Taub line who appreciated music but did not know much about them. Following the presentation, I emailed Scott asking him more about Rabbi Taub and told him that Rabbi Shaul Yedidya Elazer Taub is my 4th cousin 2x removed.

Here is Scott's response to me. "Fastag was a disciple of Rabbi Taub in Warsaw. Rabbi Taub got out before the ghetto was liquidated, not sure how much earlier, but made it safely to New York. Fastag did not escape the ghetto, and was sent to Treblinka. He composed Ani Maamin on the train, and knew he wouldn't survive. He asked two guys to jump off the train and get the melody to Rabbi Taub. One of the guys survived and was able to make it to New York and sang the melody for Rabbi Taub, who then made it famous. Try looking up 'Ani Maamin Warsaw Ghetto' as there are several articles about it."

2025 Membership Dues

Single Membership: \$25/year ~ Family Membership: \$30/year
Sustaining Membership: \$50/year (single or family)
Mail check (payable to JGS of SW FL) with your name, e-mail, phone, address and surnames/places you are researching to:

Liz Klaber
5389 Manchini Street
Sarasota, FL 34238

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President/Editor: Kim Sheintal klapshein@aol.com

Treasurer: Liz Klaber eklaber@comcast.net

Programs: Howard Finkel hgfinkel@gmail.com

Facebook: Leah Cook leahcook@aol.com

Webmaster: Jim Haberman webmaster@jgsswf.org

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JGS of SW FL MEETING

Sunday, November 16, 2025 (1:00 PM)

"What's New at JewishGen" by Caitlin Hollander Waas

For details Kim Sheintal: klapshein@aol.com, 941-302-1433

JGS of SW FL presents What's New at JewishGen

Join Caitlin Hollander Waas, JewishGen's Chief Genealogist, for "What's New at JewishGen" via Zoom on Sunday, November 16 at 1:00 PM (12:45 PM socializing). Caitlin will discuss the new databases launching for 5786 and spotlight the data added over the past year. In addition to announcing these valuable resources, she will also introduce JewishGen's new leadership team and share how the organization is forging ahead with fresh programs, expanded resources, and a renewed commitment to connecting researchers with their Jewish heritage.

JGS of SW FL 2025-2026 Calendar

(RSVP to Kim Sheintal, klapshein@aol.com)

- November 16, 2025 "What's New at JewishGen" by Caitlin Hollander Waas (Zoom only)
- December 21, 2025 "My Most Memorable Ancestor" Panel - Marc Silverstein, Abe Lederman, Lois Goldman, Doug Cohen (at Aviva, 1951 N. Honore Ave., Sarasota)
- January 18, 2026 "Exciting New Programs and Services from Sarasota County Libraries and Historical Resources" by Renee Di Pilato, Director, Sarasota County Libraries and Historical Resources, and Josh Goodman, Manager, Sarasota County History Center present (at Aviva, 1951 N. Honore Ave., Sarasota)
- February 15, 2026 "Using AI in Genealogy" by Peggy Jude (at Aviva, 1951 N. Honore Ave., Sarasota)
- March 13, 2026 "Research Israel Genealogical Resources from Your Couch" by Daniel Horowitz (at Temple Emanu-El, 151 McIntosh Road, Sarasota)
- March 15, 2026 "Born in the USA (or Not): The Evolution of Children's Citizenship" by Alec Ferretti (Zoom only)
- April 19, 2026 "My Name is Not Rifka" by Vivien Kalvaria (at Aviva, 1951 N. Honore Ave., Sarasota)

JGS of SW FL ONLINE

Website www.jgsswf.org

YouTube Channel www.youtube.com/@JGSSWF

JGSSWF Speaker's Handout Archive
www.tinyurl.com/mr3d8jwt

Facebook Page www.facebook.com/JGSSWF

How I Ensured My Family Genealogy is Preserved

by Jeri Lipov

Like many of you, I began keeping documents and family trees when I was young. Once I retired, I discovered Ancestry and I knew what I had to do – organize what I had and what I found on Ancestry into a book of sorts. While I researched several families, I focused first on my mother's family because I had many original documents and photographs. The family name was Stein, and I was one of the few remaining people who knew who the people pictured were. They arrived in Baltimore as rag dealers and became owners of various mom-and-pop grocery stores as they changed neighborhoods.

I compiled a notebook with a Family Group Sheet (FGS) for each individual, citing the source(s). As I went through Ancestry, I notated the information or photo and source on the FGS and filed a copy behind each individual's FGS. I stored them in clear plastic sheet protectors (archival). I filed the spouse next and then each child. Behind each child, I filed their children. I stopped including people if they were born after the 1950 census, for privacy purposes. My notebook grew fat.

