

**PRESENTATION OF THE ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH LIBRARIES
RESEARCH & SPECIAL LIBRARIES DIVISION
ONE-TIME BODY-OF-WORK AWARD
TO AVOTAYNU PUBLISHERS, INC.**

Presented by Peggy K. Pearlstein, Vice-President, R&S Division

First, I would like to acknowledge the advice and support of Pearl Berger, President of AJL and Zachary Baker, past president of AJL, during the process of soliciting funding from Mr. Harvey Krueger for this one-time Body-of-Work Award for Avotaynu Publishers, Inc.

Mr. Harvey Krueger is a Vice-President of Lehmann Brothers investment bank, a philanthropist, and a genealogy enthusiast. He brokered the 2003 agreement between JewishGen, the premier Jewish genealogical Internet website, and New York City's Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust. Most recently, he procured the monies needed to rescue books, records and other treasures of Iraqi Jews found in the Intelligence Headquarters in Baghdad last summer. These treasures were the subject of a presentation today by Doris Hamburg, Director for Preservation at the National Archives and Records Administration.

Mr. Krueger not only responded positively to our letter asking for funding for this award, but he gave above and beyond what we requested. This gives you a very good idea of Mr. Krueger's generosity and of the importance he attached to honoring Avotaynu Publishers. In one of our telephone conversations, he said that he was pleased that he could help to make Avotaynu Publishers' founders Sallyann Sack and Gary Mokitoff's "often unrecognized contributions to Jewish genealogy" better known.

I'd like to tell you about Gary, Sallyann, and their company, but through their own words. This is what Gary had to say in the May 30th edition of *Nu? What's New? News About Jewish Genealogy From Avotaynu*, an electronic newsletter he edits. In an article titled, "We've Come a Long Way Baby," Gary writes:

"Those of us who were active in genealogy in the early 1980s recall a maxim at that time—when you to a Jewish library or archives, never say you are a genealogist. The reaction from some archivists and librarians at that time was one of disdain; genealogists were mere hobbyists pursuing matters in a non-scholarly manner. We were an annoyance to these institutions. We have come a long way since then in demonstrating that our pursuits are serious and that we can make a positive contribution to the Jewish scholarly world. Typical is the current view of the Association of Jewish Libraries. In the past 13 years AJL has given their "Best Reference Book" award to four books developed by the genealogical community. "Where Once We Walked" received the award in 1991 and "A Dictionary of Surnames from Poland" in 1996. Now, for two consecutive years, books created by genealogists have received the award: "Sephardic Genealogy" in 2003 and "Diccionario Sefaradi de Sobrenomes (Dictionary of Sephardic Surnames) in 2004."

Now, I'd like you to hear Sallyann as she talks about Jewish genealogy. Sallyann and I have known each other for almost 22 years. We first met when I came to work in the Hebraic Section of the Library of Congress and Sallyann was a researcher there. When she can't come to the Library in person, we often talk on the telephone, but our conversations are brief. The following excerpts, from a profile I did on Sallyann that will be published in the forthcoming issue of *Lifestyles Magazine*, will tell you about her experiences in the world of Jewish genealogy and why we usually connect only in the last few minutes of the hour:

“‘This is Dr. Sallyann Sack speaking by recording.’ The calm, soothing voice you hear on the Bethesda, Maryland psychologist’s telephone message machine belies the animation, energy, and drive of the woman who is highly regarded as the ‘god-mother of Jewish genealogy.’

‘Genealogy is the number one hobby today, surpassing stamp collecting,’ notes Sack. ‘But I believe that genealogical research is important because it has a major role to play in combating Jewish assimilation.

‘The fact is that virtually everyone who gets into genealogy reports that the process of tracing his or her family—with the attendant need to learn more about Jewish history, customs, and law—causes them to feel more Jewish. With knowledge comes an intensified sense of being Jewish.’

‘Genealogy combines my love of being Jewish, my curiosity about people, my fascination with puzzles, and my passion for history. In some ways, it is an extension of psychology which is really individual history,’ Sack says enthusiastically.

‘All of this interest was developing before we had email and the Internet,’ she says. ‘The genealogists needed a way to keep in touch, especially since *Toledot*, the first publication in the United States for Jewish genealogy, had just ceased. Gary Mokotoff, who was already involved in the computer business and Jewish genealogy through the Jewish Family Finder database, and I each put up \$500 to start a new journal. I edited the material and Gary produced the quarterly publication. And that is how *Avotaynu, the International Review of Jewish Genealogy* was born...’

Sack is also president of Avotaynu, Inc. the parent company of the quarterly, created in 1991. When she and Mokotoff couldn't find a publisher for their first book, *Where Once We Walked; A Guide to Jewish Communities Destroyed in the Holocaust*, they decided to do it themselves. Since then, the company has helped to “grow Jewish genealogy” by providing reference tools for the increasing number of people interested in their roots. In the process, several of their titles have garnered book awards. Sack herself has published more than a half dozen works of interest to researchers and Jewish genealogists. More recently, she and Gary created Avotaynu Foundation, formed to publish books on Jewish genealogy that can't be published commercially...

Gary Mokotoff, who resides in New Jersey where Avotaynu is based, noted that the two have ‘an incredibly compatible business relationship,

partly because each of us is so different. We cover each other's faults. Sallyann 'runs like the wind.' She's the ground breaker for all that we do. I am the orderly one and the implementer of ideas...'
'Since our partnership began in 1984,' he notes, 'she's been in charge of programs and I've been in charge of production. We don't step on each other's toes. You have to think that the other person is responsible for fifty-five percent of the success of your efforts. We always say to each other, 'I can't do it without you.'

Well, we in the Jewish research community can't do without you either! Tonight, with this one-time body-of-work award presented to Avotaynu Publishers, Inc, and funded by Mr. Harvey Krueger, we say thank you for all you have done!