

CHOL – Community History On-Line

A forum for those involved in preserving the footprint of Southern African Jewish community life in digital form

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Community History On-Line Newsletter #3 22 February 2024

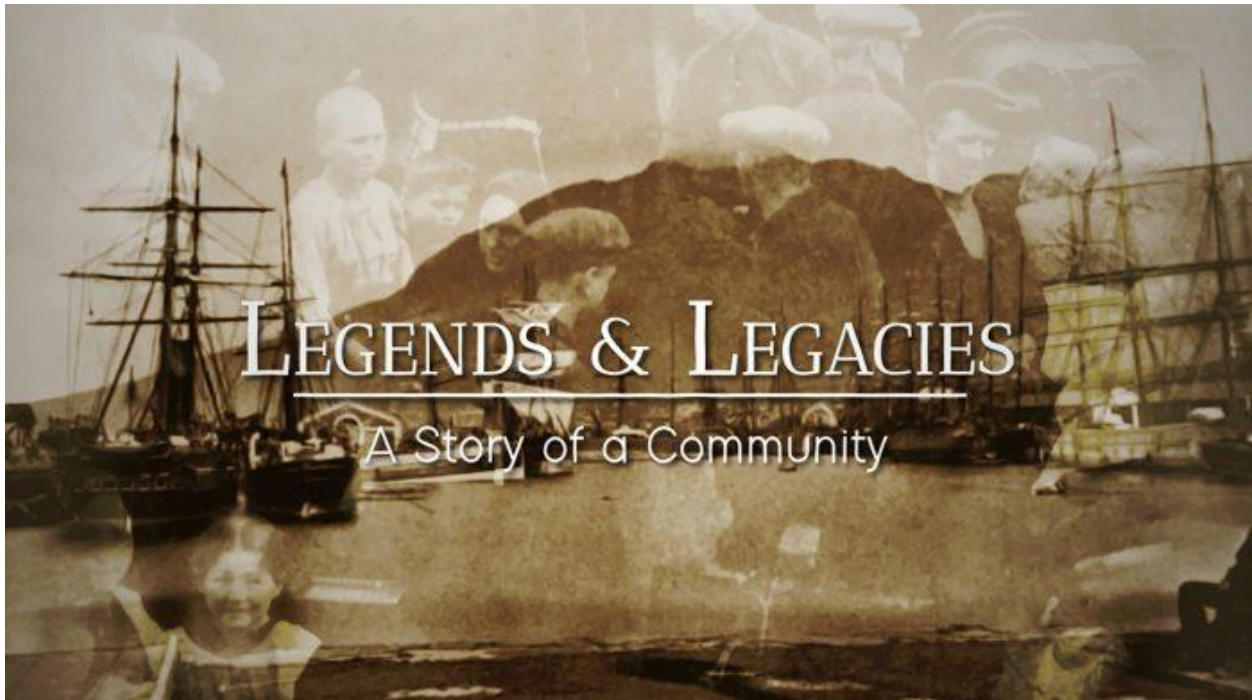
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3. **New Musical Memoirs** on the CHOL website: SA Divas **Aviva Pelham, Chayele Rosenthal, Olga Rhys**, and pianist **Charles Segal**

Next CHOL Presentations:

Legends and Legacies

Thursdays 21, 28 March, and 4 April



CHOL has the honour of hosting filmmakers **Mark Wade** and **Alan Swerdlow**, who in three sessions, will take us through the making of their groundbreaking film series *Legends and Legacies* for this year's Pre-Pesach CHOL international presentations.

These films expertly cover all aspects of Jewish history, business, social and cultural life in South Africa. They crossed the country, from small villages to major cities and uncovered little-known stories, interviewing community members from all walks of life, finding both joy and sadness and remarkable achievement. They will share these experiences with us and show excerpts from their films.

