

# Kimberley Ex-Pats Newsletter no 23

September 2019

Compiled by Leon Chonin, Toronto  
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It has been so inspiring for me to receive acknowledgement from former Kimberley chaverim who have enjoyed some of my articles that have been published on the **Kimberley Jewish Community Kehilalinks website**. Your feedback is encouraging and helps us to decide on the most popular material content that will create interest and interaction between our former Kimberley residents. I have covered some aspects of Jewish life in Kimberley, but I am sure there are others that I have not thought of and your suggestions will certainly stimulate research into the topic.

I was so pleased that several Ex-Kimberley people, some of whom have not been in touch before, have emailed us since the article I wrote about **Jewish Education in Kimberley**. (Eli has now posted this article and you can read it on the website here: <http://elirab.me/kimberley-ex-pats-newsletter-22-2-2/> )

From Marion Lewis (née Schild) Cape Town [simonl@iafrica.com](mailto:simonl@iafrica.com)

Hi Leon, I remember in 1952 or 1953 you and I were in school together. We were in Sub A or B at Belgravia Junior school. I was **Marion Schild** at that time, and now I am Marion Lewis living in Cape Town with my husband. We have two children, a daughter Avril, living across the road from us in Sea Point and a son Simon, married in London. We have three lovely grandchildren.

We all had happy childhoods in Kimberley and were free to grow up in a normal society and all had a good education. I enjoyed reading your article on the early days with cheider classes. Because I was of German parents, there were some children who did not understand much about the holocaust and how could there be German Jews in South Africa! My parents agreed that I did not have to attend cheider any more as the teacher did not want to get involved in the dispute! Things were different in those days and believe it or not, we survived!

I married Leslie Lewis in 1966 whose sister **Cynthia Lewis** was married to **Lampy (Leib) Maresky**, he died 6 years ago. The Lewis's always bragged that they found their diamonds from Kimberley. Lampy's parents were **Sarah and David Maresky** and his siblings were **Mannie (Emanuel)** and **Ray** who married Gummy Gamarov. Lampy became a very well-loved physician in Cape town and he was highly respected in our community. I was very excited to connect with **Harold Hecht** a few months ago. I have been trying to find **Ruth Witepski** but to no avail. All I know is that she is married and living in Japan and is a nursery-school teacher. **Michael** her brother lives in Johannesburg, but no one seems to know how to get in touch with him. I am in touch with **Delia Benn** (née Brown) and Bobby in America. Here in Cape town we are friends with **David Diamond**, **Daphne Gillis** (née Toube), **Sheila Grant**, (née Frank) and **Vicky Weinberg** (née Capon).



**Here is a picture of the Marion Lewis (née Schild) family, Cape Town**

From the left: Leslie, Marion, Cathy our daughter-in-law, Avril our daughter and Simon our son. (Cathy & Simon live in London (UK). The children: Naomi (Simon & Cathy daughter), Matthew (Avril's son) and Reuben (Simon & Cathy son).

Thank you so much Marion for your email. It's such an amazingly small world that Mannie Maresky son Neil was married to my brother-in-laws cousin, so we used to see him and Doreen on many yomtavim. (I am delighted to read that we had a crush on each other before I started shaving). Ruth Witepski I believe still lives in Japan and has a daughter. Her brother Michael is a Facebook friend but is non active.

I appreciate your encouraging comments about my articles. I am trying to leave for our future generations a flavor of what Jewish life was like in the old South Africa but particularly Kimberley. If we don't document our history, it will be lost and those who came before us will be forgotten. Please keep in touch and if ever you visit Toronto again please look me up so that we can meet to call back the past and see if we still have that youthful sparkle?

**From Beverly Solsky (née Buirski) Sydney [solsky@tpg.com.au](mailto:solsky@tpg.com.au)**

Hi Leon

Hope you and your family are well. I read with nostalgia your piece on Jewish Education

in Kimberley. I am not sure if you remember my sister **Lynette** and I? We used to live in Memorial Road a few houses down from the Jacobson's. I remember my days in Habonim and still remember the songs we sang and certainly have a clear memory of you.

We left Kimberley to live in Cape Town when I was 12. I went to Belgravia Junior School and attended Cheder with **Mrs Werner** as our teacher. I so enjoy receiving the newsletters and reminiscing of the happy years spent in Kimberley.

We are now living in Sydney and every now and again I bump into **Jack Klein, Robin Apter, Shelley Jawno, David Goldberg** and **Sharon Seidel** to name a few. I see Shelley more than anyone else as we are socially friendly.

