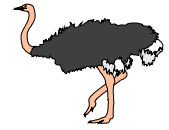


STRAUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.



Volume 9 Number 2

Newsletter

February 2008

An Evening with the Straus Family February 6, 2008 American Jewish Historical Society and the Straus Historical Society

On Wednesday, February 6, 2008 the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS) and the Straus Historical Society (SHS) presented "An Evening with the Straus Family" at the Center for Jewish History in New York City. About 150 people attended. Family members were there who always wanted to know more about their family history. People from the community came



Center for Jewish History
15 West 16 Street, NYC

who had some prior association with a family member or with a business owned by a Straus. History buffs who find these kinds of presentations interesting also attended. No matter why they gathered at the Center on February 6th, everyone came away enriched. They all agreed that it was a wonderful evening.

who had some prior association with a family member or with a business owned by a Straus. History buffs who find these kinds of presentations interesting also attended. No matter why they gathered at the Center on February 6th, everyone came away enriched. They all agreed that it was a wonderful evening.

Daniel R. Kaplan, president of the AJHS, and Joan Adler, executive director of SHS, worked together to present an event that was both informative and enjoyable.

As guests arrived they were shown to the second floor balcony where cocktails and hors d'oeuvres were served. A continuous loop of photographs of members of the Straus family and the events in their lives was shown on the wall in the Great Hall. The slideshow was easily viewed from the balcony. This was an informal time for people to meet and to share stories. The Chocolate Soldier, a light operetta written by Oskar Straus, played in the background during the cocktail hour.



Alexandra More, Rebeccas Straus,
David Straus and Barbie Gurgan
at the cocktail party

The artistic Straus family tree was on display and, as usual, drew crowds of people, both Strauses and friends alike. Strauses wanted to know where they fit on the tree. And their friends were fascinated by the beautiful manner in which the family illustrated their relationships.

After the cocktail hour the group moved to the Great Hall where a sit-down dinner was served. It was here that the formal presentations were made.



Patty Straus, Alan, Birgitta and Ingrid
Hockstader and David Straus
at the cocktail party

Large posters of Isidor, Hermine, Nathan and Oscar were placed around the room. A display case exhibited family treasures such as the locket found on Isidor Straus' body when it was recovered after the Titanic disaster; two letters written in 1854 by Sara Straus, Isidor's mother; a diary written by Sarah Lavanburg Straus, Oscar's wife, during the time they were in Constantinople in 1887 when Oscar was minister to Constantinople; a photograph taken in 1916 of Nathan Straus with his first grandson, Nathan Straus III; and several other items. A long table on the opposite side of the room held books and other memo-



Joseph Nathan Straus
and his son Adam
Straus-Goldfarb

*Memory can be saved only when the
past is not passively pondered, but
when all that has its origin there is
brought to daylight.*

Shalom Foundation

Straus Historical Society, Inc.
Newsletter (ISSN 1536-9188)
is published semi-annually

by the

**Straus Historical
Society, Inc**

Post Office Box 416
Smithtown, NY 11787-0416
631-265-0383

631-724-4487 (fax)

info@straushistoricalsociety.org

http://

www.straushistoricalsociety.org

SHS Board of Directors

Executive Committee

David H. Kurzman, Chair

Barbie Gurgan, Vice Chair

Lawrence A. Kahn, Secretary

Hugh Grant Straus III, Treasurer

Board Members

Al Berr

Michael H. Buckner

M. Brett Gladstone

George Gurgan

Paul A. Kurzman

Jack Grier Schafer

Barnard Sachs Straus, Jr.

Barnard Sachs Straus, Sr.

Thomas P. Straus

Executive Director

Joan Adler

The Straus Historical Society, Inc. is dedicated to advancing the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the Lazarus Straus family and the historical context in which they lived through research and education. You are invited to submit articles or ideas for articles, calendar events, and material relating to the Straus family and to their history.

The Straus Historical Society, Inc. is a tax exempt organization as described under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code. Contributions to the Society are deductible to the extent provided by law. A copy of the annual report of the Straus Historical Society, Inc. may be obtained from the Society or from the New York State Attorney General, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271.

© 2008, Straus Historical Society, Inc.



**A Message from the Chair:
David H. Kurzman**

I am pleased to announce that many members of the Board of Directors have chosen to join me in a DOLLAR-FOR-DOLLAR MATCH of all donations made to the Straus Historical Society by new and lapsed donors from now through June 30, 2008.

Perhaps you have thought about giving in the past, but never got around to it? Or, perhaps it has been a year or two (or three) since your last donation? NOW is the perfect time to make a new or renewed donation to the SHS, as the board will match every dollar donated by a new or lapsed donor with a dollar from our own pockets.

Why are we doing this? Because our financial future depends upon gracious and generous donations from you. In recent years, the SHS has experienced an increase in its projects and activities. New donations will be required if we are to continue on our current path.

As you read the newsletter, please note the number of fantastic projects and new and republished educational material that are helping to keep our wonderful family traditions and culture alive. Your donations make this possible.

So, the board challenges you ... will you rise to meet our challenge?



