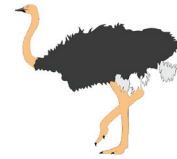




STRAUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.



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Straus is the German word for ostrich

February 2024

This I Believe by Nathan Straus, Jr.

On January 2, 1952 Nathan Straus Jr. wrote a note to his son Nathan Straus III and his wife Betty: "Betty and Nat, Please read this and phone me about it between 6:00 and 6:30 o'clock this evening. NS."

THIS I BELIEVE by Nathan Straus, Jr.

In trying to tell what I believe, it seems easier to begin by telling how I came to my belief.

Since the dawn of history, man has tried to find the answers to three key questions in life: (1) Where do we come from? (2) Why are we here? (3) Where are we going? Whence, why, whither.

Many men have offered many opinions in answer to these questions. The opinions differed widely, as differ they must – for there is no firm ground on which to base them. Yet, men have become so convinced of the truth of their own particular guess as to the answer that oceans of blood have been spilled in attempting to force their belief on others.

Since no man has yet found the key to unlock these mysteries of life, since there is no proof of the truth or falsity of any answer, I believe that each of us must grope as best we can to find at least a partial answer for himself. A man must have a belief to live by.

My own groping was given direction in childhood by the teachings of the Hebrew prophets: (1) That justice must be the basis of the good life on earth; (2) That all men are my brothers; (3) That I am my brother's keeper.

I believe in seeking my own happiness in any way that I choose as long as, in doing so, I do not hurt anyone else. I believe in seeking the happiness of others by trying to understand them and their problems. I believe that a man is civilized to the degree that he can feel, personally, the suffering of others. As Eleanor Roosevelt has said: "I think that somewhere there is a record of the things we might do and do not do – either because we are too lazy or because we do not know. I have an

idea that lack of knowledge of others' needs is no excuse for our own indifference."

Since society gives the weak, the underprivileged, and those with skin of a different color less than justice, I believe we, as individuals, should try to weight the scale in their favor to bring it into balance.

I have an instinctive distrust of great power, whether the power of an overwhelming majority or the power of overwhelming wealth, and I believe it is my job – to block great power the moment it tries to impose its ideas on any human being. Thomas Jefferson spoke for me – and all who believe in the dignity of the individual – when he said: "I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man."

I believe that few people are naturally cruel or criminal. I believe these traits are developed by bad living conditions, slum housing, malnutrition, inadequate health care – but, mainly by distorted education. I believe that prejudice, bigotry, superstition, and false standards of human worth, the source of most of the world's troubles, are implanted in childhood – in the home and in the school.

I believe that the only hope of building a world of peace and happiness lies in giving economic security and educational opportunity to all people everywhere in the world.

My code of life, the belief by which I try to live, may best be summarized in the precept of Immanuel Kant: "Act so that you would be willing to have your action become the universal rule of human conduct."



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The Straus Historical Society, Inc. is dedicated to advancing the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the Lazarus Straus family and the historical context in which they lived through research and education. You are invited to submit articles or ideas for articles, calendar events, and material relating to the Straus family and to their history.

The Straus Historical Society, Inc. is a tax exempt organization as described under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code. Contributions to the Society are deductible to the extent provided by law. A copy of the annual report of the Straus Historical Society, Inc. may be obtained from the Society or from the New York State Attorney General, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271

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A Message from SHS Executive Director Joan Adler



As we begin 2024, we also take the time to look back and reflect upon the many years that came before.

I started working with Robert K. (Bob) Straus of Santa Barbara, CA in October of 1990. The project began as an effort to get the family's personal papers out of R. H. Macy & Company, the family owned business from 1888 through 1986. At that time, neither Bob nor I had any idea where we were headed beyond that one assignment, nor the scope of what we were initiating. 33 years later, what started as a discrete family project, is the Straus Historical Society, a nonprofit since 1998. We are going strong and looking forward to many more years of research, documentation, preservation and dissemination of information relating to the Straus family and their history.

Our robust family genealogical database contains information about more than 16,300 individuals. With more than 90 cubic feet of archival materials documented and preserved, we are the largest depository of information about the many Straus family members and of their professions, public service and philanthropy. We regularly contribute information and photographs to authors, scholars, documentarians, film makers, periodicals and magazines, to news agencies and to the general public. We've published ten books and contributed to the publication of many more. We've given presentations to the members of genealogical societies, historical societies, school groups and to museum visitors. The Straus Historical Society Scholarship Program was created with the goal of supporting the continuing education of a graduate student whose professional goal is in the field of public service. In 2018, the first year of this program, we awarded one \$5,000 scholarship. In 2023 we raised sufficient funds, **thanks to your generosity**, to award four \$5,000 scholarships. We anticipate awarding five \$5,000 scholarships in 2024. And we are not done yet!

2024 started out with several new projects and research requests that have kept us busy. We are working with two authors of books about Nathan Straus. Two books about Anne Frank will be published this year that contain substantial information contributed by SHS. Another book scheduled for publication will feature information and photographs about Isidor and Ida Straus and of Nathan Straus, Jr.. We anticipate a visit to Cobble Close, the farm group in Middletown, NJ, which is the former home of Herbert and Therese Straus. There, the residents have become interested in the history of their homes and have invited us at SHS to share our knowledge of this lovely estate with them. They are thinking about creating a livestock sanctuary for cows, goats and sheep. And we continue to work with Rob Garber whose excellent article about the homes of Isidor and Ida Straus was published as a supplement to the SHS newsletter in November 2023.

