

Donors gratefully honor HFBA and their beloved fathers

Marvin Cohen

Writer reconnects with HFBA and a dad gone too soon

Ninety-one-year-old Marvin Cohen sounds like a much younger man. He's got an easy laugh. During his phone conversation with HFBA, he asks us if we want more stories to "spice things up."

"I'll give you enough to make it good," Marvin jokes. He reminds us he's written seven full-length books and hundreds of articles for "little known publications" such as *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *Vogue* and *The Village Voice*. He's proud of his long-ago friendships with Beat Poets Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and Gregory Corso.

Marvin is more modest about the reason for our conversation: He donated \$25,000 to HFBA in honor of his father, Phillip Cohen,

a Russian immigrant who died in 1935.

"It was about time I took care of an organization that took care of my family when we didn't have enough money to bury my father," he says.

During the Depression, Marvin's father was forced to quit his job as a hat blocker and transition to more lucrative



Marvin Cohen

manual labor. The tougher work ultimately led to Phillip's premature death.

"I was three when he died," Marvin says. "There was no money for a tombstone at the time."

As the years went by, it wasn't easy locating Phillip Cohen's unmarked grave. One day, however, Marvin happened upon a business card from Mount Richmond Cemetery. He called HFBA and, to his amazement,

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Marvin's parents, circa 1933 (l)
Marvin, age 3, 1935 (r)

Doris Stoll

Activist bequeaths \$260K in memory of her father

Doris Stoll, 76, a long-time civil rights activist, passed away on Sunday, November 1, 2020 due to complications from peripheral arterial disease. Before her death, Doris left HFBA a bequest of \$260,000 in memory of her father, Leib Stoll.

To her fellow congregants at New York's Congregation Beit Simchat Torah, Doris will always be remembered as a "real character." A prickly-on-the-outside, warm-on-the-inside personality, she brought humor and good will to those inside and outside her community. Whether it was in the garment and printing industries or as a Medicare consultant, Doris was committed to her professional pursuits, regardless of financial gain. Colleagues and friends will remember her as the devoted

founder and publisher of New York City's *Up and Out* newsletter.

Doris loved her dogs, especially her dachshunds — familiar faces at the Westminster Dog Show. Doris was also openly proud of her membership in AA, and shared her commitment to 34 years of sobriety with her friends. She loved theater and spoke enthusiastically about her favorite Yiddish performance of *Fiddler on the Roof*. She'd seen it a dozen times. Doris will be remembered as someone with a strong will who, despite the hardship and losses in her life, fought for what she believed in, all while keeping a sense of humor.

HFBA gratefully acknowledges Doris' generosity and dedication to *chesed shel emet*. ♦



Doris Stoll

learned the organization had a record of his father's burial.

Marvin's family gathered at HFBA's Mount Richmond Cemetery in 1976 to mark Phillip's grave with a stone.

"Imagine that," Marvin muses. "Until I came upon HFBA, it was like pulling teeth to figure out where he had been buried."

"Better late than never," he says with a laugh.

Marvin's reconnection with Judaism continued last Passover when a few young guys from Chabad of

Binghamton showed up at his house with *matzah* and *seeder* plates. As Marvin got to talking with them, he admitted he had never had a bar mitzvah.

With Chabad's help, Marvin celebrated his bar mitzvah at his home in Vestal, New York near Binghamton.

"It was one of the best days of my life," he says.

When asked why he hadn't had a bar mitzvah at thirteen, Marvin explains that his family was too poor for "that kind of thing. It just didn't happen in those days. Not under our circumstances."

"Better late than never," he says again with his trademark laugh. ♦

NYPD hero gave Joseph a good life and a good death

When his mother died in 1987, Joseph Cohen couldn't tell if she was asleep or sick. He waited several days before reaching out for help.

