



Philip Kutner

September 17, 1926 - February 13, 2024

Fishl was born September 17, 1926 in New York City. At an early age, Yiddish was the primary language spoken at home. His upbringing was strict Orthodoxy, for his mother, Pearl, brought the orthodox background to the family which prevailed throughout the marriage.

Pearl came to America from Tiktin (Tikocyn), Poland in 1922 at the age of 20 and in 1925 married Max Kutner who had just returned from the U.S. Cavalry and rode from Arizona to New York by horse, sleeping along the road. Fishl's father's side of the family arrived in America in 1912 from Lodz, Poland and had no interest in religion. Since Pearl's parents spoke no English, the children spoke Yiddish in their presence. This lasted for as long as the family lived in New York. Mama gave birth to 3 sons in 53 weeks, to twins, Sol and Robert arriving just a week after Fishl's first birthday.

Fish was born legally blind and attended the "School for the Sighted" in the New York Public School system.

In 1937, Fishl's dad bought a poultry farm a mile East of Baptistown, NJ and eight miles from Flemington-the site where the Charles Lindbergh baby kidnapping trial was held. Phil and twin brothers attended Independence School, a one-room schoolhouse having only seven other children in 1st through 8th grade. The school had no electricity, a pot-belly stove for heat, and no running water. With separate outhouses for boys and girls and the entire administration, faculty, and support staff consisted of only one teacher. Because Fishl came from New York City, academically he was advanced

compared to the farm children and skipped the sixth grade.

At sixteen, Fishl graduated from Frenchtown H.S, in Frenchtown, NJ, right on the Delaware River and the place of the devastating "hundred-year flood". He received a four-year tuition scholarship and studied Agriculture majoring in Animal Husbandry and Poultry Nutrition on a 4-year scholarship at Rutgers University, which made attending college possible. To cut expenses, he shared a tiny room attached to the chicken coop. Every 4 hours they took turns with his roommate, Jim Baldini, adding wood to the fire to keep the chickens warm. The two remained close throughout life. For breakfast, he waited on tables at the girl's college. For lunch, he was a dishwasher at a Hungarian deli. He had 15 minutes to eat as much as he could. Then, he would walk fast to his next class.

At college, he was on the Rutgers Debate Team and participated in the national debate tournament at Western Michigan State University and was nationally ranked.

After graduation, Fishl wooed and married Sally Buzzel, whose mother owned a tiny wooden grocery store and whose father peddled produce by horse. Sally did not want to live on the farm. Fishl went back to college to receive his teaching credentials. He taught vocational agriculture at Lambertville H.S. for 3 years, after which the couple returned to the family farm.

In August 1955, a massive hurricane hit the area and with the ensuing 100-year flood, wiped out the poultry farm with the loss of 10,000 Leghorn breeders. To make a living for Sally and now three children, Shelley, Ken and Debbie, ages 4, 2 and 3- months, Fishl went back to teaching. However, the high school agricultural programs were disappearing, and he became a general science teacher at newly opened River Dell Regional Junior H.S. and also coached the chess team.

Fishl received his Master's degree in Teaching from Montclair State Teacher's College and in 1966 - 67 pursued a doctorate in Education from Columbia University. Demonstrations on campus caused his course credits to elapse within the time needed to complete his degree. His studies focused on

petrology, oceanography, historical geomorphology , meteorology, mineralogy and nuclear radiation, for which he served as a certified trainer on the emergency response commission.

In 1964, he was awarded a grant from the National Academy for the Advancement of Sciences and went on Sabbatical to a program at University of Boulder in Colorado, and then a year long study in geomorphology and geophysics where he co-authored ESCP - Earth Science College Prep textbook, while studying advanced geomorphology at Washington University in St. Louis, MO. He attended geology programs at Cornell University while Sally stayed behind with the three children.

Fishl served as President of the River Dell Regional Teachers Association, for years was President of Conservative congregation Temple Beth Sholom in Fair Lawn, NJ, Founder and President of the Fair Lawn Israeli Investment Club and Vice President of ZOA (Zionist Organization of America).