I would like to introduce and welcome three new SHS board members: Barbara D. Gurgan, David Kahn and Adam Straus. Each brings substantial talent and enthusiasm. We are delighted they have decided to join the SHS board.

We are grateful for your support throughout the years and hope you will feel motivated to continue or increase, your support in 2024. We welcome your questions and suggestions. How can we make your involvement more meaningful and interesting? Let us hear from you.

The Interesting Stories of Robert K. (Bob) Straus

I first started working with Robert K. (Bob) Straus in October of 1990. After a bitter leveraged buyout in 1986 of the family owned business, R. H. Macy & Company, he wanted to get the family's personal papers out of "the store." That initial assignment in 1990, turned into what has become a 33 year project (so far), ... the Straus Historical Society.

Since Bob lived in Santa Barbara, CA and I live on Long Island in NY, we wrote lengthy letters to each other. These were the days before email was commonly used. I'd explain what I was finding in the materials I'd taken from Macy's and he would write about his own history and also about the history of the family. I looked forward to these exchanges. He was a wonderful story teller. And, as the stories unfolded, I learned more and more about the accomplished Straus family. Bob also wrote stories about his own life and his experiences, all of which were fascinating to me.

When we first started the Straus Family Project, we had no clear idea where we were headed. Bob just knew that he wanted to get the family's personal papers out of Macy's. But then, having succeeded with that task, we found we had several thousand pieces of paper that had not been seen by the family in more than 100 years. They needed to be read and organized, and many letters had to be transcribed because of the poor quality of the handwriting, paper or photocopy. I had the Old German letters and business papers translated into English and I recorded what started as a bibliography of each item in the collection. The early bibliography has turned into a robust documentation of every item in our growing archival collection.

After 33 years, we've begun rereading the letters exchanged from the beginning of the project. There are letters (and then emails), from many different family members. As the project grew, and especially after I started writing the newsletter and inviting family members to contribute information about their own branch of the family, I'm finding that some of these communications contain information that should have been recorded but was not, because I had no idea we would want to know that bit of information later. And, there was no genealogical software programs in these early days of this project where information could be recorded. Now, as I reread these letters, I am finding that there is quite a lot of material that should be added to our bibliography or to the individual's record in our genealogical software program. Rereading these early letters and emails has been a delight. I've rediscovered information I'd forgotten and relived some of the most charming relationships I've had over the years. Excerpts from some of Bob's letters and phone conversations follow.

In August 1991, in a phone conversation, Bob told me that his father, Jesse Isidor, never wanted to be an ambassador. He

wanted to be the Secretary of Commerce like his Uncle Oscar had been. He thought it had a kind of symmetry to be Secretary of Commerce under Franklin Roosevelt since Oscar had been Secretary of Commerce and Labor under Theodore Roosevelt. Jesse was promised the position but, at the 1932 convention, which Bob attended, MacAdoo of Santa Barbara, CA, who was Woodrow Wilson's son-in-law, had 100 of the Garner votes (VP). He wouldn't give them up. So they got on the phone to Hearst in San Simeon at five in the morning and he got them to give the votes to Roosevelt in exchange for two cabinet positions; one of which was Secretary of Commerce. Jesse got the ambassadorship (to France) instead. He didn't like being an ambassador except for the social aspects. Ad his wife, Irma didn't like it at all because she seldom saw Jesse alone. She wasn't as social as he was. When Bob and his brother-in-law, Robert Levy, husband of Bob's sister Beatrice, went to Hyde Park to tell Roosevelt that Jesse was ill, Roosevelt called his secretary, Miss Lehann, "Missy, call Bullet and tell him he's going to Paris." Bob believed Roosevelt knew that Jesse was fatally ill and was prepared to replace him.

From a phone conversation on August 1991 Bob told me about Percy S. Straus receiving a phone call from a Macy customer at three a.m. She told him she just wanted to thank him for the delivery of an item she had ordered from the store. He said, "Madam, its 3 a.m. Why are you calling me now to thank me?" She replied, "The item was just delivered and I wanted to thank you immediately."

In a note from Bob dated January 30, 1993: President Lowell of Harvard spoke to Bob and the 700 freshmen in the 1923 class the first night they were there. He told them: "If you are here to get an education, forget about it. After four years all you will know is what you don't know."

In a letter dated March 10, 1993, Bob, the grandson of Isidor Straus, wrote that he saw brothers Peter and Barney Straus in England during the war. Peter and Barney were the grandsons of Nathan Straus. This is important because the members of the Isidor and Nathan branches had not spoken since 1913 when there was a rift between the members of the two families. Indeed, none of the members of either branch had spoken since 1913. So their meeting, and reconnecting, was an important step toward healing the rift.

March 18, 1993: Bob was offered a one third ownership of *The New York Post* after the war by then owner Dolly Schiff for \$750,000. He didn't go for it because he didn't like her style of running the paper. She said she was broke and needed the money. When she sold the paper later to Murdock, it was for \$30 or \$40 million dollars!