These three Zoom sessions are free of charge and will take place on **Thursdays 21 and 28 March, and 4 April** (the middle one, at 12.00noon and the other two at 7.00pm South African time.)

Register your interest in tuning in, by emailing info@chol.website to receive the zoom link.

Please pass this information to any friends who might be interested in CHOL and its activities.

Share Your Stories: Join Gail Lustig on Sunday 10 March

8.00pm SA time: Meet the writers and hear them read their stories.



The large group of creative writers that Gail has brought together in **Share Your Stories** has felt specially blessed and fortified these last three months by being able to share their reflections and thoughts, their hopes and fears about the horrors and trauma we all feel, wherever we may be, since 7 October. Gail has circulated many responses.

Gail writes: The next regular **Share Your Stories** Zoom session where we share our stories, will take place on Sunday 10 March at 8.00pm South African time. The invitation still stands for you to send us pieces you have written, now or in the past, that you'd like to share on the site (www.chol.website/stories). There you can read the one hundred and eleven stories already posted on the website, some of which you can also hear read aloud by the authors.

Register your interest to join the session at info@chol.website and we will send the Zoom link.

In Addition, Gail invites you all to Send a 'Postcard' to gail@chol.website

Gail is inviting **everyone receiving this CHOL Newsletter** to send her your thoughts expressing how the months since 7 October have impacted on your feelings of being Jewish – and if your South African roots have a bearing on that.

The short submission should be between 500 and 1000 words. There are many different ways of regarding the changed realities.

All opinions expressed will be respected and published. I look forward to hearing from you.

Community Updates:

Roodepoort



With the determination of **Geoffrey Boner** in Israel, working with material collected by the late Brian Josselowitz in Cape Town – and of course with the help of **Bramie Lenhoff**, who so wonderfully builds the CHOL websites (once the material has been collected) – a site for Roodepoort is now up on the CHOL website. You can read the timeline of

Jews in the area, about the synagogue and some of the families. As small children many residents remember the force of the tornado that hit the town in 1948. It lasted only a few minutes but wreaked havoc. Read it all here: [Roodepoort Jewish Community](#)

Muizenberg

We were very pleased to have had great feedback from descendants of hoteliers regarding Muizenberg hotels and their Jewish connections. With this new information and also information from gleaning posts on Muizenberg Facebook groups, we have completely redone article the on Muizenberg Hotels and their Jewish connections. **Eli Rabinowitz**, who was pleased to be in Muizenberg to celebrate their centenary in January this year, has been refurbishing his Kehilinks site for Muizenberg. If you click the link and go to 'Places' you can access the new article on the 'Hotels and their Jewish Connections', as well as the latest compilations on the '**Beach & Bathing Boxes**' and about the three beach '**Pavilions**'. There are lots of iconic pictures there too. Click here: [Muizenberg](#).



Gerald Seftel of Johannesburg explained: *"The influence of the Jewish community was remarkable, and in 1925, 17 of the 25 hotels in Muizenberg were Jewish owned. They had their heyday in the 30s 40s and 50s but by the 1970s they had closed and turned into old*

age homes or flats – **or worse!** The picture above shows the Alexandra Hotel, the first three story building in the town, opened in 1908 going up in flames in 1964. (This picture, that was sent to **Hedy Davis** by Pearl Gisichen, is from Hedy's own Facebook page here <https://www.facebook.com/Muizenbergshtetl>).

Hedy Davis wrote the comprehensive book about Jewish Muizenberg called *Muizenberg - the story of the Shtetl by the Sea*. Go to Hedy's website <http://www.muizenbergshtetl.com/Hedys-Videos/> to see videos of her walking through the village – though the links to 'buy the book' don't seem to work.

Kimberley [Virtual Cemetery](#) launched 4 February 2024

For those that missed the launch event, and who have asked about a recording – it is at no 25 on the CHOL 'presentations' page - or click here: [Kimberley Cemetery 'Blessing'](#).