Joseph was not intentionally neglectful. He may have been cognitively disabled at birth or was a victim of unreported child abuse. His mother never enrolled him in school, and even by his late thirties, Joseph couldn't read or write. For years, he had been a "wild child" with virtually no other human contact. Neighbors occasionally spotted the strange thirty-something man on his way to the grocery store wearing boxer shorts and a dirty undershirt.

"I was the NYPD officer who showed up at Joseph's apartment," Charles Casabianca told HFBA. "As soon as Joseph opened the door, I could tell something wasn't right. The house was coming apart at the seams. Total squalor. Joseph and his mother had been living on nothing but potatoes and bread. They were both extremely overweight. We never found any next of kin."

"He had a light in his eyes"

Charles couldn't shake the sad reality of Joseph's life and set out to befriend him. Thirty-seven years after knocking on Joseph's door for the first time, Charles describes Joseph as one of the most important people in his life. A true friend. There was something about Joseph Cohen — a light in his eyes — that drew Charles to him right away.

"I couldn't find a way to help Joseph without getting him admitted to a hospital," says Casabianca, now retired

from the NYPD. "Saint Barnabas accepted him. Joseph couldn't tell us or the hospital when he was born. There was no record of him at all. No Social Security number. On paper he didn't exist."

Officer Casabianca got Joseph a Social Security number and worked to have him admitted to a group home in the Bronx. Aware of Joseph's need for social interaction, he also found Joseph a job cleaning bathrooms and putting pens together at Casabianca's police precinct.

Soon Joseph became an extension of Officer Casabianca's family. They called each other on holidays and birthdays. They went fishing together. Joseph spent time with Casabianca's children.

"We used to watch episodes of 'The Honeymooners' back to back. We'd go fishing. We'd sit on the dock and go out later to a restaurant. I couldn't let Joseph fall through the cracks."

Despite a cruel start to his first life, Joseph lived a full second life surrounded by people who adored him.

Joseph woke up one day feeling weak and tired. The next day he was gone.

Joseph's funeral will be remembered as a celebration

of a man who brought joy to everyone he met. Friends traveled from all over New York to be with Joseph at his final resting place in HFBA's Mount Richmond Cemetery.

"People cried when they learned he died," Casabianca says. "Joseph was part of our lives for 37 years. We all loved him."



Charles Casabianca, retired NYPD officer, with his friend Joseph Cohen on one of their fishing trips

HFBA Helps

Names, details and images have been anonymized to preserve confidentiality



Galina L., 44, born in Uzbekistan, passed away at a Coney Island Hospital 18 months after suffering a serious head injury in a hit-and-run accident. Until the accident, Galina had been raising a 10-year-old boy alone while working part-time as a home health aide and studying at John Jay College. Galina's mother, Lara, 76, told HFBA that her beloved daughter had never recovered from the accident, despite numerous surgeries. Following her daughter's death, Lara filed a lawsuit against the driver, but he was never found and the case could not move forward. We have reserved a grave for Lara close to her daughter in Mount Richmond Cemetery, as she has no funds to pay for burial services.

Dorothy O., 95, passed away at home last March following a long battle with dementia. Dorothy spent her professional life as a teacher. After her husband died, she shared an apartment with her daughter Lisa in Brooklyn. Lisa reported her mother's death to us and said she had no knowledge of her mother's financial situation. She said she couldn't afford to contribute to her mother's funeral and burial expenses, and eventually stopped accepting our calls. Nellie, one of Dorothy's friends, contacted us out of concern that Dorothy wouldn't be buried at all. Nellie called a nursing home chaplain about performing a proper Jewish burial for Dorothy. The next day HFBA received a call from a crematory informing us that Lisa had already signed papers to have her mother cremated. The chaplain agreed to take a

letter to Lisa that would grant him permission to handle Dorothy's burial arrangements. Lisa agreed and signed the letter. Dorothy was finally buried in Mount Richmond Cemetery on March 23. Neither Lisa nor Nellie attended her burial.