In March 1993 Bob wrote, "Jesse always said that Herbert (his youngest brother) shouldn't have been in business, He was



the only esthete in the family. He was no good at accounting which was the business he was in. His mother (Ida) was very strict with the boys. They had to change their Eton collars three times a day. Herbert and his wife Therese built a house on 91st Street and Park Avenue on the north side, opposite the Frick Museum. It's still there today. (Note: It was later sold to Jeffrey Epstein and resold after his death to a British couple.) Herbert and Therese never lived in it. The entrance was imported from France. The architect wanted to duplicate it and said nobody would know the difference, but Therese said, "I WILL." Herbert died before they could complete the house or move into it. Therese finally gave it to a Catholic Church who used it as a school because the nuns were the only ones who would take it. Herbert and Therese borrowed three million dollars to build it. At the same time that they were building the 91st Street house, they were also rebuilding their 100 acre estate in Middletown, NJ. Therese was criticized for doing this work during the Great Depression. She explained that she was not at all ashamed because she was supplying work for so many people who would otherwise be unemployed.

April 1, 1993: "In 1927 when Jesse went to Atlanta to buy Davison Paxton & Stokes Department Store (which is now Macy's), there was a dinner party. Jack and Peg (Margaret Shelton) Straus were there. Jack was 27 and recently married. Peg was seated next to a Senator who tried to make conversation with her. He asked: "Do you have any kinfolk down south?" To which she replied, "Oh yes. I'm related to General Sherman." Her grandfather was Dr. Shelton, head of the Ridgefield Connecticut Bank. His relative was General Sherman. It was General Sherman who led the troops during the burning of Columbus, GA, on Easter Sunday in 1865. Lazarus Straus and his family, members of Abraham Straus' family, the Kaufmans and the Rothschilds were all living in Columbus at the time.

April 1, 1993: The day after Bob began working in the New Deal with Rex Tugwell, Bob was to make a speech before 100 editors. Most were considered Communists. Bob was to present the Tuskegee point of view as opposed to the Uncle Tom point of view. He said it must have gone well because no one booed him off the stage. Immediately following his speech there was a 28 year old black man whom Bob remembered as being very intelligent; giving a good speech. He was Ralph Bunch who was a Professor of Political Science at Howard University at the time before he got famous.

May 18, 1993: "I remember listening on a shortwave radio to the 1944 election returns with one of Dewey's top assistants, who was in the Army with me and had the radio set we used in Paris. When Dewey lost he said, "Mrs. Dewey will be pleased. She hates politics." That was probably the election FDR should never have competed in because as we now know he was very ill at the time and had no business running. Actually Barbara Levy's father Robert had trained the Navy doctor who was with FDR when he died. His name was Howard Bruenn

and when he first examined FDR in 1943 he was appalled at his condition and told his boss, an admiral, that he thought the condition should be discussed with the President. The Admiral said, "You will not discuss this with anyone. Those are my orders." As I remember, Howard Bruenn destroyed all his files after telling Barbara's father the story." Barbara Levy's father was Robert Levy. He was married to Beatrice Straus, the daughter of Jesse Isidor Straus.

How Straus Hall at Harvard Got Its Name: In a letter from July 21, 1993: "John Baker was the assistant dean of the Harvard Business School and assisted Jesse Isidor Straus in raising the money in the 1920s to put up the buildings of the Business School. He actually had an office at Macy's for a while. My father (Jesse) and his brothers (Percy and Herbert) pledged \$300,000 as the down payment on the \$5 million campaign, which was all they needed in those days to put up a dozen buildings. Bishop Lawrence accepted Dean Donham's invitation to head the campaign. The Bishop, while on vacation at Jekyll Island in Georgia, talked frequently to Dean Donham on the telephone and one day Mr. Baker, who was known as the "banker's banker" in New York, overheard him and asked why he kept talking to Dean Donham in Cambridge every day. Bishop Lawrence explained that he was heading

the campaign to raise \$5 million for the Business School. Mr. Baker didn't say anything for a couple of days and then said to the Bishop that he had always wanted to do something for the public and had thought of building a bridge across the Hudson (there was no bridge at that time) but he had found that it was too expensive. However, he might like to give the whole \$5 million to the Business School if he could do it alone, and the Bishop replied that the Straus brothers

had made the first pledge and would have to withdraw. Mr. Baker asked the Bishop to find out whether they would do so and, of course, they did; but they still gave their money and Straus Hall was built in The Yard, the name for Harvard's campus, across the river from the Business School. In fact, until 1985 or '86 the Business School still "owned" the Hall and received all the income from the rental of rooms. This gift was the second gift of the three brothers to Harvard, I think, the first having been the Isidor Straus Chair for the teaching of Business History."

In one of our many phone conversations, Bob told me he was attending Harvard when Straus Hall was dedicated. He wanted to room there because of the family connection but his request was denied. It was a freshman dorm and he was no longer a freshman. No amount of pleading his case would change the mind of the administration.

March 24, 1995: "One other bit of history in which the family was not directly involved but which resulted from the purchase of Bamberger's in Newark in the 1920s, My father paid \$5 million for Bamberger's, I think, and Mr. Fuld, who as one of the owners, decided he would like to endow an educational project. Somehow he got to Dr. Abraham Flexner, whom I



Straus Hall at Harvard

knew a little bit because he was a friend of my Aunt Sara Hess. He was famous at that time for having done a study of medical education for the Rockefeller Foundation which had resulted in a complete reorganization of medical education in the United States. The results of Mr. Fuld's discussions with Dr. Flexner was the Institute of Advanced Study in Princeton, and I think my Uncle Percy was the first chairman. Donald Straus, was on the Board for many years. ... this Institute was Einstein's first home when he came to the United States." Percy S. Straus was the second son of Isidor and Ida and Donald Blun Straus was his son.