I was amazed at the things I learned. One relative was a number's runner who ran off with the cash. Another family member died on the ship coming over just as she approached New York. So I slowly began to put together a narrative. The information wasn't always consistent regarding dates of births or spellings. But I tried to use the most authoritative sources or noted the differences. Then, I scanned all the originals into my computer. From there, I inserted a photo of the person as well as interesting documents in the individual's FGS.

I also joined the Jewish Genealogy Society of Southwest Florida, where I learned a great deal. After several years, my husband and I began to downsize, and I had to figure out how to preserve the information. I had also joined the Jewish Genealogy Society of Pittsburgh, where the Steins lived. I submitted an article on the family story to the Pittsburgh JGS newsletter, prompted by Kimberly, to see if I could find cousins that way. Eric Lidji, Director of the Rauh Jewish Archives, was interested in my information, because he wanted photographs of mom-and-pop grocery stores.



I continued working on my research and wrote a more compelling story about the Steins and their extended families – Bilder, Chernoff, Cosner, Davis, Deber, Finegold, Kohan, Kramer, Kuperstock, Levy, Mendelson, Pretter, Rebb, Reitenberg, Schaffer, Shane, Steinman, Winerman and Winslow. Then I wrote a short piece about the original name Nosacz becoming Stein. Finally, I determined that the family was Polish originally, based on the town name and a menorah passed down through the family.

Based on Kimberly's system, I broke the information into two separate notebooks. Book 1 included a family tree, the family story, and the story about our name. It included the FGS for each person, along with a few inserted photos and documents for interest. Book II included documents and photographs, organized by Immigration, Births, Marriages, Census, Military, Deaths, Press and Photographs. Both books had a table of contents, but the second book included the notation ORIGINAL to make it easy to find things like my grandparents' wedding invitation.

In the summer of 2024, I emailed Mr. Lidji to see if he would be willing to receive my books. I sent him a thumb drive of Book I. He indicated he was interested in seeing it. I spent the past winter editing my document for consistent margins and formats. I had a friend read it for spelling or typos and clarity – that helped a lot. I copied Book 1 to a thumb drive and made a copy at Staples; I learned to save it as a PDF file so the pages print properly. Finally I was ready and called to make an appointment to bring the book to Pittsburgh. I also gave him a thumb drive of the final Book 1. I hoped to make it easier to digitize the information.

On July 10, I drove to Pittsburgh and met Mr. Lidji in the Heinz History Center's Thomas and Katherin Detre Library and Archives. He was interested in my system of organizing the information, but he also wanted to know what it meant to me and how I came to have the original documents. He graciously accepted my work. It was a huge effort, but I am relieved that anyone researching our family now has access to the information.



Rauh Jewish History Program & Archives

www.heinzhistorycenter.org/research/rauh-jewish-history-program-archives/

"The Rauh Jewish History Program & Archives was founded in 1988 to collect, preserve, and make accessible the documentary history of Jews and Jewish communities of Western Pennsylvania. The program is supported by Rauh Jewish History Program & Archives Endowment Fund of the Foundation of the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, the Senator John Heinz History Center, and many generous donors."

Local Genealogical Societies

Jewish Genealogical Society of Southwest Florida

President: Kim Sheintal, klapshein@aol.com 941-302-1433

www.jgsswf.org, www.facebook.com/JGSSWF

JGS of SW FL meets third Sundays at 1:00 PM (November thru April) at Aviva, 1951 N. Honore Ave., Sarasota (some meetings in person and some meetings on Zoom). Bonus program on Friday, March 13 at 10:00 AM with Daniel Horowitz at Temple Emanu-El, 151 McIntosh Rd., Sarasota.

Jewish Genealogical Society of Tampa Bay

President: Bruce Hadburg bhadburg@tampabay.rr.com

727-796-7981

www.jgstb.org, www.facebook.com/JGSTB/

JGS of Tampa Bay generally meets second Sundays at 1:30 PM (September thru June). Meetings are generally held at Gulf Coast JFCS, 14041 Icot Blvd., Clearwater.

Genealogical Society of Sarasota

President: Nancy Johnson choco8448@gmail.com 941-752-9819

www.gssfl.org

GSS generally meets second Saturdays (October thru May) at 10:00 AM at Gulf Gate Library, 7112 Curtiss Ave., Sarasota. Bonus program on Friday, March 13 at 1:00 PM at library.

Manatee Genealogical Society

President: Karen Dwyer president@mgsfl.org 941-840-3939

<https://mgsfl.org>

MGS generally meets first Tuesdays at 10:00 AM at Manatee County Downtown Central Public Library, 1301 Barcarrota Blvd. W., Bradenton (in person or virtual hybrid).