Helen Y., 92, died nine months after the death of her son Dan, 64. Shortly after Dan's death, HFBA's Andrew Parver received a call from the Bergen County *chevra kadisha* to report that the family was considering cremating Dan. We convinced the family to let us perform a traditional Jewish burial instead. HFBA arranged for the *chevra kadisha* to drive by Helen's care facility so she could say goodbye to her son on his way to Mount Richmond Cemetery. Dan was buried with a volunteer *minyán* present.



Helen Y., a resident at a New Jersey care facility, says farewell to her son. In attendance was a Jewish chaplain and facility administrator.

When Helen passed away, her surviving son, Scott, did not want to make arrangements for his mother's funeral. He suggested that she be buried in City Cemetery. HFBA stepped in to assume all arrangements and buried Helen near Dan's grave. HFBA's volunteer *minyán* was present during the burial. Scott participated by phone. ♦

Yeshiva students learn and pray in memory of departed souls



Fifty students from Yeshiva Gedola of Carteret, NJ have participated in a unique project to "adopt" a soul among the departed at HFBA's Mount Richmond Cemetery.

Initiated by an HFBA *chevra kadisha* member, Adopt-a-Neshama matched one or more souls (*neshamot*) with each student, who has completed his study of *Mishnayot* (a rabbinic collection of Jewish oral law). The goal of each student was to "elevate the soul of the departed," according to HFBA's Andrew Parver.

The students arrived at Mount Richmond Cemetery in April. After a tour and brief introduction to HFBA's mission, they fanned out across the property to pray at the graves of the deceased for whom they were studying.

"By learning *Mishnayot* in memory of a deceased, we bring additional merit to the *neshama*, or soul," says HFBA's Rabbi Shmuel Plafker.

РУССКИЙ ДАЙДЖЕСТ

Translated summaries of articles appearing in this issue of *Chesed*

«HFBA помогло моему отцу, теперь я помогу HFBA»

Марвину Коэну 91 год, и он гордится своей долгой жизнью в литературе. Он печатался в самых престижных издательствах Америки, таких как Нью-Йоркер, Нью-Йорк Таймс и Вилледж Войс. Тексты Марвина включены в 24 книги, были поставлены семь его пьес. Многие поэты-«битники» были его друзьями.

Но ещё Марвин гордится своим отцом, Филиппом Коэном, иммигрантом из Российской империи, который скончался в 1935-м году, когда ему было всего 27. «Мне было три года», вспоминает Марвин, «и у семьи в то время не было денег на надгробный памятник».

Недавно Марвин пожертвовал HFBA 25 тыс. долларов в знак благодарности за организацию похорон его отца в то далёкое время. По словам Марвина, «Пришло время и мне позаботиться об организации, которая позаботилась о моём отце, когда у нас не было денег на похороны».

Марвин потратил несколько лет, чтобы наконец отыскать могилу своего отца. И вот в 1976-м году его семья приехала на принадлежащее HFBA кладбище Маунт Ричмонд, чтобы согласно обычаю положить камешек на могилу Филиппа Коэна. «Что ж, лучше поздно, чем никогда», говорит Марвин с характерной улыбкой.

Нью-йоркский полицейский – герой, подаривший Джозефу достойную жизнь

У Джозефа были врождённые когнитивные нарушения, или он был жертвой жестокого обращения в раннем детстве. Мать так и не записала его в школу, и даже к тридцати годам Джозеф не умел ни читать, ни писать. Соседи видели в нём только странного тридцатилетнего мужчину, идущего в продуктовый магазин в семейных трусах и грязной майке.

Когда в 1987 мать Джозефа Коэна умерла, он даже не понимал, больна она или просто уснула, поэтому он прождал несколько дней, прежде чем обратиться за помощью. Офицер Нью-йоркской полиции, Чарльз Касабианка, приехал расследовать обстоятельства смерти. «Как только Джозеф открыл мне дверь, я сразу понял – что-то не так», рассказывал Касабианка. «Дом буквально разваливался. Я узнал, что в последнее время Джозеф с матерью питались только хлебом и картофелем».

