

# VENTURING INTO OUR PAST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE CONEJO VALLEY AND VENTURA COUNTY



# JGSCV

January 2021

Volume 16 Issue 4

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

We hope you are well and safe and practicing safe distancing and wearing a mask when appropriate.

JGSCV was privileged to hear the fascinating lecturing on the *Footsteps and Remnants of the Hidden Jews of the Iberian Peninsula*, by Genie Milgrom. After the Jews left Spain in 1492, all of their cemeteries, synagogues and other structures were destroyed. Somehow, there were enough breadcrumbs left to follow that enabled their descendants to return and find their 500-year old lost heritage. That is what Genie Milgrom did. Highlights of her program may be found on page 5.

Jan Meisels Allen led the pre-meeting ask the experts session where most of the focus was on U.S. naturalization and immigration; specifically, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). Jan encouraged the members to submit requests now as we do not know when the federal court's stay on increasing their fees will lapse. See page 17 for more on this.

Marion Werle, JGSCV Nominations Chairperson conducted the annual election by acclamation for the five people on the slate: Jan Meisels Allen, Karen Lewy, Helene Rosen, Diane Wainwood and Debby Wenkart. Per JGSCV's website, the Board assigns individual responsibility at its January meeting.

JGSCV held its annual membership/Chanukah prizes at the end of the meeting. Thank you for generous donations by Ancestry.com, AncestryDNA, Fold3.com, Newspapers.com, FamilyTree DNA, FamilyTree Maker Software, MyHeritage, Legacy FamilyTree Software, Legacy Webinars and RootsMagic Software.



Genie Milgrom, JGSCV's December Zoom speaker on tracing Crypto-Jewish Heritage

## NEXT MEETING

**Sunday Jan. 3<sup>rd</sup> 1:30-3:30 PM**

**Members only ZOOM!**

Dual Program: 1. Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam and 2. Forensic Genetic Genealogy



**Jarrett Ross** is an expert in Genetic Genealogy and Sephardic Jewish research and is the lead forensic genealogist at DNA Labs International.

[WWW.JGSCV.ORG](http://WWW.JGSCV.ORG)

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**Mission Statement:**

JGSCV is a non-profit organization run by enthusiastic volunteers dedicated to the sharing of genealogical information, techniques and research tools with those interested in Jewish genealogy and family history. Members who include beginners and experienced genealogists share with each other.

While we ended our commemoration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II we will continue to include stories of your family members. Please read Carrie Glicksteen's story about her dad starting page 13. We will also continue the *Family Stories* that we began last July after our June speaker Joan Adler suggested we write anything as a memory. Read Andrea Massion's family story on page 19. Please send your articles for the future to Allan Linderman, editor of *Venturing into Our Past* ([newslettereditor@jgscv.org](mailto:newslettereditor@jgscv.org)) and to me at [president@jgscv.org](mailto:president@jgscv.org). This is your society's newsletter and we want as many of you as possible to write something to share in the newsletter. If you need assistance, Allan is anxious to help

As of writing this president's letter we have a 77% renewal rate. This is great but we would like to hit 100%. A copy of the membership renewal form is on page 21 and may also be printed from our website <https://www.jgscv.org/pdf/membership%20application.pdf>

If you are thinking of gifts, a membership to JGSCV is always a great idea. Our gift certificate is beautifully designed to acknowledge your gift. In addition to California, we have members in Europe, Colorado, Idaho, New York so feel free to gift a JGSCV membership to friends and family everywhere.

If you shop at Amazon, please click on our Amazon smile logo at the bottom every page of our website and you need to be registered at Amazon smile—for information see our instructions under "noteworthy" on our website (<https://www.jgscv.org/noteworthy.html>). When shopping for groceries please shop- even if only on occasion at Ralphs or Food 4 Less. See page 11 for more information.

Hal Bookbinder continues with his Practicing Safe Computing Series, "Reducing the Impact of Data Breaches" on page 12.

The IAJGS 41<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Jewish Genealogy will be held on August 2-5, 2021 in Philadelphia, PA.

See <https://s4.goeshow.com/iajgs/annual/2021/index.cfm>

JGSCV is still operating on the COVID-19 restrictions and our January 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting will be by Zoom. Our speaker Jarrett Ross will be giving a dual lecture, (1) *Iberia to Amsterdam: A Genealogical Look at the Portuguese Jewish Community of Amsterdam* and (2) *Forensic Genetic Genealogy: A Baby Doe Case Review*. See meeting notice on page 4 for more information. I heard Jarrett give the "Genealogy Death March" program with Randy Schoenberg at the IAJGS 2020 conference and was blown away as he was able to go back 12 generations—how many of us can go back more than 4-6 generations? Jarrett is a professional forensic genealogist at DNA Labs International and will share a case study.

Have a happy and healthy and SAFE 2021!



Jan Meisels

## Belarus Travels for Young Adults

The non-profit **Yiddishkayt's** Helix travel program took its young adults to Belarus to immerse them in Yiddish culture with Helix scholars as their guides.

Towns included **Smorgon, Volozhin, Slutsk, and Uzda:**

*Instead of a conventional tour, Helixers explored Smorgon and Volozhin using maps from Yizkor bikher — memorial volumes compiled by former residents following the destruction of World War II. By layering these hand-drawn maps over contemporary satellite images, we were able to experience how history has changed the social as well as geographical spaces of these towns...*

Yiddishkayt's remarkable website has been filled to the brim with such artistry, culture and ideas. See the photos of the Helix journey at <https://yiddishkayt.org/view/slutsk-uzda/>

## When DNA Gives One Pause

With the rise of personal DNA testing comes the case for people who find out that they have Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry. Ashkenazim have a history that is specifically linked with certain genetic diseases and conditions such as Tay-Sachs and breast cancer. The National Society of Genetic Counselors gives advice about testing for those and other conditions. Find out more at:

<https://www.nsgc.org/p/bl/et/blogaid=1177>

## The Cold War and U.S. Cemeteries in France

"What It Means to Be American" was founded by the Smithsonian in 2014 along with Zocolo Square and others, to present events and publications that explore the origins of the American way of life, thought and culture. Its website is a treasure trove of sociological, historical and anthropological origins, memories and ideas. One such article explains why the U.S. created fallen soldier cemeteries in France with lush landscaping and fine art, as a Cold War response after WWII.

