

Thank you all for being here today....a special thanks to Marisa, Louis and Issac for indelibly commemorating the places and faces that made up the Borscht Belt. Rumor has it that by the time the three of them complete this project, the Borscht Belt Historical Marker Trail will rival both the Appalachian Trail and the Pacific Coast Trail...we can only hope. And a very special thanks to the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation for underwriting this noble effort. And thank you Ellenville Public Library.

I am Elliott Auerbach and want to welcome you to my hometown Ellenville NY...the gateway to the Catskills-where Route 52 meets Route 209...or as I like to say where Dirty Dancing intersects with the Marvelous Mrs. Maisel.

In its heyday the Ellenville area was home to 52 hotels and 69 bungalow colonies and its "hills were alive with the sounds of Slutskys" because at least four of those hotels were owned by someone with the last name Slutsky.

The Evergreen Manor owned by Jerry and Max Slutsky; the Arrowhead Lodge owned by Fannie Slutsky; the Nevele Country Club owned by Julius and Ben J. Slutsky along with children David, Richard Jeffery and Charles; and the Fallsview Hotel owned by Ben, Ida and their son Charles....

All of them can trace their origins back to the family patriarch Charles Slutsky, who emigrated from Russia around 1900 and created this legacy. It was Charles (the first) and his son Ben who started the The Falls View Farm House, as it was originally called, on a piece of property adjacent to the Nevele Falls Farm House which was owned by another of Charles' son's Joseph and his wife Yetta. Ben met and married hotel guest Ida and together, along with their son Charles created the world class Fallsview Hotel that stands today and has been rebranded the Honors Haven.

We all have hotel stories....mine began at the Nevele Stables where I started mucking stalls...a job that may have laid the groundwork for my future endeavors into politics.

I caddied at the Nevele golf course, bellhopped and parked cars at the Fallsview...and taught skiing at the Pines...but my most memorable job was working as a busboy over the summers in the Fallsview dining room before there was such a thing as a house tip.

My waitress, a gregarious and voluptuous red-headed Irish girl, whose nickname was Sam, used her good looks and sense of humor to charm the hot water and prune juice crowd. It was there where I gained a glimpse of the world not only from guests in the dining room but from the staff in the kitchen-from the chef who was a concentration camp survivor, a dishwasher who came from the deep south and a group of college aged waiters who went on to become doctors and lawyers.

The hotel owners, like the Slutskys, were Borscht Belt royalty, joining names like Levinson, Blickenstein, Steinhorn, Geller, Wagner and Gartenberg. Their kingdoms had names like the Tamarack, the Sunrise Manor, the Homowack, the Granite, the Echo, the Pioneer and of course the Fallsview and the Nevele and they left a deep-rooted mark on the guests that visited and the staff that worked there.

And gratefully the Borscht Belt Marker Project will tell a story that is greater than one town, one hotel, one bungalow colony or one bowl of borscht. The markers will remind us about an era that changed lives, changed communities and changed the Country.

I know that the Borscht Belt era sure changed many of us standing here today....it changed me and the markers will not let us forget that.

Elliot Auerbach- Lifelong Ellenville resident, comes from a family that owned and operated Ace Hardware in the village. He served three terms as Mayor of Ellenville and brings a deep, personal connection to the Borscht Belt era from mucking stalls at the Nevele Hotel stables and working as a busboy at the Fallsview, to serving as a ski instructor at the Pines Hotel.