

# Kimberley Ex-Pats Newsletter no 21, April 2019

Compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE London, April 2019

## Bat Mitzvahs (and Bar Mitzvahs, Weddings and Burials.)

After printing the picture in Newsletter no 20, that **Delia Benn** had sent me, of seven little girls at their Bat Mitzvah Ceremony in 1959 – claiming it to be a first for Kimberley and a ceremony that the Werners introduced – I have since heard that this was not the case (though it may well have been the first group Bat Mitzvah undertaken by **Rabbi Werner**).

**Gwynne Robins (née Schrire)** pictured right, explained:

*“I do not intend to boast, but mine was the first Bat Mitzvah in Kimberley. My Mom used to keep the clipping from the Diamond Fields Advertiser ‘**Kimberley Girl Makes History**’ and there was I with my thick plaits! This was four years earlier, in 1955.*

*“My Mom had decided I should have a Bat Mitzvah. She persuaded two other mothers to join. It was winter and she took me to a tailor to have a white suit made with a jacket and pleated skirt in a thick material – I hated it. Fortunately, the other two girls pulled out, the event was moved to summer and my Mom, who used to make my clothes, made me a pretty, white summer dress which I much preferred.*

*“The rabbi (must have been **Rabbi Bloch**) had never conducted a Bat Mitzvah before. I would visit him once a week and he would read me a chapter from a thin book called something like ‘What Every Jewish Girl Should Know’. The only thing I remember was that the Jewish wife should not gossip when they sat down at meals and the only conversation should be about the Torah. Our family was Jewish, but we used to discuss all sorts of interesting things at the table.*

*“I do not remember getting **fountain pens** as gifts. Because of my thick plaits, lots of people decided that the most suitable present would be a dressing table set with a hair brush, comb and mirror. We left Kimberley at the end of that year”.*

Gwynne Robins is the Deputy Director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies in Cape Town. She is described by SAJBD as, ‘Indispensable and erudite and an expert on the Jews of South Africa and Cape history, she is a fountain of knowledge that keeps us informed.’ Gwynne lived in Kimberley from age 6 in 1949, to age 12 in 1955. You can read Gwynne’s own story and the wonderful story of her Paternal Great-Grandfather – Raphael Senderovitz – a pioneering retailer and wholesaler as well as miller in Beaconsfield (and a friend of Ernest Oppenheimer) from the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century here <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Schrire.html>



## Bat/Bar Mitzvah Gallery

I am hoping that Gwynn can find that newspaper cutting – or any picture of her Bat Mitzvah to go with this lovely story. There must have been pictures. In fact, every family certainly must have Bar Mitzvah pictures. I wonder whether we can start a **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Gallery**, just as we have made a wedding gallery? That would be fun. (I wonder who might be first to dig out a “Barmy” picture and send it to me?)

## Wedding Gallery

We already have 28 pictures of about 25 weddings on our wedding gallery. We have had to split it into two: **Volume 1**, from 1914 up to 1952 and **Volume 2** from 1953 onwards. Here is the latest posting **Sheila (Frank) to John Grant** (of London). who got married in March 1960. (You can see them all here [Kimberley weddings](#))



In the picture are: Left to right: Marilyn Frank (Shalkoff) the bride's younger sister – sadly just deceased in November 2018), Anita Frank (née Cohen bride's mother) and Masel Frank (bride's father) Sheila Frank (bride) John Grant (groom) Barbara Woolf née Broude (bride's cousin), Polly Grant (groom's mother).

I was (and still am) hoping to be able to document **all** the Kimberley weddings on our Kimberley Jewish Community website. This is a very important part of documenting the history of the community and this would be a good place to preserve and list all the marriages. I asked Barney to have the wedding registers transcribed so we could have the details preserved in a safe place. I was overjoyed to hear that he had by chance

discovered one of the registers lying under the tehara robes! And that he has now enabled Lisette Datnow to transcribe it. I am still hopeful that I can add the dates and names of all the weddings solemnised in the Kimberley shul to our wedding pages.