My husband and I are now retired and enjoying our 5 grandchildren who also attend a Jewish Day School continuing in the footsteps of their parents who all attended a Jewish Day School both here and in Cape Town before we emigrated in 1987. (You can see a lovely picture that Beverly sent of **Rabbi and Rebbitzin Werner** with 50 Kimberley children, including herself and her sister Lynette, and read her family story on the website under 'Families' Solsky here: <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Solsky.html>).

I look forward to reading the next Newsletter which I understand you will be editing. We visited your beautiful city some years ago for a few days when we visited Canada and Alaska. Wishing you everything of the best. Fond regards, Beverly Solsky

Beverly, how could I ever forget all my Kimberley chaverim,. I remember you in our Habonim group and I can recall your sister, but the faces seem to be a dim memory.

**From Eleanor Kotkis** [kotkis@worldonline.co.za](mailto:kotkis@worldonline.co.za)

Hi Leon

I am Eleanor Finberg now known as Eleanor Kotkis. My husband and I have been married 46 years and we live in Joburg. We both still work. I work as a pharmacist. We have two children who are now in their 40's. My how time flies! My daughter lives in Melbourne with her husband and 3 children and my son lives in London with his wife and 3 children. So, we are left here all alone. My children went to King David Linksfield school which gave them a fantastic education. They have followed the trend and their children are now going to Jewish schools in both Melbourne and London. We see them about once a year and were lucky enough to celebrate our eldest grandsons barmitzvah in April in Melbourne. Our youngest granddaughter is 3 living in Melbourne. My parents have both passed away. My mother 14 years ago and my dad, Mickey Finberg, 12 years ago. They were living in Joburg at the time. I wanted them here, so they lived in my house for a few years and then in Sandringham Gardens which is the Jewish home for the elderly

Eleanor. Sent from my iPhone.

Thanks so much Eleanor for your update. I am happy to include your profile in this newsletter we are circulating around the time of Rosh Hashana. Keep well and my regards to Ronny.

**From Brenda Nathan (née Garsh) Johannesburg** [brenmail@telkomsa.net](mailto:brenmail@telkomsa.net)

Hi Leon.

Have just received your articles on the different aspects of life in Kimberley and so enjoyed reading them. Having left so many years ago I still value the years of growing up there. I left Kimberley for Johannesburg in 1960 but still remember the close Community life we led.

Kindest regards

Brenda (Garsh) Nathan

It was really wonderful to hear from you Brenda after almost 45 years. I think we matriculated very much at the same time. Although I lived in Joburg most of my life we never bumped into each other in all those years. I recall you had an older sister Jill and if I am not mistaken you have family living in Toronto. Please keep in touch and tell us your family stories.

**From Daphne Gillis (née Toubé), Cape Town**

Hi Geraldine

Thanks for your latest newsletter. It is always wonderful to go back and think about one's youth. Just a couple of thoughts about Jewish education for Leon. Goldberg was a Reverend, not a Rabbi, but he taught most of the Barmitzvah boys; no Batmitzvah in my time. Also, we had regular visits from the inspector for Hebrew education from Johannesburg. He was Rabbi Jack Klewansky who was married to my mom's sister, Lily (née Blumenthal). I did not enjoy his visits as languages were not my strongpoint. I did however go to Cheder classes until the end of my Std 9 year, 1947. Most boys left after Barmitzvah. and girls about the same time. Keep up the good work. Kind regards, Daphne Gillis.

(You can read more about the **Klewansky** family under 'families' on the website <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Klewansky.html>. Also, more on the **Gillises (and Toubes)** too, on the website under 'Families'

**From Trevor Toubé, London,** (Daphne's brother)

Thanks Geraldine, for another interesting Newsletter.

Leon, you may not know that Anita Kaplan did Hebrew for Matric in 1955. Because she was doing the course, which included 'Ivrit Chayah' (modern Hebrew grammar) as well as Biblical text-works, Ivor Brown and I, who were a year behind her in school, attended all the classes – and that knowledge still informs the basis of my Hebrew. I was also the first child in Kimberley 'in living memory' [allegedly!] to layen the whole sedra for my barmitzvah (1952). I think I conducted the Friday evening service as well (I have certainly done that so very many times since - as well as most other services, so I must have learned to do so at some point). All the best, Trevor

**Geraldine writes:** I have just come from celebrating Trevor's 80<sup>th</sup> with him and his family on 1 September in London. It began with a wonderful Shabbat Service at his shul, the New West End Synagogue in Bayswater, near Marble Arch, with a professional choir of 8 trained Jewish voices. Trevor, a very important minyan man – and much else for the synagogue, read the haftorah and a member of their choir, Benjamin Till, a professional composer, was commissioned to write a special new *Yismechu* for the occasion. They also sang Benjamin's beautiful Ein Keloheinu. This beautiful service was followed by a great kiddush. (There are many South Africans in the community and a few months ago they apparently had a South African 'brocha' including chopped herring trimmed with grated boiled eggs and kichel!) The celebrations continued on Sunday with a brunch at the home in Notting Hill Gate of his daughter Felicity.