**A Message from the
Executive Director:
Joan Adler**

The past year has witnessed an amazing increase in our visibility. Assisted greatly by the February 6th presentation at the Center for Jewish History, the Society, its members and its projects were mentioned in a New York newspaper The Sun, videotaped for inclusion on a video about 400 years of German Immigration for the German Consulate, received a grant from the ANNE FRANK-Fonds in recognition of the

article in the August 2007 issue of our newsletter and of our work. An English language translation of a German book presented to the Straus Family History Tour group in September 2006 has been published by the Society and a second book will be completed this year.

All of these accomplishments would not have been possible without your support. Thank you to all of you who have found our work worthy of your support. Your tax-deductible contributions make it possible.

If you have not made a contribution, perhaps now is the time to consider making one. I can assure you that every dollar you contribute goes directly into making the Society the most comprehensive institution for research and the collection and dissemination of information about the Straus family.

Let me hear from you.

rabilia that could be handled and read by the guests. A large framed campaign poster of Oscar S. Straus when he ran for governor of New York State in 1912 was also displayed.



Daniel R. Kaplan

Feldberg, acting executive officer of AJHS. Michael told the group that having AJHS and SHS host the evening was especially fitting because we were, in effect, recreating history by bringing these two organizations together. Oscar S. Straus was one of the founders of the AJHS in 1893 and its first president, a position he held until 1898.

As executive director of SHS it was my job to introduce the Society and our speakers. Dan asked me to tell the story of how I started working with the family. As someone with no background in history, genealogy, archival management or any other skill set that would lend itself to what I do, it seemed unusual to him that my professional life should evolve as it did. The quick version of how I became executive director of the Society follows.

I hold a BS and MA in Elementary and Special Education. I stayed home once our children were born and began worrying that my brain would atrophy about the time they reached junior high school age. I placed an ad in the New York Times Book Review in about 1985 stating that I would do research for people, a job I invented long before there was an Internet, and having no idea if there would be any demand for this kind of service. There was. In 1990 Robert K. (Bob) Straus called me from Santa Barbara, CA. He explained that his family had owned Macy's for 100 years but that they were bought out in a bitter leveraged buyout in 1986. Many of his family's personal papers were stored within Macy's. They were promised to him on a handshake but that promise was reneged upon once the buyout was completed. He had already hired several other people to try to get those papers out. None were successful. He asked if I thought I could do it. I told him I had no idea but, if he put me in touch with someone within Macy's who was still loyal to the family I would give it a try. I must have caught that person on a good day, and said the right combination of things because I

Dan Kaplan welcomed the group. He told us that he was particularly happy to host an evening with the Straus family because he had a long association with the family. His first job out of college, and that of his wife, was at Abraham & Straus. His opening remarks were followed by those of Dr. Michael



Dr. Michael Feldberg

was given access to the room where the papers were stored. Over a period of about eight months I was permitted to photocopy the Straus' personal papers. I then arranged to have them released to the New York Public Library when it became clear they would not be given to the family. After I organized the pages and had some translated, Bob called a meeting of eight family members to discuss what we should do about them. It was decided that we would try to find all the living Straus descendants. Then we published an address book. In 1993 I started writing a newsletter to let people know what we were finding in the letters. From there, over the next few years, the project expanded. We formed The Straus Family Project and then the Straus Historical Society, filing for 501 (c)(3) status in 1998. It was granted and we have been working and expanding since then.



Joan Adler

Now it was time to present the speakers. Paul A. Kurzman spoke about the early history of the family and about his great grandparents Isidor and Ida Straus. Paul is an eloquent speaker who held the audience mesmerized. A slideshow accompanied his talk with photographs illustrating the various people and events in their lives.

Isidor was the first child and oldest son of Lazarus and Sara Straus. When the Civil War broke out he was 16 years old. Schools in the south were closed so he went to work for his



Paul Kurzman

father. He was sent to Europe on a blockade running ship, the only ship to leave Charleston Harbor that night in 1863. After spending the duration of the war in Europe, where he bought and sold bonds, Isidor returned with \$12,000 in gold, enough to buy his mother a house in New York City where the family relocated. Isidor joined his father in business and was instrumental in its success. They bought a partial interest in Macy's in 1888 and were sole owners by 1896. Isidor served in the House of Representatives and was one of the founders of The Educational Alliance. He died in the Titanic disaster along with his wife of 41 years, Ida Blun Straus.

After Paul's talk I spoke about Hermine Straus Kohns. This is a very small branch of the family. Hermine was the only daughter of Lazarus and Sara Straus. She was a traditional wife and mother, staying home to keep house while her husband, Lazarus Kohns, worked in the family business, L. Straus & Sons. Because of the early death of their mother, Hermine became the

After Paul's talk I spoke about Hermine Straus Kohns. This is a very small branch of the family. Hermine was the only daughter of Lazarus and Sara Straus. She was a traditional wife and mother, staying home to keep house while her husband, Lazarus Kohns, worked in the family business, L. Straus & Sons. Because of the early death of their mother, Hermine became the

de facto mother of the family and her father, Lazarus, lived with her for many years.

Nathan Straus' branch of the family was amply represented by Hugh Grant Straus III who spoke about his great grandparents. Nathan Straus was the third child, the second son of Lazarus and Sara. He joined the family's china, crockery and porcelain business after completing school. His boundless energy helped to open new markets and introduce new merchandise to the firm. Nathan is credited with bringing pasteurization to New York, then America and then to the world.



