

# THE IVANSK PROJECT e-NEWSLETTER

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○ **The House at 211 Beverly Street, a Memoir.**

by **Ben Teichman, Toronto, Canada**

*[as told to Norton Taichman]*

*[Editor's comments: In January 2004 I spent several hours with my Uncle Ben Teichman reminiscing about the people who lived at 211 Beverly Street in Toronto. 211 was home to my paternal grandparents, Chamol and Rhuda Teichman and their children, including Ben (Berrol) and my father, Lemel. I was always welcomed at 211. It was where our family came together in good and in bad times. It's almost 50 years since I set foot in that house. But the memories of those who lived there and cared about me will always be with me.*

The full story of Ivansk reaches beyond the shtetl to the communities our people established after they left Poland. My Uncle Ben was the first of my grandparent's Canadian-born children, and his memoir is a glimpse of the past and what it was like for our family to set new roots in Canada. While Ben's story is specific to my ancestors, their triumphs and disappointments are representative of all Ivanskers who went in search of more hopeful places to live and to raise their children.

Everyone at 211 Beverly Street spoke Yiddish. They addressed each other by their Yiddish names and that's how they're identified in Ben's narrative. But in the outside world "English" names were required...sometimes more than one. Thus, Koppel was "Jakie" as a boy and graduated to "Jack" when he became an adult. The same holds for Myer who was known as "Mac" and then "Max".

Many people enthusiastically helped me prepare this manuscript. Members of our family listened to the audio tape, commented and filled in several gaps in the draft and provided photos or drawings. They included Annette Ennis, the Taichmans (Audrey, Louise, Susan) and the Teichmans (Blake, Doreen, Ferne, Lyle). Arthur Zimmerman offered several useful suggestions on the organization of the story. Thanks to all of you! Most of all I am grateful to Uncle Ben who understood why his recollections are so important to our family and who agreed to share them with the Ivansker community.]

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# The House at 211 Beverly Street, a Memoir.

by **Ben Teichman, Toronto, Canada**

[as told to Norton Taichman]

I am a second generation Ivansker, the son of Chaim (Chamol) and Ruda Bleima (Silverberg) Teichman. My parents had 8 children: 4 born in Ivansk and 4 in Toronto. I was born in 1921, the eldest of my parents' Canadian-born family.

My parents left the shtetl to better their lives and to offer their children a promising future. They worked hard to make it happen. Looking back on their experience I am filled with pride and admiration for who they were, what they accomplished and their dedication to family. My parents passed their basic values on to me, my siblings and their children's children. This memoir tells their story concentrating on the 1920s through the mid 1940s, years when I still lived at home.

I grew up in a closely knit family whose most immediate members are listed below. My brother Garshon and sister Chana died in childhood. With the exception of my paternal grandmother, Baila, all of us lived under the same roof at 211 Beverly Street in Toronto. Baila lived just around the corner on Henry Street with my father's sister, Surah Gross. In fact, just about everyone in our large, extended Ivansker family lived within a few blocks of one another.

<b>My Father</b>	<b>Chaim (Chamol) Teichman</b>	<b>1882 - 1969</b>	<b>Born in Ivansk</b>
<b>My Mother</b>	<b>Ruda Bleima (Silverberg) Teichman</b>	<b>1884 - 1966</b>	<b>Ivansk</b>
<b>My Paternal Grandmother</b>	<b>Baila (Wortzman) Teichman ("Die Kleineh Bubba")</b>	<b>~1862 - 1943</b>	<b>Ivansk</b>
<b>My Maternal Grandmother</b>	<b>Chaya Perel (Laufer) Silverberg ("Die Grosse Bubba")</b>	<b>~1862 - 1948</b>	<b>Ivansk</b>
<b>My Mother's Youngest Brother</b>	<b>Avrum Silverberg</b>	<b>Died ~1926 in his twenties of TB</b>	<b>Ivansk</b>
<b>My Brothers and Sisters</b> <b>("English" names in brackets)</b>	<b>Rivka Laiyah (Lilly)</b>	<b>1905 - 1988</b>	<b>Ivansk</b>
	<b>Asher Lemel (Lou)</b>	<b>1906 - 1986</b>	<b>Ivansk</b>
	<b>Garshon</b>	<b>~1909 - 19?? Died in childhood from typhus or typhoid</b>	<b>Ivansk</b>
	<b>Myer (Mac, Max)</b>	<b>1910 - 1972</b>	<b>Ivansk</b>
	<b>Berrol (Ben)</b>	<b>1921 -</b>	<b>Toronto</b>
	<b>Gevrile Yaacov Koppel (Jakie, Jack)</b>	<b>1922 - 1996</b>	<b>Toronto</b>
	<b>Chana</b>	<b>~ 1923 - 1925 Died in childhood from pneumonia</b>	<b>Toronto</b>
	<b>Getzol (George)</b>	<b>1926 - 1993</b>	<b>Toronto</b>

Our front door was rarely locked. There was a constant parade of family and friends in and out of the house, including newly arrived immigrants who were offered shelter until they got on their feet. The kitchen was the center of our universe. Almost everything happened in the kitchen. Something was usually cooking on the coal burning stove, enough to feed an army. I even remember that “Happy Thought” was the brand name on the stove.

On Sundays, 10 to 15 (sometimes more) hungry people gathered around the kitchen table for the afternoon meal. My *Mah'meh* (my mother) and my sister Laiyah ladled piping hot cabbage borscht into large soup bowls. Boiled ‘*bulbous*’ (potatoes) were passed around adding more character and nutrition to the soup. The main course followed; my favorites were liver and onions and “*gedempfte fleish*” (old-fashioned pot roast), accompanied by thick slices of rye or pumpnickel bread and of course more potatoes. Fresh or preserved fruit (which my mother had “put up” the previous autumn) and tea were offered as desert. My mind still retains the ambience of those bountiful feasts. I can hear the slurping and chewing sounds and the animated conversation of those enjoying the meal. I was lucky to sit at that table at such a time and place, surrounded by warm, caring, good people.



**211 Beverly Street**  
Drawing provided by Doreen Teichman

But such abundance and security were beyond anyone’s grasp in Ivansk.

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Like others of my generation I know relatively little about my parent’s lives in Poland. Both were born in Ivansk and must have known each other since childhood. Their marriage was presumably arranged by their parents, and they lived in a two-room cottage; one room for the family and the other for the cow. *Pah* (*Tah'te*, my Father) worked with his father, Berrol dealing in cattle. (I'm named after Berrol.) They bought livestock, fattened them up and sold them for slaughter. They worked hard but barely made enough to survive.

My father had no formal schooling other than cheder, which he attended until his *Bar Mitzvah*. He must have been a capable student because he qualified as a *Baal Kohreh* (Torah reader) in his teens. For him, it was a labor of love that he continued for most of his life. He had a powerful, bright voice and his delivery was flawless. Pah was also devoted to religious studies and maintained a small library of Talmudic tractates and commentaries in our dining room.