Meantime, if you would like to have a copy of the details of your own family's marriage, please contact Barney Horwitz who, for a donation towards the upkeep of the Kimberley Shul, would be happy to assist. (I listed the names of those included in the transcribed registers, and the details of how to go about this in Newsletter no 20 which you can read on the website under 'News' – or contact Barney directly on [ahorwitz@lantic.net](mailto:ahorwitz@lantic.net))

We are all, I am sure, extremely grateful to Barney and his few cohorts for the dedication, care and attention they give to the buildings, cemeteries and remaining members of the Kimberley Jewish Community. I hope all who read this Newsletter will want to help them with the upkeep by donating regularly to the synagogue – perhaps at Rosh Hashanah time – or indeed on any occasion – your wedding anniversary – or Bar Mitzvah anniversary.

It's helpful for us to understand what this upkeep entails: Barney recently explained to me the situation that he faces almost on a daily basis:

*“As we speak I have had to place guards from a security company at the **Pioneer Cemetery** in Stead Street dating back to the 1870's, to keep squatters out who ripped out our electric security fencing and solar powered alarm and broke three holes into the wall surrounding the property and then camped in the cemetery until removed by the Police and I have had to have the wall partially rebuilt.*

*“If one looks at the surrounding Christian Cemetery which is maintained by the Municipality you will understand why we have to take these measures. All the tombstones have been stolen in the Christian cemetery and it is impossible to identify where exactly the graves are.*

*At the **West End Cemetery**, I have had to deal with vandals who skirted the security wall (built only a few years ago at a cost of R250 000,00) on the 20th December, stole the water main and flooded the cemetery and we are having to repair the damage there too.*

*Barney continued: “**I have worked for 30 years to keep this community alive when countless others have disappeared, and most expatriates have been indifferent to the survival of the community.** I don't do this for my own benefit. I do it to protect the dignity of the souls who rest there and whose relatives in the main have long since forgotten them. Speak to people who have visited graves in the West End Cemetery from overseas recently and they will tell you it is well kept. I manage to do this by maintaining points of contact with people who have a connection to the community and who donate when approached.*

*(You may think that this is the job of the Country Communities section of the Board of Deputies. But, due to the decline in the number of Functioning Country Communities the Board is shutting down the Country Communities Department at the end of this year!)”*



This is a picture of my late daughter Loren (Jansch – nee Auerbach) when visiting the graves in Kimberley of her great-grandparents Jacob and Amalie Bergman (née Friedlander) on a visit to Kimberley from London in 1998.

Barney, as you can see, will welcome your support. You can ask for your marriage details and also for your relatives' names to be mentioned in the synagogue services. I always invite you to do so – and give you the details of the community bank account so you can send an appropriate donation. (You can see these in any Newsletter dated September of any year.) You can contact Barney directly with any queries or offers of help on [ahorwitz@lantic.net](mailto:ahorwitz@lantic.net).

## Bereavements

In the past few months several of ex Kimberley-ites have sadly passed away. There were **Sandra Finkelstein** (nee Diamond) and **Marilyn Shalkoff** (nee Frank) who passed away at the end of last year (mentioned in Newsletter 20). Since then, my cousin **Lola Waks (nee Hendlr)** passed away on 9 January 2019. She was the daughter of **Hilda and Nate Hendlr**, born in Kimberley about 1933. She grew up and married Simmon Waks in Kimberley and went to live in Carletonville – a town west of Johannesburg and principal mining centre of the Far West Witwatersrand goldfields, where Sim opened the first supermarkets to serve the mining communities. She and Sim have three daughters, Karilyn, Jennifer and Megan. (By 1979 Western Deep Levels Ltd in the locality, operated the world's deepest gold mine, extending to 12,392 feet below the Earth's surface.)

Barney has mentioned more 'passings' of former Kimberley citizens. On 3 April 2019 he reported the passing of **Sandra Sussman** (Mallach) of Johannesburg, daughter of Cecil and Natalie Sussman, and **Diana Goldman** (Meyer) of Toronto, daughter of Buddy and Anne Goldman. And eleven days later he wrote again: *"I have just heard*

that **Lorriane Brown**, widow of late **Ivor Brown**, passed away in Australia yesterday. Our sincere condolences to her sons and family and may they be comforted together with all mourners in Zion at this time. Lorriane lived amongst us for some 20 years and we remember her and Ivor with great fondness.” Perhaps family members might like to write a little profile of these people that we can add to the family pages of the website to memorialise them.