Hugh Grant Straus III

He volunteered to build a pasteurization laboratory with his own money for any municipality that would send personnel to learn the process. In his later years he became an ardent Zionist, donating money to build the Jerusalem Health Center and opening soup kitchens in Palestine. The city of Netanya is named for Nathan Straus.

David H. Kurzman, chair of SHS, spoke about the life and legacy of Oscar Solomon Straus, youngest child of Lazarus and Sara. Oscar graduated from Columbia College and Columbia Law School, supported in his desire for education by his older brother and best friend,



David Kurzman

Isidor. His outlook was idealistic. He didn't want to work in the family business but started out in his own law firm. After thoroughly exhausting himself

and endangering his health, he was advised to seek less stressful work. He tried working at L. Straus & Sons but was relieved when his family excused him so that he could research and write a book. He became the first Jewish minister, nominated for the minister of Constantinople, a position he held through two administrations. He was also the first Jewish cabinet member, Secretary of Commerce and Labor under Theodore Roosevelt. He was appointed Ambassador to Turkey once that position became an ambassadorship. Oscar served in four administrations, both Democratic and Republican. He also served on many committees, boards and councils. He was a member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, a position he as most proud of because it recognized his legal acumen.

The response of everyone who attended the evening has been extremely positive. The food, with its dishes created using the recipes of Gladys Guggenheim Straus, one of the founders of Gourmet Magazine, wife of Roger Williams Straus and daughter-in-law of Oscar and Sarah Straus, was not only delicious, it

was beautifully presented. People enjoyed seeing the historical photographs in the slideshow and presentations. The various items in the showcase drew crowds. Most of these items had never been displayed before. Family members were excited to meet their cousins or to be reunited with others they hadn't seen in years. And many people in the audience seemed pleased to be able to speak with the members of the Straus family about their own interest in the family. A DVD of the presentations will be available. Please let me know if you want to reserve one.

Based on the response, AJHS and SHS will explore other ways we can collaborate. Per-



Great Hall and Balcony with Straus family slideshow projected on the two story wall

haps we will host additional evenings where presentations can focus on the Straus brothers individually.



Caroline Selden-Pineda

Paul Kurzman wrote, "What makes our Jewish family different than all the others is neither financial acumen and wealth, nor charitable participation and generosity. Our family, of course, did both, However, the Strauses are perhaps the only

Jewish family that also made historic contributions to America as a nation. First US ambassador, first member of the cabinet, first ambassador to one of the two principal diplo-



Roberta Morse with Selma and Manfred Moses



Hebe Schafer and husband James Barnes

matic posts in the 20th century, first to have a city in Israel named in his honor. Viewed through the lenses of race, gender, disability and religion, Oscar was the Thurgood Marshal of the Supreme Court, the Frances Perkins of the Cabinet, the FDR of the White House, the Jack Kennedy of the Presidency. Straus achievements and contributions to America are unique!"

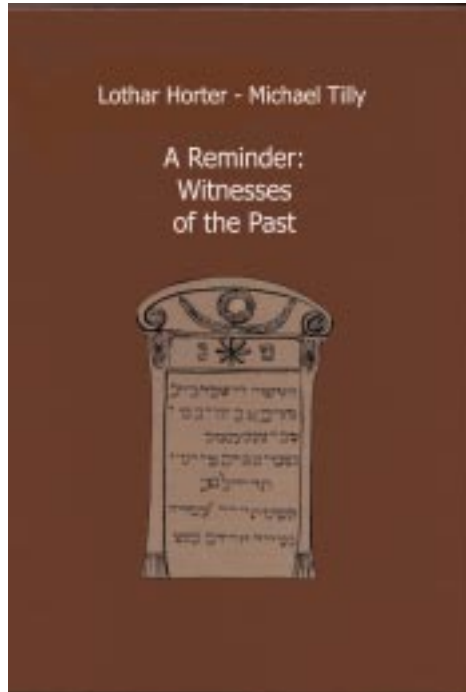
A Reminder: Witnesses of the Past.

The Straus Historical Society, Inc. is pleased to announce the English language publication of *A Reminder: Witnesses of the Past*.

This fascinating book was originally published in German. It details the history of Jewish life in the towns near Otterberg. It was given to the members of the Straus Family History Tour in September 2006 by former Mayor Hans Buch of Mehlingen who granted SHS permission to publish its English language translation.

The book contains historical details about the lives of the Jewish populations in the small towns very close to Otterberg. It also contains many photographs of the tombstones in the Mehlingen cemetery, many of which date from the 18th century. They will be of particular interest to Straus family members because several Strauses are buried there. Salomon Straus, father of Sara Straus, and Johanette Gruenebaum Straus, mother of Lazarus Straus are both buried in this cemetery and their tombstones are included. It is interesting to note that the tombstone of Salomon Straus

bears a bas relief ewer on its face clearly showing that Salomon, and therefore the Straus family, are Levites.



Authors Lothar Horter and Michael Tilly describe Jewish life and burial customs. They have also translated all of the Hebrew inscriptions on the tombstones.

For anyone with an interest in Straus family history or Jewish customs and history in the Rheinpfalz, this fascinating book will be a valuable addition to your personal library.

Please send a check for \$25.00 payable to the Straus Historical Society, Inc., Post Office Box 416, Smittstown, NY 11787-0416 to receive your copy.

