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Dear Glennie,

As an 'elder statesman' in the Katz/Horvitz tribe, I wish to express my joy in sharing the nachas at your high school graduation on Jun 18, 2005. I regret that I did not live in Pittsburgh and have the pleasure of being more intimate with the newest generation of the Katz/Horvitz tribe and watch it mature.

In this fast moving world that we live in, it would be appropriate to look back for a moment to review family history and get these snapshots of your forebear's world.

Your Zaidy Dovid's mother, Fanny Horvitz came from Schedrin Russia in 1903 with her parents, Henach and Freda Horvitz and family (Morris, Esther, Dave, Bessie. Sam and Belle were born in Pgh). Fannie married Jacob Katz about 1910 at age 22. She had polio at age 3 which affected her foot and she limped badly all her life. She was an exceptional woman: never said a bad word ("loshen hora") about anyone. Never complained about a very hard life, in Europe and in US. She had a beautiful voice which, if cultivated, she could have been an opera star. She maintained a strictly kosher home as did her parents. She had four sons: Harry, Bill, Al and Dovid.

I was born in the Horvitz home, 2323 Reed St, Hill District, Pgh on May 25, 1915, with a midwife at birth. (The custom with most births then). When I was 8, 9, 10 years old, I would spend summers at the Reed St house which had a little garden in frontI remember the festive Friday night dinners. They always had company. One of the favorite foods was the 'Schedriner Meichel'. A whole potato sliced at the top and hollowed out. A small amount of ground meat was braised and with potatoes and onions, etc, was put into the hollow potato and baked. It was delicious, and fed a lot of people with little cost. Bobbi baked delicious challos and each person was given a generous portion so no one was hungry.....Behind the house was a barn. In the barn, Zaidy had 3 cows, Prince, a horse, and a wagon to deliver the milk. In the early morning, Paul, the helper would herd the cows to a large hillside 3 blocks away on Center Ave where the cows would graze all day. At the bottom of that hill, at the end of Herron Ave, there was a large mansion. It was converted to be the first Montefiore Hospital. Our cousin, Esther Friedman, was one of the organizers and a long time secretary of the Hospital.Zaydie was very honest; he was the only dairyman who had to buy butter. He would not take anything from the milk. (Milk in those days was not pasteurized or homogenized). I used to accompany him or uncle Sam delivering the milk in the wagon over those steep hills. He rode the horse and wagon to Etna one day where he bought a plot of land for the cemetery (Ohave Zedek) for his Shule. That is where my parents, my Ruth and Freddie, and grandparents are buried, along with Uncle Sam and Aunt Esther. (I hope to visit the cemetery in August when I have to give a talk at a Pest Control Conference).

Zaidy Henach moved to the new all Jewish village of Schedrin with about 300 families at the behest of the Lubavicher Rebbe III. in the mid 1880s. By 1900, it had about 4000 Jews. It was a hotbed for Lubavichers and Yeshivas. Achai T'mimim Yeshiva in Pgh was organized by the last student to study in a Schedrin Yeshiva in 1917 before the Bolsheviks closed it down. He was Rabbi Pozner. Russian peasants were jealous of the Jews' success and started pogroms and that is why most of the Jews left.

In 1976, I organized a gathering for Schedriners in Schenley Park. I was surprised to have 200 people show up. They gave me information on their families. We continued annual gatherings for years and even more people showed up. In Florida, I continued these gatherings. Last month, a Schedrin descendant, Andrew Swerdlove visited me, stayed in my apartment for 5 days with his computer, scanner and recorder machines, etc. We worked from 8 AM to after midnight. He now has much material on his web: you can try aswerdlove@nyc.rr.com . He needs each tribe to bring their geneology records and pictures up to date. A whole new generation grew up since I saved the records. You will find the story of Schedrin fascinating. There are thousands of descendants, many in high places, all over the world.

You may be interested to know that your real name is not Katz. When my dad was 6 years old, his father died. He spent his youth living in Yeshivas, sleeping on benches, with hand me downs and eating at a different home each night, a 'teg boy'. At 16, rather than be drafted in the Polish army, he managed to get enough money to get to Liverpool England. He was standing at the dock, watching a family walk up the gang plank to the ship-- mother, children. When the father asked the oldest grown son to go, at the last minute he would not go. The father could not pull him up. My father was standing by and said, "if he won't go, can I use his ticket?". In a rage, the father pulled out an envelope and handed it to my father. In an instant, Yitchak Isaac Labzovsky became Jacob Katz. He landed in Baltimore in 1893. During the presidential election in 1896, he gave speeches in Yiddish, exhorting the Jewish immigrants to vote for Wm Jennings Bryan. His four sons have been strong democrats ever since, probably the longest tradition for a family to vote for a party.....Dad moved to DC and worked in a newsstand near the capital. Here he got friendly with Senators, Congressmen and great dignitaries. One was Sam Langley who was head of the Smithsonian Institute. Langley invited dad over to continue discussions in his shop in the basement of the Smithsonian. He was working on bending the tubes for a flying machine--getting the right angle for air flow to hold up the machine. He complained that he was interrupted often for information that he found by two bicycle mechanics from Ohio. Langley was too occupied with other duties as head of the Smithsonian to pursue is experiment and the Wright brothers got credit for the first flying machine.

