

Der Bay

The International Anglo-Yiddish Newsletter

February 2008

Vol. XVIII No. 2

The XII IAYC Conference, La Jolla, CA, Oct. 24-27, 2008 IAYC to Launch IAoYT

A New Organization

With the overwhelming success of the IAYC, it is time that the same principles that were learned in organizational club formation be applied to Yiddish teaching and Yiddish teachers.

The Grassroots Movement

In the past, charismatic individuals have been the driving force in initiating and fostering new groups. The IAYC has shown that when dedicated individuals convene they can be a powerful force in organizing a group.

IAYC Role in IAoYT Formation

The sole interest is to have the venue for lighting the fire of the new organization. Once the conference is over the IAoYT will be on its own. If the group wishes to have future meetings at IAYC conferences, it gladly will be accommodated. However, until it is able to reach a critical mass, it should piggyback at other potentially accommodating meetings such as Yugntruf's Sof Vokh, KlezKamp, etc.

Teacher's Program at the IAYC Conference

To initiate this effort the IAYC will include a series of lecture/workshops that will be open to all attendees without having to sign up beforehand. It will include successful Yiddish teachers at various levels. The program is being finalized and your input now is welcomed.

The Theme Approach

To identify the individual sessions for attendees, the program will list the areas of concern for each presentation/workshop. They will be: T for teachers, C for clubs, M for music and A for all others. Each of the sessions will attempt to have at least one in each category. Thus one could follow a thread or theme throughout all the sessions or pick and choose. You do not have to select beforehand!

Levels of Yiddish Teaching

Experienced teachers know that there is a great difference in teaching any subject when your pupil ages are; pre-school, elementary, teenage, college or adult/senior. Their attention span, retention ability, background experiences and motivation all are criteria in creating syllabi for the different age groups.

There is a wealth of learning materials and lesson plans that have been created for shules, etc. especially in the U.S. and Canada that are available from the Arbeter Ring, YIVO and especially the schools in Montreal and Toronto.

Contact Information

Visit the website at: www.derbay.org/lajolla/

Call Conference Chair, Norman Sarkin for local information and the ad journal at: 858-731-3116. Call Fishl Kutner for program, vending, and registration questions at: 650-349-6946.

Czernowitz Centennial Listings

In the last 2 issues of *Der Bay* the important centennial of the Czernowitz Conference of 1908 has been noted. The announcement includes the fact that *Der Bay* is the international clearinghouse for listing these events. There will be a separate section of *der internatsyonaler kalendar* devoted to these listings—worldwide. The purpose is to avoid date conflicts and also to act as a resource for speakers and programs pertaining to this event.

While our contacts world-wide have mostly indicated that they will celebrate the centennial, it is surprising that very, very little advance planning has been done. This makes these listings that much more important. We shall publish additional key sites in upcoming issues.

****Best place to start****
<http://czernowitz.org/>

Chernivitsi on the Net
<http://czernowitz.ehpes.com/>

Jewish Encyclopedia
<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/>

Mendele online archives
<http://www2.trincoll.edu/~mendele/arc.htm>

Yugntruf's Yidish-Tog: Tshernevits

lekoved hundert yor zint der ershter yidisher shprakh-konferents in tshernevits, vos hot bashtim yidish vi "a natsyonale shprakh funem yidishn folk" un inspirirt dem modernem yidishizm, farbet aykh "yugntruf" af a nayer shprakh-konferents zuntik, dem 17tn februar, in "arbeter-ring" in nyu-york, 45 E. 33rd St.

di onteylnemer veln genisn fun a pyese vegn der tshernevitser konferents mit ale vikhtike personazhn, redes fun gelernte, panel-diskusyes vegn dem hantikn batayt fun yidish, vi oykh oytentishe tshernevitser maykholim un a raykher muzikalisher program fun tshernevitser lider.

ba di panel-diskusyes, in velkhe ale konferents-mitglieder megn onteyl nemen, vet men arumredn azelkhe inyonim vi: di moderne yidische shprakh-pedagogye tsi iz yidish (nokh alts) a (natsyonale) shprakh? naye yidish-proyektn (verterbukh, teater, yidish-hoyz un nokh)zayt azoy gut un shikt ayere gedanken un forleygn undzer planir-komitet: leyzer burko leyzertag@gmail.com oder [khane-rivke yong hannah rivka18@yahoo.com](mailto:khane-rivke.yonghannah.rivka18@yahoo.com)

"Hot Pstromi" to Play in Berlin

We are excited to be coming to Berlin's B Flat Club to perform! Yale Strom (fiddle), Elizabeth Schwartz (Yiddish vocals) and Peter Stan (accordion) - all members of New York's renowned klezmer ensemble, "Hot Pstromi", will be joined by trumpeter Paul Brody.