И сотрудник полиции начал постепенно «приручать» Джозефа. Он устроил его в больницу, помог оформить номер социального страхования, записал Джозефа в коммунальную квартиру в Бронксе. Постепенно Джозеф стал неотъемлемой частью семьи самого Касабианки. Они ездили вместе на рыбалку, Джозеф проводил много времени с детьми Касабианки. Так, несмотря на нелёгкое начало, Джозеф прожил «вторую жизнь», окружённый людьми, которые его просто обожали.

Как-то Джозеф проснулся слабым и измученным. На следующий день его не стало. Друзья приехали со всех концов Нью-Йорка к месту последнего упокоения Джозе-

фа на принадлежащем HFBA кладбище Маунт Ричмонд. «Люди плакали, узнав о смерти Джозефа», рассказывает Касабианка. «Он был частью нашей семьи долгие тридцать семь лет. Мы его все любили».

Жительница Нью-Йорка, борец за гражданские права, дарит HFBA \$260 тыс. долларов

76-летняя Дорис Столл, давняя активистка за гражданские права, скончалась в ноябре 2020 года из-за осложнений, вызванных заболеванием периферических артерий (ЗПА). Перед смертью Дорис оставила HFBA наследство в размере \$360 тыс. долларов в память о своем отце.

Члены нью-йоркской общины Бейт-Симхат-Тора всегда будут помнить Дорис как острую на язык но теплую внутри яркую личность, которая излучала юмор и доброжелательность как в общине, так и за её пределами. Друзья и коллеги будут помнить ее как увлечённую основательницу и издательницу нью-йоркского бюллетеня Up and Out.

Дорис любила своих собак, особенно такс – хорошо знакомых посетителям Вестминстерской выставки собак. Дорис также гордилась своим членством в организации Анонимные Алкоголики, делясь с друзьями секретом того, как она продержалась 34 года без капли спиртного.

Еврейское Благотворительное Похоронное Бюро (HFBA) с благодарностью отмечает щедрость и преданность Дорис делу милосердия к усопшим (хесед шель эмет).

Перезахоронения, проводимые HFBA, обеспечивают правильное еврейское погребение

В соответствии со своей миссией обеспечить традиционное погребение для каждого еврея, HFBA иногда извлекает тела умерших евреев, похороненных в безымянных могилах городского кладбища Нью-Йорка, что на острове Харт. Один подобный случай касался 93-летней Раисы Н., которая скончалась в доме престарелых в Бруклине в июне 2021 года.

Александр, сын Раисы, умер тремя годами ранее, но она не знала о его смерти, поскольку страдала деменцией. HFBA заранее составило договор о похоронах Раисы с её домом престарелых, чтобы она могла покоиться рядом с Александром на кладбище Маунт-Ричмонд. К сожалению дом престарелых не связался с HFBA после смерти Раисы. Её тело несколько месяцев пролежало невостребованным в городском морге, а позже мы узнали, что Раиса похоронена в братской могиле на острове Харт.

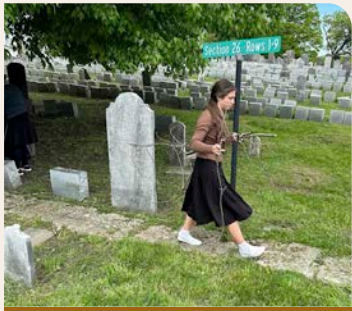
В ноябре прошлого года мы нашли имя Раисы в Национальной базе данных пропавших без вести и неопознанных лиц (NamUs) и проследили, где Раиса была похоронена. Ещё через пять месяцев мы наконец получили разрешение от городских властей перезахоронить Раису рядом с её сыном Александром. ♦

With grateful acknowledgment to our volunteers

HFBA thanks area students and congregants for spending time this spring clearing debris from Mount Richmond Cemetery.