In 1984, Fishl retired for the first time and together with Sally left their 3 children and grandchild on the East Coast, moving to "sunny California". Here he worked in his brother Sol's construction-claims and litigation-support firm. After ten years, his work began to interfere with his volunteering, so he retired a second time. In California new hobbies and interests were pursued.

Sally and Fishl became co-presidents of the OT AM B'nai B'rith couples unit and editor of its newsletter, Tam Tov. Pursuits in genealogy and storytelling followed with training in Tennessee at the NAPPS (National Association for the Preservation and Propagation of Storytelling). In 1994 it changed its name to National Storytelling Network.

Fishl was active in the community, training and serving as a mediator. He handled caseloads in the San Mateo County Small Claims Court, as well as the PCRC, Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center. His published mediation articles include: The Role of Disengagement in Mediation and The Use of Storyteller as Alternative Dispute Resolution to Conflict. Fishl became active in a local affiliate of the American Council of the Blind (ACB), the San Mateo

County Council of the Blind (SMCCB <https://smccb.org/>), serving as President and website administrator. This work led to his being appointed as a commissioner of the San Mateo County Council on Disabilities, where he focused on emergency preparedness.

His published articles on visual impairment include: ACB Chapter Websites-- Make One, Is He or Is He Not, Chapter Leadership, and One Club's Operating Procedure, Failing Sight and the Family Plight, I Know or Eye No.

Sholem Aleichem's 75th yortsayt rekindled his interest in Yiddish and then organized a celebration of Sholem Aleichem's life for the Jewish Community Centers in the Greater San Francisco Bay area. A single page Anglo-Yiddish newsletter of "What's going on in Yiddish in the San Francisco Bay, Der Bay, was created. It grew to 16 pages and was published for 25 years. During this time, the Der Bay website was home to the International Association of Yiddish Clubs Inc. which hosted 17 international Yiddish conferences in the U.S. and Canada. The Yiddish Network (TYN) was started in 1991 and grew to 460 contacts in every state in the U.S. and 35 other countries, publishing lists of Yiddish teachers, Yiddish clubs, translators and Klezmer bands.

Fishl was a zamler for The Yiddish Book Center (<https://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/>), and active in Der Arbeter-Ring (<https://www.circle.org/>), serving as Chairman of the Northern California District and West Coast Representative on the National Executive Board. He was Co-founder and served as President of IAYC (<https://yiddish.world/>), the International Association of Yiddish Clubs. Presentations followed at IAYC conferences, 29th Conference of CAJE, Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education (<https://www.newcaje.org/#portfolio>), held at Hofstra University, B'nai B'rith Women National Convention, and Holocaust groups.

Speaking engagements also included schools, senior centers, health fairs, B'nai B'rith, temples, and to the HLAA Hearing Loss Association of America for the hearing impaired. Fishl represented the SMCCB, on the County Association of Nonprofits. His community service also included being on the San Mateo Community College Committee on Community Involvement,

initiating policies on emergency preparedness for the disabled.

Ninety articles on Mama were published in a book entitled Hrabina of Hunterdon (https://pubhtml5.com/myjf/upmw/Hrabina_of_Hunterdon%3A_Mama_Stories/82), and appear on the Der Bay website (<https://derbay.org/>). It is the title of one of the stories. Hrabina means "Countess" in Polish. The title was used by a Polish hired hand on their poultry farm in Hunterdon County, NJ. The book was released at the 13th conference of the International Association of Yiddish Clubs, in Millbrae, California, for which he served as Conference Chair.

Prior to the pandemic, Fishl led the Palo Alto Yiddish Club and joined the Foster City Yiddish Club, both in northern California. With the onset of the pandemic, a weekly virtual gathering, FYG, Fishl's Yiddish Group was established, featuring presentations, discussion, music and shared resources. For more information, visit FYG Fishl's Yiddish Group website: <https://ilovefyg.org/>.