South Bay Genealogical Society

President: Cathy Rebhun southbaygs@gmail.com 813-643-4649

<https://southbaygenealogy.org/>

SBGS meets third Tuesdays (September through May) at noon for lunch meeting with guest speaker and program at 1:00 PM at South Hillsborough Elks Lodge 2672, 1630 S U.S. Hwy 41, Ruskin.

Englewood Genealogical Society

President: Paul Milton Skeels president@egsfl.org

<https://egsfl.org/contact.php>

<https://egsfl.org/eventListings.php?nm=47> (events calendar)

EGS meets once a month at 1:30 PM (September thru April) at Elsie Quirk Library, 100 W Dearborn St., Englewood.

Charlotte County Genealogical Society

President: Dottie Baugh webliasion@ccgsi.org

<https://ccgsi.org>

CCGSI meets third Wednesday at 1:30 PM at Punta Gorda Charlotte Library (some on Zoom). CCGSI offers free classes Mondays (October thru April) and twice a month on Mondays (May thru September). A schedule of classes is available at ccgsi.org. For a class link, contact President@ccgsi.org in advance.

Mourning Loss of Jewish Genealogy Founders

Stanley Diamond, the founder and leader of JRI-Poland, passed away on December 18, 2024, at the age of 91.

Gary Mokotoff, author and computer software pioneer who led to the creation of many genealogical innovations such as JewishGen's Family Finder and the Daich-Mokotoff Soundex system, passed away on August 31, 2025, at the age 88.

Schelly Talalay Dardashti, the founder of the Jewish genealogy community Tracing the Tribe, passed away on August 16, 2025, at the age of 79.

Wonderful World of Websites

<https://www.fastpeoplesearch.com>

Find People Fast and Free

by Hal Bookbinder hal.bookbinder@ucla.edu

The Internet contains numerous tools to find contact information. While some require a subscription, many are free. Along with supporting my genealogical research, I have used these tools to locate and connect with high school classmates in support of our upcoming reunion. "Locating living people" shares several of these tools. This article has been added to the Practicing Safe Computing compendium on JGSCV website and freely available at <https://tinyurl.com/SafeComputingArticles> (see page 117 for the article "Locating living people").

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/search>

Roots Tech: Search the On-Demand Library (more than 1,500 sessions)

<https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Holocaust/>

JewishGen Holocaust Database

<https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Memorial/>

JewishGen Memorials & Plaques Database

<https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery/>

JOWBR: JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry Database

Significant Additions to JOWBR by Country

Australia / New Zealand (1,500 new records from the Australian Jewish Historical Society)

Austria (1,300 records including the Viena Seegasse Cemetery)

Belgium (3,300 records from the Israelite Municipality in Antwerp)

Canada (4,000 photos from 18 new and existing cemetery sections submitted primarily from the JGS of Toronto)

Colombia (100 new records and 1,375 photos from the Cementerio Hebreo de Cali)

Czech Republic (8,600 new records and 2,100 photos from 45 new and updated cemeteries, most thanks to the Jewish Community in Prague and maintained by Mantana a. s. Administration)

Germany (3,200 records and from 25 new and updated cemeteries)

Hungary (268,200 records from 242 cemeteries from across the country from the work done by Lajos Boros)

Moldova (the latest installment of 4,000 new records and 1,400 new photos from the Kishinev Cemetery submitted by JewishGen's Bessarabia Research Division)

Romania (an additional 1,900 records from the Suceava cemetery in Bucovina)

Russia (144,400 records from 41 cemeteries thanks to the work of aGuter Beter, a community led organization based in St. Petersburg)

Serbia (3,200 new records from the Jewish Community of Novi Sad)

Slovakia (1,800 new records and photos from 15 new and updated cemeteries, the majority from Humenne and Topolcaný)

Switzerland (1,400 new records, mostly of the Israelitische Friedhof in Basel.

Ukraine (900 new records, the majority from Khmelnytsky in the Podalia region)

United States (approximately 112,200 new records and 13,700 photos for 40 new and updated cemeteries. Significant additions came from volunteers from the Mt. Zion Cemetery in Queens, NY, the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston, and a number of dedicated individual volunteers and representatives of synagogues and historical societies)

The second part of JewishGen's 2025 Summer update to the JOWBR (JewishGen's Online Worldwide Burial Registry) database is now live. This part of the update includes more than 268,000 Hungarian cemetery records.

A Birthday Celebration: Past, Present, and Personal

by Aimee Rose-Haynes

The History of Birthdays

Birthday celebrations go back thousands of years and were originally reserved for society's elite. The earliest known celebrations are credited to the ancient Egyptians, who marked the birthdays of pharaohs as moments of transformation when a mortal became a god. These weren't birthdays in the modern sense but rather anniversaries of coronations, tied to divinity and royal status.