Pah had two younger brothers (Pinchas Teachman and Myer Tishman)<sup>1</sup> and two sisters (Tsviah (Lily) Lipovitz and Surah Gross). Pinchas was even more versed in religious matters than my father. In fact, he was slated for the rabbinate; however, he became a *melamed* (a religious teacher of children) in Ivansk. A dismal salary forced him to give up teaching and become a tailor’s apprentice. He continued his craft after moving to Toronto. I don’t know anything about the early lives of my dad’s other siblings, but all of them eventually immigrated to Toronto.

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<sup>1</sup> In Poland the surname of my father’s family was “Tajchman” and my mother’s family was “Zylberberg”.



**Ivansk, Early 1900s**

L-R: Brothers Toviah, Meilech & Moishe Gross and my father, Chamol Teichman. This is the only family photo I have that was taken in Ivansk. Moishe & Toviah Gross were preparing to leave Poland for Canada; eventually all 4 men and their families would come to Toronto.

As was the case with most women of her generation my Mah'meh had little if any formal education. Yet she was able to read Hebrew, and in shul she *davened* (prayed) from the *siddur*. In many ways she was more religious than my father, and as we shall see, she was forced to develop survivor skills on her own when my father left for Canada. Outwardly she was a strong-willed woman, but emotionally my mother was a "fragile" person; the death of two of her children created psychological wounds that never healed.

My mother had four brothers (Hartske Silver, Yoel Silverberg, Gavreel Silver and Avrum Silverberg) and two sisters (Ruchel Gross and Surah (I don't know her married name)). All but Surah immigrated to Toronto; Surah and her family were killed by the Nazis.

Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century members of our extended family began leaving the shtetl for Canada. The common theme was hunger...there just wasn't enough to eat. *Phe'tah* (uncle) Moishe Gross (husband to my mother's sister, *Me'mah* (aunt) Ruchel) and *Phe'tah* Toviah Gross (married to *Me'mah* Surah, my father's sister) were some of the first to set sail. And in 1910 it was my father's turn. He left my mother and the children behind. In those times this was not unusual. The plan was to reunite the family once Pah had saved enough to bring them over the ocean. Ten years would pass before that happened.

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Arriving in Toronto my dad moved in with his sister Surah Gross and her family on St. Andrews Street in the Kensington Market district. He found work with Mendle Granatstein who owned a "secondary materials business"...more to the point, a rag shop, earning about \$3.00 for a 6-day week (excluding Shabbos). But Pah was a real go-getter and knew that \$3.00 would get him nowhere. He was acquainted with another ambitious man, Sam Smith (everyone called him Schmulick) and together they started a "dairy". They bought milk from their suppliers and delivered it house-to-house with horse and wagon. "Milk bottles" were unknown back then and the milk was ladled into containers provided by the customer. The business grew and soon Schmulick felt that they'd have to work on Shabbos to meet the competition. My father refused and the partnership was terminated. Yet, both men remained close friends. Schmulick went on to develop a knitting goods business and became a very wealthy man. And for the rest of his life Pah was known as, "*Chamoleh Milichman*" (Chamol the Milkman), even though he never again traded in milk products.

In searching for another way to make a living my father valued his independence, but he had no marketable skills, very little capital and could hardly speak or understand English. But he had "street smarts" and was driven to succeed. Like many other immigrants he moved into the "*shma'te*" (rag) business. His plan was to knock on doors: "Do you have any old clothes you want to sell?" He would buy individual garments, bundle them in lots and sell them to jobbers or dealers who recycled textiles. However, Toronto was already over-populated with men with similar ideas. So he moved west to London, Ontario, where prospects were more promising. There, he purchased a horse and wagon and secured a long-term lease on a warehouse located on a railroad siding.

Here is where luck changed the course of events. Less than a year after arriving in London, a large company offered my father a handsome sum if he would sign over his lease on the property. I have no idea how much was involved, but based on his current income, my dad said that it would take about 10 years to save that much money. After depositing the check to the bank, he returned to Toronto. I estimate that this happened in 1911-1912.

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The search for a suitable business began once again. I'll never know how or why he came to purchase a small bottling company, "The Toronto Soda Water Company". He must have intuitively sensed that he could do something in this kind of business but realized it would be more complicated than buying/selling *shma'tes*. So he decided to take in two partners who were also Ivanskers: Moishe (Morris) Silverberg (my mother's first cousin) and Sruel Shumaker.

Without any experienced employees the partners learned to run the machinery and blend ingredients to produce seltzer, ginger ale and other flavors of soda pop. They worked inside the plant, say two days a week, and then with horse and wagon went on the road delivering to customers inherited from the previous owners. All work ceased on Shabbos. It did not take long before things really took off and they were doing quite well. Their first factory was located on Elizabeth Street, and in the early 1920s the business moved to Oxford Street. (At the beginning of the 1930s, my father purchased a failing soda water company, "Punch Dry". Punch Dry was registered as a "limited" corporation to protect the owners' personal assets. For this reason my father and his partners switched the name of their business from "The Toronto Soda Water Co." to "Punch Dry Ltd.") In the late 1940s Sruel Shumaker developed a cardiac condition, which prevented him from working. His partners purchased his share of the business on an amicable basis.

During this period my father regularly communicated with and wired money to my mother in Ivansk. Undoubtedly, these funds were critical to the family's well-being. Still, my mother may have had to find ways of earning extra income but at least she could depend on Pah's help. All this would change when war erupted in 1914.

Towards the end of 1913, approximately 3 years after leaving Ivansk, my father purchased tickets for his family to come to Canada. It must have been quite a shock when he learned that my mother refused to go; her letter stated that in America you had to work on Shabbos and she would not allow her children to become *goyim* (Gentiles). My father reacted decisively and set sail for Poland to persuade her to change her mind. He pleaded to no avail and early in 1914, he returned to Canada leaving the tickets behind hoping that she would eventually consent to leave Ivansk.

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In the summer of 1914 Archduke Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated in Bosnia, and Austria declared war on Serbia. The crisis spiraled out of control: Russia, France, Great Britain (The Allies) aligned with Serbia, while Germany sided with Austria-Hungary (The Central Powers). World War I had begun. At that time Poland was partitioned by Russia, Austria and Germany (Ivansk was in the Russian Empire) and much of the fighting on the eastern front took place on Polish soil with great loss of life and property. In 1915 the Germans pushed the Russians out from most of Poland and Ivansk was occupied by the Germans until an armistice was signed with Russia in 1917.

There was no communication between my parents, and money could no longer be wired to Poland during the war. At first, Mah'meh had some funds because she cashed in the tickets that my father had purchased to transport the family to Canada. But when that ran out she had to marshal her own resources and life became extremely perilous. Little help was forthcoming from other family

members, as they were in the same predicament. My mother became a milk maid at “The Planta”, an estate owned by minor nobility just north of Ivansk. She received no money but was paid in kind; that is, she was given milk for her labor. And with her earnings she made cottage cheese, which she sold in the market place.

