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## Vu zenen di briv-fraynd

Our online Yiddish Pen-Pal Club is going strongly. Thanks to the original efforts of Dr. Allan Blair of Columbus, Ohio and Frida de Cielak of Mexico City, the effort had an excellent start.

Now located online at: [www.derbay.org/penpal.html](http://www.derbay.org/penpal.html)  
Der Yidisher Briv-Fraynd Klub has members in 24 countries and 34 states in the U.S. The members are asked to use their accession number that is now up to 346. Future members are asked to rate themselves on their Yiddish ability and to rate the pen-pals to whom they wish to write. In addition they have the choice of writing online in transcription or in hardcopy. The majority chooses to write via the Internet.

Once an application has been received, your editor asks the applicant to write a little in Yiddish so that he is assured that the applicant is legitimately able and interested. A fascinating article could be written about the troublesome and usually humorous ones that have been weeded out so that the chance of one slipping through has now been avoided for well over a year.

The main matching criteria are the levels one chooses. By selecting only one level, one has a greater limitation. Usually, 8-10 names are selected and sent. It is much quicker writing online, for the message is sent and received in a matter of minutes rather than days. In many cases the other party may not respond, for he/she is already corresponding and does not wish to add another pal. Most people will write to several and use most of the first letter for the others—with minor changes. The selection process had been honed to the point that it has been a long while since a complaint has been received. There is no attempt to match people up geographically, by age or gender, for it greatly limits the selection process. Remember that the levels one chooses remain the major selection criteria.

One suggestion is to have clubs involved. Also reading letters from distant places is exciting.

Below is the list of countries with Pen-Pal locations. Argentina, Australia, Austria, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Uruguay

Below is the list of States with Pen-Pal locations. AL, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, IL, IN, KS, KY, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, NC, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, SC, TN, TX, WA, WI

## TYN Contact in Durban, South Africa

by Rochelle Winer

Ich badank aich far *Der Bay* vos ich hob bakumen. Es is shver tsu shraiben "Yinglish" ober ich vel probiren! Ir vet mich antshuldiken—efsher vet nit zain azoy 100% ober es is beser vi tsu shraiben oif English! Ich hof az ir zeit gezunt. Do gayen mir arein in unzer vinter monaten ober es iz nit azoy kalt. Mir hoben do zaier heise monaten, February/March ven mir leben in a shvitzbod.

We had the "Yom Hashoa ondenk frimorgen" for the 6 million Jews who were murdered by the Nazis. We had about 600 people at the cemetery, and I recited a poem about the almost 2 million children who were brutally murdered. I translate first and then do the Yiddish poem about Die Lererin Mire. It was very well received. I have been doing this for 13 years in Durban.

My Yiddish group is going well and on the 1st July we celebrated our 6th birthday with a "farbrengeish" in the Durban Jewish Centre. We had personal reminiscences from our members. Some of them were born in Lithuania, Poland, and Latvia and they all had a story to tell. Some members were born in the shtetlach of South Africa and moved to the bigger cities, like Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. They tell some wonderful stories as the Yidden had a lot in common with the Afrikaans farmers. They also regarded themselves as the Chosen People!

Prof. Joseph Sherman, of the English Department at the University of Witwatersrad in Johannesburg, has written about this and also Dan Jacobson. Maybe some day I shall come to San Francisco and then we can have a wonderful meeting and talk about South Africa and the little bit of Yiddishkeit here. That is why *Der Bay* is so interesting for us. We can then see what is happening in the big, Yiddish world. It is truly an eye-opener to read about the Yiddish clubs all over the world.

I read about the First Yiddish Litvak Congress in Vilnius that Dovid Kunigis attended. I was VERY interested in this as I read about Vilnius in the Jerusalem Post and about Prof. Dovid Katz who runs the summer programme. If I could get the address of Mr Kunigis, I would like to contact him and learn of what happened in Vilna. I really am very interested to know what is happening in Lithuania. Rabbi Krinsky came out to Durban and told us a bit of the Yiddish life in Vilna.

Zait gezunt un noch a mol a groisen un hartsiken dank far alts vos ir tut far undz do in Dorem Afrika.

## Morrie Feller Shares Letter from Vilnius

Thank you for sending the IAYC check for Sarah. The program promises to be a real success. We have so many young applicants from all over the world. A new generation of those interested in Yiddishkayt is growing.

There is excellent enrollment from a wide range of students hailing from many countries and of many age groups and backgrounds. Between those over 70 already registered for the August 2002 Program, we have people from Australia, Canada, England, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Scotland, Slovakia, USA, age ranging from 15 to 70 (for the moment).