<https://www.whatitmeanstobeamerican.org/places/how-the-u-s-designed-overseas-cemeteries-to-win-the-cold-war/>

# The Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County (JGSCV) will hold a **Zoom Meeting: Sunday, January 3, 2021 1:30-3:30 p.m.**



Open only to JGSCV members (\*see below for membership application)

**Zoom link will be emailed to members a few days before the meeting.**

## THE DUAL PROGRAM

- 1. Iberia to Amsterdam: A Genealogical Look at the Portuguese Jewish Community of Amsterdam**
- 2. Forensic Genetic Genealogy: A Baby Doe Case Review**

Jarrett will give two presentations. The program discusses the history of the Portuguese Jewish Community of Amsterdam community by looking at available documentation that can be used for genealogical purposes. He will also present a forensic case study.



### **About Speaker Jarrett Ross**

Jarrett Ross began researching his own family history in 2009 while finishing his undergraduate degree at the University of Pittsburgh. Since then, he has built his own personal tree with over 7000 people, successfully connected with thousands of relatives all over the world and has helped build hundreds of trees for people of varying ancestral backgrounds. Jarrett has found multiple specialties including Genetic Genealogy, Sephardic Jewish research with an emphasis on the Portuguese Jewish Community of Amsterdam, the Jewish Agricultural Societies of Southern New Jersey, Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry in Ukraine, and American Jewish history. Jarrett writes a blog called “Sephardic Genealogy” and he also has a vlog called “GeneaVlogger” where he talks about his research, gives genealogy tips, interviews other genealogists and shows different aspects of working in genealogy. Jarrett currently works as the lead forensic genealogist at DNA Labs International.

There is no charge for members of JGSCV to attend this Zoom meeting. Anyone may join JGSCV from our website: <https://www.jgscv.org/pdf/membership%20application.pdf>. Annual dues are \$30 for an individual and \$35 for a family. We welcome new members!

# Highlights from *Following in the Footsteps and Remnants of Crypto Jews*

By Jan Meisels Allen

After the Jews left Spain in 1492, all of their cemeteries, synagogues and other structures were destroyed yet somehow, they left enough breadcrumbs to follow that enabled their descendants to return and find their 500-year old lost heritage just like Genie Milgrom was able to. JGSCV was privileged to hear this fascinating lecturing on the *Footsteps and Remnants of the Hidden Jews of the Iberian Peninsula*.

Genie has authored several books including *Recipes of My 15 Grandmothers*. She began with a recap of her life. Genie was born in Havana, Cuba, and was raised Roman Catholic and went to Catholic schools throughout her life- grade schools through university. In her mid-20s she did make a formal return to the Jewish people. She did an Orthodox conversion to Judaism as she had strong feelings for the Jewish people. She did not have any idea that there was anything behind her feelings. She caused a ruckus in her family and no one was talking to her-family or school friends. It was only after her maternal grandmother died and left her some Judaica and other items that she realized she could have been a descendant from the Spanish inquisition. Her grandmother and grandfather were first cousins.

## Genie's History

As a genealogist she asked, “how do you look *under* all the documents especially when one is looking for things from the Catholic church?”. Her family's village in Spain since 1405 is Famoselle—on the border with Portugal. Genie did acknowledge the family went back and forth between Famoselle and Portugal but the Spanish town is the family ancestral town. Genie talked about a cousin from Belgium she met through DNA who had done extensive research on the town and family but had never known they were Jewish—basically because the inhabitants had hidden they were Jews—and “pretended” to be Catholic. The challenge is to find the information that the Inquisition did not find.

Eventually, Genie did a “formal” return to Judaism because she had become active about her life on social media, and since no one would talk to her—Catholics, Jews

or her family- she decided to help others who would want to make a return to Judaism. She



started to take speaking engagements including the Knesset in Israel, the European Union Parliament in Europe. Eventually, slowly people started to understand and accept what it was to be a descendant of Crypto-Jews.

To accept you and make Aliyah based on your lineage, the Israeli rabbinate, expects that person to find someone in his/her maternal lineage before the Inquisition, who was burned or judged or killed for being a Jew. Therefore, one has to go back to the 1300's—to the lineage early 1400's and work forward to 1480s. While many think of 1492 as the year of the Inquisition in Spain, the largest amount of Jewish conversion to Catholicism was in 1381. After finding her 15<sup>th</sup> grandmother, Genie found 45 women and men who were actually burned alive for being Jewish. However, the Israeli rabbis also told Genie that she had to find a history of Jews that had lived in her ancestral village because there was no history pointing to that. While her family was from there, Jews never live alone so they asked for this historical proof.

By halachic law (Jewish law and jurisprudence, based on the Talmud) Genie was Jewish (direct maternal lineage) but Genie wanted to prove to others that she was indeed Jewish and to help others who felt as they were Jewish by direct lineage they need not convert to Judaism. It is easier to convert than to look for your lineage.

The number one Jewish demographer in the world, Dr. Sergio Della Pergola in Israel, said in 2015, there are 50 million people in the world who have Jewish ancestry in Latin America. There is a Sephardic DNA project that said there are 250 million people in Latin America that share Jewish roots. Genie does not know if the numbers are accurate but she says it

shows the ancestry, not necessarily that all want to return to Judaism.

Genie was able to find the grandmothers who were burned for being Jewish and found the history of the town.



The Beit Din in Israel did give her certification stating she had been born Jewish and that no one could question that going forward. While she got to the proof in an unusual way, all of her descendants would be considered Jewish if they took on Judaism. Genie's children did not take on Judaism. Genie did not convert them when they were young as she did not think it appropriate as her children has been born Catholic—however, today they do not follow anything. They have always been very supportive of Genie and her return to Judaism. Genie believes it is not the DNA nor the people who you were born to but what is inside you—your soul that makes you a Jew.