To make matters worse, my brother Garshon died and my mother had to endure this heavy blow without her husband at her side. Then, my brother Lemel came down with Bell’s palsy and one side of his face was partially paralysed. Somehow, my mother and her three remaining children survived that terrible time. When war ended, communications were reestablished. My father was now able to send money to Poland and the family’s situation probably began to improve.

During the war Pah dreamt that his father had died in Ivansk. His dream was so vivid that he was convinced it was real. Should he recite *Kaddish* (prayer for the dead) for his father? Pah consulted a rabbi who told him that it was not appropriate unless the death could be confirmed, but there was no way to determine whether this was the case. After the war Pah’s premonition was proven true.

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At war’s end my mother had had enough of Poland and agreed to come to Canada. But it was not until 1920, two years after the war, that the family packed up and left Ivansk forever. Apparently, the delay was caused by the military having priority in transporting the troops and their “war brides” from Europe to North America. I always presumed that the family set sail for Halifax or Montreal. Recently, I was surprised to learn that they actually landed at Ellis Island and then boarded a train for Toronto.

Passenger Name	Residence	Age/ Birth Date	Port of Departure	Date Port of Arrival New York	Ship	In Transit*
Taichman, Rhode	Jewansk, Poland	37/1883	Hook of Holland	3-21-1920	Manchuria	Husband
Taichman, Riwke	“	17/1903	“	“	“	Father
Taichman, Lemel	“	15/1905	“	“	“	Father
Taichman, Myer	“	11/1909	“	“	“	Father

These data are from the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation web site. Presumably, shipping company personnel acquired the information and spelled words phonetically; for example, ‘Ivansk’ was rendered as Jewansk, Ivanisik and Ivanisk. \*In Transit” refers to final destination; in this case “Husband” and “Father”, “Chaim Taichman, 32 Henry Str. Toronto Ont”  
[Editor: Address given was that of Chaim’s (Chamol) sister, Surah Gross]

Several other passengers sailing on the Manchuria were Polish Jews in transit to Toronto.  
At least two of them were from Ivansk:

- o A woman from “Ivanisik”; her husband’s name & address was given as: “Z. Kleiman, 40 Camlien Str”
- o A woman from “Ivanisk”; her husband’s name & address was given as: “Leib Singer, 38 Cameron Str “

By this time my father was pretty well off: he owned a business and could see opportunities for financial gain where others did not. Together with two lawyers (Bernard Weinberg and Myer Rotstein) he began investing in properties, mortgages and other business ventures. To me, all this was remarkable given that Pah was basically an illiterate immigrant. Frugality was also a key element in his material success; not a penny was wasted.

Anticipating his family’s arrival my father purchased the house at 211 Beverly Street in 1919 or early 1920. He paid \$6,000.00. The house was only a short distance from the “Beth Jacob” (*Beis Yaacov*) Synagogue, which was under constuction on Henry Street. For my father this must have been a major reason for wanting the property.

Our new dwelling had 3 floors. On the first, there was a living room, small den, dining room and a substantial kitchen (a “summer kitchen” would be added later). The second floor had 3 bedrooms, a toilet and a small kitchen; one of the bedrooms and the kitchen served as a “flat” and was rented to tenants. When my sister Laiyah got married, she and her husband occupied the flat. Finally, the third floor had two bedrooms. In the back there was a tiny garden and a stable, which later became a garage. Before the family arrived from Poland my father installed central hot water heating (coal-fired furnace) and electric lighting. By comparison to the humble 2-room cottage in Ivansk, the house on Beverly Street was a huge palace. I’d give anything to have witnessed my mother’s reaction as she first stepped into her new home.

As their train pulled into Toronto’s Union Station, the weary travelers peered out the window searching for a familiar face. The children had not seen their father for at least 6 years and may not have recognized him. Then my mother exclaimed, “*Dort ist dein Tahteh!*” (There’s your father!). Imagine what that must have been like for my brothers and sister.

After the initial greetings, my father asked the new arrivals to wait while he hailed a taxi. But my mother would have none of it. Fearing that he might disappear, she refused to let him out of her sight. She had heard horror stories of some husbands deserting their families after long periods of separation.

My mother’s sister, Me’mah Ruchel was waiting to greet her as she entered her new home (Ruchel lived on the same block on Beverly Street). As was the custom with married orthodox women, my mother wore a “*sheitel*” (wig). Me’mah Ruchel ripped it off her head declaring, “In Canada women don’t have to wear sheitels.” My mother never put it on again.

It did not take long for my parents to get started on the Canadian branch of the family. I was born in January 1921, 10 months after their reunion. Three more children arrived within the next 5 years, Koppel, Chana and Getzol.

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But the reunification of our family was not without its problems.

When they arrived in Canada my sister Laiyah and brother Lemel were 15- and 17-year-old adolescents and had grown up in the absence of my father. Tensions developed when my dad resumed “direct command” of the family. Laiyah wanted to go to school, but like many others of his generation my father believed that women belonged in the home and did not require a formal education. (He changed his mind much later but it was too late for Laiyah.) Further, my mother needed help managing the household and the growing family. Laiyah yielded, and her dream of experiencing a wider world was thwarted.

Lemel was enrolled in public school but it was a disaster. There were no special classes for new immigrants and Lemel could not speak English. Placed together with 11- and 12-year olds, he was taunted and mocked by his classmates. After two weeks he refused to continue and joined the work force. I believe his first job was a salesman/driver with “Silverstein’s Bakery” delivering bread by horse and wagon. Lemel was a rebel and was continually at odds with my parents. They frowned on many of his friends who were considered to be “*trembeniks*” (rascals, always getting into trouble). In fact, Lemel gained a reputation as a “pool shark” and enjoyed a good game of poker. He would often return home “after curfew” to find that he was locked out.

By contrast, it was a different story with Myer. He was about 10 years old when he started school; for him the transition went smoothly and he thrived in his new environment. In our family Myer

became the bridge between the “old” and the “new” world. He translated, interpreted and responded to documents or inquiries that were written in English. When I was old enough to attend school, Myer composed the response to my report cards. No matter how well I did, Myer’s standard comment was, “We will expect better results on his next report card.” The bar was always set to a higher level.

My brother Koppel was about a year-and-a-half younger than me. Although our personalities were very different we were good buddies. When we were in high school we were given our own bedroom on the third floor facing the street. We shared the bedroom until Koppel married after the war. (The bedroom window is visible in the drawing on Page 3, top floor on the left side.)

In 1926 I can remember walking home from Orde Street Public School and meeting my cousin, Annie Silverberg who also lived on Beverly Street (Annie was the daughter of Phe’tah Yoel, my mother’s brother). Annie announced, “Oh, you’ve got another brother – a little boy!” And that’s how I found out about the arrival of Getzol, my youngest brother.