Laima

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## A Correction from Brazil

fun Jose Roque Sturza

Ershtns volt ich veln dankn far main naiem brivfraind, mit velchem ich hob zich bakent durch YBFK.

Tsfeitns volt ich veln dermunen, az inem tekst fun [www.derbay.org](http://www.derbay.org) leient men:

"The "Yidisher briv-fraynd Club" is a world-wide Yidisher pen-pals club with over 280 in: Argentina, Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Russia, S. Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Uruguay and the following states in the USA: AL, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, IL, IN, KY, MA, MD, MI, MO, NC, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, SC, TN, TX, WA, and WI."

Oibm ken me nisht leienen, az Brazil iz eins fin di lender, vi brivfraind iz tsi gefinen. S'iz du veinikstns ein brivfraind - ich (hehe). Oib es zainen du andere brivfraind, veis ich nisht. Ober ich bin du oif zicher :o), un vart oif a sach briv, vus ich vel entfern yiddish un mit farguenign.

Ot der YBFK un aier arbet zainen tomed vus tsi loibm in tug arain! Oichet adank zei lebt-iber undzer gelibter mame-loshn!

Un ich vil noch andere brivfraind!!! Vil ich aza sach vi meiglech oif beide oifonem: durch der normaler post un durch der e-post.

Azoi, main taierer, noch amul a groisn dank far alem, un ich vintsh dir mit mishpuche al dus guits!  
mit fraindschaft

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## The Art of the Yiddish Folk Song

Sima Miller truly impressed the entire audience at the IAYC Conference in Milwaukee. When your editor heard her CD, Heritage #1, he was even more impressed. The 19 songs she sings in this first of four CDs are a mixture of old favorites and ones lesser known, but just as exciting.

She has performed all over the U. S. and in Israel before audiences on radio and on television. Her Israeli background enriches her broad repertoire. She has produced this set of 4 CDs that also are on 5 cassettes. The set of cassettes is \$60 and the CD set is \$68. These include shipping and handling.

Sima Miller

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## Jewish Braille Institute

by Ellen Wertheim [ewertheim@jbilibrary.org](mailto:ewertheim@jbilibrary.org)

Since 1931, The Jewish Braille Institute of America (JBI) has provided the visually impaired and the blind of all ages with books, magazines and special publications in Braille and large print. In 1960 JBI began the production of audiocassette, further enabling full participation in educational, cultural, religious and communal life of the Jewish people. Our individualized services--that are free of charge--enrich the lives of over 30,000 people worldwide, most of whom are seniors.

JBI is in need of Yiddish readers willing to generously volunteer their time to both narrate and direct books on tape. At this time we are unable to offer many wonderful Yiddish works to our Yiddish-speaking clients who are eager to hear materials in their mame-loshn.

Located at 110 E 30th Street in Manhattan, the JBI sound studio has many available time slots during the day, and occasionally during the evening. Please consider tsedaka by way of sharing the richness of language with our clients.

Ellen Wertheim, Library Coordinator 212-889-2525 xt 123

## After the IAYC Milwaukee Conference

by Paul Melrood: Conference Coordinator

After a week relaxation in the southern coast, Costa del Sol, we flew to Madrid, to meet with your contact in Spain, Richard (Zishe) Carlow, who worked with the Folksbiene in NY for ten years. He was our guiding light in a strange land. (Lang lebn zol er.) With 12 hours notice, he called together his local Yiddish Vinkl.

We spent an entire evening, speaking only Yiddish (some of them didn't speak English) with people who were originally from Kiev, Buenos Aires, Spain, Miami, New York, and Israel. What an intelligent group! Their last names were like the League of Nations. I read a few of my Chelemer Maises, the likes of which they hadn't heard in years. We made several good friends there, who guided us around for the rest of the week. Where else, except "tsvishn undz yidn" can this happen in the world? The upshot of this whole experience is what's most exciting. There is a good possibility that their Yiddish Vinkl could be the first contingent of the IAYC in Europe.

## Yiddish In The Automobile Showroom

By (Marjorie Gotlieb Wolfe) Wolfeny@Webtv.Net

Below are Yiddish expressions that can be used in an auto showroom when attempting to buy a new or used car.

"Ikh kuk zikh nor arum."  
(I am just looking around.)

"Loz mikh tso ru!"  
(Leave me alone.)

"Ikh glaykh nit handlen."  
(I dislike the bargaining process.)