Above left is **Larry Galansky** who created this concept to help his father raise the funds needed for the Cape Town cemetery – and who generously offered this platform to be developed for Kimberley and other communities. Above right is **Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft**, who looks after small Jewish communities in South Africa. In the middle above, is a page dedicated to a family member. When you search, this is the page that comes up for each person. You can then interact in a number of ways, like placing a stone, uploading a photograph, writing a message and purchasing some leaves on their tree of life – the funds for which go to the upkeep of the cemeteries. This page is for Helen Brown

SA Divas on the website www.chol.website:



New on the **Memoirs Page** we feature an interview with [Aviva Pelham, Opera Singer](#) – one of the South African musicians we could not fit in to the recent music series. Another we would have liked to feature was [Chayele Rosenthal, Yiddish Diva](#). We have now linked our memoirs page to her extensive website lovingly created by her daughter Zola Shuman of Cape Town that charts her survival from the Vilna Ghetto and



her stellar career in Europe, America and South Africa with links to their performances. We are glad to add their stellar stories to the 'memoirs' pages of the CHOL website. Click the links above to read their stories.

Olga Ryss

Another South African diva - with her story now on the 'Memoirs' page is the internationally renowned opera star and voice coach **Olga Ryss** - perhaps a less familiar name? Her remarkable story was brought to our attention by **Beulah Gross** in Australia whose family is related to Olga. Born in Libau, Latvia and trained in St Petersburg, Olga was already touring internationally before she arrived in South Africa in 1935. Once in Johannesburg, she was involved in all aspects of opera production and became a much sought-after singing teacher. Many of her pupils became very well-known in the operatic world, notably Hanlie van Niekerk. After meeting with the more famous mezzo, Jennie Tourel, when she toured SA, Olga was lured to America where she set up a singing school. She and Jennie had great success teaching at the Aspen summer Schools in Colorado. You can read Olga's story on the Memoirs page too. [Olga Ryss, Opera Singer and Vocal Coach](#)



Charles Segal

And a Pianist/Composer. Yet another South African heavily involved with music was brought out our attention by **Herman Salmenson**. This is the prolific pianist, composer and recording artist **Charles Segal** who arrived in Pretoria as a small boy. He started by writing award winning songs in Afrikaans. In an age of LPs, he made hundreds; so much so that in 2017, he won the **Guinness Book of Records** award for the Most Recorded Pianist in the World! (left). He said: 'It took me and my assistants about 5 years to upload, organize and sort my database of some of my songs. We actually still haven't even got to the entire catalogue – for the Guinness World Records title we submitted only 11,721 of my song recordings, but I probably have around 25,000 tracks of different pieces I've recorded – and many are my own compositions.'



You can now also read Charles Segal's story on the CHOL Memoirs page. On his YouTube channel, [Charles Segal Music](#), there are 79 videos of Charles Segal and his great variety of music, such as: Romantic Piano for Valentines Day; Live Piano Improvisation; Songs of Africa, songs for Channukah. There are also documentaries and SABC performances. A truly versatile and celebrated South African pianist, composer and record producer.

Thank you, Beulah and Hermann, for enabling us to honour these special South African artists.

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Keep us informed of your CHOL – Community History On-Line activities and interests.  
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CHOL Newsletter no 3 compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE, London February 2024, comes to you with every good wish for calm and peace in a troubled world.

Checkout the CHOL website: www.chol.website which now has on it:

- 111 original stories
- 47 communities - also resources and journal articles etc
- 33 Memoirs
- 25 Video presentations

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**CHOL – Community History On-Line** is a forum set up in 2020, under the auspices of the Kaplan Centre at UCT and the South African Jewish Museum – bringing together all those working on / or interested in creating an online presence relating to the **History of Jewish Communities in Southern Africa**. see [www.chol.website](http://www.chol.website) contact [info@chol.website](mailto:info@chol.website).

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SAJM
South African Jewish Museum