Our baby sister Chana died of pneumonia when she was about 2 years old. In those days before antibiotics this condition exacted a heavy toll. Chana’s little coffin was placed in our living room, and I have just a shadowy memory of her funeral. She was buried in the Lambton Cemetery on Royal York Road in the outskirts of Toronto. My parents and other family members are buried there as well, but there is no stone to mark Chana’s grave. Among our people there was a superstition that anyone who died at a very young age would not have a *matzevot* placed over their grave, as if to shield the living from ill fortune. As far as I know there are no photographs of my sister. While the whole family mourned her loss, it was especially hard on my mother who was never quite the same again. She had unfathomable aches and pains and seemed to be guilt-ridden by Chana’s death. She was no longer able to handle the business of taking care of the family and many responsibilities fell on my sister, Layah. At the time I was too young to appreciate what was happening.

My mother was also deeply affected by the death of her sister, Surah who never left Ivansk and was murdered by the Nazis. I have very little information about Surah; I don’t even know her married name. She had a very large family and her husband was a cattle dealer. Sometime in the 1930s one of his animals wandered onto a Polish neighbor’s property. He went to retrieve it and was assaulted and killed by the neighbor. Although my mother regularly sent money to the family, she always regretted that she had not done more, especially in getting some of them out of Poland.

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A word about my grandmothers, Baila Teichman (*Die Kleine* (small) *Bubba*) and Chaya Perel Silverberg (*Die Grosse* (large) *Bubba*). I never knew why they were called the “small” and the “large” bubba; in fact, both were pretty tiny...only about 4.5 feet tall. However, their personalities really set them apart. Chayah Perel had a rather “flat”, gentle character, and at times it was easy to take her for granted. On the other hand, Bailah was very lively and engaging. She had a beautiful face and always fussed over us children. I don’t think she was as bright as Chayah Perel but we always took to her.

I don’t know when Bailah immigrated to Canada but Chaya Perel arrived around 1926. She was preceded by her youngest son, Avrum who lived with us. He developed tuberculosis and died shortly before her arrival. Chaya Perel was not told of his death before she left Poland. I remember the day she came through our hallway into the kitchen for the first time. She greeted me and I blurted out, “*Phetah Avrum ist geshtorb*” (Uncle Avrum died). Within seconds my bubba threw off her shoes and started sitting *shiva* (the 7-day period of intense mourning).

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#### The Former Beis Yaacov Shul

After WWII the Jewish population of Toronto began moving north to the suburbs. In the 1960s it was decided that the shul would follow suit and relocated in North York. In 1971 the Beis Yaacov amalgamated with the Drildzer synagogue. The Aron Kodesh, Ner Tamid and the Beimah were removed from the Beis Yaacov and are preserved and incorporated into the new facility. Today, the former shul is a Greek Orthodox Church.

Religion and faith were core aspects of my parents' lives. They felt it was their duty to support the Beis Yaacov, the "Polisher Shul" on Henry Street <sup>2</sup>. The shul was dedicated in 1922 and was one of the largest synagogues in Toronto. Many Ivansker families belonged to the congregation. The building was an impressive structure accommodating 800 people. The exterior was of Romanesque design and it had a *Beis Midrash* (study hall), a *Mikvah* (ritual bath) and a social hall. The sanctuary was brightly illuminated by stained glass windows and the walls were decorated with paintings of animals, biblical scenes and signs of the Zodiac. As a boy I did not comprehend the purpose of prayer, but this vivid panorama captured my imagination and kept me occupied during the service. Supported by two towering columns, the *Aron Kodesh* (the Torah Ark) was crowned by two fierce lions whose piercing eyes discouraged any thought of expressing my impatience at having to sit quietly for long periods. The *Ner Tamid* (the Eternal Light) suspended above the ark was inscribed with my parents' names, a tribute to their financial assistance in building the shul.

My father became very active in the affairs of the shul. He attended daily morning (*Shaharit*) and afternoon-evening (*Minchah-Avrit*) prayers and on Shabbos and festivals he served as the *Baal Kohreh* (Torah reader). Whenever possible he'd join the study group in the Beis Midrash especially on Saturday afternoons. He was the treasurer of the shul for several years and was often invited to run for president. He always declined. He was smart enough to stay out of politics. He knew that it would be impossible to satisfy everyone and that even minor disagreements could turn into sour, never-ending arguments, something that did not interest him.

Both my parents assisted family and friends who needed money to build a business or to get through difficult times. They offered shelter to new immigrants from Ivansk and my dad gave work to those who needed a job. My mother donated both money and time to various charities. My father rationed what he gave her to run the house; even so, she managed to save extra change that she deposited in the row of tin *pushkes* (charity boxes) that sat on a kitchen shelf. To help clothe needy children she belonged to the *Halbushas Arumin Women's Society* of the Eitz Chaim Talmud Torah on D'Arcy Street. The Society's annual fund-raising tea was often held in our living room on a Sunday afternoon. The furniture was moved around to accommodate the expected crowd and a table was set-up with a large crystal bowl in which to deposit contributions to the organization. In my mind I can picture the women dressed in dark-colored damask dresses, wearing hats of every description. Tea and home-baked strudel, fruit cake and cookies were offered, and the room buzzed with chatter and gossip. Many of my mother's friends attended; it was quite a social event.

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Observance of Shabbos and the festivals was largely my mother's doing. Before Shabbos she used a wooden stick to shut down the telephone so that it would not ring, and she ripped off

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on the history of the Beis Yaccov Shul, see Arthur Zimmerman's, "The Ladies of the Henry Street Shul" that appeared in The Ivansk Project e-Newsletter, No. 17, March - April 2006.

enough pieces of toilet paper to last the Day of Rest. She also added extra coal, banked up the fire and closed the damper in the furnace so that the coal would burn more slowly. By late afternoon in wintertime we'd run out of heat and the house would be absolutely freezing. Nothing would be done until *Havdalah* (the service recited at the conclusion of Shabbos). Sometime in the 1930s my father installed a "stoker" in the furnace, a gadget that kept feeding coal onto the fire; now the house was warm all through Shabbos. Eventually, oil replaced coal and a flick of the switch on the thermostat automatically regulated the temperature. It was like being in heaven!

Preparing for Pesach required more work for my mother than any other holiday; it was an enormous undertaking. The house was cleansed from top to bottom; it was more than just a simple spring cleaning...the place was ritually purified. Every crumb of *chumatz* was eliminated; forbidden foods were removed to the cellar and our regular dishes, pots, pans and silverware were replaced with utensils reserved just for Pesach. In later years Lemel and Koppel would take an entire afternoon off work just to clean the enormous chandelier that hung in the dining room. They removed and wiped down every single piece of crystal. When the fixture was reassembled its light was dazzling, like no other time of the year.

The special foods of Pesach included my mother's amazing gefilte fish...sweet with a just a hint of almonds and bathed in a shimmering yellow fish-soup. Alas, her recipe has been lost forever. Then there were the matzo balls, "bubbeleh" (soufflé made with eggs and matzo meal), potatonick, roast chicken, juicy brisket, a peppery potato kugel and other Pesach'dicke foods. The house was permeated by incredible aromas that came together only at Pesach time.

