



CHOL – Community History On-Line

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

Community History On-Line

Newsletter # 12

December 2024

In this issue: compiled by Gail Lustig gail@chol.website

1. **The Share Your Stories Site, take a look [Gail Loon Lustig](#)**
2. **A Memorable Discovery Session - Two special writers Orna and Natalie**

‘2024’

2024 held promise for heralding in a good year; or so it seemed. After all, the four numbers one after the other, look good on paper. A sunny emoji might just have replaced the yellow ribbon 🧡 that has flooded our phones this year.

Yes, as we all know, just the opposite was in store for many of us. Unprecedented chaos tinged with trauma and pain. The reality has shattered all anticipation of a quiet year.

For me, coping with life right now, is keeping busy and so today, I sat quietly and checked out the **153 stories** on the CHOL site and was struck by the meaningful themes, stories and writers filling the pages that Bramie Lenhoff, our amazing volunteer in Delaware, has so diligently set up for us on the ‘stories’ section of the CHOL website www.chol.website.

I share a few thoughts with you about them (click the title to read the story).

There are the stories about love - [The Love Story](#) by Glenda Levitt which tells of the forbidden relationship of a young Jewish Lithuanian with Catholic Jadviga whose love never died despite the years of their living apart. And then there’s the love for her father that Jodi Neelin Schneider writes about in [Some Days](#) which shakes me every time I read it.

Nostalgia is a prominent topic in many stories; [Table Mountain](#) by Brian Meyer reminds us of the ‘back way’ up the mountain which Capetonians were so familiar with. [Outside](#) by Basil Porter tells of the family house in Lower Houghton and [Gran's Place](#) while Beulah Gross describes the modest flat of her grandmother in charming detail, the sewing machine an integral part of the furniture.

There are stories telling of personal careers such as [Medical and Ophthalmic Photography](#) by Avra Scher and [My First Week of Work](#) by Leon Moss which relates the writer’s working experience as a

fresh immigrant in Israel. [The Eyes Have it](#) by Sheila Swartzman tells the story of a traumatic incident at work as an anaesthetist.

Sport in South Africa is warmly remembered by Stanley Loon in [Sport in the Sixties](#) while [The Knockout](#) by yours truly, is still one of my favourite personal stories telling how my late father Donny Loon was actually behind the surprise world championship bantam weight win which took place in Johannesburg in the early 1950's when Australian boxer Jimmy Carruthers smashed Vic Toweel! Where did a Jewish GP come to boxing??!

Apartheid was indeed experienced sharply by all of us even though we were outwardly calm and almost content in our community bubble. And yet, reading the tiny story of Bella Brom telling of her experience in a double decker bus - [Double Decker Buses](#) in those days of discrimination is sad and disturbing. Linda Frysh's [Tokolosh](#) a must read, beautifully written tale of the times, has special significance for all of us.

It's time to note and remember the special relationships that have been created with so many of **you**, dear CHOLers! **Tony Fine** who sadly passed away was a keen and avid reader of his stories in our presentations. After his passing in Jan 2023 we had a special meeting to remember Tony which can be visited in this link; [A Tribute to Tony Fine by Family and Friends](#)

And then there's **Karine Schomer**, the late Raphael Shevelev's wife whom I discovered by chance when I wrote to him after reading [Mrs Marcus's Bagels](#) only to be answered weeks later by Karine who by chance looked at his email. Raphael had passed away many months before. Karine soaked up Raphael's love for Cape Town and 'despite the fact that she has never visited the city, in the three decades of her marriage to Raphael, she has absorbed the culture, the history, the feel, the references, and the lore of her husband's native place to the point that she feels deeply and personally connected to it'.

Fonda Dubb, living in Eilat, started writing [poems](#) under the tree in her garden at her retirement home, and has now started a Poetry sharing group after moving to Beth Protea in Herzlia!

Margaret Green in [Finding Borys Tolsczynski](#) wrote this at the end of her story.

'This account is just the South African component of a much bigger story which unfolded in Eastern Europe during some of the most turbulent times in world history. It involves the migrations of two families, separations, war years spent in unimaginable terror in the crowded Vilna ghetto, in camps and in hiding, the murder of close relatives, moments of courage, humane Lithuanians as well as Nazi collaborators, partisans, lucky escapes, reconfiguring lives in new countries, reunions and professional successes, and families once again separated – this time by the Cold War.'

I have not mentioned the wonderful memoirs that have been posted and shared including the one of **Stanley Moss** [Johannesburg-A Memoir](#) which had been stored in the cupboard of his brother Leon in Israel for more than twenty years and is a delight to read.

I hope you've enjoyed this short review of our current "Share Your Stories" site and its members. There's so much more to add which I shall definitely do in the next letter.

Our history has been compressed and as it were, the distant past seems to have caught up with the shaky present.

I repeat our invitation to you, friends of our forum, to continue sharing your writing with us and thank you all for your friendship, support and interest shown over these past two- and a-bit years.

There's so much more to be said, but 'after all tomorrow is another day'....

Be well,

Gail

A Delightful Session -Two Writers in the World of Crime and Mystery

Towards the end of November, two new contributors to CHOL Share Your Stories gathered at the crack of dawn in Sydney, Australia , and at 21.30 in Israel with all the rest of the forum somewhere in between to a riveting discussion about their ventures into the genre of Crime Fiction.

Natalie Conyer, who relocated to Australia in the 70's after growing up in Bellville , Cape, drew on her past to create a plot and characters which are easily connected to by all of us 'Capiers'. Natalie's books, *Present Tense* and *Shadow City* have received terrific reviews and are the perfect read for these times.

Orna Sandler Klein, born in Israel of South African parents spent 26 years working in the Mossad. Orna's book, *A Spy in the Shadows* is a captivating work of fiction based on her life experiences. It has just been translated to English and is available on Amazon.

Both ladies connected instantly to the attentive forum of participants who enjoyed the topic and tales beyond all expectation.

The comments afterward to CHOL were truly heart-warming, future meetings and correspondence was immediately established and many doors were opened for further communication. A truly memorable occasion was shared by all!

For those interested, the link to the recording of Natalie ad Orna on Crime Fiction is on the CHOL website on the presentation page at no 36 <https://chol.website/presentations.htm>

CHOL Newsletter no 12 compiled by Gail Loon Lustig, Givatayim, December 2024

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

- 53 communities <https://chol.website/communities.htm>
- 57 Memoirs <https://chol.website/memoirs.htm>
- 153 original stories <https://chol.website/stories.htm>
- 36 Videos of presentations <https://chol.website/presentations.htm>

also on the site are resources and journal articles and all our CHOL newsletters

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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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