

JENNIE ARANOVITCH

PICTURES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Note: Newspaper clippings from Biddeford Journal acquired through newspaperarchives.com

Aranovitch Family Photos



Ida Osherowitz: My great-great-grandmother. She was the mother of Jennie (Osherowitz) Aranovitch. Her Hebrew name was Chaya Gittel. She lived part time with Jennie and her family and part time with her son Sam Osher.



Jennie and baby Eva: Taken in Russia in 1906 shortly before they embarked on their journey to America. Eva was born after her father Harry had already left for America. It is thought that they had this photo taken so that if she did not survive the journey, Harry would be able to see what she looked like. She did end up contracting scarlet fever on the boat but survived.



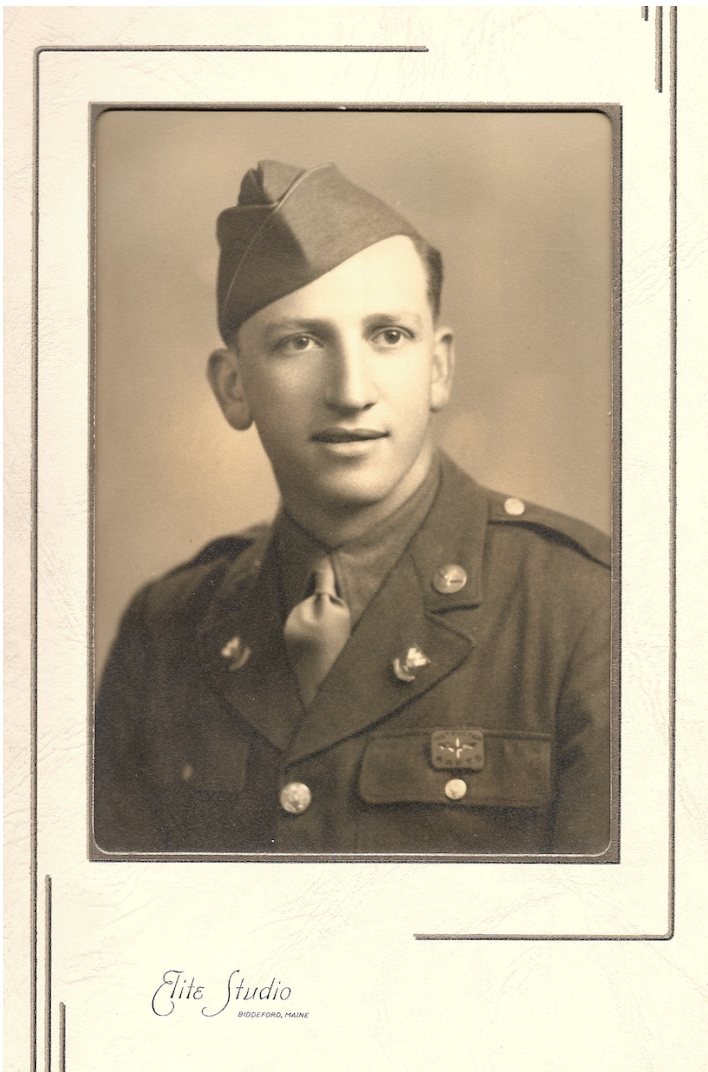
Aranovitch Family (circa 1921): Seated: Alvin Aranovitch, Ivan Aranovitch (grandfather), Harry Aranovitch (great-grandfather), Eva Aranovitch (great-aunt mentioned in interview). Standing: Lillie Aranovitch, Alec Aranovitch, Jennie Aranovitch (great-grandmother), Shirley Aranovitch



Baseball Team: City of Biddeford baseball champions, Emery Grammar School team (1927). Made up of boys in grades 6-9. Defeated teams from St. Joseph's, St. Mary's, and St. Andre's. My grandfather Ivan Aranovitch is standing in the second row, second from the right. In front of him are the two other Jewish kids on the team, Sam Cohen (first row second from right) and Arthur Stern (first row, far right)



Columbia Hotel Feb 29, 1929: The Aranovitch family owned and operated the hotel (located at the corner of Main, Water, and Hill streets) from 1926 until it burned down in 1973. The family lived on the first floor.