October 30 1995: "I have always thought that June 10, 1940 was one of the worst days of my life, when France collapsed and only England was left. I guess now the explanation is probably that all the best Frenchmen were killed in World War I and they had nobody to lead them. I always remember that my mother [Irma Nathan Straus] always said that when she had Marshal Petain to lunch, all he did was tell dirty stories. And, of course, he took over. Oddly enough, Laval, who ran the French government under Petain during the German occupation, was a good friend of father [Jesse Isidor Straus] and my parents gave his daughter an engagement party."

"General Wood graduated from West Point at the top of his class. In those days, the first ten graduates automatically went into the Engineer Corps. He was told to report to General Goethals who was about to start building the Panama Canal in 1904. General Goethals said to him, "Young man, all you have to do is to make sure I never run out of cement. If you do run out of cement, put your resignation on my desk." For ten years, from 1904 to 1914, that is all the Lieutenant Wood did. He never ran out of cement. Then, in 1915 or 1916, President Wilson made Goethals Quarter Master of the Army. He retired in 1916 and Wood took his place. That made him the youngest general in the Army at age 38. He was a two-star general. He stayed in the Army until 1923 and then he saw it was going to take a long time to be promoted so he left the Army and went to work for Montgomery Ward, a department store. After a couple of years there he saw that the roads had been built in the mid-west and west and that the farmers were driving to the county seat to do their purchasing. He realized that buying by mail, as was customary at the time, was going to decline. He told his bosses at Montgomery Ward that they should start building stores. They thought he was crazy. He quit, with five children and no money. Two weeks later, Mr. Rosenwald, who owned Sears Roebuck, said, "I hear you want to build stores. Here's \$25,000. Don't ask me for another nickel. Build your first store." He did – he invented the shopping center. He realized the store should not be built on the main street of a town but on the outskirts of a town where there could be plenty of parking. Parking was the key to the whole thing. And that is how shopping centers started off. When Macy's started building stores, they built them on main streets but quickly realized their mistake. The only exception was a store in Queens, NY that was built on top of a garage after unsuccessfully trying to get the homeowner to sell his house to Macy's. They built the

store around the house and on top of a garage in order to avoid encroaching on the homeowner's property."

"Jesse once said that he wished fashion could be eliminated from retailing because it was such a pain. I guess that might be possible if we could eliminate women."

Ken Straus was Jack Isidor Straus' son and Bob's nephew. Bob and Ken were very close. When Ken was writing his autobiography, *Reflections*, he turned to Bob for comments and criticisms. Bob, in turn, wrote back lengthy stories of his own experiences relevant to the stories Ken was writing about.

Bob wrote: "You remind me of what General Marshall said to MacArthur when he went with President Truman to meet MacArthur. I have forgotten whether it was in Honolulu or Wake Island. In any event, MacArthur made some remark to President Truman that his staff had said so and so and Marshall said to him, "General, you don't have a staff, you just have a court." MacArthur and Marshall never liked each other from the time they were lieutenants. I had a few glimpses of General Marshall when I was in the Pentagon. I talked with him a number of times and had the impression that he was one of the greatest Americans of my era, of any era. It is

interesting that when President Conant gave him his degree at Harvard in 1947, he said there was only one other American with whom he could be compared, George Washington. I think there was a lot of truth to that."

Another story was about the Red Ball Highway during World War II. "General Somerwell, who was my boss, came over to investigate why there were some many frozen feet and you [Ken] were one of those who suffered from it. He was the head of the whole Army Service Corps with five million men under him. He came with his right-

hand man, whom I had worked directly for in the Pentagon, General Robinson, and they discovered that the reason for the frozen feet was that General Bradley, in September 1944, had said to General John Lee, who was the head of the communications zone, which included all troops behind the combat zone, that he could finish the war by Christmas if he could get 5,000 tons of ammunition delivered per day. And that's how the Red Ball Highway was organized, to do that job with mostly black drivers. They organized relay stations every 30 miles, with Coca Cola, hot dogs, coffee and doughnuts. But the winter clothing was all left on the boats off shore and that was the scandal. Unfortunately, as you know, General Bradley didn't finish the war by Christmas. I suppose this was largely due to Hitler's last crack at a victory, which was the Battle of the Bulge ... In the postwar days there's been a great deal of discussion of this whole concept, Eisenhower's concept, of an even advance of his lines with the British on the left and the Americans on the right. Patton on the extreme right with the Third Army. U.S. First Army was in the middle, U.S. Ninth Army was on the left of the First Army and the British were on the left of that. At the time of the Battle of the Bulge, the command was changed so that the Ninth Army was put under Montgomery. But Montgomery's criticism was that he should



