

Wednesday, April 17, 2024
SFBAJGS Presentation
co-sponsored with Jewish Community Library

Pathways to Preserving Family Histories
Speaker: Basya Petnick

This workshop will provide guidance for collecting, organizing, and preserving your own family history. What photos and documents exist? Who is available to be interviewed? Basya Petnick will stimulate thinking about the stories behind the births, marriages, deaths, and migrations in your family, as well as the presentation forms that might work best—such as oral history, legacy letter, or ethical will—to help you move forward in creating a beautiful gift from the past to future generations.

Basya Petnick has been practicing oral history for 35 years. She served as the co-director of the Legacy Oral History Program at the Museum of Performance + Design, and as director of the Alumni Memory Project of San Francisco Ballet. Working in partnership with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley, she was invited to add several of her oral histories to their Bancroft Library Special Collections, including Gratefully Yours, an oral history of Rabbi Stephen Pearce, and Song and Spirit: A Cantor's Life, an oral history of Roslyn Junever Barak. Her work has been honored by several major grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. She is the founder and principal of Books & Lives, a creator and publisher of oral histories and life stories.

Program made possible, in part, by Judy Baston.

Resources recommended by Basya Petnick for Ethical Wills, Legacy Letters, and Oral History

Books on Ethical Wills and Legacy Letters (all of the following books are available for borrowing from Jewish Community Library)

Freed, Rachel. *Your Legacy Matters: A Multigenerational Guide for Writing Your Ethical Will*. Minervapress, 2013.

Leder, Steve. *For You When I Am Gone: A Journal: A Step-by-Step Guide to Writing Your Ethical Will*. Penguin Random House Company, 2022.

Riemer, Jack, and Nathaniel Stampfer. *Ethical Wills: A Modern Jewish Treasury*. Schocken Books, 1983.

Riemer, Jack, and Nathaniel Stampfer. *So That Your Values Live On: Ethical Wills and How to Prepare Them*. Jewish Lights, 1991.

Zaiman, Elana. *The Forever Letter: Writing What We Believe for Those We Love*. Llewellyn Worldwide, Ltd., 2017.

Books on Oral History (unavailable at the Jewish Community Library)

Perks, Robert, and Alistair Thomson, eds. *The Oral History Reader*. Routledge, 1998.

Ritchie, Donald A. *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*. Oxford University Press, 2003. [recommended for family and community histories]

Yow, Valerie. Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Altamira Press, 2005.

Libraries with Large Collections of Oral Histories

[Library of Congress](#), Washington, DC

[Butler Library](#), Columbia University, New York

[The Bancroft Library](#), University of California, Berkeley

See also local libraries and most university libraries, e.g. Stanford University, UCLA, Rutgers University, New York University, and others.

Holocaust Libraries

[JFCS Holocaust Center](#) in San Francisco, including [Tauber Holocaust Library and Archives](#)

[US Holocaust Memorial Museum](#)

[USC Shoah Foundation](#), University of Southern California (includes Spielberg interviews)

(If your synagogue has a library and/or archive you might find some local family and personal histories there—Holocaust and non-Holocaust related.)

Oral History: Introductory and Advanced Workshops

UC Berkeley's Oral History Center's Introductory Workshop--remote and in-person--and Oral History Summer Institute (information here)

The Institute for Oral History at Baylor University's online workshops (information here)

Recording

StoryCorps: free audio and video recording (easy) individual, family and community resources

Zoom- easy audio and video recording

Associations

[Oral History Association](#) (membership organization): resources, ethics statement, annual conferences, index of available oral historians by location, and publishers of bi-annual journal Oral History Review, Oxford Press.

There is a vast collection of resources, materials, and help for those interested in oral history (academic, family, community, etc.), ethical wills, legacy letters, memoir writing, and more. I have listed only a mere few references from the cornucopia of available resources. Google. It's all there. Someplace. Email me if you need help or have any questions not addressed here.

Basya Petnick

Oral History, Ethical Wills, Legacy Letters and Memoir

Books & Lives

www.booksandlives.com

Email: books1000@mac.com

415-238-8358

Jewish Genealogical Resources Suggested by Judy Baston

San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society

The San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society has regular meetings (some on Zoom, some in-person) and publishes an informational newsletter ZichronNote. <https://www.sfbajgs.org/>

JewishGen

Jewishgen.org is the main Internet source for Jewish genealogical research. It's worth browsing the website, but here are some of the key resources to help you:

JewishGen Family Finder – You can search for your name and town of interest among hundreds of thousands of listings and connect with others who may share your roots. And you can add your own information so others can find you. <https://www.jewishgen.org/jgff/>

JewishGen Unified Search – You can search millions of Jewish records from around the world. <https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/all/>

Yizkor Book Translations – You can read translations of memorial books from hundreds of towns where Jewish families lived and learn more about their lives. <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/>

Litvak SIG and JRI-Poland

There are independent organizations for Jewish records from Lithuania and Poland:

Litvak Special Interest Group (SIG) with more than 2.5 million freely searchable records. litvaksig.org

Jewish Records Indexing-Poland, with more than 5 million freely searchable records. jri-poland.org

Discussion Groups

Discussion groups are especially valuable for researchers at all stages. Here are several:

JewishGen main discussion group: <https://groups.jewishgen.org/g/main>

Facebook includes two major groups for Jewish genealogical questions and answers: Tracing the Tribe <https://www.facebook.com/groups/tracingthetribel>

Jewish Genealogical Portal <https://www.facebook.com/groups/JewishGenealogyPortal>

Jewish Community Library

1835 Ellis St, San Francisco

www.jewishcommunitylibrary.org