Coming Soon - Publication of the English language translation of *A History of the Jews of Otterberg* by Dr. Hans Steinebrei. This thoroughly researched and detailed history contains specific information about the Straus family and

their lives in Otterberg. The information it contains compliments *A Reminder: Witnesses of the Past*.



ANNE FRANK - FONDS, Basel Switzerland

The SHS is pleased to announce that we have been honored with a grant from the ANNE FRANK-Fonds of Basel, Switzerland.

In December 2007 I was contacted by John D. Goldsmith, vice president of ANNE FRANK-Fonds who explained that, on the recommendation of Buddy Elias, and "fully supported by our Board, we would like to invite you to present one or more projects for our consideration which we would be prepared to support with a grant." Buddy Elias, president of ANNE FRANK-Fonds is the nephew of Otto Frank. Buddy and I have corresponded over the years, especially since the recent discovery and publication by YIVO of the Otto Frank/ Nathan Straus Jr. letters. The August 2007 issue of the SHS newsletter contained an article describing the relationship between Nathan Straus Jr. and the Straus family with Otto Frank. It also described Otto's wish to leave Amsterdam and Nathan Jr.'s unsuccessful effort to get him and his family out of Europe.

The SHS's proposal is to write a book aimed at the preteen and early teenage population based on the information in the letters and the article. I would like to expand on this article and turn it into a book with an enhanced section on the Straus family and its efforts to rescue others from Europe before and

during the war and, of course, expanding on the Frank family and their experience. One of the most important aspects of the newly discovered letters between Otto Frank and Nathan Straus Jr. is that it gives one an opportunity to understand in a completely new way, the historical context of their experiences. The heroic efforts of both men, fully supported by the various refugee and relief agencies in the United States, within the context of the rapidly changing world political environment, was not enough to save the Frank family.

I think that a book of this nature could easily be incorporated into many school curriculums, telling the story of the tragedy of war and the heroism of people. Although the story has been told before, this book would use the newly discovered letters of Otto Frank and Nathan Straus Jr. to tell their particular story from a completely different perspective.

The grant proposal was submitted in time for the ANNE FRANK-Fonds January 22, 2008 board meeting. We were notified the next day that the grant proposal would be funded. We are honored by their support of our mission and grateful for their funding which will give us the opportunity to work on this important project.

A Special Thanksgiving

by Eva Schmalz Sanders

Edited by Joan Adler

I remember October 29, 1939. I was crossing the Atlantic Ocean on the "SS Rotterdam" with my brother Ernst and mother Ruth Strauss Schmalz. It was my ninth birthday, and I received several presents. One was a kosher salami, one of my favorite foods, from my Grandparents. I also received a green jewelry box.

My mother had come from New York to the Hague, Holland to bring us to America. We had been living with my Grandparents for two years while my parents were starting a new life in America. The whole family had fled Germany in 1933 when the beginnings of the Nazi terror and Jewish persecutions were starting to have an impact on our lives. The Netherlands became our safe haven for a while as it was for many other Jews who fled the Nazi terror.



Eva and Ernst Schmalz
The Hague - 1927

mother was busy night and day ministering to us and many other passengers.

As children at the time, we were not aware that the ship was vastly overcrowded and had to go slowly to avoid mine fields. If we hit a mine, there would have been few survivors. There were not enough life-jackets or life-boats for all on board.

Little did we know that this was the last ship to leave Holland before the German Blitzkrieg and subsequent surrender of Holland to Nazi Germany on May 14, 1940.

We know only a few words of English. Our Grandparents had given us English lessons every afternoon and paid us a penny each time to make sure we paid attention during class.

When we arrived in New York and settled into our new lives, we were enrolled in PS 46, the Bronx, and started to really learn English. Our parents encouraged us to speak only English at first, and we did. But slowly we forgot Dutch, which we spoke fluently, having lived in Holland for six years. We attended school there.

Later, our parents wanted us to speak only Dutch at home so as not to forget the language, but that didn't work. We forgot Dutch while learning our new language.

The war ultimately took its toll on our family. My three Grandparents and two aunts perished in Hitler's death camp. But we have much to be thankful for - family, friends, health, a good life. I want to say especially today: Thank G_d for America.

Submitted to the *Bulletin*, Temple Israel, Riverhead, NY

Yom HaShoah - Holocaust Memorial Day, 1999

Address delivered at Temple Israel of Riverhead,
April 16, 1999 by Eva E. Sanders

For those who say the Holocaust never happened, I can tell them from personal knowledge it happened.

My Oma (grandmother) Rosa perished in Theresienstadt. My Grandfather Richard and Grandmother Helena, Aunt Elise and Aunt Leah perished in Bergen Belsen in early 1944.

After fleeing to Holland in 1933 from Bingen, Germany, my family lived in the Hague, Holland where it was felt we were safe from the Nazis. In 1937, my parents emigrated to America since it was difficult for them to earn a living in Holland. In 1939 my mother came back to Holland to bring my brother and me to America. As it turned out, we left Holland on the last ship out of Rotterdam in October 1939, overcrowded and avoiding German submarines - U-boats - in the Atlantic.

We arrived in New York in November, 1939, safe and sound. I had my ninth birthday on board our ship, the "Rotterdam." The Nazis marched into Holland May, 1940, five months later.