Fishl is survived by his wife, Sally (nee Buzzel) of 76 ½ years. They met when she was 13 ... she had a crush on him (he was 15) and was a Jewish youth group leader and saw each other every week; brother: Sam Kutner. Daughter, Rochelle Kabran, Son, Dr. Kenneth Kutner and Daughter, Debbie Herman (Steve Herman). Grandchildren: Melanie Kashi (Benjamin), Rachel Pires (Andre), Jeffrey Herman (Elizabeth) and Kaylin Kutner. Greatgrandchildren: Lyla Kashi, Lucas and Marina Pires; loving nieces and nephews.

Philip and Sally Kutner lived in San Mateo California for 40 years and Philip will rest at Temple Emanuel Cemetery in Oak Hill Burial in Lakeland Florida.

Previous Events

Service

FEB **18**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Gentry-Morrison Funeral Homes - Southside Chapel

1727 Bartow Road

Lakeland, FL 33801

(863) 688-7679

t.hall@gentry-morrison.com

<https://www.gentry-morrison.com/>

Tribute Wall



“ Gentry-Morrison Funeral Homes created a Webcast in memory of Philip Kutner



Gentry-Morrison Funeral Homes - February 16, 2024 at 02:28 PM

VF

Since 2007 when Fishl first invited me to be a presenter in Cleveland , visiting our children in Palo Alto gave Shim and I the opportunity to visit Fishl and Sally in San Mateo two or three times a year. All these years, until the start of Covid 19, they welcomed us into their home made us feel like family. Our lives have been immeasurably enriched by having known Fishl and Sally. With our deepest condolences to the family, especially to Sally, and to Debby who has worked so hard to preserve her father's legacy.

Vivian Felsen - February 20, 2024 at 10:45 AM

GI

Sad to learn. Pal,colleague, shared many rides to River Dell. Great teacher, mentor to me. He gave me a few new words ..MENCH and he was and remains.

george iannacone - May 05, 2024 at 03:48 PM

DH

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Deborah Herman - July 07, 2024 at 09:34 PM

DH

Sol Kutner (left) with his brother Phil Kutner (right)

Deborah Herman - July 08, 2024 at 01:35 AM

RM

“ I am a graduate Riverdale high school in 1964. My thoughts over the years would go back occasionally to Mr. Kutner. He wasn't my science teacher, but I was in the astronomy club and he would take us out at night with our telescopes. This began my interest in astronomy that led to my career and aerospace engineering with a degree from Texas A&M. I was in Northern California the same time he was. How many people in our past are so close by and we do not even know, And that are still alive. There are not many people that worked as hard and achieved as much as he did anymore, and also remained true to his faith. As a Roman Catholic, we were remain close to our Jewish ancestry. He his family remain in our prayers.

Richard May - May 20, 2024 at 11:39 AM

TP

“ Oh Philip, do I miss you! I miss our weekly chats, your wit and how much you have taught me about computers. Every time I run into an interesting article, my first reaction is to forward it to you. It's been an amazing 30 or so years and I thank you for it.

Tomasz Pado - May 07, 2024 at 11:00 AM

RM

“ There are a few people who have made an impression on my life, mentors. Fishl was one of them. I felt great love and respect from him and love and respect him. Thank you.

Ruvn (Roland) Millman

Roland Millman - February 29, 2024 at 03:14 PM

SF

“ I have known Fishl for many years and used to call and speak to him and Sally from time to time. My condolences to his family. He was a dear, dear man and a lover of Yiddish as I am. Sonia Pressman Fuentes, spfuentes@comcast.net

SONIA Pressman FUENTES - February 25, 2024 at 04:23 PM

PS

“ I remember a quote that spoke of a great man as being one who leaves others at a loss when he is no longer with us. This, truly, applies to Philip “Fishl” Kutner. When I think of him, I visualize him smiling, happy, and sharing all his joy and wisdom with anyone who’s lucky enough to spend time with him. I miss him. His love of family, learning, and teaching, his warmth and kindness, appreciation of a good story and a good joke will remain with me always. He is a gift that never stops giving. Thank-you Fishl for enriching my life so deeply. You will forever be loved and appreciated.

Priscilla Satyamurthy - February 20, 2024 at 09:12 PM

KK

“ A **Giant of a Mensch** whose limitless life-long curiosity and love of learning was matched by his devotion to Yiddishkeit and love of family. He gave me a big break with publication in *Der Bay* and strengthened my bond with Yiddishkeit as well. Friendship with his daughter Debbie is also one of his greatest gifts to me. We will always miss him.