## Natalie and Cecil Sussman – Married 70 years



**Natalie and Cecil Sussman** were due to celebrate their 70<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on 12 March this year. Their family came to Cape Town from Johannesburg, Melbourne and London to be with them. How sad therefore, that just two weeks before the special date, their daughter Sandra died. Cecil said that it was a great shock that after only 2 weeks of feeling ill, Sandy passed away. There had previously been no sign of anything untoward – and she was not yet 68. It was comforting for them to have their entire family around them to give them, and each other, strength at this sad – but also happy time.

Cecil wrote that the celebrations were cancelled, but ‘the little ones who had come all the way, were disappointed at not having a party, so they gathered as a family for tea. They have some wonderful family photos of 4 generations, to remind them of their 70<sup>th</sup>.

Cecil said *“It was wonderful seeing the little ones, who had not previously met their cousins, getting to know and love one another (ages 6 months to 15 years)”*



In this picture Cecil is seated in the middle with Natalie behind him. They had three children, Sandy (sadly deceased February 2019 – married to the late Trevor Mallach. They lived in Johannesburg) Jeff, married to Diana – living in Melbourne, and Laura (married to Michael Radomsky, living in Cape Town). (you can read more about the Sussman family on the Family pages here

[https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Sussman\\_Cecil.html](https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Sussman_Cecil.html)

**Back row:** Michael (Laura's husband, Peter+Ros (their machatonim, Anthony's parents) Anthony+Lindi (Laura's daughter) Laura, Debbi (Laura's daughter) Natalie, Grant (Sandy's son) Erin +Ryan (Grant's children) Debbi (Grant's wife) Hayley (Kollen's wife) and baby, Jeff (our son) Kollen (Jeff's son ) Diana (Jeff's wife).

**Front row:** Alexandra (Lindi's daughter) Cecil, Gabriella (Lindi's daughter) Camilla and Luna (Kollen's daughters)

## **Kimberley Graves**

These people, of this generation, who have sadly died far away from Kimberley, will be buried in places across the world. But thinking of those family members who were buried in the Kimberley cemeteries (specially in the light of what Barney has written above), we are particularly lucky to have the pictures of every grave in both the Pioneer and the West End Jewish cemeteries pristine and documented on our website.

<https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Cemeteries.html>. These pictures were taken by British-American photographer, Jono David, who was welcomed to Kimberley by Barney a few years ago, on his quest round the world, photographing Jewish heritage sites. You can see all the graves in our cemeteries on our website here – linked from Jono's own site: (Shawn Benjamin also took some pictures of the graves in the cemeteries which you can see under photos on the website)

<https://jewishphotolibrary.smugmug.com/AFRICA/AFRICASouth/SOUTHAFRICA/NorthernCape/ZAKimberleyNewJewishCemetery/i-R2PqvDH>

**If you would like to have pictures of your family grave**, (to add to your family page on the website – or for any other purpose) Jono can supply them in digital format at a large size resolution/dimensions for personal use and also to use on the Kimberley Jewish Community family page for your family. He charges £18.00, for 1 photo per order, and £15.00 for additional photos ordered by the same person at the same time. The grave pictures are not searchable under names or dates, so, you have to look through the galleries of pictures yourself and when you find the graves you want, note down the numbers, and contact Jono ([jonodavidphotographer@gmail.com](mailto:jonodavidphotographer@gmail.com)) and give him the numbers and ask him for the images. You could also contact Shawn Benjamin of Ark images and for a similar consideration I am sure he will photograph your family grave when he is next in Kimberley – if he has not already done so. You can contact him at [shawn@arkimages.com](mailto:shawn@arkimages.com).

**And at the same time, you might think it appropriate to send a suitable donation to Barney Horwitz and the community who are tasked with actually caring for and looking after the cemeteries and the graves of our loved ones.**

I look forward to hearing from you

Best wishes

Geraldine

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