Helen and Richard Strauss,
Eva's grandparents

My grandparents and aunts did not want to leave as they had built a new life in Holland. My Grandfather, a prominent lawyer in Germany, developed a new practice. My Aunt Elise, also a lawyer, assisted him. My Aunt Leah, the youngest of my mother's four sisters, was studying horticulture and was engaged as was my Aunt Elise. My Grandmother Helena had a busy household to take care of as we all lived in one house. She taught my brother and me English every afternoon and paid us one cent to attend the lessons in preparation for our emigration.

They hid in the attic, as many Jews did at the time, until they were betrayed and sent by the Nazis to an internment camp in Westerhoff, Holland at the end of 1943. My Grandfather con-

ducted Services there from memory. There were no books, of course. Early in 1944 they were transported to Bergen Belsen. The British liberated Bergen Belsen April 15, 1944. In the meantime, my parents were getting together the necessary documents for their arrival in America.

As the saying goes, the rest is history. They didn't make it to this land, America, a safe haven for millions!



Miriam, Elisa, Leah, Hannah and Ruth Strauss, the five daughters of Richard and Helene Strauss



Eva and Arthur Sanders

Today Eva and "Abby" Sanders are retired and living quietly in Riverhead, Suffolk County, NY. Their children, Richard and Anne, daughter-in-law Constance, grandchildren Charlotte and Ryan and their many cousins bring them happiness. But the family who were killed in the Holocaust are never far from their thoughts.

Thank you for sharing your stories, memories and photographs with us.



How I Found Out About the Lavanburgs

by Lotte Stern
Edited by Joan Adler

When I was a little girl in Gerolzhofen, Germany (about 1930-1936) my Grandparents would talk about the money they received from someone by the name of Lavanburg (around 1918) who lived in the United States.

My parents wanted to leave Germany, but my Father could not get a visa because he was badly injured in the First World War fighting for the Germans. One of the officers at the American Consulate suggested to my Mother that she and I should come to the U.S. first. The consul did not like to have families separated and he thought my Father would be able to come here once we were here. So my Mother and I emigrated in May 1936.

That summer, my Mother and I went to see a Roger W. Straus (President of the American Smelting and Refining Co.) who had an office on Wall Street in New York City. She asked him to please send an affidavit to the American Consulate to vouch for my Father so that he would not become dependent on the U.S. government. We all had to have affidavits - otherwise we could not come. My Dad needed someone with lots of money to vouch for him. Mr. Straus did send the affidavit and my Dad came in February 1937.

For the next ten years, until I got married, my Mom insisted that I write to Mrs. Straus, asking her for clothing for me. I hated to

write but she always mailed beautiful clothes for me. Then I had to write thank you notes. They had a daughter who was a few years older than I and who now lives on Pfungsten Avenue in Northbrook, IL, not far from where I live.

All these years later, in May 1998, Monica Lewinsky's Mother married R. Peter Straus and I remembered the stories told to me long ago. My parents, Tante Selma in New York - everyone was gone and no one knew why my Mother went to see Roger W. Straus and what connection, if any, the name Lavanburg had to Roger W. Straus.

I volunteered at the Temple Library (B'nai Jehoshua Beth Elohim) once a week. One day there was a book lying on the table entitled "Great Jewish Families" by Darryl Lyman. I took the book and it opened on a page where there was a picture of Roger W. Straus. As a matter of fact there were quite a few chapters on the Straus family. That's where I found that Oscar Straus (Roger's Father) married Sarah Lavanburg.

I am still trying to find out more about the Lavanburgs. I've learned that they are my relatives and that they were a very charitable family. To me it is very fascinating and it keeps me busy.

Donald Blun Straus 1916 - 2007

The following obituary, written by the children of Donald Blun Straus, appeared in the Mount Desert Islander (ME) on September 7, 2007.

Donald Blun Straus, 91, an influential leader in education, conflict resolution and population control died peacefully Sept. 3, 2007 at his home.

Mr. Straus was born June 28, 1916 in Middletown, NJ., the son of Percy and Edith Abraham Straus. Percy Straus was president of R. H. Macy's landmark New York store, founded by Donald's grandfather, Isidor. Isidor and Ida Straus died on the Titanic after they allowed others to take their places in a lifeboat.

Mr. Straus graduated from Harvard University in 1938 with a baccalaureate and earned his Master of Business Administration degree in 1940 from Harvard. He and Elizabeth "Beth" Allen were married September 7, 1940.

He was a member of the Century Association, the Knickerbocker Club, the Harvard Club of New York City and the Pot and Kettle Club of Bar Harbor.

Mr. Straus served at various times as executive director of the Labor Relations panel of the U. S. Atomic Energy Commission, Vice President of the Health Insurance Plan of Greater New York, President of the American Arbitration Association, a consultant to the International Institute of Applied Systems Analysis, and a member of the board of the New York Board of Mediation.