Later, the Greeks adopted the concept of honoring individuals on their birthdays, and they introduced offerings to their deities. Artemis, the goddess of the moon and protector of women and children, was honored with round cakes symbolizing the moon. Candles were added to create a glowing effect to represent the moon's light. These early traditions planted the seeds of the cake and candle ritual that we still use today.

The Romans expanded birthday celebrations into the public sphere. While the elite celebrated their own birthdays with grand feasts, Roman citizens also began to observe birthdays for family members and friends. They even recorded birthdays in calendars and offered public recognition for notable men. However, women's birthdays were often excluded from public acknowledgment until much later in history.

Enter the Cake

The tradition of the birthday cake as we know it today has roots in 18th-century Germany with a celebration called "Kinderfeste," a party specifically for children. German bakers created special cakes made from sweetened dough, often topped with colorful decorations and candles. Each candle represented a year of the child's life, and one extra candle was added to symbolize hope for the future or good luck.

These cakes were not only enjoyed for taste but were believed to carry spiritual significance. Blowing out candles while making a silent wish was thought to send the wish directly to the heavens. Over time, the idea spread to other cultures and evolved into the sugary, layered, frosted birthday cakes we associate with celebrations today.

The Song We All Know

The iconic song "Happy Birthday to You" has humble beginnings. In 1893, American sisters Patty and Mildred Hill composed a melody for a children's classroom greeting called "Good Morning to All." The tune was catchy and simple, making it easy for young students to sing.

Eventually, the lyrics were changed to fit birthday celebrations, and the song slowly gained popularity across the country. By the early 20th century, it was widely sung at parties, though it was not published with the familiar birthday lyrics until the 1930s. Despite legal disputes over ownership, the song became one of the most widely recognized melodies in the world. Today, it is sung in dozens of languages and used to mark birthdays across generations and cultures.

Birthdays around the World

While cake and candles are common in Western traditions, other cultures celebrate birthdays in unique and meaningful ways.

In Mexico, birthdays often feature a festive piñata and the singing of "Las Mañanitas," a traditional birthday song filled with beautiful lyrics of joy and appreciation. Children take turns hitting the piñata until it breaks, showering candy and small toys onto the ground.

In South Korea, the first birthday is an especially significant milestone called Doljanchi. The child is dressed in traditional hanbok clothing and presented with a table of symbolic objects. Whichever item the child picks up—such as money, a pencil, or a thread—is believed to offer a glimpse into their future path.

In many parts of Africa, birthdays are less about material gifts and more about community connection. People gather to share music, dance, food, and oral storytelling that celebrates the person's journey and role within the community.

In Jewish culture, birthdays are sometimes used as a moment for introspection and charity. Rather than focusing on gifts, some choose to donate time, money, or resources to causes they care about, honoring life by giving back to others.

Across the globe, birthday customs vary, but the core values remain the same: honoring life, connecting with others, and embracing gratitude.

Why It Matters

In our family, birthdays are a big deal. I never schedule trips, work obligations, or conferences on the same weekend as a loved one's birthday. These moments are reserved for connection and celebration. At the very least, we always have cake and dinner, but often it becomes a whole-day event filled with laughter, memory sharing, and love... and sometimes a zoo trip which is our favorite.

Birthdays are more than a date on the calendar. They are personal holidays that remind us of how far we have come and who has helped us along the way. They are a reason to pause and recognize the worth and value of each life. Whether it is a child's very first candle or an elder's 80th milestone, each birthday adds a new chapter to the story of our lives.

So this week, I am making time for reflection, celebration, and cake. I am embracing another year of growth and the beautiful people I get to share it with. However you celebrate, I hope your traditions bring you joy, connection, and a sense of just how special you really are.

The website for Aimee Rose-Haynes, professional genealogist, is <https://aimeerosehaynes.com>.

Jewish Birthdates Can Vary:

Jewish Calendar Versus Gregorian Calendar

Birthdates sometimes can differ in records for the same person because some records are based on the Jewish Calendar (aka Hebrew Calendar) rather than the Gregorian Calendar. The JewishGen Calendar Converter can convert a civil (Gregorian calendar) date into the equivalent date on the Hebrew calendar, and vice versa.

http://www.jewishgen.org/JOS/josdates_solr.htm

Jewish Traditions for Special Birthdays

Age 3: cut son's hair for the first time

Age 12 or 13: bat mitzvah

Age 13: bar mitzvah

Age 83: Because 70 years is expected lifespan of most humans reaching age 70 can be considered a new start. Therefore, age 83 would be the equivalent to reaching b'nai mitzvah age again.

Common Jewish Blessing for Birthdays

A common Jewish blessing for birthdays is "Ad meah ve'esrim!" translates to "May you live to 120!"