

Brochah (Blessing in Hebrew)
Righteousness
Elite

Ahava (Love in Hebrew)
Koach (Strength in Hebrew)
Szodokah (Charity in Hebrew)
Talmidim (Scholars in Hebrew)
Obedient

*Nemen (River that flows thru
Ponemun)*
Ertachkitz

(Honesty in Yiddish)

Ben Stone

Childs, Pennsylvania

(Excerpted from the January 1932
Breakstone World)

BREAKSTONE WORLD

March 18, 1998

Dateline Washington, DC

In the early evening on Sunday 15 March 1998, a Breakstone Family Reunion convened officially in Washington, DC. Eager to meet each other and talk, family members gathered at the Clarion Hampshire Hotel near Dupont Circle. Dr. Walter Miller demonstrated the computer database that he and Rabbi Jeffery Marx have created, and demonstrated it for Angela Breakstone and several others. Copies of the Breakstone World from January 1932 were displayed, along with a photograph of Sarah Breakstone Levy (known by many as Blind Sarah) and her children, taken in the summer of 1913. Photographs were passed around later of Grisha Bregstein's visit to Israel with Philo Bregstein, and of the September 1992 opening of Philo and Victor Wolf's photo diary of their visit with Grisha to Paniemon in Lithuania.

How did this mini-reunion come about? It seems that Bob Boruchowitz was going to be in Washington for a conference and contacted Philo, who was going to DC at some point to see the Kovno Ghetto Exhibition. At the same time, Koen and Natascha were planning a trip to Goldsboro, NC for Vanessa's (Koen's daughter, Vanessa's sister) 30th birthday and could pass through Washington on the way to North Carolina. Philo wrote to Rabbi Jeff Perry Marx, Dr. Walter Miller, and Walter's niece Andrea Berman to let them know that family members would be gathering in DC. Andrea lives in DC and called around to find a hotel room for her Uncle Walter and was VERY surprised when Philo's fax arrived, informing her that he was staying at the very same hotel she had just reserved for Walter. A coincidence or just good taste? Jeff Marx was unable to come, as were Ruth Wetter, Edith Miller Berman, and the Eric Miller Family but all sent their regards. Postcards were written and sent to Jeff and to Grisha, signed by the company.

The assembled company watched Philo's almost-final cut of his most recent video documentary, *Days of Memory, Impressions*. This moving video documented a conference held in Vilnius, Lithuania in October 1993. The conference commemorated the annihilation of the Vilnius Ghetto by the Nazis fifty years before. The video inspired a fairly somber mood, but the reflective tone was lifted a bit by a walk in the cold (the coldest weekend of a very warm winter) to BeDuCi Mediterranean Restaurant. The family had a dining room to ourselves and a chance to get to know each other. Someone noted that we had three pairs of brothers at the table! After fine

food, wine and a little dessert, the serious storytelling began. There was a great deal of warmth in the stories about family members long passed, easily recognized by cousins who had never met each other but had met or heard of these family members.

On Monday 16 March 1998, we went to the United States Holocaust Museum Kovno Ghetto Exhibition. The exhibition brought together materials from Lithuania, Israel and the United States to present the history, through artifacts from the Kovno Ghetto where Jews were confined and forced to do slave labor for three terrible years. At risk of death, ghetto residents recorded their experiences through paintings, writing, accounts, and hidden cameras. The exhibition was to open at 10:00am, but as it turned out, we were enjoying each other's company too much over breakfast to get there at the moment the doors opened. The Stanley Leavys took the initiative and hailed the first cab, followed by two more cabloads in short succession. While we had envisioned a group experience at the exhibition, the exhibit was instead designed around small displays where only one or two people could comfortably read the text, and mini-amphitheaters where footage of interviews and film clips could be seen. Once inside, we spread out to experience the somber pictures and stories of the war-time ghetto. The remarkable thing was that, even spread out in the museum, we were living and breathing, a somewhat far-flung and fragmented family group, but nonetheless we were there.

On Tuesday, Philo Bregstein went to the General Exhibit at the Holocaust Museum. Somehow, on both Monday and Tuesday, in addition to all the family events, Philo managed to meet with museum officials about including *Days of Memory, Impressions* as part of the exhibit, and a DC Jewish Film Festival organizer about working with the museum to sponsor the video during December 1998's Jewish Film Festival.

The stories and reminiscences are too numerous to begin to record here, but many of them have already been entered by Walter Miller and Jeffery Marx into the family computer database Ultimate Family Tree.

Philo Bregstein, Paris France

Koen Bregstein, Amsterdam Netherlands

Natascha Bregstein, Amsterdam Netherlands

Bob Boruchowitz, Seattle

Stanley and Margaret Leavy, New Haven, CT

Morris and Angela Breakstone, Adrian, Michigan

Jack and Marlene Breakstone were visiting their daughter Carol who was not able to attend the events because she is preparing for her qualifying exams for a Ph.D. in folklore at the University of Maryland in College Park, MD.

Dr. Walter Miller, Cambridge, MA

David Miller & Marilee Marshall, Newtowne Square, PA

Morris' long time friends, the Adlers from Brooklyn, NY

Andrea Berman & Richard Price, Washington, DC

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