"Es is zeyer tayer."  
(It is very expensive.)

"Der kolir gefelt mir nit."  
(I don't like the color.)

"Ken ikh bakumen an oysdruk fun dem prayz?"  
(Can I get a printout of the sticker price?)

"Ikh vil a helere shatirung."  
(I want a lighter shade.)

"Es gefelt mir."  
(I like it.)

"Ikh darf a draysik toysent dolar mashinke vi a lokh in kop."  
(I need a \$30,000 car like a hole in the head.)

"Tsi farkoyft ir a muster?"  
(Do you have a demo for sale?)

"Vos is der untershte shure?"  
(What is the bottom line?)

"Iz dos biliger far z'keynim?"  
(Is it cheaper for senior citizens)

"Vayst mir an andere model."  
(Show me another model.)

"Ven veln onkumen di iberayorike oytos?"  
(When will the 2002 cars arrive?)

"Ikh volt gevolt dos koyfn."  
(I would like to buy this.)

"Ikh vil zen di gantse makher."  
(I want to see the manager.)

[after salesman says, "Prices are going up"]  
"A naye geshikhta." (That's a new story.)

"Der rezerv redl iz a groyse?"  
(Is the spare a full-sized tire?)

[salesman discusses the purchase of a TV/VCR console for that long trip to visit the "mishpokhe" in South Florida]

"Ikh darf es af kapores. Aroysgevorfn gelt."  
(I have no use for it. A waste of money.)

[after signing on the dotted line]  
"Zol zayn mit glik!" (Good luck to you!)

Marjorie Gotlieb Wolfe is a retired business educator, free-lance writer, and has owned several "lemons."

## L'chayim Comrade Stalin!

Yale Strom's newest documentary film L'chayim Comrade Stalin! (produced by Elizabeth Schwartz) had its world premiere at the Berlin International Film Festival in February 2002. Since then the film has been screened at many other festivals and will have its New York City premiere at the Anthology Film Archives (212-505-5181) December 12-18th.

The film is about the fascinating but overlooked history dealing with the world's first and only Yiddish secular region. The Soviet Union created the "Jewish Autonomous Region" (known by the name of the capital Birobidzhan) as a response to the "Jewish Question." In 1928 the Soviet government designated the Birobidzhan District as the official territory for Jewish settlement. An area slightly larger than Belgium. It was officially designated the Jewish Autonomous Region (J.A.R.) in 1934. In these times it took ten days via the Trans-Siberian Railroad to travel from Moscow to Birobidzhan. The J.A.R. is closer to Seoul, Korea than it is to Moscow.

Proponents of the J.A.R. believed that establishing a territorial Jewish homeland for the Soviet Union's Jews would help facilitate a Yiddish secular culture based on socialist principles while consolidating all the Jews in one area. There were other reasons the Soviet government wanted to create the J.A.R.:

- to develop and secure their eastern flank which bordered Japanese occupied Manchuria,
- create a political alternative to Zionism for Soviet Jewry and
- to promote positive propaganda among world Jewry who would be apt to financially support their brethren.

Needless to say Stalin never gave the J.A.R. a real chance of becoming a viable Yiddish secular state. At the height of immigration from 1946-48 (including some 1200-1500 Jews from outside the Soviet Union) J.A.R. had about 45,000 Jews.

After the State of Israel was established in May 1948 Stalin's paranoia against Soviet Jewry called "the rootless cosmopolitans" reached new heights with devastating results. Stalin's plan was to kill Jewish culture by murdering its intellectual and artistic leaders (Shlomo Mikhoels, Itsik Feffer, Perets Markish, etc), which culminated in 1953 with the infamous "Doctors' Plot."

Yale Strom's film deals with the past and current history of Birobidzhan. He found archival footage and photos in Birobidzhan that has never been seen outside of Russia. He interviewed many Jews who still live there and interviewed two women who immigrated with their families from the U.S. to the J.A.R. in the early 1930's. Both of these families returned to America. Today there are some 5-7000 Jews still living there. Yiddish is still an official language of the region along with Russian, and Yiddish is still taught to all students who attend the public schools. There is a teachers college now where students can get a degree in Yiddish. As in Yale's other documentary films this one has a strong soundtrack with some original Yiddish melodies as well as some Yiddish songs he found while in Birobidzhan.

To rent or purchase the video (89 min. with English subtitles) or want to know about future screenings, contact Elizabeth Schwartz at tel: 212-781-9192, fax: 212-781-9186 or email her at: stromhome@aol.com