The seder was held in our dining room where the table was set for a minimum of 15 people. With time, more chairs were added for spouses and grandchildren. My father wore a *kittel*, the traditional white robe, and he sat on a chair bolstered with pillows to signify that the seder was being celebrated in a relaxed manner befitting a people freed from bondage in Egypt. Everyone was given a copy of the The Haggadah, which was printed entirely in Hebrew. The youngest child asked the "*Feer Khashis*" (Four Questions) in Hebrew and translated the words into Yiddish; for years this was Getzol's job but he was replaced as successive grandchildren joined the company.

Next to Pesach, *Sukkos* was the most memorable festival in our family. In the autumn the unheated summer kitchen at the back of our house served as our *Sukkah* (booth or hut). It was a large room with a "skylight" in the roof. Instead of glass, the skylight was made of wooden slats, which were hinged so that they could be opened to reveal the stars as required for the holiday. My mother decorated the room with fruits and other harvest symbols, including a long necklace of shiny brown chestnuts, which hung from the slats. As we entered the Sukkah for evening meals a special prayer was said inviting our ancestors to join the gathering. When the weather held out, it was a welcome change to have our meals in this unique setting. But more often than not it was wet and cold. We'd sit there bundled in our winter coats and hats, shivering and drenched with rain. It took courage to sing *Zmirot* (Blessings after Meals) under those conditions. But my mother would utter, "This is not for me", and she and Laiyah would be excused from the table.

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My parent's religiosity became a burden on their children. While we respected their philosophy none of us wanted to adhere to the strict orthodox code that governed their lives. Under their watchful eyes we dutifully carried out our religious obligations, but as we grew older we ventured beyond these boundaries. My sister Laiyah was more restricted than my brothers and me. She continued to live with us for 7-8 years, even after she married and had 2 children. Then, Laiyah and her family moved around the corner on Henry Street. Laiyah was always on guard in case my parents walked in on Shabbos when her kids may have turned on the radio or the phonograph.

To skip years ahead, both my parents gradually adjusted to the reality that their children would not be as observant as they had hoped. My mother saw what was happening in other families who were not as well off as ours, especially during the Depression. Many of our neighbors were hungry, and I think she began questioning the validity of such practices as abstaining from work on Shabbos. Also, she wanted to keep our family together and derived much pleasure when her children and grandchildren came to visit. She was aware that we drove rather than walked to be with them on Shabbos or on the holidays. To assuage our own sense of “guilt”, we parked our cars out of sight. Once Lemel told my mother that he had decided not to come for Yom Kippur because he would not drive. She exclaimed, “It’s OK. Just come.” My father’s attitude also softened over time. It was a tremendous transformation for both of them.

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In 1926 my sister Laiyah married Joe Evans (Yossel Ivanisky), who was born in Lagow, a shtetl not far from Ivansk. Yossel worked as a furrier on Spadina Avenue. Their wedding was a great family event. Laiyah was 21 years old and a beautiful woman. They had 3 children; Annette (Chana), Harvey (Harshol) and Rosalie (Roizeh).

My father’s uncle, Phe’tah Shloimah Teichman and his son, Yoshkah (Yossel) came to the wedding from New York City, a huge deal in those days. Phe’tah Shloimah had a very distinguished bearing, always well groomed and dressed in a tailored suit and tie. My father held him in high regard. Shloimah’s brother, Hershol Teichman lived in Toronto and was also very conscious of his appearance. By contrast, my dad usually wore his work clothes except on Shabbos and special occasions. I’ve lost touch with Phe’tah Shloimah’s family; it’s been at least 60 years since I’ve spoken with or seen any of them.



**Toronto, 1926. Family Portrait Prior to Laiyah and Yossel’s Wedding**

**Front Row (left to right):** Baila Teichman (Die Kleinah Bubba), Chamol Teichman (my father), Berrol Teichman (me), Shloimah Teichman (my father’s uncle), Rhuda Bleima Teichman (my mother), Koppel Teichman (my brother), Chayah Perel Silverberg (Die Grosse Bubba)  
**Back Row:** Myer Tishman (my father’s brother), Lemel Taichman (my brother), Yossel Evans (the groom), Laiyah Teichman (my sister), Myer Teichman (my brother), Yoshkah Teichman (son of Shloimah Teichman)

Beginning when I was a little kid my father often took me to work at the pop factory on Oxford Street. It was within walking distance from home and just a block or two from the Kensington Market, the Jewish hub of commerce. I was fascinated with the comings and goings of the trucks and the whirr and clang of the machinery. It was a little world all its own.

People would stop by just to schmooze and pass the time of day. Recently arrived immigrants would appear looking for a job. No one was turned away; they only made a few dollars for a week's work but it was enough to tie them over until they found a decent job. Both my parents really appreciated that they had much more than a lot of people and their home became a way station for new arrivals from Ivansk. For a number of years someone would turn up on a moment's notice. They were taken in and stayed 2, 3, 4, sometimes 5 weeks until they got on their feet – when the head of the family got a job. I never knew who would be sharing my bed. But that was the culture.

The happiest memory of being with my dad happened when I helped him deliver seltzer and pop in the wintertime during the Christmas holiday. My father could not drive a car and made his rounds with "Bill", his faithful *ferd* (horse). Bill knew the route by heart. When the streets were covered with snow my dad hitched Bill to a sled and draped heavy blankets over the siphons and pop bottles so that their contents would not freeze. Bells were festooned on Bill's harness, and as he trotted down the road they jingled merrily. For a little boy it was a magical experience.

As a youngster I had no concept of the physical effort that was required by my dad to earn his livelihood. A box of pop contained 6 quart bottles and weighed between 60-70 pounds. Schleppling one box up 3 flights of stairs was hard enough; sometimes he'd even drag two boxes at a time. Pah had a lean body mass and I don't know how he did it.

I always looked forward to working with my dad. I enjoyed being with him so much that when I was about 16 or 17 years old I exclaimed, "I'd like to work with you in the pop business when I grow up." I still remember the look on his face; it was as if I had lost my mind. His exact words: "You're not going to work like I do. You're going to go to school. After you finish school you can decide for yourself, but you're going to go to school! You're going to be a doctor!" To my father that was the ultimate goal he aspired for his children. Imagine...a man who came to this country with nothing now envisaged such lofty dreams for his children. While it was too late for Lainyah and Lemel, it was possible for Myer, Koppel, Getzol and for me.

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Living just around the corner from the shul, we often witnessed the rituals that were practiced following the death of some of its members. For instance, when the Kleinh Bubba died her coffin was placed at the foot of the steps to the shul and the memorial service was conducted inside. In other instances, a funeral cortege would halt momentarily in front of the shul and then proceed to the cemetery. These practices captivated 5-year-old Koppel who declared that he wanted to become a funeral director when he grew up. Our cousin, Ruthy Gross (daughter of Ruchel and Moishe Gross) shared his fascination for things funereal. She was about the same age as us and lived at the other end of our block on Beverly Street. Ruthy and Koppel got into a lot of trouble when they decided to stage a funeral.