The Ramaz School



Ma'ayanot Yeshiva High School of Girls



Congregation Beth Aaron



Manhattan Day School

Volunteer students from ITeens (right), a project of the Staten Island JCC, gathered at Mount Richmond Cemetery on March 26 to pay tribute to the victims of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire. The *chesed* project observed the 112th anniversary of the deadliest industrial disaster in NYC's history.



HFBA disinterments ensure compassionate Jewish reburials

In keeping with its mission to provide a traditional burial for every Jew, HFBA recently disinterred two Jewish decedents buried in unmarked graves on Hart Island, New York's city cemetery.

Raisa N., 93, passed away at a Brooklyn nursing home in June 2021. Raisa's son Alexander had died three years earlier, but because she suffered from dementia, Raisa was unaware of his death. HFBA had made pre-burial arrangements for Raisa with her nursing home so she could be buried alongside Alexander at Mount Richmond Cemetery, but the nursing home did not contact HFBA after she died. Sadly, Raisa's body lay unclaimed for months in the city morgue. Several months passed before we learned Raisa had been buried on Hart Island in a mass grave.

Last November we found Raisa's name in the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) and tracked Raisa down to the city cemetery. After five months, we received permission from NYC to rebury her beside Alexander.

Ethel W., 92, had been known to HFBA for 20 years. We buried her mother in 1999 and her brother in 2000. We located her, first, at a nursing home, and then at a rehab facility in 2019 only after her *Chesed* newsletters were returned to us as undeliverable. Nobody from her nursing home called HFBA or Ethel's court-appointed guardian to inform either of us of her death.

In November 2022, Ethel's name showed up on NamUs. We learned Ethel had died in April 2022. Like Raisa, she had been buried in City Cemetery. HFBA applied for permission to disinter Ethel's body and rebury her at Mount Richmond Cemetery.

The story does not end here.

As it turns out, a *minyán* from Lakewood, NJ was on hand at Mount Richmond to recite *kaddish* for Mimi H., disabled all her life and a resident of a long-term care facility for much of it. The 73-year-old woman had been buried just before Raisa and Ethel's reburials. When the *minyán* heard about the two disinterments, the men joined HFBA's Rabbi Shmuel Plafker in reciting *kaddish* for Raisa and Ethel with the same commitment to *chesed shel emet* they showed for Mimi.

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HFBA MISSION STATEMENT

THE HEBREW FREE BURIAL ASSOCIATION devotes its resources to performing *chesed shel emet* (the ultimate act of loving-kindness). It is the only agency in the New York metropolitan area dedicated to assuring that every Jew, regardless of financial means or religious affiliation, receives a dignified, traditional Jewish funeral and burial.

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Annual community breakfast embraces inclusiveness and unity

Some 200 people gathered for HFBA's annual breakfast in Riverdale (Bronx) on Sunday, May 7 to honor a diverse group of community activists.

The event's honorees featured brief speeches by Susan Cohen (*Avodat Hashem Award*); Phil Clarke (*Tikun Olam Award*); Lisa Licht Hirsch and Danny Hirsch (*Oskim B'Tzibur Award*); Shira Silverman (Community Service Award), and Dina and Andrew Kramer (*Chesed Shel Emet Award*). All are members of area synagogues.

"We aimed to be more inclusive this year," says David Knapp, HFBA event co-chair. "Our honorees ranged from Conservative to Reform to Reconstructionist to Chabad – as well as Modern Orthodox."



Bryan Alter, Daniel Pilarski, Paul Nagelberg, HFBA board members; Phil Clarke, recipient of HFBA's *Tikun Olam Award*; Shira Silverman recipient of HFBA's Community Service Award; Susan Cohen, recipient of HFBA's *Avodat Hashem Award*; Amy Koplow, HFBA executive director; David Knapp, HFBA board member and event co-chair; Andrew and Dina Kramer, recipients of HFBA's *Chesed Shel Emet Award*; Lisa Licht Hirsch and Danny Hirsch, recipients of HFBA's *Oskim B'Tzibur Award*, and Andrea Harris, HFBA board member and event co-chair

A lasting impact with HFBA

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