

The Marx Brothers Visit Chelm

by Philip Fishl Kutner

If the truth be known, Chelm was not founded by the stork dropping all the foolish babies over Chelm. That bobe-mayse was made up for children many, many years ago who asked, "From where did I come?"

Actually great, great, zeyde Marx and great, great bobe Marx kept fleeing the persecutions of Western Europe and finally settled in the bucolic valley and founded present day Chelm.

When the famous Marx Brothers decided to visit their ancestral home and trace their genealogy, their business manager sent a message to Meyer the Mayor of Chelm.

If the truth be known, that was the story circulated around in all the newspapers worldwide. However, the real truth is that they had run out of material. Since Life is "One Big Joke", what better place would there be to visit than Chelm? There would be original material to last a lifetime.

Naturally this would not be any ordinary visit from the outside world. This would be the arrival of the most famous members of the Marx family—The Marx Brothers. In preparation for the great event it was decided to have a special greeting committee.

History tells us that the parents of the 5 Marx brothers, Minnie Schoenberg came from Germany and Sam Marx from Alsace, France. A genealogist once told them that if they went back far enough, they must have come from Chelm.

So the New York born vaudeville family decided to go back to their roots. They were going to visit Chelm.

When the Chelm Shtetl Council met, Meyer the Mayor of Chelm said we must have our own group of Marx brothers. He said, "I have an idea and you can all help out. Just like in any shtetl, there are twins. We have a set named Kharpe and Shande. The little boy is Kharpe and the little girl Shande. Kharpe will play Harpo."

"Wait" said Chaim the Kheldzl Maker, "Chico is the eldest and we have to go by age."

"Your right" said Meyer the Mayor of Chelm, "Leonard is called Chico and just like the real one, my son Chaim is a gambler and a ladies man. Also my son Gershon can imitate Julius (the real name for Groucho)."

"Gummo Marx (Milton) will be hard to find" continued Meyer.

Yitzkhok, the youngest and newest council member, said, "Let's make believe that Gershon also is really Giuseppe the Mafia Boss because Gummo is the Marx Brothers business agent."

"We are almost done" said Meyer "We have only Zeppo (Herbert). He is the youngest of the 5 Marx Brothers. Can you imagine he was a hooligan and now has become an inventor."

Zelig the zipper peddler said, "My shvoger Zev is the perfect person. In Hebrew it means a *wolf*."

THE VISIT TO CHELM

The Marx Brothers Arrive in Chelm!

The group is tired from their long journey from America, but everyone is in the Chelm Shtetl Square awaiting the train from Lublin carrying the famous American comedians.

As the brothers get off the train the Chelm Kheyder Band starts to play and Meyer the Mayor of Chelm presents the shlisl to the shtetl.

Everyone is awaiting the speech by Groucho, but in honor of this very special occasion, Harpo has been selected to say a few words. It will be the first time that he will have said anything in public.

A hush came over the crowd awaiting Harpo's first public utterances. He steps forward and whispers pey, samekh, tes—psst! With that they all walk out of the square and the Chelemers burst out in a round of laughter and a rousing ovation. The Marx Brothers have arrived in Chelm!

The Marx Brothers Museum in Chelm

If you visit Chelm be sure to go to the Chelm Shtetl Square, you will find The Marx Brothers Comedy & Vaudeville Museum. It was founded in 1979 upon the passing of Zeppo the last surviving Marx Brother. Chico, the eldest, was the first to die in 1961, Harpo in 1964 and the other two in 1977

For free admission to the museum tell them that Fishl, from *Der Bay*, sent you.

Visit the Marx Brothers Museum website at:
<http://www.marxbrothers.nu/>