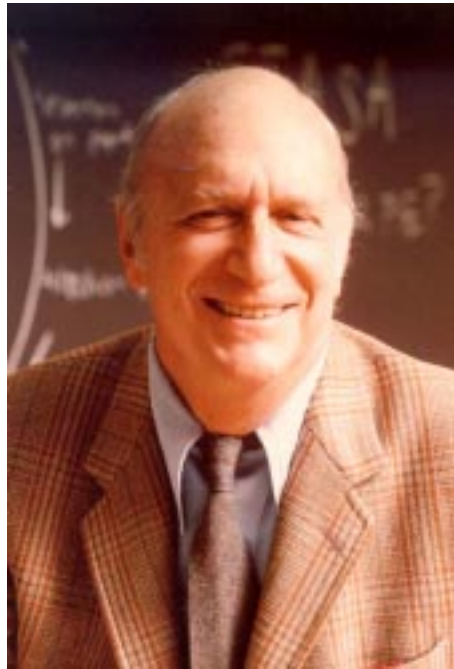
He served as Chairman of the board of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, and on the boards of the International Council of Commercial Arbitration, the Population Resources Commission, the Society of Human Ecology, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Institute for Advanced Study and of the College of the Atlantic.

Mr. Straus was an early advocate for non-adversarial conflict resolution and of online computer conferencing and online education and referendums. He taught an online course in "Democracy in the 21st Century" for Connected Education.

Mr. Straus and his wife, the former Elizabeth Allen, lived in New York City for many years and summered at their home at the head of Somes Sound in Maine. Mr. Straus was an intrepid, daring sailor, often exploring shallow gunk holes in search of remote anchorages.

He and Beth often cruised along the Maine coast in their cutter, Sea Otter, alone and with friends and family. In later years, they eventually turned to a twin-diesel lobster boat and to a 12-foot Herreshoff sloop, Pinniped. When not cruising, he and Beth would row their dinghy together in perfect synchronicity on Somes Sound.

Mr. Straus loved to reminisce about his sailing life, such as crossing the Atlantic and the Pacific as an undergraduate and cruising in the Baltic with friends. One of his favorite stories was his unsuccessful effort to conceal from Beth that he had run the Sea Otter aground near Castine and had to wait for the incoming tide to refloat her.



Another early passion was flying, and Mr. Straus flew his own plane cross-country to California to propose to Beth.

Mr. Straus is survived by his beloved wife of 67 years, Beth; their three children, sons David and his wife Patricia, and Robert; their daughter, Sara Byrck and husband, Marcus, all of Cambridge, Mass; David and Patricia's two daughters, Sara Farrer and her husband, Luke Farrer, and their two children Emma and Toby, and Rebecca Straus; Rob's two children, Lisa and Drew; and Sara and Marcus' two children, Mischa and Chloe. He was predeceased by his son Robert's wife, Sheryl Foti. A memorial ceremony will be announced. Arrangements by Jordan-Fernald of Mount Desert. Condolences may be expressed

online at www.jordanfernald.com (Reprinted by permission of the family.)

A memorial service was held Friday, November 23, 2007 at Story Chapel, Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, MA. Family and friends had an opportunity to share their stories about Don. David Straus, Don's eldest son said, "Dad was the ultimate early-adopter and early promoter of cutting-edge and often provocative ideas. When he grabbed onto a new idea, he was like an energetic dog with a bone in its mouth, bounding around, daring everyone to take it away from him. While he spoke logically and clearly, he was really an intuitive thinker. He would grasp in his gut that an idea was important and totally commit himself to promoting it where ever and when ever he could - which meant often at the dinner table."

Friend Don Coulson: "Nothing is simple, certainly no our memories of Don Straus, a wonderful man who was endowed with so much energy and curiosity and loyalty and love, a man who responded to our troubled and contentious society with such

good intentions. ... I realized there was a trace of Don Quixote in Don. He was a zealous knight of the good spirit, not in the sense of Cervante's loony search for chivalry, but embarked upon a crusade to create a more rational, less embittered world. Don truly believed in peaceful dispute resolution."

Second son Robert B. Straus: "Dad carried an immense legacy of family history which both supported and burdened him. He was one of the generation when the Straus family was still in full prominence in New York and nationally. ... Dad made a great deal of his life. I choose to believe that he became what he always wanted to be, a 'self-made' man. ... created what he most wanted, a caring and cohesive family and an interesting and vibrant professional life. ... Professionally, Dad chose not to go into the family business. Instead, as David has described, he forged his own way in labor relations, mediation and arbitration. Again, he made his own way outside the family mold. His interest in conflict resolution obviously inspired David and me, whether we were aware of it or not. ... Dad died at home, surrounded by his family, with us all literally holding his hands. It was a beautiful day in Somesville; across the meadow the harbor and Sound were sparkling in the morning sun. It's as good a way as any to end."

Sara Straus Byruck, Don's daughter: "Dad was NOT a religious man. He did NOT believe in an afterlife and I don't believe he dwelled much on the subject. He preferred to live his life in the present and he was content to leave the mystical to other people."

Rebecca Straus, Don's granddaughter: "I want you to know how much you mean to me and what a wonderful grandpa you are. You have always believed in me and known how to challenge me and push me to my limits; sometimes there was fear and often there were tears; but always in the end I learned that I could go farther than I ever thought possible. ... You have been such an incredible influence in my life. I have always admired your strength, generosity and devotion to causes such as ecology and population control. No matter what happens, you will live on through your children and grandchildren."