This promises to be a great night of traditional klezmer, Yiddish and Gypsy music and jazz fusion. If you are in town, please come—and say hello! Also, as we don't know a lot of people in Berlin, please tell your friends and anyone who loves great music!

We'll be presenting new and traditional songs, as well as cuts from our new ARC (UK) recording, "Borsht with Bread, Brothers" (see below). The concert will be Monday, 17 March 2008. Check with the club for the details about our start time.

The B Flat Club is located at Rosenthalerstrasse 13. It promises to be a great evening of music, Jewish and Yiddish culture - and we hope you can be part of it. Thanks, a hartsikn dank and zay gezint, Elizabeth Schwartz

From Weltmusik-Magazin.net:

Yale Strom & Hot Pstromi: Borsht With Bread, Brothers <<http://www.welt-musik.net/?p=755>> 1981 zog Yale Strom durch die ehemaligen Ostblockländer auf der Suche nach unbekanntem, unveröffentlichten (und meistens nur mündlich überlieferten) Klezmer- und jiddischen Liedern. Ein Ergebnis dieser Reise ist diese CD. Aus Ungarn, Ukraine, Slowakei, Rumänien, Weißrussland, Russland, Deutschland, Polen und Moldavien stammt die Musik. Die Aufnahmen zeigen die große Bandbreite der jiddischen Musik und macht deutlich, wie sie immer auch von der traditionellen Musik des jeweiligen Gastlandes beeinflusst wurde. Eine farbenfrohe Musik, die nicht nur gut unterhält.

Das Ensemble "Hot Pstromi" besteht aus Fred Benedetti (Gitarre), David Licht (Percussion), Jeff Pekarek (Bass), Sprocket Royer (Bass), Elisabeth Schwartz (Gesang), Tripp Sprague (Sax), Norbert Stachel (Holzblasinstrumente) und Peter Stan (Akkordeon).

Zu jedem einzelnen Stück gibt es im viersprachigen Beiheft ausführliche Erläuterungen, sowie zu den Musikern und zum Projekt insgesamt. Sehr lobenswert!

<http://www.voiceofklezmer.com>

Yiddish Theater: A Love Story

A Documentary Film by DAN KATZIR

Reviewed by Martin Brandfon

I had the opportunity to see this gem of a film at the Peninsula JCC in Foster City, CA, (with the Director in attendance) and if you find it playing anywhere near you, call your friends and family to go see it!

The title of the film is a little misleading; this is not a Yiddish film but it is a "love story" on many levels. (There are subtitles for the Yiddish parts and to better understand the star's accented English.) The love objects are many: keeping Yiddish theater alive in New York; the close relationships between the dedicated "Yiddish Diva" Zypora Spaisman and her producer David Romeo; as well as the growing rapport between the film maker and his subject.

Filmed against the backdrop of New York City at Hanukkah time in 2000, the story unfolds: the aged but energetic star of the Yiddish Public Theater is trying to bring her off-Broadway production of Peretz' 1916 play, "Green Fields," to a theater closer to Times Square to attract bigger audiences. Despite a great review in the New York Times and inclusion as one of the 10 Best Off-Broadway Plays by the New York Post, raising enough money to move the show is the problem and the goal. The burning Hanukkah candles tick off the days until the final curtain falls.

The film captures the spirit and drive of the actress and provides an intimate portrait of the impact of her life's work on the play's cast, her family, her friends and ultimately on Yiddish theater. It also proves that no matter how old you are, dreams really can come true. Zypora Spaisman is an inspiration and Dan Katzir has preserved her unforgettable character for this generation. As a bonus, the soundtrack includes many classic Yiddish show tunes and folksongs enhanced from their original recordings.