Lt. Robert K. Straus

have been allowed to advance straight into Berlin and that he could have gotten through. Patton had pretty much the same criticism. If he had the gasoline, Third Army could have gone right into Germany across the Remaggen Bridge. General Eisenhower was criticized for wanting to have that even advance of all the armies together. I think the main hub of the thing was that the British felt it was very important to get to Berlin, and the Americans didn't attach as much importance to it. On the whole, my own opinion is that the British were right; that given the American training (and I had a chance to discuss this after the war with some of the people at West Point), American generals had no idea of the politics and the importance of Berlin in this particular case, and of getting there first before the Russians got there. The Europeans understood this very, very well and I think it's really a pity that our people were not better educated. I think that's been corrected since. The general at West Point, who was head of the Political Science Division, told me, I guess about 1947 when I was at a Council on Foreign Relations dinner, that there was a reason why West Pointers had deliberately not been taught politics, because of the fear on the early days of the United States, the Union, that some general might try to become a dictator and they didn't want them politically oriented. But I think, since World War II, there's been a big change as far as that's concerned. This is an old argument that surrounds the Battle of the Bulge and the Red Ball Highway. I should add that the port of Antwerp, which was supposedly under the original plans of the Overlord invasion to fall on D+ 30 or 40, didn't fall until much later so everything had to come across the beaches. It was impossible to unload the winter clothing if they gave priority to ammunition, and that accounts, pretty much, for the frozen feet.

In his book Ken wrote about the wine and liquor departments at Macy's. Bob contributed the following story: "After the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, Father and Mother (Jesse Isidor and Irma Straus) met Rudy Kunett when they were returning from Europe on the ship Isle de France in 1933. Rudy was returning after having just bought the rights to Smirnoff Vodka from the Smirnoff family in Paris for \$14,000. Rudy had been born in Russia. But, at the age of 15 or 16, he was sent to school in Germany. In the meantime, the 1917 Russian Revolution had broken out and he had never gone back. He came to American and started in the liquor business. After the repeal of Prohibition, he talked with Father about the liquor business coming back on the boat. A few weeks later, after Father got back to his desk at Macy's, he called Rudy and asked him to come over to see him. Father showed him a letter he had received from what appeared to be a large company in Aberdeen, Scotland, offering Macy's the rights to Chivas Regal whiskey. Father told Rudy that Macy's only had a retail license and couldn't accept the offer but thought Rudy might be interested. Rudy was interested. He went right back to the boat. Apparently the letter was written on beautiful

stationery and he expected to see a large building when he got to Aberdeen. The address shown was a green grocer shop and there was a man behind the counter wearing a white coat. He was slicing beef. Rudy showed him the letter asking to see the man who signed the letter. The man in the white coat said, "I'm Mr. McGregor. It's my letter." Rudy told him what he was there for and he got the rights to Chivas Regal whiskey. He was quite surprised that it was a blend that had been worked out by this man and somehow they knew how to market it in a big way. To this day, I doubt anyone knows the source of this very expensive whiskey. I'm told it's still the property of whoever inherited that green grocer shop in Aberdeen."

"Another whiskey story is when Father and Mother were on their honeymoon, they went to Scotland and visited a distillery owned by Macy's at that time, a scotch distillery. The distillery is still going strong. It's called George Cowie & Son Ltd. in Dufftown in Banffshire. The whiskey I am referring to is an unblended straight scotch called Mortlach. I

believe Kobrand has the right to import the whiskey, going back to the days, the early 30s. Some years ago I wanted to get some of this because I always liked straight whiskey. I went to Kobrands to get it. That's the distillery that at one time Macy partnership owned but when the partnership broke up and became a corporation, all of the liquor and wine that belonged to the partnership was divided between the three families, those of Jesse, Percy and Herbert. Mother, until quite late in her life, still has some Park & Tilford gin that was pre 1914 gin. It is totally different from the gin that we now have. It was highly perfumed with juniper berries, not nearly as dry but very, very smooth. After Barbara

and I got married, we'd get some from the cellar at 720 Park Avenue where it had lingered for many, many years without being touched. I don't quite understand how Macy's can still hold New York State's retail license number 1 if it's not in the business. I'd think the number would be assigned to someone else."

February 1, 1997: "Ralph was a Major in the Army during World War II. I was a captain, an enlisted man, having gone in as a private and moved up in rank. Once, when we were both in England together, walking down the street, Ralph told me I should walk two steps behind him because of my lesser rank." Ralph was the son of Percy S. Straus who was the second son of Isidor and Ida. Bob was the son of Jesse Isidor and Irma Nathan Straus. Jesse Isidor was the oldest son of Isidor and Ida, So, at least in family lineage, Bob outranked Ralph.

It has been a pleasure to read through the old letters and to review the transcripts of some of my phone conversations with Bob Straus. I think he would be thrilled to see the development of the Straus Historical Society, a nonprofit organization that started with his original phone call to me in October 1990.



Barbara and Robert K. Straus

Meet SHS's New Board Members



Dr. David A. Clark is a professor of psychology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is also a senior research advisor at the Center for the Study of Social Development. Dr. Clark has published numerous articles on the topic of child development and has been a frequent speaker at national and international conferences.

Joan: Welcome Barbie, David and Adam to the board of directors of SHS. I look forward to working with you. Your enthusiasm and unique talents will surely enhance SHS's already robust board of directors.

David A. Morse

Secretary General of ILO and Nobel Peace Prize Winner

by Catherine Smith

David Abner Moscovitz (later Morse) was born May 31, 1907, in New York City to first generation Russian Jewish immigrants Morris Moscovitz, a cabinet maker, and Sarah Werblin. When he was one, his family moved to Somerville, New Jersey where he was raised. David was educated in the public schools of Somerville. He graduated from Rutgers University in 1929 and Harvard University Law School in 1932.