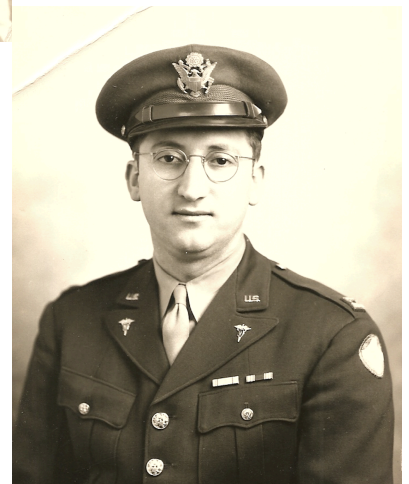


Ivan Aranovitch (grandfather): Sergeant U.S. Army Air Corps, WWII

Alvin Aaron: My great-uncle Dr. Alvin ("Arvie") Aaron who was a dentist in Biddeford and then Saco.



He also served in WWII as Captain, U.S. Army Dental Corps





Aranovitch Passover Seder (circa 1952): Seated: Rosemary Aaron, Bob Aaron, David Aranovitch, Leah Aranovitch (mother), Jennie Aranovitch (great-grandmother), Arlene Aranovitch. Standing: Alvin Aaron, Sophie Aaron, Estelle Aranovitch (grandmother), Ivan Aranovitch (grandfather), Harry Aranovitch (great-grandfather), Eva Aranovitch (great-aunt), Rose Aranovitch, Alec Aranovitch



Jennie and Harry Aranovitch 50th Wedding Anniversary: Seated L-R: Alec Aranovitch, Jennie Aranovitch, Harry Aranovitch, Eva Aranovitch Standing L-R: Ivan Aranovitch, Shirley (Aranovitch) Martinez, Lillie (Aranovitch) Schlessinger, Alvin Aaron

On Feb 4, 1958, an event was held in my great-grandmother Jennie's honor by the Biddeford-Saco chapter of Hadassah. Her favorite TV show was "This Is Your Life." To honor her as a "devoted wife, wonderful mother, and charitable woman," Hadassah created a This Is Your Life event for her at the synagogue in secret.



HONORED IN a "This Is Your Life" program by members of the local Hadassah chapter for her achievements as "devoted wife, wonderful mother and charitable woman." Tuesday evening was Mrs. Harry Aranovitch. The ceremonies covering her life in Russia and this country, took place in the Etz Chaim synagogue, Bacon street. She was presented a gold bracelet bearing a tree of life by her family and a tree in Israel was planted in her honor by Hadassah. Sharing in the honors of the evening were members of her family here and messages were read from Mrs. Irvin Schlesinger, New York, and Mrs. Tony Martine Hawaii, two daughters. Pictured are, from left to right, seated, Mr. and Mrs. Aranovitch; standing, daughter, Eva Aranovitch, and sons, Ivan, Dr. Alvin Aaron and Alex Aranovitch. Mrs. Ma Ruben, program chairman, served as moderator for the evening. The committee on arrangement for the ceremonies included Mrs. Maurice Ross Mrs. Jon Nathanson, Mrs. Joseph Tryman and Mrs. Alvin Aaron.

From Biddeford Journal: 12-15-1965

Deaths

Harry Aranovitch

Harry Aranovitch, 86, proprietor of the Columbia Hotel, Biddeford, died Monday in a Portland hospital following a long illness.

Born in Russia, he had been a resident of the Biddeford-Saco Old Orchard Beach area for the past 60 years. For many years he was engaged in the furniture business and had operated the Columbia Hotel for the past 40 years. A founder of Etz Chaim Synagogue, Biddeford, he served as its president for a term of 16 years and had taken a deep interest in all Jewish affairs of the community.

Surviving are his widow, Jennie Aranovitch; three daughters, Miss Eva Aranovitch, Biddeford, Mrs. Irving Schlesinger, Forest Hills, N.Y., and Mrs. Anthony Martinez, Brunswick; two sons, Dr. Alvin Aaron, Saco, and Ivan Aranovitch, Old Orchard Beach; nine grandchildren, five great-grandchildren and one sister, Mrs. Fannie Hozid, Dover, N.H.

