

THE BERMAN FAMILY ANNOUNCER

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A HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR !

With the advent of a new year it is appropriate to both learn from the past and to record the present while looking forward to the future. The ability to look back and to the future was the unique gift of the Greek god Janus after whom this month of January was named.

In keeping with the reflective theme of the New Year, we are delighted to be able to share two recent communications from members of The Berman Family that capture the spirit of the season. They are reflective of the origins and history of The Barman Family – **This Is Us** – and the diversity and vitality of the family today....leaving to our imagination and speculations as to what we will become in the future generations. It is the excitement of a diverse, widespread and vibrant family...The Berman Family!

The first communication is from **Ruth Berman Harris** (*Chonon Berman/Benjamin Berman*) who has provide her remembrances of her father, Benjamin Berman, one of the eight children (3 girls and 5 boys) of Chonon & Khasia Berman:

Benjamin Berman, 1885-1964

Benjamin was 19 years old when he came to America. The reason he came was very interesting. They regularly had pogroms against Jews in Russia and he was a member of the Socialist party, which protested against the government.

The socialist would meet in the woods to plan their strategy to talk to the people. The leaders would give the speeches to the orators and tell them to memorize them and swallow the paper they were written on. As Benjamin was very bright he was always chosen to speak on street corners. When the soldiers came they couldn't arrest him because they could find no evidence. This went on for some time but soon his father heard that he was about to be arrested.

His father had a brother who was a very successful merchant and who travelled to many countries to deliver his merchandise. He agreed to take Benjamin to a seaport in another country to take him to America. He hid him under a lot of blankets and parcels. Before my

Father got on the boat he bought a lot of pastries at a local bakery. All during the trip the other passengers begged him to open the box but he refused.

When he got to Ellis Island they took the food away because no food was allowed to enter America.

Rose Kravitz was his cousin and met him at the dock. They traveled to New HAVEN, Conn. Where his aunt eagerly awaited his arrival and he lived with them until he got himself settled in a clothing store as a tailor.

After a few years he opened his own clothing store and sent for his parents to come to America.

His parents came with their children and another little boy that they agreed to take with them. When they got to Ellis Island the little boy saw his father and yelled out Papa. An official heard him and detained them for three weeks until my father finally had them released by going to Washington D.C. and talking to his congressman explaining the situation.

He bought them a little white house on Ward St. in New Haven. I remember all the happy times we had in that house. Especially the Seders. They would take all the furniture out of the living and dining room and set up tables against the walls. We all had such fun.

Uncle Harry would play the piano and all the brothers would sing wonderful Russian and Jewish songs.

My father was very successful in his business but two of his siblings were very poor so when he went shopping for our family on Friday he bought an equal amount and left it at their door not ever wanting them to know who left them.

Benjamin was very smart and I remember one situation when he bought a house and sold it the next day at a 5,000 profit.

He successfully ran a clothing store, buying the building it was housed in. He also dabbled in real estate and was a silent partner in a movie theatre in West Haven and several restaurants.

He was also very compassionate. He had loaned money to a farmer to buy his farm but during the depression of 1929 the farmer couldn't pay him back on time. He waited years and the farmer paid him back every penny.

Dad met my mother when she was 16 years old. He was around 24 and met her at his mother's house. He was a distant relative and when he came to New York he would drop by to say hello. After meeting her he said to himself, someday I'm going to marry her and he did when Pauline was 21 years old.

He was a dear loving father. He always said that when he closed the store for the night that he never took his worries home with him.

I remember going to a lot of concerts at Woolsey Hall and the Schubert Theatre. My first opera was when I was 5 years old. When we came home from some event we would always sing in the car. We had such good times! I remember so many parties. My parents both loved to entertain and usually on Sundays we had company for the afternoon and dinner. We had Aunt Mae, Uncle Barnett, Helen & Arnold over very often and we would usually spend a lot of time singing, my mother who was a concert pianist, playing the piano. Dad was such a gracious host; his manner was so warm, hearty and full of spirit. We had a grape harbor in our back yard and he made the most delicious wine which his guests loved.

As a young boy he grew up in a village where his father was a successful landscape manager of a huge forest owned by a Russian noble.

Benjamin had 4 brothers and 3 sisters. He studied Hebrew at a local yeshiva. When he was around 12 years old he was sent to a big city near his village to further his education. He spent many years living with a family near the yeshiva and in return for his room and board he would tutor their young son. They paid him \$12.00 a year. On his yearly trips home he would bring 12 oranges which cost him \$12.00 as a gift to his family. His mother made orange marmalade which they enjoyed all year round. As he grew older he tired of the yeshiva and came home and studied to be a tailor and at around 17 yrs old joined the socialist party.

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Portrait of my Father

Warm, kind

Hearty & cheerful

He was full of good spirits

A good listener

Adored, loved, he was loving

Respected, admired, he was admirable

Sage, Wise, he was full of wisdom

That was my father

Ruth's recollections are an exciting addition to the history of the family and will be incorporated in an early revision of **This Is Us, A History of the Chonon & Khasia Berman Family** that is incorporated in the family website at www.BermanFamily.com.