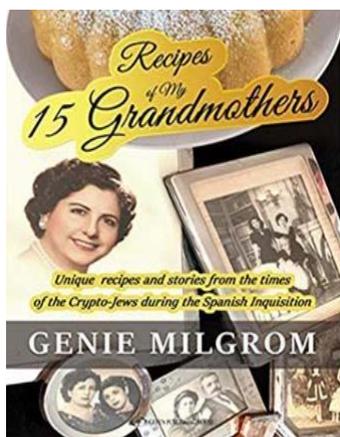
#### **Recipes of My 15 Grandmothers**

Genie's mother has always denied that she owned anything Jewish. Back in 2014, when her mother had to leave her home due to Alzheimer's, Genie was able to go into her house and find closely guarded information. At her mom's house she found most of the **original** documents that Genie had spent years looking for in Spain. Genie found hundreds of little recipes handwritten passed down through the generations—some dating back to the Inquisition.

Genie decided to make this "find" into something beautiful. The grandmothers

carried these recipes when they went from Spain to Portugal to the Canary Islands to Columbia to Costa Rico and to Cuba. Genie's mother was the last one to transport them (from Cuba to Florida).

Genie translated all the recipes into English and placed them into the book *Recipes of My 15*



*Grandmothers.*

She called on hundreds of friends to cook the recipes and to make them perfect! Each recipe has a story in the book.

One of the recipes included in the book is her Aunt Paulita's recipe for "Chuletas" for Pork Chops—which she made into Kosher pork chops—which is actually French toast with caramelized red peppers on top. This was actually eaten during the Inquisition where they



made believe they were eating pork chops. This history is what Genie means is the "under belly" of the genealogy. None of the recipes mixed meat with dairy or nor did any of them have lard or pork. Think of Spain in the 1400's and later—what recipes did not have pork—so it was hidden not to have it.

The Crypto-Jews could not fast on Yom Kippur as the inquisitors knew about Yom Kippur so they created a holiday-- the feast of Saint

Ester on Purim. They made a dish like a large empanada and ate it after the fast of Ester.

Genie talked about the food of her ancestors and what she learned about the family as a result. She saw the grandmothers passed down the recipes for generations—with different handwritings. The recipes changed as the family moved from country to country. While initially the recipes had olive oil, anise and almonds, this changed to rum, turbinado sugar, orange and other new world foods. They continued not to mix meat and milk. In Cuba there was no use of non-Kosher meats until well into the 1930s. Passover recipes used corn starch and potato starch which was unusual.

### 523 Years Later

Looking at what we are left with over 520 years later are the customs that passed down.

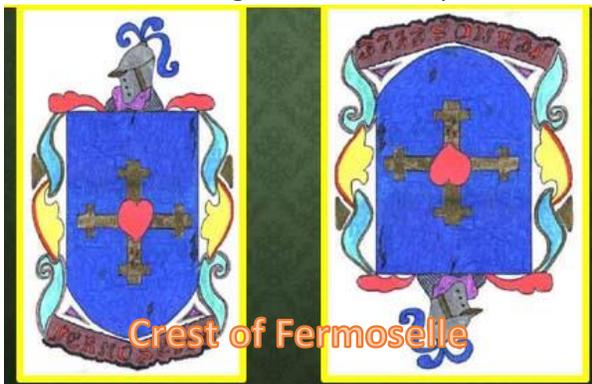
- Cooking, including checking eggs for blood and leafy vegetables for insects, taking dough to burn in the oven with or without a blessing.
- Lighting candles on Friday night, washing hands before the meals, saying grace after a meal.
- Endogamy (the custom of marrying only within the limits of a local community, family) continues.
- Abundance of clergy, priests and nuns in the family.
- Marriage rituals such as donning a cloth across the shoulders as a Spanish custom and immersing in a ritual bath (mikvah) before the wedding.
- Death rituals—burying immediately and covering mirrors after a death in the family.
- Architectural details and Jewish details in small villages.

- Genealogical physical records and Inquisition documents.
- No cemetery or synagogue records available until the New World.

Family Customs in Families are Ancestrally Jewish

- Babies not taken to the Church for Baptism –In Genie’s family they say the baby is too sick to come to church.
- Many priests and nuns in the family.
- Pre-nuptial marriage agreements before the actual wedding.
- Trusts for Charity strictly a Jewish custom- “Dotars” Genie has some from her family running from the 1500’s-1854.
- Sweeping to the center of the room so not sweeping to where the mezuzahs were located.
- Burn nails and hair or save and never throw away.
- Bury the dead immediately. This is how Genie learned about her Jewish roots as her mother insisted on burying her mother, Genie’s grandmother, immediately and it was Shabbat.

Genie showed some artifacts left to her by her grandmother including a hamsa and a pin with



the Star of David. She has found 28/32 of her great grandparents. Her father was a Mason and his Mason pin has a hamsa and an eye in the center of the hamsa.

Another way to learn if the town is Jewish is to look at the crest for the town. The crest of the town Fermoselle says the town’s name but turn it around and the name is now in Hebrew. She also showed some physical remnants in architecture and mikvah’s with steps and natural water running. Every house has tunnels and interconnect underground so every house is connected.

Types of documents are in medieval Spanish and Portuguese—and very difficult to read. Types of records that are necessary to prove one’s Judaism:

Dissertations; guild registries; historic family trees and known conversos; Inquisition archives; notary documents of land sales; last wills and testaments; engagement and marriage registries; synagogue registries in the Islands and the New World, Blood Purity certifications and Ketubahs’ - marriage records from the new world. Only primary sources are



acceptable for the purposes of conversion. Genie reminds us that not everything is in the archives. In fact, Genie has uploaded over 55,000 documents from every country in the world. The documents are now on JewishGen as *the Genie Milgrom Crypto-Jewish Collection*. This represents 55,000 entries representing 11,000 families with individual

family names. Genie explained the difference between the Sephardim that Jeff Malka (head of the Sephardic SIG) focused on Sephardim—those who left Spain, while Genie focuses on the Sephardim who remained in Spain as Catholics.

The types of information that Genie has accumulated and digitized for over 15 years are: names, dates, places of origin, occupations, number of Inquisition Court Case, cemeteries where the family is buried and more.

Currently, Genie is uploading every grave of the original Spanish -Portuguese community of Jamaica into an Excel Spread sheet, so that it can be placed on JewishGen.

Genie gave a webinar on the *Genie Milgrom Crypto-Jewish Collection* at JewishGen.org which is now on their Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/JewishGen.org/> You do not need to be a Facebook subscriber to access the JewishGen Facebook page.

