

# THE ABRAVANEL FAMILY NEWSLETTER

"Basta mi nombre que es Abravanel"



Newsletter No. 15  
September 1992

## THE GREAT PRETENDER



*Dr. Samuel Solnik*

The Committee of the Israel Royal Party published a startling booklet in 1946, claiming that Emmanuel I was the Pretender to the Throne of David. The writer, Samuel Solnik, a dentist from Netanya, asserted that the royal line from David flowed through the Abravanel family to their descendants, including the Solniks - a Polish family whose name, Dr. Solnik reported, was a shortened version of Rabbi Abraham "de Saloniki," an Abravanel who had journeyed to Poland centuries earlier. Dr. Solnik's son, Emmanuel Solnik, born on June 22, 1943, was to be the latest heir to this inheritance.

JAN ABARBANEL (Ede, Holland) has now produced a copy of a 1949 letter that Dr. Solnik (also known as Samuel Abarbanel-Solnik) wrote to a number of newspapers in Palestine (including Ha'aretz, the source of this letter) regarding the Abarbanel family:

### *"The Estate of the Family Abarbanel"*

"In 1876 (or 1878) the last descendant of the Marrano family Abarbanel, countess Sara Abarbanel, died in Paris. According to her testament, her whole estate, estimated at around 200 million French Francs in gold, was to be handed over to the person who could prove that he was a descendant of Don Isaac Abarbanel, who left Spain in 1492, leaving all his possessions and properties to his Marrano family that stayed behind. With the death of countess Sara Abarbanel, this line of the family died out completely. The estate is in Spain and seems to comprise large properties both in the city as well as the countryside."

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"The Rabbinate in Barcelona contacted the Jewish community in Saloniki, where the trail of the descendants of Don Isaac Abarbanel led to, with the request that everybody who thought he could claim the estate had to report with all the proof he had to collect the estate. As the Abarbanel family in Saloniki thought that some industrious journalist [was merely trying] to get the family documents, they did not reply. The Russian Ambassador at the time in Barcelona became interested in the matter. He had the Russian state newspaper call on all descendants of the family to collect this large inheritance. As a result, the Abarbanel family living in Smolensk and Potawa (now in Tel Aviv) put the matter in the hands of a well known solicitor in St. Petersburg. He succeeded in establishing the extraction of his clients back only 150 years to Danzig. [In the meantime] the Spanish Government supervised the estate until the lawful heir was found."

"As the representative of our family, I did everything possible to clear up this matter and to find the inheritance. The Spanish lawyer Emilio Roman Zenraro took on this case, but, as yet, he has not succeeded in achieving anything positive. In 1945 I turned to the Jewish Agency, where it has been 'bottled up' for over two years. The Jewish National Fund is also interested in the fate of the inheritance. In spite of my repeated requests and in spite of my promise to use the entire inheritance for national purposes, I did not receive any answer regarding the state of the matter."

"I received interesting material from the Paul d'Abarbanel of France, who claims that the duke d'Alba, who was greatly interested in the Abarbanel family, knows a lot about the matter and is worth contacting. In Istanbul lives a member of the Abarbanel family, consul for Portugal and a native of Saloniki, who certainly knows something about this matter, as an extensive article about the matter appeared in the newspaper 'De bos de Turkia' in Istanbul."

#### THE ISRAELI MOVIE THEATER IMPRESARIO

The Newsletter recently received letters from ERAN ABARBANELL (Ramat Hasharon, Israel) and ORI ABARBANELL (Bronx, New York), two cousins who both wrote about their family in Israel. Their grandfather, Moshe Abarbanell, was born in Kriminshuk, Russia in 1875. He, his wife and six children emigrated to Palestine before the beginning of World War I. Ori reports that he has a home movie of the family gathered at the Jaffa Railroad Station in 1914.

Moshe was a pioneer builder in Tel Aviv. His home, built in 1918, is now a National Landmark. He also built "Galai-Aviv," the only gambling casino ever constructed in Tel Aviv. In 1915, Moshe built "Cinema Eden," the first movie theater in Tel Aviv (and in all of Palestine). The hall was, according to Eran, the only building in Tel Aviv that had electricity during World War I.