Kitty Katz - February 20, 2024 at 08:27 AM

DA

“ אונזער מתנה איז אַוועקגענומען געווען

daniela+isabellaeva+davide - February 19, 2024 at 12:21 PM

EL

“ I "met" Fishl only on Zoom, when he attended the Lehigh Valley, PA Yiddish Club. He was a charming man and I wish I had really known him. I offer you my sincerest condolences.

Another reason for entering this comment is that I read his obituary and was intrigued by the fact that his mother emigrated from Tiktin in 1922 at the age of 20. My father's family emigrated from Tiktin in 1926 when my Dad, the youngest of 3 brothers, was 13. His brothers were probably 15 and 18 at that time, and were active in the Zionist youth groups in Tiktin, so, if Fishl's mother was, too, it's possible that they may have crossed paths. My father also had two older sisters who were married by 1926 and didn't emigrate with the family. They and their families perished in the Holocaust. But their ages were probably closer to Pearl's age and they very well might have known each other. I have the Tiktin Yahrtzeit book and there are pictures of the Zionist youth groups. They were quite large. Also, my grandmother owned a coat factory in Tiktin, so she, and possibly her family, were probably well known in the town. My husband and I traveled there with my father in 2007 when he was 93. There's not much left of the bustling town my father remembered, just the town square and the restored, historic synagogue, which is now, of course, just a museum. One could hardly call it a town at this point.

I am sorry for your loss. May you be comforted among the mourners of Zion

Elaine C Langer - February 18, 2024 at 01:49 PM

RL

“*Fishl’s committment to Yiddish was so impressive! I’ve been a member of FYG since it came online. It’s been really important in my life. Meeting Debbie and experiencing her commitment to the Yiddish community has set an important example for me. I’m sorry for his loss. May his memory always be a blessing. MIT freindshaft und liebshaft,
Rita Lieberman*

Rita Lieberman - February 18, 2024 at 12:54 PM

HF

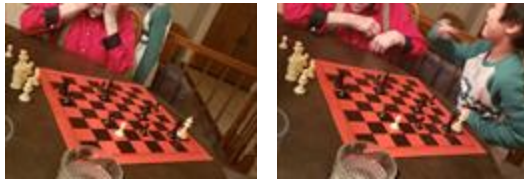
“*Thank you for keeping the fire burning, Fishl, and for sharing your love of Yiddish and Yiddishkayt with others.*

Howard Freedman - February 18, 2024 at 12:51 PM

AL

“Phil, you are a very good man and loved to learn many different things. You were always fascinated by culture and beliefs. My son, Ethan hadn't forgotten about you. You two played chess together and enjoyed each other company while I had to take care of my mom. I remember when I was in high school, my bird flew over your backyard fence that my dad and I had to drive over to your place, so I can capture him. Ever since then, that is how we met. I would sometimes visit you and Sally when I had time. My parents would see you at fitness 19 sometimes or cvs. My dad would pick you up and take you to places to eat or go to the Buddhist temple. Rest in peace, Phil. I know your up there with my dad. Enjoying some good food. Prayers to you and your family.

Love your neighbor, Ethan, Angela and Alexandra.



Alexandra Liu - February 18, 2024 at 10:55 AM

CB

“Dear Kutner Family, My heartfelt condolences on the loss of your dear husband, father, grandfather & great-grandfather. He was a wonderful human being. At a time when there was not much interest in Yiddish from the general population, Fishl was inspirational in creating a group that kept Yiddish alive and thriving. Now, it is called "Fishl's Yiddish Group" and has members who participate from all over the world. May the memories that you have of him bring you comfort at this difficult time. May his legacy forever continue. Celina Brettschneider

Celina Brettschneider - February 18, 2024 at 10:37 AM

רפ

“ פישל איז געווען אן אינספיראציע צו אונדז אלע.