Genie is also working with a DNA company from Israel on digitizing the Inquisition files. She has been visiting archives around the world and has been successful in getting contracts from one or two countries. Due to COVID, the scanning has just begun.

Genie's showed her family tree pre-1600 including those who were judged in the Inquisition and many burned to death.

Genie may be reached at: [www.Geniemilgrom.com](http://www.Geniemilgrom.com). Her books may be purchased through Amazon.com and on Facebook under Genie Milgrom.

Genie answered many questions some of which were:

- How to find about the tunnels? The tunnels were only in Feroselle (Spanish side) as that was the jumping off point to Portugal across the river.

- New Mexico and Colorado have Crypto-Jews from Mexico. There are a lot of hidden Jews there.
- Ladino was the language in 1400s but it depends on where you were. Judeo-Spanish became more crystalized after people left. Genie has not met anyone who was able to trace their family due to Ladino. She has seen Ladino more in people who left than those who stayed.
- She was not familiar with the PBS special on Crypto-Jews. *Children of the Inquisition* is a lovely film and Genie is in it. The producer, Joe Lovett, of the film *Children of the Inquisition* came to her meetings at the Crypto Judaic Studies at Colorado State University.
- On the Fast of Ester the people actually fasted on that day. Today it is still a holiday in Portugal to celebrate the Fast of Saint Ester.
- Genie's grandmother was upset when Genie converted as she was afraid as it was dangerous for what Genie was doing to be up front about being Jewish. All of her family knew they were Jews and it was hidden for many years.
- In response to a question about Nicaragua, Genie said there were a lot of Crypto Jews in that country. Many came to Nicaragua from Cartagena, Columbia via Panama. Today there are about 4-5 communities of Crypto Jews in Nicaragua.
- DNA matches are still in churches—those who converted to Catholicism hundreds of years ago. Therefore, the

matches are ancient. She suggested testing with FamilyTree DNA and uploading to MyHeritage as the best opportunity to find Crypto Jewish lineage. Genie said the other DNA companies are not testing for this particular combination of matches and Iberian background.

- In Cuba there is a small group of Crypto Jews but they are returning. They put up a Facebook group. There are more people in Puerto Rico than Cuba looking for their Crypto-Jewish roots.
- There was no intermarriage between the Crypto Jews and Catholics in Genie's family.
- Spain waited over 500 years to welcome back the descendants of Crypto Jews. There is still antisemitism in Spain. So she thinks Spain needed to make "nice". In Portugal they recognize three out of five people have Jewish ancestry and they don't hide it.
- The routes the Crypto Jews took leaving for religious freedom was to Flanders (Antwerp). From Antwerp they went to Amsterdam. Some went

to London. From London some went to Jamaica. The ones from Portugal went to Mexico. When they got kicked out they went to Surinam. They also went the other way- off the coast of India, Cape Verde Islands, Azores and the Canary Islands. They are also in the Philippines and Macau and today in Hawaii.

- There is no proof that Cristopher Columbus was Jewish but at least two crew members were.
- No one knows how many Crypto Jews stayed in Europe.
- Synagogue Scribes (<https://synagoguescribes.com/blog/>) from London has transcribed many of the original last wills and testaments of Crypto Jews.

Between 1550 and 1596 they are missing 40 years when the Crypto Jews arrived in Amsterdam. Genie was not able to prove the person from Spain was the same person later in Amsterdam. Genie thinks the answer to the missing 40 years is they were going to stopping-off points that are not known which they were.

Everyone enjoyed the presentation and the extensive question and answer period.

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Genie Milgrom is a genealogist and global speaker on Crypto Jews. She was born in Cuba into a Catholic Family of Spanish Ancestry. In an unparalleled work of genealogy, she was able to fully document her unbroken Jewish lineage as far back as 1405 to Pre-Inquisition Spain and Portugal and has developed a method to trace Jewish lineages to the 1400's. She is the author of the books *My 15 Grandmothers* and *How I Found My 15 Grandmothers, Pyre to Fire* and *The Recipes of My 15 Grandmothers*. Winner of the 2015, 2018 and 2020 (for *Recipes of My 15 Grandmothers*) Latin Author Book Award; winner of the Literary Titan Silver award for the book, *Pyre to Fire* and 2019 for the Best seller *Recipes of My 15 Grandmothers*. JewishGen.org has added The Genie Milgrom Crypto Jewish Collection. Recipient of a Genealogy Award from the State of Florida IAJGS.

# JGSCV Updates

A virtual vote for 5 seats on JGSCV's Board of Directors was held at the December Zoom meeting. Debby Wenkart was elected for her first term on the board while Jan Meisels Allen, Karen Lewy and Diane Wainwood were re-elected. Congratulations to everyone. Board assignments for each board member will be made at the first board meeting of the new year

## Congratulations to the Chanukah Gift winners chosen at the December meeting!

<u>Gift</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Gift</u>	<u>Name</u>
Ancestry World Subscription	Karen Franklin	Fold3.com Subscription	Suzanne Scarberry
Ancestry DNA Kit	Andrea Massion	Family Tree DNA	Joanne Cadis
FamilyTreeMaker	Issie Perel	FamilyTreeMaker	Sharlene Pass
Legacy Family Tree	Cherie Wrigley	Legacy Webinars	Dan Kaufman
MyHeritage	Carol Paskow	MyHeritage	Carole Brownstein
MyHeritage	Ellen Hustead	Roots Magic	Ralph and Pat Fuller
Newspapers.com	Judy Cohen		

JGSCV webmaster David Oseas reminded genealogists that former JGSCV speaker Joel Weintraub has a JewishGen InfoFile for helping to locate challenging names on manifests at Ellis Island. Mr. Weintraub responded to David as follows:

*"Thanks David for reminding people I have a JewishGen InfoFile on finding difficult people on manifests at Ellis Island. The link to that is: <https://www.jewishgen.org/infocfiles/degradedmanifests.html> I gave an on-demand talk based on this InfoFile at the IAJGS meeting last summer, and put that video (with a link to a handout) on my YouTube channel. Viewers can find it at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5dzaug6\\_pdo&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5dzaug6_pdo&feature=youtu.be)"*

JGSCV is a participant in Ralph's and Food for Less Community Awards. If you are already registered you need not reregister this year. If you are already registered and have JGSCV as your charity of choice there is nothing more to do. If you are not yet registered please go to our website to learn how to participate: <https://www.jgscv.org/pdf/Ralphs%20Community%20Contribution%20Program.pdf>.