As is the difficulty with so many recollections, they frequently raise a myriad of unanswered questions that are the grist of genealogists and family historians. In seeking to record as much factual history as we can ascertain, we have asked Ruth and her daughter **Susan** to provide as much additional information as they can recall...encouraging Susan to record "interviews" with her mother to ferret out recollections that may be long forgotten. Indeed, we would encourage other family members to provide their own ere collections of family history and, perhaps, add further insight to some of the questions that have now been posed to Ruth:

- * You mention your father's (Ben), father's (Chonon) father. What information can you provide about him: name, date and place of birth, siblings, wife, date and place of death?
- * Do you know the name or any additional information about Chonon's "very successful merchant" brother ?
- * Do you know the name of or other information concerning siblings of Chonon Berman ?
- * Do you know the family name and/or other information concerning the boy who accompanied Chonon, Khasia and Harry to the United States ?
- * Do you know when the Kravitz family came to New Haven and/or why New Haven ?

There are so many unanswered questions. So much history unrevealed.

We urge anyone having tidbits of recollection of family history to share them with us and to write down such vignettes and stories and send them (e-mail, regular mail or even by telephone) to ebermamn1@cox.net . Once lost the pieces of family history cannot be reclaimed.

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The second item reflects on the growing universality of The Berman Family, the wide-spread accomplishments of our kin and the nature of their lives. While the following "seasonal newsletter" from **Robert Sprafkin** (*Chonon Berman/Chana Esther/Dora Sprafkin*) would normally have been broken up into individual news clips, the totality of the information is too overwhelming to be diminished by dissection. While the letter is an up-date on the Sprafkin family, all of us have our own stories to shareeven if a bit less global.

We extend our congratulations to Robert and look forward to welcoming Martha to the family as we read "their" story of this past year:

I can't believe that I am actually sending one of these seasonal newsletters, but alas even I have to try to overcome my computer phobia, master e-mail. And learn how to use my new iPhone (more about that later). Here goes:

The big announcement for 2010: Martha (Copithorne, of Plymouth and Ossipee, NH) and I are very happily engaged! The wedding will be in May in California, a small one, just our five sons, their spouses and our four grandchildren. Our houses have been on the market since April, but in spite of seemingly precipitous price reductions on our part, neither has sold or even been nibbled at. When a house sells or rents, we plan to live part of the year in Center City Philadelphia and part of the year in Ossipee, NH. Until then the driving between Syracuse and Plymouth continues, but with more time spent together given my retirement this last week! Yes, I'm fully retired, although the impact has yet to hit.

Our travels this year have been extensive. In January, to Nicaragua with Sustainable Harvest International, an organization upon whose board Martha sits; in March/April to Shanghai to meet two month old Joshua, my first grandson; a couple trips to California to see Martha's children and grandchildren; lots of time this summer in Ossipee, NH where Martha and family have been going all their lives and where we hope to spend summers; and in November, off to India for nearly 2 weeks, occasioned by my daughter-in-law's sister's marriage. On addition to the wedding in Patna, we went to Delhi, Bodhgaya, Varnassi, Sgra (Taj Mahal), and Jaipur. A fascinating time in a colorful, complex and chaotic country!

The Sprafkin children and families continue to rack up frequent flyer miles: Jeff, Ella, and Josh seem to be settled in Shanghai; Noah, Rachana and Noor (now 27 months old) had been living in Karachi, Pakistan, where Noah was working for Marie Stopes International, a leading productive health organization. In November the Pakistanis saw fit to cancel Noah's visa (thank goodness!) so they are presently camping in Jeff's house in Philadelphia while Noah prepares for his next (probably ex-pat) adventure. Neal has continued to run Barbara's gourmet dog treat business, My Doggy. He had been doing it from Syracuse, but decided to relocate himself and the biz to Philadelphia. A fantastic move, as it turns out, since there he met, dated, and became engaged to Lisa Yaffe, Dartmouth '93. We are all thrilled.

Last week all the Sprafkin boys, spouses, children, fiancée, and Martha and I converged on Philadelphia to celebrate my 70th birthday on the 18th. I am still aglow! Not only am I left with the warmth of the occasion and some photos, but also the task of learning how to use the aforementioned iPhone, which was the birthday gift that is likely to keep on challenging.

That's the up-date from this end. As the dust settles, with a trip later this week to California and a Sustainable Harvest International trip to Belize in January, Martha and I hope to ease into the

next phase of our lives. We send you the warmest of wishes for health, peace, and happiness for the New Year.

Bob

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MAILING LIST

A copy of the **January 1, 2011 Mailing List of the Descendants of Chonon & Khash Berman** has been provided as an attachment to the e-mail transmittal of the **The Berman Family Announcer**. The **Mailing List** is provided as a separate document and is not included on the website of www.BermanFamily.com at the request of members of the family to protect the privacy of the information.