Granddaughter Lisa Foti-Straus read a poem titled "My Philosophy" written by Don in February 1934 when he was at Milton Academy:

When you can see no purpose to it all
and life, a some huge gulf that blocks your way
with sides so sheer they hide the light of day,
So slipp'ry that to climb would mean to fall;
Is bleak and drear and full of bitter gaul;
And when it seems your strivings do not pay,
And if they do, the future still seems grey
With failures, labors gains at best are small;
then shift the focus of your fogged eye

and look about. See how the Robins sing,
and when the port of winter's months draw nigh,
They wing their southward way. The greatest thing
That we must learn from life before we die
Is this: that SENSE OF HUMOR is the king.

Dominic Muntanga, a student of College of the Atlantic who is from Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe: "As we begin the healing process for our pain of his passing, I hope all of you will cope, not by forgetting Don, but by finding out how we can best live his legacy. This world might just become that better place we dream of if more of us adopt just a little bit of his kindness, his passion for resolving conflicts, and his service-mindedness. Don was a great man."

I first met Don Straus when he invited me to his office to take possession of his professional papers for the Straus Family's Archives. There were many file cabinets full of papers. I was not prepared to crate them and bring them back to my office. Don was not deterred. He told me where the nearest office supply store was located. When I returned to the office Don invited me to lunch at his club where I met his wife, Beth, his brother Ralph and Katney, Ralph's wife. Don cautioned me that Ralph was in the early stages of Alzheimers. What I recall most about that lunch was the caring Don displayed toward his brother. After lunch we returned to the office where, before long the file cabinets were empty and my car, a large SUV, was full. There were several more days together where Don generously shared stories about



his life. We did an informal oral history together which Don embellished upon over the years.

Don told me about his flying across country in his own plane to propose to Beth. They traveled all over South America on their honeymoon at a time when most couples went to Europe. He chuckled at some of their adventures and seemed still to be delighted with their experiences, many of them unexpected and near disasters. Don was proud of his many professional accomplishments, especially because he forged his own way rather than following in the family's business. He said he tried it for six weeks and quickly learned it was not for him. I think we are all very lucky that Don was strong enough to seek his own path.

As so many people at his memorial service expressed, Don may be gone but his legacy of love and professional achievement lives on through all of those he touched. We are all grateful for the opportunity to have known him, worked with him or loved him, each in our own way. You are missed by never forgotten.

Contribution in lieu of flowers may be sent to The College of the Atlantic, 105 Eden Street, Bar Harbor, ME 04609.

Going Home - Again

Irene Stern Pastarnack of New Rochelle, NY has proven that on at least one level it is possible to go home again. Irene is donating her mother's collection of rare volumes of German literature to the Abraham Geiger College in Berlin, the first rabbinic seminary in Germany since the Holocaust. In September 2006, while the Straus History tour was being conducted in southwestern Germany, Abraham Geiger College ordained three reform rabbis, the first rabbis ordained in Germany since the Holocaust.

Irene Stern was born in Frankfurt more than eighty years ago. Her mother Lili Strauss Stern was a college graduate who studied philosophy and literature. During her years in Germany Lili amassed an impressive collection of German-Jewish books including monographs and speeches by Martin Buber and an original Goldschmidt Haggadah.

Irene's early childhood was privileged. Her father Hugo was a successful wholesaler of women's clothes. Her mother was a member of the distinguished Straus family. Family members remember visits from their American cousins whenever they came to Germany. The family owned a six-story building where they lived in a beautiful eleven room apartment complete with staff and a well-tended garden. Her father was an officer in the German cavalry during World War I. He was decorated with an Iron Cross. Irene said, "They were more German than the Germans."

When the Nazis came to power Irene remembers watching Hitler on parade. She went to the secular school in Frankfurt until Nazi decrees prohibited it. Then she studied at a school in the synagogue. On Kristallnacht her father guarded that synagogue with a rifle but was unable to save it.

The Stern family was warned of approaching danger by one of Hugo Stern's customers, a man wearing an SS uniform. Her brother Helmut (Harold) was sent to Switzerland. Her father fled to France and she was sent to relatives in Holland. Her mother stayed in Germany until the family could be reunited in Holland. From there they traveled to the United States in 1939. Sissie Straus Lehman and her husband Judge Irving Lehman sponsored them.

Once in the United States the family moved to New Rochelle, NY where Irene now lives. She is a graduate of Syracuse University with a degree in fine arts. She married Irving Pastarnack, a photographer, now deceased. The couple had two sons and four grandchildren.



Lili Strauss Stern and husband Hugo
February 1928



Irene Stern Pastarnack and
husband Irving
Irene is the daughter of Lili
and Hugo Stern

Irene's family were active supporters of their Frankfurt reform temple. Once settled in New Rochelle they immediately joined Temple Israel, a reform temple and remained active throughout their lives. Irene was confirmed at there and continues to be a member.

During conversations with Rabbi Zimmerman of Temple Israel, Irene spoke about her mother's book collection. She told him, "Tradition is very important to me because I was uprooted." By sending her mother's books back to Germany she feels she is contributing to the reconstruction of the German Jewish community.

"I decided I wanted to send the books back to Germany where they recently ordained three rabbis. It would make my mother very happy. We did lose almost the whole family. This is something close to my heart." Irene further said, "It would have meant a great deal to my mother. It's a memorial to her and all the people who died."