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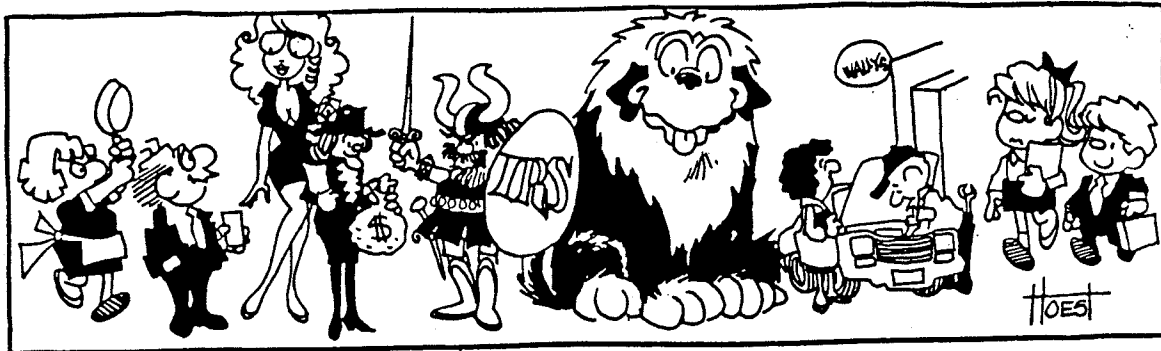
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## A WOMAN WITH CARTOON CLOUT

BUNNY HOEST (Huntington, New York), born Madeline Mezz, is one of the most widely read cartoonists today, reaching nearly 200 million readers every week. She produces The Lockhorns, Agatha Crumm, and What a Guy!, distributed internationally by King Features; Laugh Parade featuring Howard Huge for Parade Magazine; and Bumper Snickers for the National Enquirer. Known as "The Cartoon Lady," she has 25 best-selling anthologies and many new projects in the works, including a Lockhorns off-Broadway show and TV pilot and Howard Huge licensed products from LucasArts.

Bunny reports that her great-grandmother was named Malke Barbanel. When Malke married Sam Mischachovsky, the family apparently abandoned her husband's name and took Malke's surname as its own (a not uncommon practice in Eastern Europe when the family background of the wife was considered superior to the family background of the husband). Bunny also encloses a family tree, which indicates that Barbanel frequently married their Barbanel cousins in her family.

THE LOCKHORNS • AGATHA CRUMM • LAUGH PARADE • HOWARD HUGE • BUMPER SNICKERS • WHAT-A GUY



## POLISH COUSINS

Various stories have been received by the Newsletter regarding the family in Poland. ALEXANDER BARBANELL (Phoenix, Arizona) detailed his family's travels from Warsaw to the United States in the 1920s and 1930s. SAUL BARBANELL (Hollywood, Florida) explained that his family in Poland generally adopted a Polish nomenclature, going by the name "Barbanelski" (or, for females, "Barbanelska"). The members of the family who remained in their home town of Stawisk perished in the Holocaust, he reports, except for Issachar Barbanelski, an engineer now residing in Israel. [The family of the late JOE BARBANEL, a family chronicler, also came from Stawisk.]

HANNAH ABARBANEL HOLZMAN (Cambridge, Massachusetts) reported that her father, Charles Abarbanel, came alone to the United States from Bludowa as a young man, unable to persuade his brothers and sisters to join him. As a result, only three nephews, who hid in the Polish forest during the War, survived.

HENRY BARBANEL (Leominster, Massachusetts) was one of the three nephews who survived. Described by the press as "dynamic - in a quiet, dignified way," Henry arrived in the United States as a refugee in 1949, and rose to become the President and owner of Sannor Industries, a manufacturer of urethanes and other polymers.



Henry in 1945

During the War, as a young teenager, he was sentenced by the Nazis to a forced labor camp. After escaping with his brother (the only other member of his immediate family to survive the War), Henry fled to the forest, where, at the age of 14, he organized a resistance group and fought in the Polish underground. After the war, Henry briefly joined the Polish police force, and eventually relocated to the United States.



Henry Barbanel

JODY CHINITZ (Upper Montclair, New Jersey) tells a tale of the hidden Abarbanel identity of her ancestor, "Avraham Itzchak," whose son, Moshe Chaim, founded the Krakow branch of the family banking business in the late 16th Century (Moshe Chaim journeyed to Poland because of anti-Semitic actions in Vienna, the city of his birth). On his deathbed, "Avraham Itzchak" revealed that he was actually Itzchak Abarbanel of Venice, the son of Yakov ben Shmuel Abarbanel and Yehudit bas Itzchak ben Yehuda Leib Abarbanel (Yakov was married to the daughter of his first cousin). Under threat of assassination by the Doge of Venice, Yakov had ordered his three sons to disperse, sending Itzchak Abarbanel to Vienna (where he changed his name to Abraham Itzchak), Yehuda Leib Abarbanel to Bordeaux, and Avraham Abarbanel to Amsterdam.

FLORENCE GRENDE, (Lanesboro, Mass.) reports that the Barbanel family of her mother (second from the left, second row) came from the Mentoff-Glusk area near Lublin. Nearly all in this photo perished in the Holocaust.