Services were conducted yesterday by Rabbi Boris Gottlieb at Etz Chaim Synagogue, Biddeford. Burial took place in Mt. Sinai Cemetery, Portland. Memorial Week will be observed at the family home in Biddeford.

From Biddeford Journal: 12-2-1975

Jennie Aranovitch

Mrs. Jennie Aranovitch, 93, formerly of 127 Foss St., Biddeford, died Tuesday at a local nursing home.

She was born in Russia and came to Biddeford in 1906.

Mrs. Aranovitch and her late husband, Harry Aranovitch, owned and operated the former Columbia Hotel in Biddeford. She was a member of the Congregation Etz Chaim Synagogue, the Ladies Auxiliary and the Jewish Home for the Aged in Portland.

Surviving are two sons, Ivan Aranovitch of Old Orchard Beach and Dr. Alvin Aaron of Saco; three daughters, Miss Eva Aranovitch of Biddeford, Mrs. Lillie Schlesinger of New York and Mrs. Shirley Martinez of Bath.

Funeral services will be conducted Thursday at 11 a.m. at Etz Chaim Synagogue, Biddeford and interment will be in Mt. Sinai Cemetery, Portland.



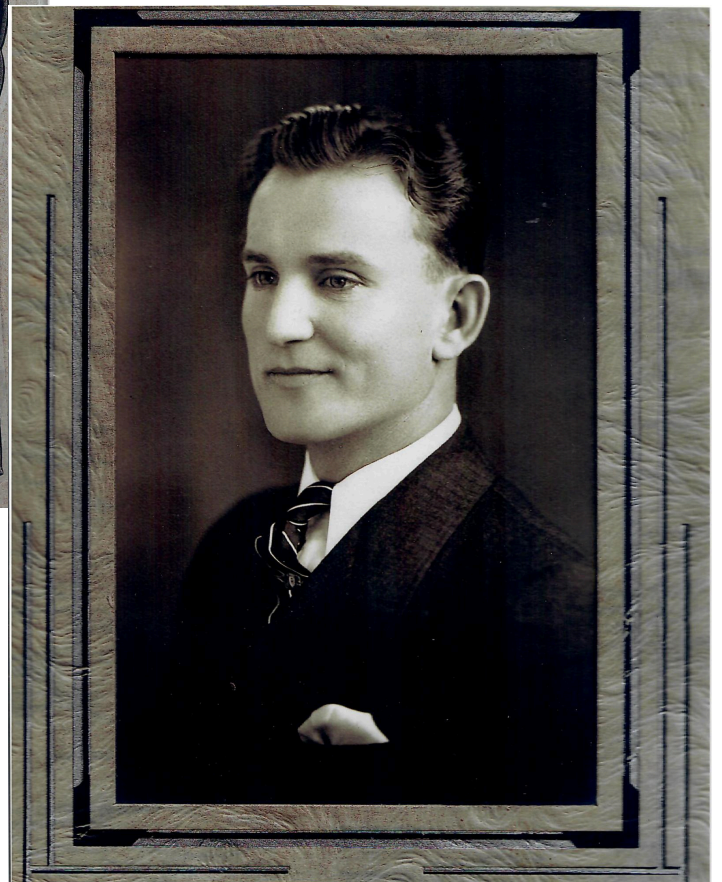
Torah Table Cover: This cloth covers the table upon which the Torah is placed during religious services at Congregation Etz Chaim. It reads, "Donated by Chava Ita daughter of Aharon Aranovitch" ("Donated by Eva Edith, daughter of Harry Aranovitch")

Oberzan Family



My paternal grandmother, Agnes Marie (O'Malley) Oberzan, as a young woman

My paternal grandfather, Rudolph (Rudy) Oberzan, as a young man



My paternal grandfather, Rudy Oberzan, with the five eldest kids in the family of six. Kids L-R: Joe, David, Tom, John, and Rudy

Leah Aranovitch (mother)

From Biddeford Journal: 11-28-1955



A TALENT SHOW was presented Sunday evening at St. Margaret church parish hall, Old Orchard Beach, sponsored by the Rev. J. J. Mullen council, Knights of Columbus auxiliary. Prize winners were, first row, left to right, Robert Cude, Gail Shorey, Gail Hodge, James Lambie and Paul Reed. Second row, Edward Thorne, Donald Shorey, Theresa Cook, and Leah Aranovitch.