Irene is a free lance journalist whose articles have appeared in the Jewish press and other publications. She remains an active reporter. She is also an accomplished artist. Her lovely New Rochelle home contains many pieces of her artwork that are beautifully displayed. She is on the board of the New Rochelle Council on the Arts and has exhibited in many venues. She expects to have a really exciting show of her musical drawings in

June. Irene is active with the Village of Scarsdale Recreation department where she leads "Terrific Tuesdays at Eleven," a trip and lecture series for seniors.

Irene is a woman whose great love of family and sense of tradition has prompted her to make this important donation. We are pleased to let you know about it in the Society's newsletter.

Friends of Straus Park

By Joan Adler

On Friday evening, December 21, Friends of Straus Park sponsored a winter solstice festival in the Park. There was singing, festive music, luminaria, hot cider and cookies. The weather, which was a problem for most of last year's events, cooperated enough to allow a nice group of friends and neighbors to gather for this lovely event.

A complete schedule of events is planned in the Park for the 2008 season. We're hoping the weather will cooperate this year and we will be able to hold all of our events. Past history tells us they are enjoyed by neighbors and friends. We'd like you to join us at any of the planned events in the Park.

Saturday, April 26th

(rain date April 27th)

**11th Straus Park
Anniversary Celebration
11:00 am to 2:00 pm**

Wednesday, June 11th

(rain date June 12th)

**Evening Concert in the Park
5:30 pm to 7:30 pm**

Saturday, July 12th

(rain date July 13th)

**Book and Photography Fair
10:00 am to 4:00 pm**

Saturday, October 18th

(Rain date: October 19th)

**12th Annual Art in the Park
A day-long celebration of
art, music, dance & food
10:00 AM to 4:00 PM**

Friday, December 19th

**Luminaria and Song
Lights and music for the winter solstice
6:00 pm to 7:00 pm**

If you would like more information about Friends of Straus Park, would like to make a contribution, or to suggest artists or ideas for future events, please contact Friends of Straus Park, PO Box 2021, Cathedral Station, New York, NY 10025. E.mail can be sent to Margie Kavanau, secretary: margkav@msn.com



Photographs taken October 2007 at the 11th Annual Art in the Park day-long celebration of art, music, dance & food.

**SHS Goes to GA
November 6-9, 2008
Please Join Us**

The Straus Historical Society is pleased to announce that we will be sponsoring a trip to Talbotton and Columbus GA the weekend of November 6-9, 2008. This visit will coincide with Historic Talbotton's Plantation Days annual festival, The Sights, Sounds and Smells of Talbotton.

For those of you who have been to Talbotton and Columbus before, you already know how hospitable the local population can be and how interesting Michael H. and Debbie Buckner's presentations are.

We will include visits to the Straus and Kaufman families' homes and see the sights of their home towns. We will also include several new venues including optional side trips to FDR's Little White House at Warm Springs, nearby Callaway Gardens, Americus and Plains, the home town of former president Jimmy Carter. If trip participants who want to spend time in Atlanta or on one of Georgia's coastal islands, additional side trips might be arranged if there is sufficient demand.

Further information will be sent as soon as plans are formalized. For now, keep the weekend of November 6-9, 2008 open. And please let me know if you want to join us in Georgia, the first place the Straus and Kaufman families lived in the United States.



Left: The Straus' last home in Talbotton. Photo taken in June 2001.



Below: A pushcart similar to the one Lazarus Straus might have used.



**Available from the
Straus Historical Society, Inc.**

DVD Slide Show of the Straus Family History Tour in Germany September 13-19, 2006 - \$20.00

DVD Video of the Straus Family History Tour in Germany September 13-19, 2006 - \$20.00

"The Autobiography of Isidor Straus" privately published by Sara Straus Hess, in softcover - \$40.00

"Genealogical Miscellany" a family genealogy compiled by Robert K. Straus with addenda - \$40.00

Large black & white photograph of the Isidor and Ida Straus family taken at Elberon NJ in 1905 - \$40.00

Masters Thesis of Saul Viener, "The Political Career of Isidor Straus." West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia, 1947 - \$25.00

A Reminder: Witnesses to the Past by Lothar Horter and Michael Tilly, translated by Frank and Sue Kahn. This book is about the history of the Jews in several small towns in the Rheinpfalz of Germany. A large section contains complete information and photographs of the Mehlingen Cemetery where many Straus family members are buried. \$25.00

Send your tax deductible check to Joan Adler, payable to: **Straus Historical Society, Inc.**, P. O. Box 416, Smithtown, NY 11787-0416. You can contact Joan by phone: 631-265-0383, fax: 631-724-4487 or e.mail: info@straushistoricalsociety.org

Available Soon

The History of the Jews of Otterberg by Dr. Hans Steinebri, translated by Frank and Sue Kahn. This excellent publication contains a large section dedicated to the Straus family. Many photographs compliment the text.

This book will be published in English by the Straus Historical Society, Inc. Announcement of its availability will follow.

You Are Invited

The board of directors of the Straus Historical Society, Inc. invites you to attend a meeting of the board. Attendance can be in person or by conference call.

The next meeting will be held Tuesday, May 6, 2008 at the office of board member Paul A. Kurzman, 129 East 79th Street, New York at 6 PM. There is no obligation to join the board or to contribute to the Society.

This invitation is extended so that anyone interested in the SHS may have an opportunity to participate and to share his/her views. Please contact Joan Adler 631-265-0383 or Paul A. Kurzman 212-452-7035 for further information.