# Practicing Safe Computing #62: “Reducing the Impact of Data Breaches”

By Hal Bookbinder (Number 62 in a series)



On Monday, November 30<sup>th</sup>, the “blackShadow” group revealed that it had hacked Shirbit, an Israeli insurance company. “blackShadow” tweeted photos of ID cards, driver’s licenses and forms containing private information. The next day the Jerusalem Post quoted a leading hacking expert that “there have been multiple successful cyberattacks against Israeli infrastructure in the past year that have not been revealed to the public.”

“blackShadow” demanded payment of 50 bitcoin (\$961,110) or it would continue to release hacked data. Each day, it posted significant amounts of data and doubled its price. Shirbit publicly refused to pay and the Israeli government acknowledged it was unable to stop the release of data. It encouraged Israelis to obtain new ID cards and driver’s licenses. Then, on December 6<sup>th</sup>, the reporting abruptly stopped. One wonders what might have taken place behind the scenes.

U.S. laws require that organizations report data breaches to the impacted individuals and in larger breaches to the government. You can scan a list of 500 significant 2020 breaches of Personal Health Information (PHI) at [https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/breach/breach\\_report.jsf](https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/breach/breach_report.jsf). How many organizations actually comply and how many quietly pay off the hackers is anybody’s guess. But, be assured, eventually, your data will be exposed. Take these steps to lessen the impact of the inevitable breach.

1. Use different IDs and passwords for your accounts. Hackers know that many use the same IDs and passwords. So, when they discover this information at one site, they will try it on others.
2. Use dual authentication where offered and consider shifting from organizations that do not offer it. In dual authentication, a message is sent to your smartphone for your confirmation. So, a hacker would also need to have your device to be able to access your account.
3. Monitor your credit report and review your credit card, investment and bank statements to ensure that no unauthorized transactions have occurred. Notice any missing credit card or utility bills.
4. If notified that your data was part of a breach, update your password and change it at any other site where you have used that password. Redouble your efforts to monitor your credit reports. Accept any offer by the organization to pay for credit or identity monitoring services.
5. Check <https://haveibeenpwned.com> to see if your email and password can be found for sale on the dark web. The results will only be meaningful if you use strong passwords that others are not likely to have used as well. Change compromised passwords.
6. Consider placing a credit freeze with the three credit reporting agencies. This restricts access to your credit report, which makes it more difficult for identity thieves to open new accounts in your name.
7. Consider signing up for a credit or identity monitoring service that will alert you if your data has appeared on the dark web or someone has used your information to open a credit account.

For additional guidance, see <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/697985.pdf>.

*This is the sixty second in a series of articles by JGSCV founding member Hal Bookbinder. Hal is also a Past President of JGSLA and IAIGS. He is the 2010 recipient of the IAIGS Lifetime Achievement Award and his online skills are well documented. All the Safe Computing articles by Hal Bookbinder are available on the JGSCV website [www.jgscv.org](http://www.jgscv.org) under*



# Commemorating the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the End of World War II

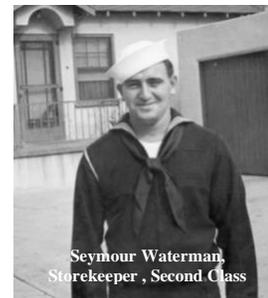
Last year was the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II and JGSCV members and friends are contributed stories about themselves or their ancestors who fought in the war. We are continuing this series into 2021 so If you have a story to share, please let Allan know at [newslettereditor@jgscv.org](mailto:newslettereditor@jgscv.org).

JGSCV member Carrie Glicksteen writes about her dad,

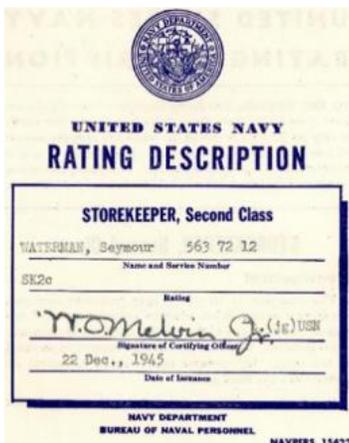
## **Seymour Waterman, Storekeeper, Second Class, U.S. Navy**

Growing up I never thought much about my dad's Naval service. Being a Baby Boomer, it seemed everyone's father had been in the service. Nothing Dad had told us about his time in the Navy was the stuff about which movies were made. Dad didn't talk much about his service and I never got the impression he was ever in any real danger. I wasn't completely correct in my assumptions.

To write this story, I relied on my interview notes, the official War History of the USS Lenoir AKA-74 (a mimeographed copy of a document written by the ship's executive officer), research, and Dad's photos and documents. At 98 years old, Dad doesn't read books for pleasure anymore. Recently, while this story was in draft form, about 10 pages long, I gave it to him to read. He read every page straight through! At the end, he commented, "I was at a lot of these places." So, here is what I know.



Seymour Waterman,  
Storekeeper, Second Class



**What I Know** On the 15<sup>th</sup> of October 1942, 20-year-old Seymour signed up for service in the Navy, choosing to enlist, rather than to wait and be drafted into the U.S. Army as he had seen happen to his two older brothers. He had been thrust into manhood two years prior when he found himself all alone with his mother when she died at Cedars of Lebanon Hospital in Los Angeles (November 1, 1940). He still tears up when recalling his mother.

Seymour reported to the Naval Training Center at Terminal Island. There he was issued his uniform and received some initial training. He was designated Storekeeper, Second Class.

In 1943, Seymour's training continued at Naval Air Station Clinton, located at Burns Flat, Oklahoma, between Clinton and Elk City.

At some point in Dad's naval career he had his tonsils removed. I learned about his tonsillectomy when I had mine at age 5. According to Dad, sailors were lined up in a hallway when the Naval physician came to him and said, "Open your mouth." He did. The doctor reached in with something that resembled pliers. Snip, snip and out came the tonsils!

### **Being Jewish and in the Navy**

Whenever Dad spoke about his time in Oklahoma, he always repeated a couple of stories. He told us about how the Navy arranged for Jewish "boys" to be invited to homes of local Jewish families for the High Holidays.