רפאל פינקל - February 17, 2024 at 09:51 PM

AS

Fishl's love for people and the Yiddish language created FYG - Fishl's Yiddish Group which warms the hearts of so many Yiddish enthusiasts meeting together every week. Zol er hobn a likhtikn ganeydn! Assia Azenkot

Assia - February 17, 2024 at 10:24 PM

ML

Fishl was loved by all of us. He inspired us to far bessern our Yiddish and share with the Yiddish community. Much love to the family. Sincerely, Marsha Love

Marsha LOVE - February 18, 2024 at 12:00 AM

HE

Fishl was an incredible Yiddish mentsh and a true friend. My family feels so blessed to have spent many wonderful IAYC conferences with Fishl. He enriched the lives of so many.

*Koved zayn ondenk.
Helen*

helen - February 18, 2024 at 12:50 AM

MI

*א דאנק פישלען פאר זיין טעטיקייט. ס'ר וועלן געדענקען אים מיט כבוד
אייביקער אַנדענק
מירע*

Mirra - February 18, 2024 at 05:11 AM

SG

He touched so many with his good heart and meaningful storytelling... never stopped learning, reaching out, caring for others.

Sue Green - February 18, 2024 at 10:00 AM

GK

So, we met at a conference, about twenty-five years ago, zikh oysgeshuest af Yiddish, and kept on talking and talking. Fishl had no problem talking, on any subject, but his focus on yiddish was an inspiratsye far di fun undz far vemen mame-loshn is geven zis -- vi honig afn tsung. Dear family, know that there was a whole world that loved Fishl -- and learned from him.

Gerry Kane in Toronto, Canada.

Gerry Kane - February 18, 2024 at 10:52 AM

MD

פישל איז געווען א ליבער מענטש און א שאפערישער אקטיוויסט פאר יידיש. כיוועל אים אייביק געדענקען. געבענטשט זאל זיין זיין אנדענק. -מאיר דוד

Mark David - February 18, 2024 at 11:04 AM

IG

There are not enough words to express admiration and appreciation to Fishl for his outstanding inspiration and contribution to sharing his own love of Yiddish. Koved zayn ondenk!

Itsik Goldenberg - February 18, 2024 at 11:10 AM

TN

Fishl was an inspiration and great story teller. I met him two years ago when I joined his Yiddish group. FYG brought Yiddish back into my life. I will be forever grateful to Fishl. געבענטשט איז זיין אנדענק

Tara Neuwirth - February 18, 2024 at 12:05 PM

LM

Fishl's love of Yiddish was inspirational. I have known him from P.A. JCC Yiddish Club. I could understand but never spoke Yiddish. He encouraged me to learn Yiddish. Now I am enjoying Fishl's Zoom meetings every Tuesday.

Fishl enriched the lives of Yiddish lovers around the world!

Lydia Mirsky

Lydia Mirsky - February 19, 2024 at 02:21 PM

AO

*Dear Kutner Family,
Fishl was the BEST.*

His Der Bay was eagerly awaited by all in our Yiddish group. We loved his stories about his mother and your family. Debby, you helped carry on Der Bay. We are so sorry for your loss. May you and all family members have only fond memories to sustain you. May his memory always be for a blessing.

*Warmly mit lib un fraynshaft,
Annalee Odessky, Minneapolis Yiddish Vinkl*

Annalee Odessky - February 20, 2024 at 01:50 PM

ES

I was his Yiddish student for 15 years at his home in San Mateo. Once a week I enjoyed his teaching, knowledge and wonderful sense of humor.

*May his memory be for a blessing.
Evelyn Szelenyi*

evelyn szelenyi - February 23, 2024 at 07:38 PM

DH

“ 36 files added to the album Dad



Deborah Herman - February 17, 2024 at 08:59 PM

DH

“ 3 files added to the tribute wall



Debbie Herman - February 17, 2024 at 08:39 PM

AH

“ When the history books on Yiddish are written, Fishl Kutner (o'h) will be one of the most important characters. Through all the 'lean' years, his dedication and love of Yiddish maintained the longevity of our beloved legacy. A true mensch!
Baruch Dayen Emes!
A likhtikn Gan Eydn 💔🕍❤️

Avi Hoffman - February 16, 2024 at 07:49 PM