From Biddeford Journal: 5-6-1959



LEADING the Old Orchard High School band on Saturday at the Western Maine Music Festival in Lewiston, will be this group of majorettes, complete in their western style outfits. Kneeling, left to right, Phyllis Lewis, assistant head majorette; Donna Gillis, head majorette, and Nancy Gibbs, mascot. Standing, left to right, Doris Quelletie, Jean Hays, Leah Aranovitch, Marlene Russell, Maureen Abearu, Joan Strickland, Patricia Smith, Patricia Dawd and Priscilla Hamilton.

Olive Rebekah Lodge Honors

Womens Group Elects Officers

The first Bas Mitzvah Ceremony for girls that was allowed at Congregation Etz Chaim, which was an Orthodox congregation at the time and had not previously allowed any sort of coming-of-age ceremony for females. The ceremony was not equal to a Bar Mitzvah, but it was a big step towards egalitarianism for the time. Five 13-year-old girls participated. My mother was one of them.

June 10-1956 Full Leased AP Wire Service ** PRICE FIVE CENTS.

FIRST BAS MITZVAH ceremonies were held Sunday at Congregation Etz Chaim synagogue. Girls who were confirmed were, left to right, Ellen S. Haas, Leah Aranovitch, Lynn Susan Carp, Linda Roberta Spill, Sharon Frances Sneider. Talks were given by the Bas Mitzvah girls including "The Faith of the Jew," Leah Aranovitch; "The Literature of the Jew," Sharon Frances Sneider; "The Festivals of the Jew," Linda Roberta Spill; "The History of the Jew," Ellen S. Haas; "The Declaration of Faith and Vow," Lynn Susan Carp. Hebrew songs sung by the group were "Ani Ma'mmin" and "V'tahair Lee-bainu." Rabbi Boris Gottlieb presented the charge to the girls while Mrs. Ruth Spill issued Bibles and Atty. Simon Spill awarded certificates to the girls. Gifts were presented by Morton Rosen. Greetings were given by Mr. Leo L. Simensky.



First Bas Mitzvah Ceremonies
CONGREGATION ETZ CHAIM
BACON STREET, BIDDEFORD, MAINE

JUNE 10, 1956 1st Day of Tamuz, 5716

Processional
Greetings Mr. Leo L. Simensky
Responsive Reading
Talks by the Bas Mitzvah Girls
The Faith of the Jew Leah Aranovitch
The Literature of the Jew Sharon Frances Sneider
The Festivals of the Jew Linda Roberta Spill
The History of the Jew Ellen S. Haas
The Declaration of Faith and Vow Lynn Susan Carp
Hebrew Songs Bas Mitzvah Girls

"Ani Ma'mmin"
"V'tahair Lee-bainu"

Charge to Bas Mitzvahs Rabbi Boris Gottlieb
Presentation of Bibles Mrs. Ruth Spill
Award of Certificates Mr. Simon Spill
Presentation of Gifts Mr. Morton Rosen
Benediction
Recessional

Bas Mitzvah Legend:
"Observe and Remember"—Bible

From Biddeford Journal: 5-6-1959

Biddeford-Saco Journal, Wednesday, April 26, 1961 3





Sharon Lord
Russell Bird
Leah Aranovitch

Beach Honor Students Have Kept Busy

Leah Aranovitch, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ivan **Aranovitch**, 44 Central Park avenue, Old Orchard Beach, whose activities include honor roll, four years; cheerleader, three years, serving as co-captain; member Senior class play cast; vice-president of the Science club; majorette, two years; Highway Safety council member four years; Athletic association, four years; participated in the TV classroom program, Concepts of Mathematics; member of the Bowling club, two years and member of the National Honor society. She also plans to attend college in the fall.