Dad married a Pgh girl in DC and she got him to move to Pgh. He opened a used furniture store on Carson St. In the back of the store, a group of locals gathered around a hot belly coal stove and shmoozed during the winter months. One of the shmoozers was Honus Wagner, the great Pirate shortstop. He came by street car from Carnegie and regaled them with stories about his baseball feats. A young neighborhood boy got his start when my dad put a picture that the 12 year old boy painted in the window and it sold. The boy was Jim Nesbert who later founded the Nesbert Art School in Pgh. In 1923, Nesbert made a portrait painting of dad's mother, Rebecca. It has been floating around from one brother to the other. I don't know where it is, but it certainly needs to be repaired by now.

Dad had a problem with his first wife and got a divorce, after which he moved to Canonsburg. He opened a used furniture store and was doing well when a bad flood , in 1911, destroyed his whole inventory. He then opened a 5 & 10 store and also did well, until a national chain came in and wiped him out. (Just as Home Depot has wiped out most of the independent hardware stores).

In 1933, I had a scholarship when I graduated high school. But with sick parents and a sick store in the midst of a depression, I stayed in the store. I built it up with my brothers, built a new storeroom and the four Katz Bros did well. When WWII was declared, we were all drafted and our uncle Sam Horvitz, at a tremendous sacrifice, took over the store and left in better shape when we returned.

Brother Dovid ended up as a Brownie Automatic Rifleman in the 15th Infantry of the 3rd Army in the Battle of the Bulge. He was one of the few survivors of that company. When he was in the trenches, unable to go to a mess hall, he survived on packaged rations. Even here, he followed his mother's tradition and traded his meat rations for his buddy's cheese rations. Will was in Paris, freeing it from the nazies. While in Paris, Will conducted the first Friday night service in the Great Synagogue which had been closed by the nazies. While in Paris, he looked up a sister of Sam Toder in Canonsburg. She was a survivor and lived with 2 small daughters in one room in a top floor of a tenement. He found her, left his heavy overcoat to keep the girls warm in unheated room, brought them food. The daughters are now happily married with families in the US..... Brother Al was in the Phillipines with a Coast Guard Outfit. I was the luckiest of all. I wound up as the company clerk for an MP detachment behind the White House, guarding the White House in DC. I watched Vice Pres Truman walk hand-in-hand with the Secy of State to the back door when Pres Roosevelt died.

On a 3 day pass in Pgh, I was standing at a bus stop waiting for a bus on Forbes ST when a car stopped. My aunt Bess Winograd with a neighbor from Rochester, Ruth Gordon; they picked me up. I invited Ruth to visit with me when she came to visit her cousin in DC. She did. We went out for dinner at a nice restaurant and when I took her home, I proposed. We lived happily for 54 years until Ruth died 3 years ago. We have one son, Elliot who has 8 children and 11 grandchildren, all exceptional, thank G-d. Dovid, his oldest son, went to a Yeshiva and also to Truro College night school. He got a degree there and got a job promptly running a public school in NYC for handicapped children. Considering the pay scale, he decided to try for a law school. Without preparation, he took the LSAT and got 99.7. Within a month, he was accepted at Harvard where he now lives with 2 darling children. Dershowitz is one of his profs. He sometimes tell them, when they are discussing various opinions on cases, what the opinions on the subject were of Rabbis in the Gemorra over 1000 years ago. The oldest daughter, Sara Liba Tropper lives in White Hall, McKeesport. Her husband, Nossen is head of the Yeshiva High School. They have 6 darling children. When I came to NY this Pesach, I was treated with a lavish party celebrating my 90th. Michael made a video of the affair which was quite professional. I'll try to get a copy of it to Lucy. Michael is writing a book, ala Harry Potter. I don't know how a Yeshiva student with no TV in the house can do it..

More memories: Back in 1923 or so, I was listening to Zeidy Henach shmoozing with his cronies about wishing that he could visit Schedrin and see what was going on. He said if he went, he would try to find a document that his father had which listed a family tree back to Levi, in the bible. I'm sure it would have been destroyed on one of the pogroms, but if it was there, it would probably be the oldest family tree in the world. Only the Horvitz boys are Levites. The honor goes from father to son.

When I was about 5 years old, I recall a parade in Canonsburg. A little old (to me) lady with a broad rimmed hat was in a car and she came to get the first gram of radium

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that was manufactured. She was Madam Curie who discovered radium. I may be the only person left in the world that saw her personally.

Also among my early memories: the excitement of a electric light bulb replacing the flickering gas mantle..... The ice box which had to have melted water removed every day..... The crystal set I made with wire and galena stone to hear some scratchy sounds over the air from KDKA that just started to broadcast.The windup victrola that played scratchy records--songs "Blue Skies" and Cantorial songs.....Father Coughlin giving fiery talks every Sunday night on the radio telling how bad the Jews were, cowards, crooks, etc, etc. week after week.....I had to walk 2 blocks out of the way to go to school to avoid stones from the Catholic kids if I passed their parochial school.....When your Zaidy Dovid was a dentist in Punxutawney, I once phoned him and the telephone operator said, "Oh, Dr Katz is playing golf today". Bubbi Lucy was a science teacher in the Catholic Parochial school in Punxy. The only time kids had a vacation for a Jewish holiday.....More recently, in Canonsburg, Al and Will were honored by being the Marshals for the Fourth of July Parade.....

I seem to remember stuff 50 years old, but I can't remember what I had for dinner last night.

Again, congratulations on your graduation and best wishes in your college years.

May 25, 2005

Zadie Dovid's oldest brother, Harry

Katz