At the age of 26, David was recruited by the Solicitor of the Interior Department. During his time with the Interior Department, David negotiated for the milk industry and for the cleaning and dyeing industry, as chief counsel of the Petroleum Labor Policy Board in the Interior Department and as regional attorney for the National Labor Relations Board in the metro New York area. He became prominently involved in the implementation of the Wagner Act of 1935, which for the first time in American history put trade union activities on safe legal ground

In 1937, David Moscovitz changed his family name to Morse. This step was motivated by instances of anti-Semitic resentment he had experienced in both his private and professional life. The same year, David met Mildred Edna Hockstader. They were married May 13, 1937. According to a biography by Daniel Maul for IO BIO, "The idea to 'Americanize' it was further pushed by his marriage that year to Mildred Hockstader, who was born into one of the richest and most distinguished Jewish families in the US. She was supposed to marry someone from the highest strata of society. Her choice of the son of poor Eastern Jewish immigrants was greeted with great apprehension. It took years, until Morse joined the Truman administration (in 1947), for him to be accepted as part of the family." Mildred Edna Hockstader was the daughter of Aline Straus and Leonard A. Hockstader and the granddaughter of Oscar S. and Sarah Lavanburg Straus.

In 1937, David Morse resigned from government and returned to Newark, NJ, to become a partner in a law firm, Coult, Satz, Tomlinson and Morse, for which he had previously been a clerk. There he became one of the first impartial chairmen of the milk industry from the metropolitan area for New York.

When Pearl Harbor occurred, David enlisted in the military, went to basic training in Florida, and became a lieutenant in the Air Force. In the wake of the Allied invasion of Italy, David was deployed to North Africa and was shortly thereafter assigned to act as the Chief of the Manpower Division of the Military Government operation that was going into Sicily. He was given the responsibility for preparing the decrees for General Eisenhower which would abolish the Fascist

corporative syndical system. Some months after the invasion, David was ordered to England, where he went to Shrivenham, an artillery school outside of London. There he became a part of the unit at the Supreme Allied Headquarters, called SHAEF, (Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force). It was a joint U.S. - British military organization created in 1944 to carry out the war in Western Europe. Dwight D. Eisenhower, an officer in the United States Army, was appointed Supreme Allied Commander. David's job was to advise on the labor aspects of what would become the Military Government in the occupied areas. His time with the occupation forces in Europe strengthened his belief in international cooperation.

In 1944, after D-Day, David went to Paris, then to Versailles, and then to Frankfurt where he became the acting head of the Control Council of Germany. He dealt with the labor side as acting head, but General Frank McSherry took over the responsibilities in 1945. He was then a lieutenant colonel but was recalled to the U.S. soon after as he had received a request from the Secretary of War, Robert Patterson, to become General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Upon his return to the U.S., David received the Legion of Merit.



David A. Morse
September 1943

David recalled his work at the NLRB in an oral history interview with the Truman Library. "My work at the NLRB was extremely interesting. It was for me an innovative period. It was a postwar period. It was still the Wagner Act, before the Act had been amended to be called the Taft-Hartley law. I made a tremendous effort with the Chairman to follow out President Truman's wishes, which were rather clear, and that was to improve the National Labor Relations Board's services to labor and management. I recall that very vividly because it was in connection with that objective of the President that I called the

first conference that had ever been held by this agency or any other agency in Government of the attorneys that practiced in the labor field and before the NLRB. This was good because it gave the bar on the management side and on the labor side and the Government side, a chance to know each other, to exchange views with each other, become familiar with their respective problems and interests and the machinery and procedures of the National Labor Relations Board, and to try to weld that into some cohesive relationship that would have a positive impact on the public interest that we in the Government were attempting to serve; and that was, I think, a very good development. As a matter of fact, we received at the Board a great deal of positive support for that effort."

On July 1, 1946 President Harry S. Truman named David Morse Assistant Labor Secretary. David recalled, "Sometime in 1946, I was in my house on 16th Street in Washington and the phone rang at night and it was a fellow by the name of

Sylvester, who was the Chief of the Bureau for the *Newark Evening News* of New Jersey, in Washington. He said, "Dave, I just saw on the ticker that you've been appointed by the President of the United States to be the first Assistant Secretary of Labor for International Affairs. What have you got to say about it?" I said, "Well, the first thing I've got to say about it is that this is the first I've heard about it. I'm really quite surprised and pleased, of course, because I think it's something which we need."

Before David was appointed, the Labor Department had not been handling any international affairs. In 1947, David became the Under Secretary of Labor. He created the Trade Union Advisory Committee on International Affairs. During this time, David was able to bring together the head of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and the head of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) which unified the labor movement position on the international side. As the Under Secretary of Labor, he represented the U.S. government in the ILO Governing body and as a delegate to the International Labor Conference.

In 1948, at the age of 41, David A. Morse was elected Director General of the International Labor Organization (ILO). At this time, David had reservations about standing for an election. First, he had been asked to return to practice law in Newark by a friend of his, which he had accepted but not announced. He had also been asked to be the candidate for the U.S. Senate in the state of New Jersey. All of this happened at the same time that President Truman met with David and asked him to be the candidate for the ILO. Though he did get advice from several of his colleagues that he should stay and focus on national labor issues, David decided to honor the President's wishes and serve the ILO. "I talked to my wife and I remember saying, "Well, we won't do it for long. I think we might do it just to satisfy the President and see what it's like. Let's say two years." Well, we went, got elected -- and that was in San Francisco in June of 1948 -- and I served five terms. I had been there 22 years when I finally resigned to come back in May of 1970."