In speaking to the Director, Dan Katzir, I realized that a parallel struggle exists in producing theater and distributing this documentary to wider audiences. The film recently has been shown in New York City at the Pioneer Theatre and in Los Angeles at Laemmle's Grande. Both the New York Times and Los Angeles Times gave it positive reviews but these screenings were limited runs. (Last year's showings at the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival were sold out hits!)

So, if you are in a position to bring this film to your synagogue, JCC or other community organization, please contact Dan Katzirat: dan@newlovefilms.com and check out his other award-winning films. Learn more at: www.newlovefilms.com

From Czernowitz

by Barbara Goldstein

Arthur Rindner is a survivor of Czernowitz and lives in Israel. He is a marvelous resource and the "sending source" of the photographic essay about the Jewish quarter of Czernowitz. Below is part of a message sent to the Houston Yiddish Vinkl member, Nitza Gil. Nitza wrote Mr. Rindner about the IAYC La Jolla conference and this is his response. It is important to get the feelings of someone in Czernowitz

Dear Czernowitzers,

Dr. Bursuk is one of the few Jewish Czernowitzers, who never left the city. He works for Hesed Shushana, a Jewish aid society in Chernivtsi and cares for the elderly and destitute Jewish people. He and I correspond occasionally. In the latest letter I received from Dr. Bursuk, there are two important messages, which I would like to communicate to you:

1. In 2008 except for the 600-anniversary of our city, carrying out in our city of conference on Yiddish is planned. 100 years ago, in 1908 in Chernovtsy there was such conference. Probably, anniversary in this occasion will take place.
2. If you have opportunity then organize, among the American Jews, a museum. It can be copies of documents, photos, and other interesting exhibits that show a life of Jews of Bukovina.

It seems, that there will be three Yiddish conferences in 2008; one in Toronto in April, one in La-Jolla in October and a third in Chernivtsi At an unknown time. I urge everyone to go through their photographs, letters and documents to see what material they may have which would be suitable for an exhibit or a permanent museum on Czernowitz or Bukovina Jewish heritage.

Please make this list and send it directly to Maita, or if we soon have a volunteer for the point-person job, then to this person. We, Czernowitzers of the online Cz.-List, have the best collection of documents photographs, and letters pertaining to the Jewish heritage of Czernowitz - Cernauti. We are collectively more knowledgeable about the history, culture and Jewish heritage of the city than anyone residing there now. Many of us are retired and do have the time to devote to assembling the material for an exhibition.

Editor's note: Barbara Goldstein is a longtime IAYC Board member, and has held the position of secretary. Her vinkl in Houston is IAYC #2. They have a long history of Yiddish activities in the Houston community.

Shayles un Tshuves in "Hilkhes Libe" (Questions and Answers in the Matter of Love)

[transliterated and annotated by Goldie Adler Gold]

"Forverts" -- Jan. 4, 2008

Fun der khaznte Khane Slek, a yidishe tokhter. Ot entfert zi oyf farsheydene shayles in "Hilkhes Libe" fun mentshn mit tsores.

Tayere khaznte,

Farvos ken ikh keynmol nisht makhn keyn bashlus? Ikh kvenkl zikh [waver] hin un tsurik vegn yedn inyen [matter], yedn bashlus [decision]. Ven ikh bin in a kleyder-gesheft, ken ikh nisht bashlisen vosere malbushim tsu koyfn. Ikh bin keynmol nisht zikher, voser kleyd past mir mer. Afile nokh dem vi ikh koyf epes, zorg ikh zikh, az ikh hob gehat a toes un freg zikh, tsi ikh hob rikhtik bashlosn. Farvos kumt es mir on azoy shver?

Nisht-bashlosn

Tayere Nisht-Bashlosn,

Ayer umzikherkeyt kumt for tsulib ayer zelibst-tsutroy [confidence], oder beser gezogt, tsulib nisht hobn keyn tsutroy tsu zikh aleyn. Dos iz an inyen vos shpiglt op a tifere problem, vi di bashlusn in gesheft. Ikh volt aykh geeytset [advise] zikh tsu fregn, farvos hot ir nisht keyn tsugroy tsu zikh aleyn un oystsurekhenen di mides [virtues] ayere, vos ir hot lib un zent shtolts mit zey.