The victim was a hapless cat. The animal was thrown into a garbage can, which was set on fire in our garage. Needless to say, the creature did not survive. However, more was yet to come; the fire spilled out of the container, and the garage, summer kitchen and kitchen became engulfed in flames.

The fire department arrived and put out the blaze, but not in time to save the garage, summer kitchen and the kitchen, which were completely destroyed. More importantly, the culprits had fled the scene and no one knew where they were. My mother was frantic. At last she found them hiding in the back of Ruthy's house. She was so relieved that I don't think she even rebuked them for what had happened.

Then my father showed up. Koppel expected some form of corporal punishment. Instead, my father held his hand and deliberately led him through the debris, stopping every so often to let Koppel absorb the extent of the damage: "Do you see what you've done? Look what you did!" That was the way Pah was. I don't remember him or my mother ever laying a hand on me, Koppel or Getzol. Yes, we were scolded but never disciplined physically. This was unusual for those times. Many parents took their frustrations out on their kids.

Luckily, we were insured against fire. The kitchen was rebuilt and became the grandest kitchen on the street. Completely tiled in white with a black border and boasting a new refrigerator, new stove and everything else...it was a show place.

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Some of my earliest recollections are about our family's summer vacations. Around 1928, when I was 7 years old, Pah purchased a car even though he could not drive it. In reality it was Lemel's car and it opened endless possibilities. On Sunday afternoons we'd pile in and venture to places like Port Credit and Lake Wilcox. That's how we discovered our first summer house in Clareville near Brampton, Ontario, way out in the countryside. Today, that area is part of Metropolitan Toronto. The rental fee was shared by my parents and my mother's sister, Ruchel and her husband, Moishe Gross. The property was an unoccupied farm house that had seen better days. It must have reminded them of dwellings in Ivansk. A gaggle of people moved in, including the "Grosse Bubbah", Me'mah Ruchel's family (with her 4 children), my brothers and sister and her husband, Yossel. Those who worked in the city spent the week days in Toronto and returned to the farm on Friday for the weekend. Together with our cousin Ruthy, Koppel and I roamed through the fields and woods and swam in the Humber River, which was really a creek at this point. It was an incredible summer.

A neighboring farmer had a herd of dairy cows; my mother sent me to him with 5 cents and an empty bottle to fetch a quart of milk. This went on for a couple of days and then the farmer announced, "It's now 10 cents. This time I'll take a nickel but next time it'll be 10 cents." Returning home I told my mother about the new price. That Friday our men came out for the weekend. When Phe'tah Moishe heard what had happened he got very upset: "He's taking us for a ride. I'll look after this. I'll show him." The men drove back to town on Sunday evening.

Now, Phe'tah Moishe owned an abattoir on Clinton Street near Bloor Street. On Monday morning one of his trucks pulled up to our farmhouse. We were astonished to see a cow in the back of the truck! Because she had worked as a milkmaid in Ivansk, my mother knew exactly what to do next. We had more than enough milk for the rest of the summer.

Here's another tale from that summer. Our families slept in bedrooms on the first and the second stories of the farmhouse. Koppel and I shared a second floor bedroom with some of our cousins. In the past a cast iron stove stood on the ground floor; a tin pipe ran up from the stove through our bedroom to vent through the roof. The stove and chimney were gone but the hole in the bedroom floor remained. In the middle of the night Koppel had to urinate. There was no indoor plumbing, and the outhouse seemed miles away, not to mention the ghosts and other creatures that lurked out there in the darkness. Koppel took a shortcut and peed down the hole.

It happened that Phe'tah Moishe and Me'mah Ruchel were fast asleep in their bed right under the hole. Me'mah Ruchel was jolted awake and shook her husband, "*Moishe, Moishe, hybd'dech oif. Es requent ahrein!*" (Moishe, Moishe, wake up. It's raining inside!)

For the next 9-10 years our summers were spent in Jackson's Point or Belle Ewart on Lake Simcoe. The summer of '37 or '38 was especially memorable; we were late in making arrangements to find a cottage in Jackson's Point and only a few suitable options remained. By chance, we spotted a "For Rent" sign at the entrance to a large property...a lovely lakeside estate with a huge two-story mansion and a private beach. The owner was a Mr. Jackson, perhaps related to the Jackson of Jackson's Point. He was not Jewish and at that time some of the finer properties in Jackson's Point were "restricted": That meant, "No Jews Allowed". My parents were unmistakably Jewish, and we expected that Mr. Jackson would find some excuse to avoid renting his house to us. Not only did he agree to let us have it, he also reduced the price.

I was now 17 or 18 years old and had obtained my driver's license; the following Sunday I used one of Lemel's trucks (Lemel was now in the creamery business) to transport all our furniture, dishes and so on to the cottage. Our family, including both bubbas, my brothers and Laiyah and her family (now with 2 children) numbered about 16 people. But there was still a lot of leftover space; so, just about every family connection was invited to join us for the summer. They included my father's brothers, Pinchas and Myer and their families. Over 30 people were accommodated on weekends. It was indeed a wonderful summer.

I think that was the last time my parents planned the family's summer vacations. Their children were now adults with jobs or responsibilities that limited the time they had available to leave town. Koppel and I were in medical school, and in the final years of the war we served in the army. Consequently, there was little incentive for my parents to put something together as before.

In the early '40s Laiyah and her husband, Yossel, invested in several cottages in Belle Ewart and rented them out for the summer. They reserved one for themselves and their 3 kids, and my mother would spend a few weeks with them. Lemel, his wife Frances and their 3 sons let the cottage next door. Until the mid '50s both families summered in Belle Ewart and were joined by other family members on weekends. Those times remain a source of many special memories.

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In the late '20s or early '30s my brother Lemel and our Phe'tah Myer, my father's youngest brother, went into partnership in the "Western Creamery" producing cottage cheese and sour cream and distributing butter and other dairy products. Their plant was located in the rear of 1664 Queen Street West near Roncesvalles Avenue (in the early '40s they purchased a larger facility on Osler Street, just south of Davenport Road). Their customers included corner grocery stores (supermarkets were unheard of back then), bakeries and restaurants. My father helped Phe'tah Myer and Lemel get started. My mother also contributed; she taught Lemel how to make cottage cheese and sour cream in Ivansk and in Canada. Despite the Depression, business was good and a third partner, Joe Adler, was brought on board.

Lemel and I had little in common initially, but we began playing ball and street hockey together when I was about 7-8 years old. After he went into the creamery our relationship really blossomed. The creamery had a couple of trucks, and I was crazy about cars and trucks. Even though I could barely reach the pedals, Lemel let me start them and took me on his route when I was off school. I got to know many of his customers, and I loved the way he handled people. He was very approachable and outgoing and had a host of friends, mostly acquired through the business. When

I got my driver's license, Lemel would sometimes ask me to help out and trusted me to make deliveries with one of the trucks. For me this was the greatest compliment and elevated my self confidence.