According to ILO's website, David recalled, "My task was to rebuild an organization which had run down during the Second World War. It had survived, which was a feat, but it had not yet found a firm footing in the post-war world." Under David, membership of the organization grew from 52 to 121 member countries while staff grew from about 600 to five times that number. The annual budget increased from \$4 million to \$60 million.

During his time at the ILO, David faced pressure from several countries, including the United States. He was able to resist the pressure and was never seen to show favoritism to specific member nations. Each term he was re-elected by a unanimous vote.

"Up to 1949...The ILO had been an international standards setting organization and advisory body... I was going to remold the entire program of the ILO so it would achieve a tradition of standard setting and operational programs to implement the standards. You know, vocational training, management training, occupational health, say, the training of people and the training of officials and administrators for social security systems; training, training, training in all areas that had to do with the labor and social side. Starting from that point on I began, and the ILO has become, and I think, is among the specialized agencies of the United Nations, a leader in that area."

In 1965, the International Institute for Labor Studies was established at its Geneva headquarters, and the International Training Centre in Turin was set up. Four years later, the World Employment Program was launched. Other programs that concentrated on protection were also launched, for example; special procedures were established for the promotion of human rights and especially for freedom of association.

The cold war and the process of decolonization, which brought in a large number of new States whose main preoccupation was poverty, caused strains in the structures of the Organization. However, under David's leadership, the ILO continued to carry out its essential work and emerged stronger than ever.



David A. Morse with the Nobel Peace Prize

In 1969, the Noble Committee wanted to award David Morse the Noble Peace Prize. He said he would only accept it on behalf of the ILO, not personally. The committee agreed and the prize was accepted by David Morse, who gave a lecture on the history and the goals of the ILO. In his speech, David said, "The ILO has not only served as a meeting ground for the nations of the world, as a "market place" for ideas and ideologies, and as an instrument for

adjusting conflicting interests. It has also put forward a set of goals, and programs for attaining these goals, with which the entire ILO membership can be identified. It has constantly sought to widen the areas of "common ground" in order to focus the attention of the nations of the world on those problems in which they have common interests and concerns, and to unite them in a major international effort to eliminate poverty and injustice wherever they exist."

He continued, "Much has been achieved over the past half-century. There has been a growing awareness and acceptance of man's economic, social, political, and civil rights; a far greater effort than ever before has been made to give each man a decent standard of living and a dignified place in society; men have become far readier to accept and live with people of different races, interests, and ideologies; and there has been growing recognition of the need for a truly worldwide solidarity in the fight against poverty and injustice, with the aim of building a more peaceful world. The ILO is proud to have played its part in these achievements. But as we know

and as you see from the horizon that I have sketched, the task is still far from finished... The ILO has never seen, and will never see, its role as that of a defender of the status quo; it will continue to seek to promote social evolution by peaceful means, to identify emerging social needs and problems and threats to social peace, and to stimulate action to deal with such problems."

After his resignation from the ILO in 1970. David formed a law partnership in New York City, Surrey & Morse, which was later merged into the law firm Jones, Day, Reavis & Pogue. He acted as a legal advisor to American countries and to the governments of Senegal, Ivory Coast, and Zaire. He chaired an Advisory Panel on Program Policy of the UNDP from 1970-1972 and was active in the Council of Foreign Relations, the World Rehabilitation Fund and the United Nations Association.

Mildred was devoted to David and fully supported his many philanthropic endeavors. The couple maintained apartments in Geneva, Switzerland and in New York City.

The Morses were passionate art collectors. Every inch of wall space in their New York City apartment was covered with the many paintings they had collected in New York and

abroad. What has remained from his years in Geneva was a substantial art collection, mostly of nineteenth and early-twentieth century French graphics and paintings, which David and his wife donated to the Zimmerli Art Museum in New Brunswick, NJ. They created the David A. and Mildred H. Morse Acquisition Fund at the Zimmerli Art Museum which is used to purchase mostly European Art.



Mildred H. and David A. Morse

In 1999 Mildred attended a ceremony in Geneva where a street was named Allée David Morse.



Mildred H. Morse
at the dedication of
Allée David Morse in Geneva
1999

After David's death, Mildred devoted her energies to overseeing a charitable trust in both their names and in arranging for the donation of David's business papers to the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library at Princeton University. She also created the David A. and Mildred H. Morse Charitable Trust Matching Gift which, among other things, funds the work of our able SHS assistant director, Catherine Smith.

David A. Morse died in 1990 following a heart attack. He and Mildred were married for 53 years. They had no children. Mildred Hockstader Morse died in New York City in 2005.

2023 List of Donors to SHS

The board of directors of the Straus Historical Society wishes to thank those who made contributions in 2023.
Your generosity made it possible to continue the important work of SHS

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Friends of Straus Park

by Al Berr

Photographs by Joe Arbo

Last year, the first day of autumn was Saturday, September 23rd, a day on which we had planned to hold our annual Art in the Park event. However, it was not a day to celebrate the season nor our event, because it rained. Our rain date was the next day. Rain date, indeed! It rained both days, giving us an unwelcome two consecutive years without the event. Annual, indeed!