Vos shaykh [regarding] ayer umbashlosnkeyn in gesheftn—beser tsu makhn dem bashlus—un arop fun mark [decide and leave]! Me darf zikh shteln a tsayt-termin [deadline] tsu bashlisen, tsi me zol yo koyfn, tsi nisht. In lebn hot men an umbagrenetste [limited] tsol breyres [choices]; oyb me vet batrakhtn yede breyre, yedn bashlus, vet nisht blaybn keyn tsayt far dem vos iz beemes vikhtik in lebn.

"Forverts" - 1/4/08

Tayere Khaznte,

Ikh hob zikh shoyngetrofn fir mol mit a fayne froy. Zi iz in mayn elter, oykh a gegete [divorced], un hot dervaksene kinder vi ikh. Zi iz sheyn, hot a gute arbet; zi hot ale mayles [virtues]. Fun destvegn, nokh yedn randevyu trakht ikh tsu zikh, tsi kh'zol vayter farbrengen mit ir? Zol ikh vayter zikh trefn mit ir?

Umzikher

Tayere umzikher,

Ir hot oysgerekhnt etlekhe gute faktn vegn der froy, ober ir hot gornisht dermont ayere gute gefiln tsu ir. Oyb ir hot azoy hanoehat fun ayere trefungen, az ir zent nisht zikher tsi ir vilt zikh nokh trefn, volt ikh itst opgeshtelt di frayndshaft. S'iz klor az epes felt in der batsiung [relationship] tsvishn aykh.

Tayere khaznte,

Ikh hob gezogt mayn tokhter oyfn telefon az zi makht shlekhte bashlusn [decisions] un darf aynordenen ir lebn [settle down]. Ikh hob ir afile gezogt, az efsher zol zi zikh aroystsien [move...] fun undz, kedey tsu vern mer umophengik [independent]. Zi iz gevorn mole-kaas [furious]. Bald nokh dem klingt zi mir on mit a histerishn geveyn. Zi iz geven in an oyto-aktsident. S'iz mit ir gornisht geshen, danken got, ober ikh fil zikh azoy shuldik! Itst vil zi afile nisht firn keyn oyto. Mir dakht, az mayne sharfe reyde tsu ir hobn derfirt tsu dem matsev [situation].

A Mame

Tayere Mame,

Koydem-kol [first of all], zent ir nisht shuldik inem oyto-aktsident. Tsveytns, darfn kinder, vi alt zey zoln nisht zayn, amol hern fun di eltern, velkhe hobn zey lib, az zey muzn zikh aleyn shteln oyf di fis [...to be self-supporting]. Ir hot gornisht shlekhts geton.

A tsveyt mol, ven ir vilt zikh durkhredn mit ir vegn dem inyen [matter], zolt ir beser dos ton ponem-el-ponem. Farbrengt tsayt mit ir, kedey ir zolt beyde kumen tsu a bashlus un keyner zol nisht vern in kaas. Farzikhert [make sure], az ayer tokhter farshteyt, az ir hot zi lib un zent shtolts [proud] mit gevise aspektn fun ir lebn.

Editor's note: We have published Goldie Adler Gold translations, and IAYC has distributed A TOUCH OF MAMELOSHN that she had compiled, and it was published by the Arbeter Ring/Workmen's Circle.

Goldie is the leader of the Penn South Senior Center Yiddish Club.

She lives in New York City and can be reached by e-mail at: goldede@rcn.com

Sandra Jacobs Writes

Cleveland Hts., OH sondrajacobs@sbcglobal.net

After attending the IAYC Conference in Cleveland, my husband and I were inspired to study Yiddish at the Siegel College of Jewish Studies. We completed that course (30 hours) and, while it was a "refresher" course for my husband who grew up in a Yiddish-speaking environment, for me, it was all quite new.

I learned a great deal but I remain largely unable to converse in Yiddish. We learned many verbs--all in the present tense--and much vocabulary from working with the Workmen's Circle 1994 publication, *Yiddish--An Introduction to the Language, Literature & Culture*, by Sheva Zucker. I expect to continue studying the textbook and practicing as much as possible (I became extremely adept at writing in Yiddish).

My husband and I are greatly enjoying the *Der Bay* monthly newsletter to which we subscribed following the conference. My question for you is: Would it be possible for you to have a small special section--a learning corner--in the newsletter on Yiddish VERBS--their conjugation in various tenses--perhaps just one each month. One can hardly speak exclusively in the present tense and I would be so grateful for such exposure at least to future and past tenses.