Dad recalled fondly attending a High Holiday meal with the Donchin family. The 1940 Census shows Abraham and Fannie Donchin, with daughters Mozelle, 22 years, Frieda, 22 years, and son, Maurice, 13 years living on W. Third Street in Elk City, Oklahoma. Forty years after that meal, Seymour looked up the family's son, Maurice, when he was in Oklahoma City on business. At age 57, Maurice fondly remembered the Navy boys' visit. Dad spoke very warmly about this family and the experience of being welcomed into this Jewish family's home. I decided to see if I could find living relatives of the Donchin family. Through an obituary I found David Donchin, Maurice's son, in July 2020. David told me it was very important to his family to host military men for the Jewish holidays. David explained that his grandmother reached out to Naval leadership to request young men be invited to their home for Jewish holidays on multiple occasions. I'm hoping to receive some pictures of the family Dad remembers with such fondness and appreciation.

Following his time in Oklahoma, Seymour was stationed in Houston, Texas where he enthusiastically answered the call to serve as escort for an AWOL Naval prisoner in transit to the prison at Terminal Island. He was adamant about getting the prisoner transfer assignment because he had a plan to use the 72 hours allotted for the prisoner transfer to also get married to his young love, Betty Joyce, my mom.



Seymour's wedding plan was realized. Seymour, Betty, her parents, and his brother, Albert, drove through the stifling Arizona desert, and August 25, 1944 Betty and Seymour were married.

After a couple of weeks in Houston, Seymour got orders to go to Rhode Island for sea draft. Ten sailors and Betty rode the train to Rhode Island.

### **You're in the Navy Now**

The Base in Rhode Island was where crews were assembled for all Navy ships. Seymour's crew assembled for the first time as a complete group at the naval Training Station, Newport, Rhode Island on 3 November 1944.

Betty followed Seymour to Charleston, South Carolina to pick up the brand-new ship, USS Lenoir AKA 74. While in Charleston, Betty, with the other young wives, stayed at the YMCA. As storekeeper, Seymour's responsibility was to assist with spare parts for ships, something he said he had no interest in doing, and ironically what he ended up doing for his life's work.

The Lenoir (AKA-74) was designed to carry military cargo and landing craft. Betty and Seymour were both aboard the Lenoir for its commissioning on December 14, 1944 and for the full 17 months it was commissioned.

The Lenoir left Charleston, headed to Norfolk for one day and then on to Chesapeake Bay on January 13, 1945 for a "shakedown cruise" for three days. Six days of launching boars, 0400 reveilles, temperatures of 20 degrees, amphibious landings and hoisting boats under adverse conditions; the freezing weather offered those conditions. The week was spent in short range battle practice, anti-aircraft target firing and fueling at sea." (USS Lenoir War History)

After shakedown, the ship returned to Norfolk Navy Yard on 20 January. Loaded with supplies for the Naval Supply Depot in Pearl Harbor, Oahu, Territory of Hawaii, the Lenoir left Norfolk on 31 January with three other ships in their task unit. They traversed the Caribbean and entered the Panama Canal 6th. What a different trip he had in 2001 when he took our family on a lovely Princess Line Panama Canal Cruise! Dad seemed to be very impressed by the engineering of the Canal and was happy to share this part of his war experience with us.

The Lenoir's trip to Hawaii from the Panama Canal took 14 days during which the crew performed drills and exercises. They were sent to help secure Guadalcanal, then the Marshall Islands, Guam, Saipan, and the Philippines. "We were close to action in Okinawa, but we were lucky," Dad described. On the morning of 30 March, they successfully entered the anchorage of Ulithi and on 3 April they were underway to Saipan. Enroute plans changed. On 12 April 1945 the Lenoir received two important communications. First, their orders rerouted them to Okinawa, secondly, news of the death of President and Commander in Chief, Franklin D. Roosevelt was received.

The next day they embarked for Okinawa. The Battle for Okinawa had begun on April 1<sup>st</sup>, code name "Operation Iceberg". "The initial invasion was the largest amphibious assault in the Pacific Theater" (Wikipedia).

On the Morning of 17 April, the Lenoir arrived off Hagushi beaches, Okinawa and was ordered to proceed immediately to Nago Wan Bay, Okinawa. The discharging of cargo was interrupted by red alerts (enemy airplane raids) which continued for the next three days. "We were lucky," is all Dad said. I never knew the details of this lucky episode. He never spoke about any danger or action he saw during the war.

On 27 May the Lenoir arrived at Eniwetok where they spent 18 days waiting for orders for departure to Guam. Finally, they arrived at Guam on 17 June. Then on 25 June, the ship secured for sea with 39 enlisted men headed for San Francisco. "Spirits ran high and all hands were looking forward to leave, liberty and recreation in the States. All available time and energy were devoted to getting the ship into tip-top shape." (War History)

On 10 July at 1000 the Golden Gate Bridge became visible. Some of the ship's crew took leave, using their liberties in San Francisco. Mom met dad in San Francisco. They visited relatives and shared some romantic times.

On 25 July 1945 the Lenoir loaded cargo and headed to Maui and Pearl Harbor. Dad was on board as they departed San Francisco the evening of 2 August.

The night of 13 August was memorable. "That night during the movie we witnessed the fireworks and celebration for the premature V-J day announcement. Pictures of the fireworks show evidence that nothing was left undone in giving vent to feelings and emotions."



Dad recalled, “We heard fireworks and a lot of noise. People were cheering and shouting to celebrate the end of the War with the Japanese. We started walking toward Waikiki. There were hundreds of people in the street. The crowd kind of carried us along.” News of the surrender was official the next day, Aug. 14, 1945,



Dad’s 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday! He brought home a couple of historic newspapers:

The Lenoir was headed to Japan after a stop at Saipan on 19 September. Saipan was significant as the last command everyone had received word of the armed and US Troops had to be

post of the Japanese army and not Japanese surrender. Some remaining Japanese were careful.

Just a couple of months before Dad’s ship arrived in Saipan, it was the site where the atomic bombs dropped by U.S. planes on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were loaded onto those planes.

