

# OBITUARIES

## Lois Schaffner



Lois Schaffner, who held top positions at JFS and NCJW, passed away Aug. 16, 2013, in Denver. Rabbi Benjy Last and Cantor Joel Lichterman officiated at the

Aug. 18 service at Mt. Nebo Cemetery. Feldman Mortuary made the arrangements. "Lois was loving and gracious and made the lives of those around her easier," the family said. "She will be remembered for having boundless energy for her family and friends."

Mrs. Schaffner was born Jan. 8, 1917, in Chicago, Ill. She attended Northwestern University.

She married Bernard Schaffner on June 14, 1936 and moved to Denver in 1954. The couple celebrated its 75th wedding anniversary on June 14, 2011.

Mr. Schaffner passed away on Jan. 6, 2012.

A homemaker, Mrs. Schaffner was past president of NCJW and JFS, where she became an honorary life chair.

Although everyone in her family loved to golf, Mrs. Schaffner was the only person to make a hole in one.

Mrs. Schaffner is survived by her children Barbara (Dr. Stephen) Engel of Denver and Dr. Steven (Myra) Schaffner of Phoenix, Ariz; grandchildren Marnie (Stephen) Hayutin, Allison (Dr. John Alongi) Engel and Dr. Richard (Dr. Lisa) Engel, Dr. Robin (Colin) Schaffner, Lisa Schaffner; and great-grandchildren Nina and Ben Hayutin and Melissa and Mathew Engel.

Contributions may go to FD Now, 1170 Green Knolls Dr., Buffalo Grove, IL 60089.

## Nathan Londer

Nathan Londer, a resident of Denver since 1930, passed away Sept. 24, 2013, in Denver. Rabbi Joe Black officiated at the Sept. 25 graveside service at Rose Hill Cemetery. Feldman Mortuary made the arrangements.

Mr. Londer was born June 21, 1913, in Belarus. 1918 to 1930 he lived in Baltimore, and came to Denver in 1930.

Mr. Londer married Gertrude Cohen Londer on June 13, 1937. Mrs. Londer passed away on May 24, 1988.

He owned the American Mattress Mfg. Co. and Colorado Boulevard Liquors.

Mr. Londer is survived by his children Larry (Shirlee) Londer and Michael Londer; grandson Bradley Londer; great-granddaughter Sara Blanchfield.

His granddaughter Beth Blanchfield predeceased him.

Contributions may be made to Denver Dumb Friends League or charity of choice.

# NEWS: Girl asked her father to kill her

## 'A tragic circle closes' Sally Levin's new gravestone is unveiled in Cheyenne

By CHRIS LEPPEK  
IJN Assistant Editor

Last Sunday, a windy late September morning in Cheyenne, a tragic story from long ago came full circle.

Prayers were said, a new tombstone was unveiled and tears were shed at the grave of Sally Levin, who was laid to rest here on another

the INTERMOUNTAIN JEWISH NEWS a few months ago ("The Sad, Sad Story of Sally Levin," June 28, 2013).

It was a tale of a young woman whose life was upended by mental illness, who feared the prospect of commitment to an insane asylum so much that she begged her father, respected Cheyenne merchant Sam Levin, to kill her, and whose father did as he was asked.

On Aug. 16, 1937, Levin killed his daughter with a handgun and tried unsuccessfully to kill himself. In a sensational trial, he was eventually convicted of manslaughter but sentenced only to five years probation.

Shortly after his conviction, Levin and the rest of his family left Cheyenne and never looked back.

The story was brought back to light after years in the shadows — an almost literal skeleton in the family closet — by Suzanne Handler, a niece of Sally Levin, who lives in Greenwood Village and who, ironically, had worked for years in the mental health field.

Handler uncovered the story of her ill-fated aunt bit by bit, retrieving scraps from the few relatives who would discuss the case, newspaper accounts and official documents.

The story she was ultimately able to glean from her research — and the lessons about family secrets and mental illness that she derived from it — resulted in Handler's book, *The Secrets They Kept*, published earlier this year.

The book, to some degree, provided Handler with a sense of closure that she needed after growing up in a family that kept its dark and painful secrets very close to its chest.

Last Sunday, however, provided her with an opportunity to give not only full closure to herself, but to



The late Sally Levin, diagnosed with mental illness, and her family.

her long-deceased Aunt Sally — a tragic figure whom she never had the opportunity to meet.

Accompanied by her rabbi, Richard Rheins of Temple Sinai, life companion Jerry Newman, a handful of friends and relatives and representatives of Cheyenne's Mt. Sinai Congregation, Handler provided her aunt with a proper memorial at last.

The stone that had reposed over her grave for 76 years incorrectly misspelled her name as "Salie," an error which to Handler symbolized not only the neglect of Sally's grave — it went unvisited by relatives for decades — but the virtual obliteration of her memory from the family's collective mind.

The earlier, misspelled, tombstone was left in place, Handler told the IJN this week, after the rabbi suggested that it could serve as a historical marker of sorts, a reminder of the fact that just as Sally Levin's life was troubled and unsettled, so was her death.

The new stone, bearing Sally's name in English and Hebrew, her dates of birth and death and a Hebrew inscription, was placed below the original.

Denver's Erickson Monuments made the stone, Handler said, adding that Erickson's Michael Zelinger was amazingly helpful as the firm worked to place the unusual order for a marker nearly eight decades after its subject's death.

Rabbi Rheins asked Handler's children to remove the cloth from the new stone and said a few prayers, including *Kaddish*, during the brief ceremony at the Mt. Sinai Cemetery. Poems were read and the mourners were encouraged to read a silent meditation.

It was, Handler said, as emotional as she expected it to be. "I was sobbing through the whole thing," she said, "but at the end of the day I felt and continue to feel a sense of peace and closure and that's what I was looking for. I was in tears for a lot of the morning, and I felt very peaceful afterwards."

"For me, it was more about what she didn't get at the time of her passing — the fact that she was left there all those years. This should have been done a long time ago."

"It was sadness mixed with peacefulness — that's the word that keeps

coming into my head. She can lie there for eternity and it's all right. I think we did the right thing, mourning the loss of this child who was so young and also celebrating her life."

During the service, Handler said she kept thinking of her grandfather, Sally's father, and her mother, Sally's sister, and wondered what they would think of this long-delayed ceremony on behalf of their loved one.

Handler said she was very grateful when Jeff Weinstein of Mt. Sinai informed her after the service that Sally's *yahrzeit* would now be placed on the congregation's permanent roll of names, meaning that her name will be read in the synagogue once a year.

The fact that Sally's memory is no longer lost in oblivion, as it has been for so long, seems especially meaningful to her niece.

The Hebrew inscription on the new tombstone reads, in English: "She will not be forgotten."

Handler says she is not a particularly religious person, and admits she has no idea whether any



Suzanne Handler at the gravesite.

er Cheyenne morning, in August, 1937, a few days after she was slain by her own father.

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Sally's gravestone markers, then and now.

sort of afterlife follows one's mortal existence. During the service last Sunday, she didn't give a thought to the notion that the restless Wyoming wind might have been Sally's spirit watching over her mourners.

"But if Sally could sense what's going on — if one can believe that — and if she is aware of what we did or what wasn't done, wouldn't my grandfather also have awareness of this?" Handler speculated.

"And if so, wouldn't he want peace, too, for both of them? Are they now relieved?"

Handler admits that she doesn't know, but she does know that she herself experienced peace and relief in that Cheyenne cemetery this week.

And that it was considerable.

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