Thanking you in advance both for your consideration of this request and your outstanding efforts toward yidishkayt.

Lomir esn un fresn

by Dink Holzman: papadink@aol.com

Our Vinkl may not be the biggest, but we are the healthiest. The Congregation Shalom Yiddish Vinkl enjoyed another super "TEPL - MAZEL" (Pot Luck luncheon). This was our 3rd annual affair, and it gets better every year. We had 44 members prepare their favorite Jewish dishes. Included were gribenes, chopped liver, herring, gefilte fish, kugel, rolled cabbage, varnishkes and kashe, and more. I won't get started on the desserts—95 people were in attendance!

As in the past, my wife, Reggie Holzman, chaired the affair. She headed a committee of great women who helped make this event super special. A sheyne dank tzu Reggie!!

The first ever "Groyser Yid" award was presented to Congregation Shalom's exec. dir., Marc Cohen, who has contributed greatly to our Vinkl's success. Folk singer, Lil Rev, helped top off a wonderful afternoon with his beautiful renditions of Yiddish favorites. Siz sheyn tzu zayn a "GEZUNTER" YID!

A Yiddish Interpreter's Call

By Hersh Hartman

The varied parts of my life are starting to invade each other...to slop over, as it were.

At around 3:00 this afternoon, Pacific Standard Time (I checked: given the solstice and all, it was after shabes, Eastern Standard Time) I had a Yiddish/English telephone interpreting call. The client was New York City 311. The caller, I later learned, was a resident of Lakewood, New Jersey—whose burgeoning Orthodox/khsidish (Hassidic) community just happened to have been featured in a New York Times article this week that I'd read online. (Crossover invasion No. One.)

The caller had bought a cell phone that was "broken" and was told that one could file a complaint with New York City. It turned out that he was right. The Department of Consumer Affairs does handle such complaints. Had the caller returned to the store? Yes, but his English was so limited that they would not help him. What was the store's name and address?

Here comes slop-over No. 2: It was an iPhone and the store was in Manhattan. Not sure a PC-using Yiddish interpreter would've caught "eplstor" and understood it to mean what this Mac person knew immediately—Apple Store!

Given the caller's home address and a working cell phone number, the 311 operator (a helpful African-American young man) assured him that the Department of Consumer Affairs would contact him within 4 working days.

The caller heaped blessings on 311 and on the interpreter. No blessings on Apple yet, but it does raise the question: shouldn't Steve Jobs sign up his smiling retail geeks for the telephone interpreting service I freelance for? That way, they can smilingly "Communicate with anyone, anywhere, in over 170 languages," as its website proclaims.

Maybe Steve could call me. We can *handl*. But maybe that would be too much of an invasive slopover...

My Yiddish-knowing Mac *meyvin* endorses my proposal to Mr. Jobs. A fellow-graduate of *der bronkser mitlshul un di hekhers kursn* advises that he's forwarded it to an Apple executive. *ver veyst?*)

Editor's note: Hersh Hartman is the educational director for the Sholem Community, a L.A. Secular Jewish educational, cultural and social organization. He will be a speaker at the IAYC Conference.

Mama Was An Actress

By Philip *Fishl* Kutner

She could have been on the Yiddish stage—maybe even in the movies.

Mama never told me that, and it never occurred to us boys until we were much older. In sharing stories about mama we realized that she really could put on “the act” whenever it was needed to get what she wanted. In each of her roles she played it to the hilt.

Papa Never Had a Chance

Papa was only 5’6”, but he was a division boxing-champ in the U.S. Army, WWI. Mama was almost his height and very powerful, but they never traded blows—she never had to—to get her way.

Mama started with “oy vey iz mir”, but it never worked. Then she compared her lot in life to her shvegerin, on papa’s side of the family. This guilt trip usually didn’t work, but sometimes it did. This was followed by her beginning to pull out the *big guns*. “Far dos hob ikh gedarft kumen tsu (mama never said *keyn*) amerike”. Finally the tears came to her eyes. It was never a stream—only a drop. It shone like a diamond, and the battle was all over. Papa was no match for mama’s diamond.

With Us Boys

Mama would give her life for any one of her 4 boys, but you wouldn’t know it when she played the Sarah Bernhart role—guilt, guilt, guilt!

Mama never used that word, but every time she got done talking with us we felt bad because, “You let me down.”