Nonetheless, we continued to care for the blooms and blossoms in the Park under the able guidance of our gardener, Joe Arbo. We are also currently proud of our park benches which have been restored to their original look, thanks to neighbor Paul Froehlich who proposed to us that he would undertake the work if we would provide the cleaning materials, and we agreed. The benches date from the renewal of the Park in the mid-nineteen-nineties. Now that they have been cleaned and oiled, they look splendid and add to the Park's attraction.

We are sad to report the recent passing of Melvin Wulf, husband of Friends board member, Deirdre Wulf. Mel was a renowned lawyer, associated for many years with the ACLU and had argued cases for it before the Supreme Court. We are grateful that he was instrumental in shepherding FOSP from its inception as a nonprofit organization. He will be sorely missed by those who knew him.

Traditionally, we hold a commemorative event on the weekend closest to April 15, the date of the Titanic loss. We usually display photos and objects from our collection of Straus family and nautical memorabilia. The date looks to be April 13th. However, considering our recent luck with the weather, we suggest a check with our website to affirm that it will take place: [fospark.com or email us at fospark@gmail.com] for more information regarding our events, about the park and the people who work behind the scenes to arrange our events and to keep the park such a beautiful neighborhood oasis.



Scholastic's Groundbreaking Novel of Anne Frank Before the Diary

When We Flew Away: A Novel of Anne Frank Before the Diary by Alice Hoffman to be published internationally on September 17, 2024.

New York, NY – January 4, 2024: Scholastic, the world's largest publisher and distributor of children's books, announced today the publication of *When We Flew Away: A Novel of Anne Frank Before the Diary*—a novel exploring the little-known story of Anne Frank's life before she went into hiding—from bestselling, award-winning author Alice Hoffman and published in cooperation with the Anne Frank House.

In soaring prose, bestselling author Alice Hoffman brings Anne Frank to life on the page, drawing from her extensive research in Europe and the United States, to depict her experiences from the moment the Nazis invade the Netherlands until her family is forced into hiding in the annex of her father's office building at Prinsengracht 263 in Amsterdam. As state-sponsored discrimination turns ordinary people into monsters, the Jews in the Netherlands are caught in an inescapable swell of violence and hate, and Anne is shaped as both a young woman and as a writer who will change the world. *WHEN WE FLEW AWAY* features archival content provided by the Anne Frank House, as well as information about Otto Frank's desperate bids to get his family to safety in America gathered from correspondence between Otto Frank and Nathan Straus, Jr. from the Straus Historical Society's Archives.



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SHS Scholarship News

Thanks to your generosity, SHS will be awarding five scholarships in 2024 to graduate students pursuing preparation for careers in public service. The recipients are selected from the graduate public service and administration programs at Tufts, Columbia and American Universities. The winners will be announced in April. With your continued, and increased, support we hope to award even more scholarships in the future and to draw applicants as well from additional universities.

Social Media Call to Action

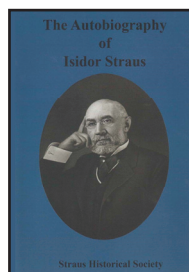
What would you like to see posted on our social media platforms? Do you want to see more about: family members, our collections, events, family history? Let us know what would be most meaningful and interesting to you as we continue to develop these new opportunities for communication.

Don't forget to Like, Follow and Subscribe!

Available from the Straus Historical Society, Inc.

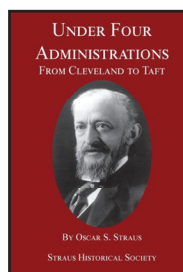
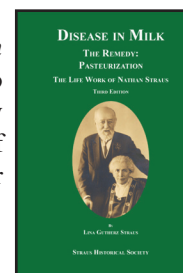
www.straushistoricalsociety.org/books

Strauses and the Arts, a collection of articles about family members who are artists, patrons of the arts, musicians, dancers, or involved in the arts in some other manner. Personal interviews with the artists reveal details about their creative process and their philosophy of the arts. Images of the artists' work are included at the end of each article. Available from the SHS website as an eBook (\$4.99) or paperback (\$25).



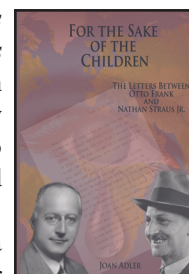
The Autobiography of Isidor Straus privately published by Sara Straus Hess in 1955, greatly expanded and updated by SHS in 2011, including the addition of many photographs and articles. Hard cover with dust jacket - \$30.00

Disease in Milk: The Remedy Pasteurization by Lina Gutherz Straus, a loving tribute to the life's work of Nathan Straus, greatly expanded in 2016 including the addition of many photographs and articles. Hard cover - \$40.00



Under Four Administrations: From Cleveland to Taft, the autobiography of Oscar S. Straus. This recently re-published autobiography includes a new supplement with articles about Oscar S. Straus from past issues of the Society's newsletters and new photographs. Hard cover with dust jacket - \$40.00

For the Sake of the Children: The Letters Between Otto Frank and Nathan Straus Jr. by Joan Adler published in 2013. When Otto Frank realized he had to get his family out of Europe in April, 1941, he wrote to his Heidelberg University roommate and lifelong friend Nathan Straus Jr. for help. This book describes their struggle to find a way to save the Frank family. Hard cover with dust jacket - \$30.00



Additional items are available for sale on the SHS website. www.straushistoricalsociety.org/publications. Contact Joan Adler by phone: 631-724-4487 or e-mail: info@straushistory.org if you have questions about ordering.