**Trevor, son of Abie and Violet Toubé (née Blumenthal)** pictured left at their wedding in the Kimberley shul in 1929) left Kimberley in 1957 to go to Rhodes University. He got his BSc (Hons) in 1960. Then in 1961, he got his MSc at Natal University, and received his PhD from Cambridge in 1965. Trevor – who was always reckoned to be super-bright, rose in the British academic field and was Senior Lecturer in Organic Chemistry at Queen Mary University of London when he retired. He then continued to lecture, this time to students from New York University. He married American, Sharlott Abrams in 1965, and they settled in North-East London, initially in Loughton and later in Woodford.



Trevor and Sharlott had two children; Felicity, now a Queen's Counsel and David, the Director of Policy of Quilliam. He works in anti-extremism. Sharlott passed away in 2006 and Trevor moved to Bayswater to be nearer to Felicity and his three Miller grandsons. Trevor's son David, and his wife, who is a Judge, live in a village near Colchester with their two children.

Above is an iconic picture of 'Blumenthal's Corner' Pan Road /Jones Street. Where the Toube's ran their Central Jewellers emporium. It is opposite the SA PERM and Edgars and diagonally opposite the Dee Bee Bazaar with its iconic Clock Tower (once owned by the Klein Brothers) now at the Big Hole Museum.

**(More pictures of and information about Jewish businesses can be seen on the website at the bottom of my business survey here <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Business.html> )**

### **Where have we all ended up?**

Looking at the spread of our responses, I thought that another topic that would be of historical and communal interest is the migration patterns of our former Kimberley Jewish residents. Obviously, we are all aware were most of our former residents have moved to English speaking countries and to Israel but perhaps it may be of value to know who went where and why they decided to migrate to that country. And if their children have migrated anywhere else! Such a research paper would need the collaboration of those in the various countries and I would need a volunteer from each country to gather the data for me. Are there any chaverim out there interested in helping me.

### **How Jewish are our grandchildren?**

Yet another topic I am considering is the threat of assimilation to the future viability and survival of small Jewish communities and how they can overcome this dilemma. Anti-Semitism is another growing threat to the safety of the Jewish people worldwide and I have considered documenting how we coped in Kimberley with this plague which may also require some impressions from former Jewish residents on whether or not they ever experienced any form of discrimination. Our generation grew up after the end of the Second World War but during the war years there was a very strong Afrikaner movement who supported Hitler and were not well disposed towards the Jewish community. Today the threat is from the fanatical Muslim population and the so-called liberal left wing. Again, I would welcome contributions from all Kimberley Jewish residents and non-residents.

### **Keeping in touch - Our Common Bonds**

While we may all live in different cities and countries, we all share that common heritage that we grew up in a small united Jewish community and were a close and vibrant bunch of men and women, boys and girls that gave us the values we hold onto today. Let us try to remember those former days by remaining in contact with each other for as long as we are all able to read and write.

I want to attract regular visitors to our Kehilalinks website. This is an amazing place to record and document the people and events in the Kimberley Jewish Community. The best way I can do it if we can provide interesting and current information. Please send

your stories and photos and share our website with all the old Kimberley folk living in your region and ask them to contact me with their family status.

It would really stimulate interest if you could provide us with a recent family picture so that we can give all our old chaverim an idea of our maturing years. Here below, by way of example, is my own family in June 2018 at my granddaughter Gemma's Batmitzvah.

### Leon Chonin Family Photo, Toronto 2018



From the left: Kevin Moshal (son-in-law), Melissa Moshal (daughter), Megan Moshal (granddaughter), Gemma Moshal (granddaughter), Jayden Sussman (grandson), Clifford Sussman (son-in-law), Tanya Sussman (daughter), Dylan Sussman (grandson), Barbara Chonin (wife), Leon Chonin. Front row: Benjamin Moshal (grandson), Evan Sussman (grandson)

Have a look at the visitors' book section where we post your emails to us [https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Visitors\\_Book.html](https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Visitors_Book.html) and our Newsletters which <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/News.html> are all up on the site. and fill in the form in the 'contact' section to start your own family page.

On behalf of the editorial team, (Geraldine Eli and me) I wish you all a happy New Year and a meaningful Yom Kippur. May you all be inscribed in the book of life for another healthy joyous year and may you all share these high holidays with your loved ones. We look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards

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