In 1933 Frances Kline, who lived on Wright Avenue near the creamery, was hired as a secretary to work in the office. A few months later Lemel brought her to our house to meet the family on a Sunday afternoon. He was in his late twenties and seemed to be destined for permanent bachelorhood. My parents had tried to arrange *shidachs* (love matches) with other women but nothing ever worked out. Now, things looked more promising.

Their wedding took place on December 4, 1934, a very cold winter day. Close members of our family turned up at our house to "*Bazingen der Chusen*" (non-literal translation: "To sing along with the bridegroom"). Moishe Lustig and his klezmer band were on hand. Everyone danced. And you can be sure that there was plenty of Mazeltovs, "Crown Royal" (a premium rye liquor) and "I'Chaims" to go around. The stage was set for a *frailecha simcha* (joyful celebration). From our house Lemel, my parents, other members of our family and the band drove to Frances' home to "*Badeken die Kalah*" (the ceremony of veiling the bride). More dancing, Crown Royal, I'Chaims and Mazeltovs. Finally, the motorcade, with horns blaring, carried the bride and groom to the Beis Yaacov shul on Henry Street for the ceremony. The party continued late into the evening in the social hall. Using your imagination it would be easy to visualize similar wedding festivities taking place in Ivansk.



**Frances and Lou's Wedding  
Toronto, 1934**

**Frances & Lemel (Lou) had 3  
sons: Nissi, Lazer & Kopy**

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After completing primary school I went on to Jarvis Collegiate. It was a tremendous school; I was a highly motivated student standing at the top of my class throughout the 5-year program. But it came at a high price. Most of my time was spent at study to the exclusion of sports and other extracurricular activities. My routine went something like this: on weekdays I got up at around 7:30, put on my *teffilin* (phylacteries) and then came down to breakfast. My mother prepared a hot meal on the "Happy Thought" coal burning stove and packed my lunch. The walk to Jarvis took about 25-30 minutes, classes began at 9:00 am and ended at 3:30 pm. Returning home from school there was milk and cookies and then I was off to *Eitz Chaim Talmud Torah* on D'Arcy Street where I was in the "yeshiva class". (After their Bar Mitzvahs most of my friends stopped going to *cheder* but my father wanted me to continue and I did not put up any opposition.) Supper was served at about at 7:00 and then I hit the books until 11:00 o'clock.

On Shabbos, I attended shul in the morning and went to the Beis Medrish in the afternoon. There, someone examined me on the material I had learned at Talmud Torah during the week. My dad did not question me; he either did not know enough about what I was studying or did not want to put pressure on me if I faltered. On Sundays, it was back to *cheder* for a 3-hour session, followed by lunch and then more homework.

My father was very proud of my academic accomplishments. But I think he knew that I might be overdoing it. During the third year of high school he approached me, "You're working very hard and I think it's time to decide what you want to be. If you want to go on to university, I'll send you and

look after everything. If you want to go into the rabbinate, you'll have to leave here for a "proper" yeshiva in the United States - in Baltimore."

After some discussion I told him I wanted to go to university. "Fine. If that's your decision it's time you stopped going to Talmud Torah." My goal was to go to medical school.

Koppel was one year behind me in school and was equally encouraged by my dad to succeed. He followed a similar trajectory to medical school. But Koppel was a much more outgoing person and a really good athlete. Even more important, he was brainier than me. He had a photographic memory; he'd read something once and remember it and was especially bright in mathematics. Like me, he attended Talmud Torah into his teens; nevertheless, he sailed through Jarvis finding time to play sports and engage in a full social life. It was the same in medical school; Koppel really knew his stuff but in comparison to me he was able to escape from the books and do other things. Sometimes I wished that I could have lead a lifestyle like him. Despite our different personalities we were always close and supportive of each other.

My youngest brother, Getzol was a nice kid with a generous heart. He was very handsome; my parents doted over him. But he had no interest in books and ultimately dropped out of high school. He had the brains but not the desire. Unknown to us, he was absent from school for 3-4 weeks, playing pool on College Street and hanging around with other "drop-outs". I don't understand why my father and Myer did not have an inkling of his behavior. When we found out, it was a big disappointment especially for my father. But my dad did not ostracize Getzol; he took him to work with him. They bonded together and became very devoted to each other. When my dad retired, Getzol inherited his share of Punch Dry and for the rest of his working life Getzol schlepped seltzer and pop boxes. He later acknowledged that he had squandered a great opportunity.

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According to current standards, my parents did little in the way of entertainment. In 1928-1929 we got a radio and then a "Victrola", a gramophone made by RCA (today it's called a record player). Most of the 78 rpm shellac records were cantorial arias or klezmer music. We also had a piano in our living room. As far as I know it had always been there. I don't think it was ever tuned and one or two keys were broken. It produced a tinny sound, like pianos in the saloons of early Western movies. No one took piano lessons but Lemel had a wonderful gift...he could play just about any tune by ear using both hands.

My parents enjoyed going to "The Standard" on the corner of Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street where they could see Yiddish plays and vaudeville. They often took me along. Sometime in the '30s it was renamed "The Strand" cinema, and in the '40s it was transformed into "The Victory" burlesque. If my folks went to The Victory, they never took me with them.

I don't think my parents ever ate in a restaurant, even if it claimed to be "kosher". No restaurant was kosher enough for them. The only exception was the "Lakeside House", a summer hotel in Jackson's Point, where they personally knew and trusted the owner, Mr. Alspector.

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Both my parents could read Yiddish and Hebrew. But my mother could not read a word of English, and my father was limited to signing his name, writing the date and few other simple everyday business terms. He subscribed to two Yiddish newspapers, *Der Forverts* (The Forward) and *Der Tag* (The Day), which were published in the USA. I was fluent in Yiddish, and my maternal grandmother, Chaya Perel ("Die Grosse Bubba"), who could not read Yiddish, relied on me to convey some of the news in *Der Forverts*. She especially enjoyed the "*Bintel Breev*" (Bundle of

Letters) section that appeared in the weekend edition. These letters were submitted by readers seeking advice and solutions to minor as well as serious problems.

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**“Bazingen der Chusen”, Getzol’s Wedding Day, Toronto, 1947**

Relatives have come to my parent’s home to “sing along” with Getzol before his marriage to Ferne Kay. In this photo my immediate family has gathered in the dining room, following which we drove to Ferne’s home to “*Badeken die Kalah*”.  
(Photo of the bride and groom on Page 22.)

**Seated (L- R):**

Roizeh Evans\*, Lazer Taichman\*, Kopyy Taichman\*, Frances Taichman, My Mother, My Father, Getzol Teichman, Chaya Perel Silverberg (*Die Grosse Bubba*), Myer Teichman, Laiyah Evans

**Standing (L-R):**

Lemel Taichman, Berrol Teichman, Koppel Teichman, Yossel Evans

\* My parents’ grandchildren at the time of the wedding.