RECIPIENT of a B. A. degree from Colby College at Commencement exercises Sunday was Miss **Leah Aranovitch**, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ivan Aranovitch, 44 Central Park Ave., Old Orchard Beach. While at college Miss **Aranovitch** was an officer of Alpha Delta Pi Sorority and of the Modern Dance Club. She was a member of Hillel and the Colby Library Associates. An English literature major, she graduated from Old Orchard Beach High School.

From Biddeford Journal:
6-9-1965



RECIPIENT of a Master of Arts degree in English literature at the summer commencement exercises at the University of Maine Friday was Miss **Leah Aranovitch**, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ivan Aranovitch of Old Orchard Beach. Miss **Aranovitch**, who graduated from Colby College in Waterville in 1965 with a B. A. in English literature, was recently elected to Phi Kappa Phi, a national honor society. She plans to teach high school in New York City in the fall.

From Biddeford Journal: 8-25-66

Aranovitch pumps iron for health, and for life

By CASS SANFORD
Journal Tribune intern

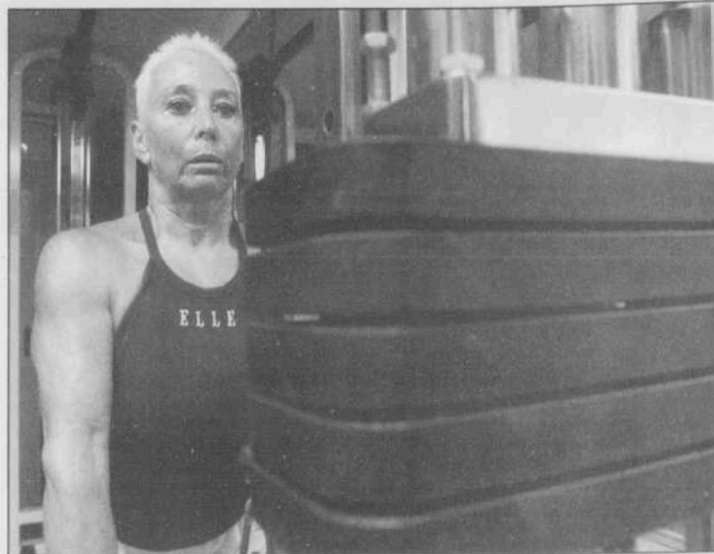
SACO — As a 44-year-old single mother, Leah Aranovitch knew she had found a new, unique passion when her son began lifting weights as a teen. It was then that she left her job as a real estate agent and entered the world of professional bodybuilding.

Despite her age and several serious illnesses, bodybuilding has kept Aranovitch physically and mentally strong. The now 64-year-old bodybuilder and personal trainer from Saco has had a successful bodybuilding career, winning state-wide titles against women in their 20's.

When Aranovitch went to her first competition as a spectator, she was blown away by the women bodybuilders.

"I never knew the female body could be so beautiful," said Aranovitch. "Right then I said, 'This is what I want for myself.'"

Three years later, after many grueling hours at the



BOB SANFORD/JOURNAL TRIBUNE

NEIGHBORS

Leah Aranovitch, 64, of Saco, pumps iron in her weight room on Monday.

"In my mind, bodybuilding is a perfect combination of athletics and aesthetics."

Leah Aranovitch,
Saco personal trainer

slowly began to gain back the muscle and spirit she had lost during her illness.

In 2005, she underwent what is for many people a serious medical operation that takes months to heal: Hip replacement. Just 6 days after her surgery though, Aranovitch was back in the gym, attributing her almost superhuman recovery to years of bodybuilding.

Now, Aranovitch spends most of her time helping other women appreciate the benefits of weight training in her gym, which she runs with her son out of her home on Summer Street in Saco. At "The Body Firm," she teaches four classes

said, "This is what I want for myself."

Three years later, after many grueling hours at the gym, Aranovitch returned to the same competition and won the show. Wins such as this, as well as her age, have made Aranovitch somewhat of a local celebrity.

But even though people may enjoy watching her compete, she says bodybuilding is not a very appealing sport to the general public.

"In my mind, bodybuilding is a perfect combination of athletics and aesthetics," she said, "but it's just not accepted as an athletic sport. People need to see violence and action for it to be considered a sport."