On 1 October the Lenoir departed Wakayama for Manila, Philippine Islands, arriving there in six days. They next visited Subic Bay where Naval Base Subic Bay, a major ship-repair, supply, and rest and recreation facility for the Spanish Navy and later the U.S. Navy.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S.\\_Naval\\_Base\\_Subic\\_Bay#World\\_War\\_II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Naval_Base_Subic_Bay#World_War_II)

The photo below was one of the most startling things I found in dad’s belongings. He told this story: One day, while in Kure, an officer invited anyone who wanted to go to travel upriver with him to see the damage at Hiroshima. Dad went. This is what he saw. He took the photo below from the boat. I have never seen an image such as this in a textbook or anywhere else for that matter. “In hindsight, it probably wasn’t such a good idea to go,” Dad commented years later.

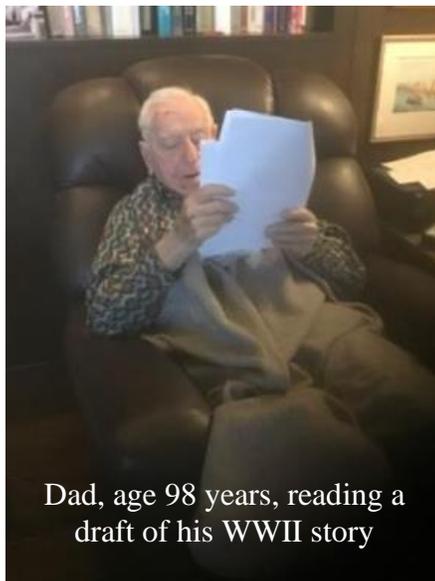


After their job was completed, from 25 October until 2 November the officers and crew “sweated out” waiting to learn their next assignment. On the morning of 4 November, we retraced our course through Bungo Suido and set out on a great circle course at maximum speed for the Golden Gate. Thus, ends the War History of the USS Lenoir.

The officers and men of the “Mighty L” deserve much credit for the successful operation of the vessel during one year of service in the active theatre of war. At Okinawa

Shima, Wakayama, Honshu, Japan, Aringa, Luzon Philippine Islands and Hiro Wan, Honshu, Japan, all hands were commended by the Commanding Officer for a job WELL DONE. A good ship and a good crew has written another chapter in the saga of the sea.”

Approved: Marcus L. Whitford, US Naval Reserve, Commanding Officer.” (War History, USS Lenoir)



Beginning in October 1945, over 370 navy ships were used for repatriation duties in the Pacific. Warships, such as aircraft carriers, battleships, hospital ships, and large numbers of assault transports were used. The European phase of Operation Magic Carpet concluded in February 1946 while the Pacific phase continued until September 1946.

### What I Know Now

Every person who has served in the military was brave and has stories to tell. Dad’s life *was* in danger multiple times during his military service. Though not in a foxhole on the front lines, his work was important.

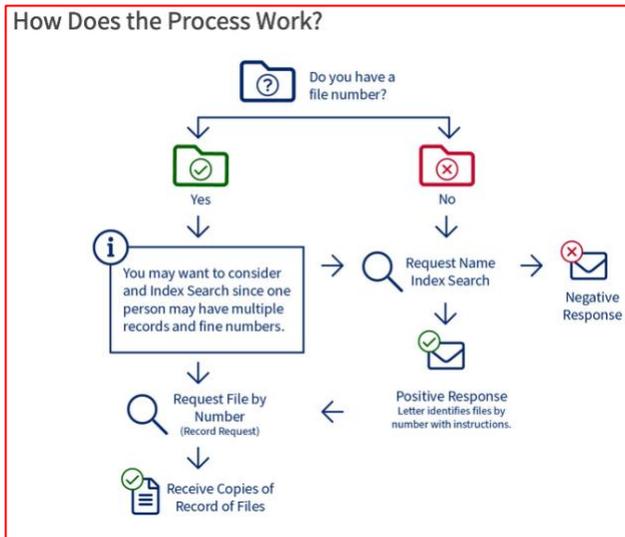
Whatever he experienced as an enlisted man contributed to his growth as a person. He is my hero, not because of a specific action in battle, but because he worked hard, was a leader in our community and our family. He demonstrated his toughness time and

again, not with bravado, but with care, generosity, bravery, and love.

## USCIS Proposes New Fees for Genealogists

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services proposed a significant increase in fees for genealogical records. According to the USCIS, “Use form G-1041A to obtain copies of USCIS historical records. (To request an index search of USCIS historical records, use Form G-1041, Genealogy Index Search Request.)” The proposed new fees add about \$100 for the request of an actual record when filed on paper and about \$200 when the request is filed online via the DHS using Form G-1041A. At this time, the fee for a request using form G-1041 and for an actual record is \$65 each. The proposed **new fees**, using the same form, is \$255 when filed online and \$265 when filed by using a paper form. If you plan to access any information using USCIS data, you may want to start the process soon.

The forms may be found at:  
<https://www.uscis.gov/genealogy>



# Genealogy Odds and Ends

## RootsTech Connect Is Free in 2021

For the first time ever, Roots Tech (February 25-27) will be entirely virtual and completely free. Get ready to celebrate shared connections with people from around the world. Connect with friends, your family, your past, and your heritage and homelands—all from the comfort of your home and in your browser. Go here to read more and to register: [https://www.rootstech.org/?lang=eng&et\\_cid=1828608&et\\_rid=113694786&linkid=RootsTechLogo&cid=em-fsn-10572](https://www.rootstech.org/?lang=eng&et_cid=1828608&et_rid=113694786&linkid=RootsTechLogo&cid=em-fsn-10572)

The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany and the Commission for Art Recovery initiated the Jewish Digital Cultural Recovery Project with initial funding of €490,000 from the European Union's Creative Europe program. In addition to listing both missing and recovered art, it will explore the looting networks and the trade and digitize thousands of documents and photographs from archives. For more information, go here: <http://jdcrp.org/>

The Israel Genealogy Research Association (IGRA) added or updated more than 1.8 million records. New databases include Ashkenazi Cemetery Tiberias, Jaffa/Yafo Cemetery, Voters Jerusalem Municipal Election 1934, Tel Aviv Marriage Ledger 1931-1939, Illegal Immigrants, 1939-1942, Immigrants 1945, Enlistment Jerusalem 1948. Updated databases include 1,786 Palestine Marriage/Divorce Certificates. Before viewing and searching the databases, you must register at <http://genealogy.org.il>. There is no charge to register.