Please review your own contact information and that of your family to assure the accuracy of the listing. Please advise us as to any additions or corrections that should be made to the List.

You will note that despite extensive efforts to assure that the list is complete, we continue to be missing contact information and e-mail addresses for some family members. Please review the list, make it a New Year's project to contacting those for whom we do not have complete information and forwarding the contact information to us for incorporation in the Mailing List.

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NEWS OF THE FAMILY

Did you know that **David Sulkis** (*Chonon Berman/Barnett Berman/Helen Rhein/Judith Sulkis*) collects antique cameras? Don't throw away that old camera; send it as a gift to David!

(We trust that other family members have collections...collections about which we would be interested. Share information concerning your hobby and/or collection with the family...you may discover others who share your interest.)

In the "it's a small world category", at the Bar Mitzvah of his grandson, **Harley August Berman** (*Chonon Berman/ChANA Esther/Gus Berman/David Berman/Andrew Berman*), in Tiburon, California on October 23, 2010, (Donald) **David Berman** (*Chonon Nerman/Chana Esther/Gus Berman*) had the opportunity to meet the president of the Temple, Ronald Berman. They quickly determined their connection, Ron Berman being the maternal first cousin of **Eugene Berman** (*Chonon Berman/Gustave Berman*), the nephew of Gene's mother, **Lillian Berman Berman**.

The historic and genealogical truth is that David Berman and Ronald Berman are, in fact, related...by marriage. **Bertha Kraviz** (1896-1971), one of the daughters of Chonon's sister, Fannie Berman Kravitz, was married to Louis Berman, a brother of Lillian Merman Berman Berman. Lest you be confused, it is easily explained, **Gustave Berman** (*Chonon Berman*) was married to a married to an unrelated Berman, **Lillian Berman**, the daughter of Samuel Berman, also of New Haven.

As to the encounter between David and Ron, Ron has written: *"I really liked the 'new' Bermans. And you should fly out here just to meet Dave and Deb's grandson, Harley. He's funnier than both of us put together and certainly better looking."*

Keep up-to-date by checking out the month of September in the 2011 Calendar of The College of Natural Sciences of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst that features a picture of **Alexander and Zachary Nemtsov** (*Chonon Berman/Gustave Berman/Eugene Berman/Caren Nemtsov*) with the write-up:

DYNAMIC DUO. Twins Alexander and Zachary Nemtsov like to do things in tandem. Juniors pursuing dual degrees in Physics and Polemical Science, they are members of Commonwealth Honors College, where Alex is vice chair and Zach is the chair of the Student Advisory Board Development Committee. They are also working to revitalize the campus chapter of the Society of Physics Students. Together, they are a force to be reckoned with, but they are also individually talented. They are musical – Alex plays drums, Zach plays guitar, and they both play alto saxophone. As members of physicist Laura Cadonati's Experimental Gravitation and Particle Astrophysics research lab, Alex specializes in Monte Carlo simulations for DarkSide, and Zach works on gravitational wave analysis for the LIGO project.

The guy's also appear pictorially in the brochure for The College of Natural Science.

Each of the twins aspires to be a patent attorney. Zachary was the first born, but his brother was named Alexander so that he too would have an opportunity to come first.

Zachary and Alex's grandfather, **Eugene B. Berman** (*Chonon Berman/Gustave Berman*) was recently presented with a Centennial Award by the Massachusetts Bar Association for epitomizing "the spirit of public service on which the Massachusetts Bar Association was founded a century ago." The presentation celebrated "his work on the issue of predatory mortgage lending and the foreclosure crisis. He suggested and became the chair of the

Hampden County Bar Association’s Foreclosure Task Force as well as organized and chaired the Alliance3 of Providers of Legal Services to Individuals Facing Foreclosure.”

Mark R. Berman (Chonon Berman/Gustave Berman/Milton R. Berman) has been named Vice President of American International College (AIC) in Springfield, Massachusetts and, as such, is the College’s chief financial officer.

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Do you ever ask yourself why your name or the name of a member of your immediate family does not appear in **The Berman Family Announcer**? The answer is simple: you do not provide us with information about you and/or your family. The truth is that the family is interested in what is going on in the lives of other members of the family...but they can only know if you share the information with us. Except in our attempts to locate missing family members, The Announcer does not employ a staff of investigative reporters...we rely on members of the family to share information, to keep us advised as to life cycle and other events...the good, the happy, the funny and, unfortunately, the sad. You are our sources.

As a start, please:

- * **Inform us promptly as to any change of your address and/or contact information.**
- * **Keep us informed as to new e-mail addresses of members of your family, i.e. children.**
- * **Inform us as to new contact information relating to any family member to assure that we always have the information to maintain an up-to-date mailing list.**
- * **Report all life cycle events (marriages, births, deaths, etc.) and other items of interest providing names of parents, date and place.**

IT’S GREAT TO BE A BERMAN !

Visit the Berman family website at: www.bermanfamily.com