Although Aranovitch admits that the strict diet and training that bodybuilders endure to prepare for competitions is sometimes unhealthy, she is a strong advocate for the health benefits of bodybuilding and

NEIGHBORS

Leah Aranovitch, 64, of Saco, pumps iron in her weight room on Monday.

weight training.

Lecturing several times a year at Southern Maine Medical Center and Adult Education classes, Aranovitch informs men and women on the aging process, and the importance of staying strong and healthy.

"I don't tell anyone that bodybuilding will let you live forever," said Aranovitch about her lectures, "but what it will do is make the later years of your life quality years."

Aranovitch is a firm believer in these words because she suffered from a serious illness in 2000 that had her believing she would never lift another weight again. For several months, Aranovitch got progressively sicker and sicker, visiting several doctors who were unable to diagnose

her illness.

After becoming too sick to work, she was finally diagnosed with septic arthritis, which if not treated with antibiotics can become fatal. The months without proper diagnosis and treatment had left her body in tremendous pain. What had started as an infection in her knee had become septic, spreading to her blood, joints and bones.

Aranovitch's illness left her in bed and on IV antibiotics for three months. Not only did this illness destroy the tip-top physical shape that Aranovitch had been in, it was also emotionally damaging.

"I felt that I looked so awful (after being sick) that I didn't dare go back to the gym," said Aranovitch about her post-illness depression that left her

in bed.

After being told by several doctors that she would never lift heavy weights again, it seemed as if her bodybuilding career had come to an end. Her son, Rudolph "Gator" Oberzan, a former bodybuilder who survived a serious car crash, knew the pain his mother was going through and was determined to get her out of bed and working again.

Oberzan set to work immediately on something he and his mother had always dreamed of: Building "The Body Firm," a home gym where they could each train clients as well as work out themselves.

"Gator knew I couldn't go to the gym looking the way I did, so he brought the gym to me," said Aranovitch, who

out of her home on Summer Street in Saco. At "The Body Firm," she teaches four classes a day with about six women in each class. Most of the women who train with Aranovitch have one thing in common: They all suffer from Osteoporosis.

Many of Aranovitch's clients have been referred to her by doctors and with intensive weight training, she has been able to help them reduce and even reverse osteoporosis.

"Besides the obvious health benefits, it's very therapeutic," said Aranovitch. "It empowers women more than anything I've ever encountered."

Aranovitch is a living example of these therapeutic benefits that come with a passion for bodybuilding.

"I wish those doctors who told me I would never lift again could see me now," said Aranovitch, smiling.

The Body Firm

Leah Aranovitch,
BA, MA

American Council
on Exercise

Certified Personal Trainer
International Weightlifting
Association

Certified Weight Trainer



Jennie Aranovitch pictures



Jennie (6 months) and her mom,
Leah Aranovitch

Jennie (age 12) with her father, Rudy
Oberzan II





Jennie and son, Josiah



Jennie and daughter, Eva

Four generations:

Eva, Estelle (grandmother), Leah (mother) and Jennie



Jennie with Josiah and Eva





Biddeford WinterFest

January 27 · 🌐



Welcome François, our new Winterfest Mascot!! Be sure to watch out for François at Winterfest and introduce yourself.

François was created by Biddeford HS student Eva Aranovitch last year, in response to our call for a WinterFest Mascot.

François is a white tiger who likes to celebrate Biddeford's diverse and complex heritage. He wears clothes made at the mills because he likes showing his Biddeford pride and wants to show Biddeford's history. François spends his time at Winterfest spreading joy to all who join in the outdoor fun!



Screenshot

From Winterfest 2023 Facebook page

Museum Exhibit



Jennie the Curator:
Jennie setting up the
museum exhibit



Etz Chaim Open House:

Congregation Etz Chaim held an open house to celebrate the opening of the museum that I curated at the Saco Museum in 2006, "A Century of Jewish Life in Biddeford-Saco." Pictured L-R:

Jennie Aranovitch,
Arnold Shapiro
(then president
of the

congregation), Governor John Baldacci, and Cynthia Kurtz (board member of synagogue)