The Arolsen Archives added about one million documents to their online archive additions including pictures of prisoners and transport lists from the Auschwitz concentration camp as well as letters written by Soviet forced laborers to their families. Go to: <https://arolsen-archives.org/en/news/update-online-archive/>.

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# JGSCV MEMBERS' FAMILY STORIES

JGSCV's June speaker Joan Adler advised genealogists to write down whatever you know about your ancestor(s) and not worry about style, chronology or even whether it seems to make sense. Just do it! We think that's a great idea and VENTURING INTO OUR PAST began our FAMILY STORIES series as a result. This month, JGSCV board member Andrea Massion shares her family story.

## How Laurel and Hardy Drove a Truck Through My Genealogical Roadblock

By Andrea Massion

During the 2020 quarantine, I sat down to watch Laurel and Hardy's "Sons of the Desert" (1933) on Turner Classic Movies. Growing up in Los Angeles, it is not uncommon to know someone "in the business" of movie-making. My grandfather, Hiram Massion was a prop maker at 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, thanks to his training in metal crafts at the TRUD school in Odessa, Ukraine. His brother-in-law, Jack Asrican studied carpentry at TRUD, and built most of those lavish staircases of the 1940's in Fox films. My mother and I were actors, and my father even did a short stint at Fox assisting his uncle. Family film lore maintained that my father, Nate pushed a canoe off-camera in "Forever Amber" (1947) (probably true) and that Hiram wagged the tail of the cowardly lion with a fishing rod in "The Wizard of Oz" (1939). (Definitely FALSE since it was made at MGM.)

The other Massion brothers, Jack, Ben and Alex Isaac opened pharmacies in Los Angeles and Long Beach in the early 1930's after studying at Cal Berkeley. When I began my hobby of genealogy research back in the 1990's, my dad's cousin, Sol Rischall, already 89 years young, told me stories and shared his photos. There are just a few taken outside one of the Massion Drug Company sites. One site had a U.S. Postal station, another had an ice cream machine. The stores were gone in my lifetime.

Back to Laurel and Hardy: the parade scene starts and I am speechless. On the corner building are letters that say "Massion Drug Company," with awnings below and crowds of extras in the street. Never was this told to us that we might see one of the drug stores in a 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox film! I googled and found this from <http://www.laurel-and-hardy.com/films/features/sons-shoot.html>



Reel four begins with a montage of parade scenes, showing conventioners marching past people looking on. Only the last few scenes of this sequence were those shot on the studio backlot -- the ones picturing Laurel & Hardy. Most of the montage consists of then months-old stock footage captured in Santa Monica when that city's local Lodge of Elks held a state convention. The antlered herd is shown parading past Massion Drug Co.,

which was located **near the studio on Centinela Avenue** in Santa Monica, close to where the carnage in *TWO TARS* (1928) was filmed. <http://www.laurel-and-hardy.com/films/features/sons-shoot.html>



After recovering my faculties, I called my friend, Stan Taffel, an active member of *Sons of the Desert* and a film history professional. He sent the still photo the next day. I realized that I had to research the city directories for the *correct* locations of the Massion Drug Company, and finally got a great view of the drug store we didn't know about on or around Venice Blvd.

## Future JGSCV Meeting Dates through October 2021



**ALL MEETINGS WILL BE RESERVED FOR MEMBERS ONLY VIA ZOOM UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**

NEXT MEETING: SUNDAY, January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1:30-3:30PM via Zoom

Jarrett Ross will present on both Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam AND Forensic Genealogy

DATE	PRESENTER	PROGRAM
Feb. 14	Marian Smith	Researching USCIS Records
Mar. 7	Amy Wachs	Food of Eastern Europe Family
Apr. 11	TBA	Yom Hashoah Program
May 2	Stanley Diamond	Next JRI-Poland

DATE	PRESENTER	PROGRAM
July 11	TBA	TBA
Aug. 15	TBA	TBA
No meeting to observe High Holidays		
Oct. 3	TBA	TBA

**Until further notice, all future meetings will be held on Sunday from 1:30-3:30 PM**

## Facebook for Genealogy?



*By Allan Linderman*

Of course, Facebook isn't for everyone. But, it is hard to argue against its potential as a useful genealogical tool. There just may be someone among its 2.7 billion worldwide users who can help with your genealogy. Or, who you may be able to help. Or, who may actually be a relative.

One of the things Facebook does to forge communities (and of course, to keep you on their site) is to invite people with similar interests to join a 'group'. Personally, I am a member of several groups. One so small, it includes only 7 members (my elementary school classmates) and one so large it has almost 37,000 members (Schelly Talalay Dardashti's *Tracing the Tribe*).

If this is something that interests you, first establish a Facebook account (simple and free) and then search for your interest. For example, searching groups for 'Jewish Genealogy' brings up more than 50 groups. Of course not all will be of interest to you.

Group members ask and answer questions relevant to that group. For example, a question about Geni's reliability posted on the group *Jewish Genealogy Portal*, elicited 25 responses in less than a day. Of course, all the responses may not be accurate. That is up to you to determine, but there is typically ample response from many members to help tease out the guesses from the fact.

As always, when using the internet do your best to protect your privacy.

Good luck!

**2021 Membership/Renewal Form**

**Jewish Genealogical Society**

**of the**

**Conejo Valley and Ventura County (JGSCV)\***

\*Member of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS)

**www.JGSCV.org**

**Dues paid now are good through December 2021**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Check one:

This is a New Membership \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Single \$ 30.00 \_\_\_\_\_ + \$1.00\*\* Family\* \$35.00 \_\_\_\_\_ + \$2.00\*\*

\*family defined as two people living in the same household

\*\* \$1 per person is a voluntary donation to the IAJGS Stern Award, granted annually when it recognizes institutions for outstanding work in the creation and availability of resources for Jewish Genealogy.

Additional voluntary contributions:

Library Acquisition Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Programs Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Security Fee Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(suggested minimum voluntary contribution for any fund \$5.00)

Make check out to: JGSCV Mail application to: Helene Rosen,  
28912 Fountainwood St.  
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

Name (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zipcode+4 \_\_\_\_\_

Home telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile telephone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Talents that you have to share (accounting skills, language skills, computer skills, translation, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_