It was just that look, and those words. I can still hear them today. It was different with papa. He was logical and explained things. We felt good afterwards, but with mama, it was always guilt, guilt, guilt. Sometimes I wish that they’d have spanked us and forgotten it, but mama laid it on!

As a Business Woman with “City Folk”

Forget about the storekeepers. They were no match for mama. First she gave the merchandise a dirty look. Then she felt it, and one knew right from the start that in her mind it was of low quality. Her Yiddish words here are not repeatable. Finally she ended with, “This you call a “*metsie*”? The shopkeeper was embarrassed in front of the other customers.

He usually said, “Okay, lady how much will you give me for it.”

Mom’s response was, “You should pay me to take it.”

This was followed by, “If my boys weren’t hungry, or if my boys didn’t need....I wouldn’t be here looking at your ...”

The only one who was treated “fairly” was the furniture man. He always had his wife “take care of mama”. Because she was from the same shtetl, it always was talking about the people whom they knew and there was no bargaining.

As a Business Woman with “Farm Folk”

The “business farm folk” were the dealers who bought the chickens and eggs. Mostly we sold them at the Flemington Auction Market where our lot number was 2448. Here the dealers bid on the lots and we were paid a week later (less a commission). There was no “hondling”.

Sometimes the dealer would come out to buy directly from us because it meant that the eggs were fresher, and he didn’t have to pay his part of the commission.

Mama always got a better deal than papa. She would speak to them in Yiddish, Polish or Russian and her language was always of a higher class than the dealer. They were impressed.

The Helpless Old Lady

Later in life she bewailed the fact that she had had only 4 sons and no real daughters. Mama never lived with her sons even though she lived into her 90’s. It was always in a *moyshe skeynim*. Maybe it was partly old age and maybe partly the dramatic side of her, but as she moved from one magnificent retirement home to the next (es gefelt mir nisht) it became obvious that none would suit her.

On the East Coast, it was “Zey zenen ganovim”. On the West Coast “dos heyst kosher—phe!” With that she made funny sounds as if she were spitting, but no *shpayekhts* left her mouth. It had a funny sound like “tu, tu”.

So mama went back to New Jersey—Jersey City and she finally left us from a real *moyshe skeynim*.

Mama's Boarders and Roomers

by Philip Fishl Kutner

School was out and the influx would soon come. Our large, ca. 1842 colonial farmhouse would be totally rearranged. The families came in many different combinations.

There was the single *rich older lady* whose son drove her out each spring to see the room she would get, and also "make the arrangements." Money was paid upfront, and mama used it to get ready for all the rest.

We boys liked this time because there were new kids with whom to play. Our chores often suffered, but all the mamas were happy because it got the children out of the house.

Yes, there were families—many of them. They wanted to get the children out to the farm. *Jersey* was a shorter trip than going to *The Mountains*, so it was filled early and full all season.

All the bedrooms were rearranged. The twins and Fishl all slept in one bed in the small bedroom. Even mama's and papa's big bedroom was rented (to the rich old lady).

The kitchen was where mama fed the boarders and us boys and papa—later. The large screened-in summer kitchen, added on around the 1920's, was where the roomers cooked and the back room where they ate. The summer kitchen and back room were unheated and thus not used the rest of the year.

Mama sold the roomers; fresh eggs, milk, cream, butter, pot cheese, kosher chicken and ducks. Papa drove the roomers to Flemington once a week to do their shopping, or would take their orders.

Most of the time the men would carpool and come out for the weekends or stay on their one-week vacations. This was a very special time, because the living room became the place papa would play pinochle with the men.

It was a time that the women or we children would not dare make noise or bother them. Every once in a while there would be some loud laughter or an argument when a partner overbid and the other would be upset when they could not make the bid.

Papa's rules of the house—pay extra for a double pinochle (both Jack of diamonds and queen of spades) and double if trump was spades.

We all felt a little sad when they left by Labor Day.

Mama's Buttons and Her Boys

Mama loved her boys and anyone or anything that harmed them was her enemy.

Buttons had a special place in her life. Mama worked hard and she expected her kitchenware, sewing machine, broom and mop to do likewise.

A button to mama was a *button*. It was not anything with a picture on it to wear on a lapel and surely not something that you pushed. They were shank buttons or flat ones with four holes. There were no fancy cloth buttons.