Grandchildren not in the photo: Chanah and Harshol Evans, Nissel Taichman

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Every year, just before *Rosh HaShanah*, my parents visited the graves of relatives and friends. Since my dad was not able to drive and because Jewish cemeteries were some distance outside town (on Royal York Road, North Bathurst Street and Wilson Avenue), they depended on their sons to drive them there. They wanted to teach us that this annual pilgrimage was an obligation that one had to honor. It was an all-day affair and I did this for a number of years.

My dad knew many people who were buried in the Ivansker Section of the Bathurst Lawn Cemetery. One of those visits stands out in my mind. Positioned at the foot of a grave my father spoke directly to the deceased. It started something like this: “I, Chaim Teichman, have come to visit you. It is the time of the *Yom Tovin* (High Holidays) . . .” Then, he quietly recited the “*El Malei*

*Rahamim*" (Prayer for the Dead), summarized how he knew this individual and told him or her about a significant event that had occurred during the past year. For instance, he might say that the person's youngest daughter had given birth to a healthy child.

He had gone down the rows pausing at several graves and then stopped at the grave of someone I did not know. He rapped really hard on the stone and began shouting the prayer as well as the "latest news".

I could not believe what was happening but stood back until he had finished, "Pah, please you're talking so loud. It's not nice. You're disturbing everyone else."

Without blinking he pointed to the stone and responded, "*Ehr ist gevain a toiber.*" He was deaf!

Can you imagine? Although death was very real to this man, it did not mean that he'd lost touch with the dead. I think he believed in the "world to come" and that he would eventually meet up with these people. For him death fit into the natural scheme of things, part of the natural rhythm of our existence.

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As far as I know my brother Myer was the first member of our extended family to attend university. He finished Grade 13 in Jarvis Collegiate with an excellent academic record and was accepted into medicine at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario. That was no mean feat as it was understood that a quota system limited the number of Jews that were admitted into medical school. But Myer never completed his medical studies. He finished the first two years of the program, but apparently missed the deadline to pay tuition for the third year. I was told that the letter from the university comptroller was somehow misplaced and that he never saw it until it was too late. Even if this was the case, why didn't he appeal for reconsideration? We'll never know the answer.



**1932. Myer Graduates in Optometry from the University of Toronto**

In any event, Myer was at loose ends and decided to apply to the College of Optometry at the University of Toronto. He was admitted to the second year, receiving credit for several courses he had taken in medical school. He graduated in 1932 in the midst of the Depression and in those hard times felt it was too risky to lease office space. Instead, he worked out of a room in our house. A few years later he had gained sufficient clients to set up his practice on College Street just east of Bathurst Street and was doing very well. However, Myer would soon have to contend with two major medical problems.

A lesion on his cheek turned out to be melanoma, a condition that even today has a very guarded prognosis. He was treated with irradiation and got lucky; the disease never recurred but he was left with a pronounced scar on his face. Then, he got hit with multiple sclerosis and it made a mess of everything. I was in first year medical school and can remember the day when he told me the diagnosis. He had every reason to be down-hearted; even at this early stage his coordination was going downhill and there was no effective treatment. As his disease progressed, he exhibited muscle weakness and spasms, visual problems, tremors and dizziness. Nevertheless, he somehow kept on working until the late 1950s. He never married because he would not saddle





But time would not stand still and my parent's health began to decline when they were in their sixties. My mother's arthritis became more debilitating and medical treatments provided little relief. She was told that the mineral baths in Mount Clemens, Michigan, might be beneficial. Koppel, Getzol and I took turns driving them there. Despite the smell of rotten eggs that permeated the town, they stayed for a week or two and returned year after year. They also began to fly south to Florida during the winter. Then, my father developed fainting spells because of an abnormal heart beat (Stokes-Adams syndrome) and became one of the first recipients of a pacemaker in Canada. The device worked very well. A few years later he suffered a coronary but pulled through and even returned to work doing odd jobs that did not require strenuous effort.

But Myer was their overriding concern. Around 1959 he had to stop work and could no longer take care of his own needs. For my parents this was the ultimate blow. You really have to live with multiple sclerosis to appreciate what this disease does to a person. It is one thing to have a child with this affliction; at least you can pick him up, move him about, bathe him and keep him clean, but with an adult it's a different story. The problem with hygiene was overwhelming for my parents, for everyone, not to mention what it did to Myer's self image. My father, who was 75 and still enjoyed working with Getzol, retired so that he could help with Myer. In 1963, in an attempt to make things easier, my folks decided to leave their home on 211 Beverly Street and moved to a small bungalow on Frontenac Avenue near Bathurst Street and Lawrence Avenue.

Around-the-clock help was hired to tend to Myer, but it was a losing battle. The time came when he had to be placed in a nursing home. This was the beginning of the end for my parents. I somehow feel that they kept on going because he needed them. Now Myer was out of their hands and their sense of purpose was gone.

It was in the summer of 1966 that a major artery in my father's leg suddenly became obstructed by atherosclerotic plaque. The limb could not be saved and was amputated. My mother could not handle all this. She fell to pieces and became very ill. She was hospitalized but no one could adequately understand what was happening. She just seemed to give up. She had had enough. And on November 8<sup>th</sup> she died. My mother was 82 years old.

Now confined to bed and a wheel chair, my dad moved in with Frances and Lemel. Little by little he faded and eventually was transferred to a long term care facility at the Baycrest Centre/Jewish Home for the Aged. He died on August 15, 1969. He was 87 years old.

And then I lost my sister and my 4 brothers, Myer (1972), Lemel (1986), Laiyah (1988), Getzol (1993) and Koppel (1996).

I miss them all.

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How to end my memoir?

Perhaps my father's words best sum up what remains to be said: I believe my dad had few frustrations. When I was preoccupied trying to build my practice he said to me, "Why are you working so hard? You shouldn't have to work so hard to make a living. Take a look at me; I always took off on Shabbos and on Sundays. And what am I lacking? I am the richest man in the world."

My dad was really satisfied with his lot in life. He loved his family, he was very happy to help people get started in business or a career and he was proud that he had not become a financial

burden on others, particularly his children. Finally, his deep and abiding faith was part of his being; it was like breathing...he didn't have to think about it.

I am thankful for the enduring memories of my family in the house at 211 Beverly Street.

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**My Parents Toronto, 1958  
Attending a grandson's wedding**



**George (Getzol) & Ferne  
Toronto, 1947**  
  
George & Ferne (Kay) had 3 sons:  
Jay, Brad & Scott



**Ben (Berrol) & Queenie  
Toronto, 2003**  
  
Queenie Sachs and I were wed  
in Ottawa in 1951.  
We have 4 sons;  
Blake, Bill, Lyle & Joel



**Jack (Koppel) & Doreen  
Visiting Philadelphia, 1990**  
  
Doreen Caplan and Jack married  
in 1956. They had 4 children:  
Alan, Dianne, Patti & David  
Jack had a son, Barry from a  
previous marriage.