Mama said, "Buttons know their place. They should be seen and not heard. Their job was to keep her boys' sweaters, jackets, shirts and pants closed and neat."

Very few things annoyed mama more than a button stepping out of line—getting loose or G-d forbid to fall off. The button became the recipient of a long litany of curses used only for reprimanding the Czar.

Mama had a button collection that would make any philatelist drool with envy. She had them stored in Mason jars. She knew every one of them and where they came from. There was every color of the rainbow and design.

Before sewing back the button mama closely inspected the buttonhole. It had to be just the right length. If it were too small it would put unnecessary strain on the thread when the button was pushed and twisted in use. On the other hand, if it were too large it would not remain buttoned and her boys would be cold or embarrassed.

Of course there was her ever-ready and trusty *fingerhut* (thimble). Mama never left the house without it. "You could always find a needle and thread, but where would you get the right sized protection?" It went over her left index fingertip.

Once all was in readiness and the needle threaded, mama proceeded with the skill of an artisan. Her hands flew as the needle whirred in and out. The needle had to be just the right size and she had the full set from number 1-10.

Mama had a pattern depending on the piece of clothing and the location on the garment. Mama was partial to the 4-hole buttons. The patterns of the sewn thread formed a square, or an X. She told me the parallel sewing style made a weaker stitch.

Mama knew her buttons.

International Association of Yiddish Clubs

12th Conference * La Jolla, California * October 24-27, 2008

Registration Options: Choose option A, or any combination of B, C, D or E

- A. Full Registration \$325.00: Includes Friday dinner, Saturday breakfast, lunch and dinner, Sunday breakfast and dinner, Monday breakfast, lunch plus all entertainments & sessions. 3 KOSHER DINNERS ADD \$30.00 – LUNCHES PAREVE
- B. Friday only \$85.00: Includes Friday dinner, orientation and entertainment. KOSHER DINNER ADD \$10.00
- C. Saturday only \$125.00: Includes Saturday morning services, breakfast, lunch and dinner and access to all Saturday meetings, lectures, presentations and evening entertainment. KOSHER DINNER ADD \$10.00
- D. Sunday only \$95.00: Includes breakfast and dinner and access to all Sunday meetings, lectures, presentations and evening entertainment. KOSHER DINNER ADD \$10.00
- E. Monday only \$85.00: Includes breakfast, lunch, lectures and the special closing ceremony.

Please circle your request, fill out the form below and mail with your remittance.

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HOTEL RESERVATIONS: Call 858-587-1414, Conference rate is \$119.00 + tax per night, single or double occupancy 3 or 4 is \$129 plus tax. Must say "Attending IAYC Conference" to get this low rate. You are responsible for your hotel reservations and must book by Oct. 1st to guarantee the conference rate--if still available. Same rate 3 days before and after conference.

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Mama Was a Solver

by Philip Fishl Kutner

Mama played many roles in our Jersey farmhouse. As the only woman in a household of papa and 4 boys, she was outnumbered. It was her feminine guiles that made her the matriarch. There were few times that she tangled with papa, but when she did—she always won.

Mama used a different kind of logic. To us it wasn't logical at all by any scientific problem-solving method, but it worked. She could clear up or explain anything.

Mama was a *dissolver*, and I don't mean just in cooking. Problems seemed to disappear when she put her hands and mind to it.

I remember her ability to be an *absolver* when it came to Fischele. He could do no wrong. Our household had a special rule—the teacher was always right—that is, except when it came to her Fischele.

Mama had 2 *resolving* periods. They were the High Holidays and January 1, the goyishe New Year, as mama called it. Our house was strictly kosher and Friday night candle lighting was an inviolate ritual. However, mama was a soft touch when papa asked her for money from her safely hidden knipl. Her *resolutions* evaded her until papa's dying day.

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On Divorce

Mama had no wiggle room for her 4 boys. It was about as black and white as any matter could be. If the daughter-in-law could have a boy then she was worth keeping. Everything else was a *kleynekayt*.

"A girl should divorce one of my sons—never. Where could she find another like him?"

However, the day came, and it happened—as well as with the following generation.

"What is happening to the World?" This was her constant lament She seemed to be consoled when it also happened to our neighbors. She blamed it on, "Times are too good. They will be sorry." But it only got worse.