

A N C E S T O R S

November 20, 1991

Ms. Miriam Weiner, C.G.
136 Sandpiper Key
Seacaucus, N.J. 07094
(201) 864-9222 fax

Dear Miriam:

It was delightful to speak with you on the phone. I am so glad that your recent trip to Eastern Europe was successful. I wish you the best on your next flight. What you are working on is so fascinating!

I also want to thank you on behalf of the ANCESTORS project for agreeing to participate on our advisory board. Your knowledge of Jewish genealogy and your current work in the archives of the Soviet Union and Poland make you an invaluable member of our team.

Your presentation and comments during our ANCESTORS retreat at Alex Haley's Farm were insightful and most helpful. I know the project will benefit from your continued involvement.

In relation to your participation on the ANCESTORS Board we would like to receive a Biographical paragraph for inclusion in our project proposal. We are also planning to create new stationary listing all the names and titles of our advisory members. Please let us know how you prefer to be referenced.

You can contact ANCESTORS' producer, Tom Lefler, with all of this information:

Tom Lefler
Dept. of Theatre and Film
D-581 HFAC
BYU
Provo, UT 84602
(801) 378-3213 phone number
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Thanks again for your help. I look forward to hearing all about your next trip to Russia.

Sincerely,



BaBette Davidson
Project Director

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KBYU-TV Provo, Utah

A Family History Series for PBS

Issue 2 August 1992

ACADEMY AWARD-WINNER TO DIRECT "ANCESTORS"

An Academy Award-winning director is teaming-up with KBYU-TV to produce "Ancestors," a series for PBS on family history research.

Aviva Slesin, of New York, will direct the 13-part series for KBYU.



Ms. Slesin won an Academy Award for Best Feature Documentary for her 1988 film "The Ten Year Lunch: The Wit and Legend of the Algonquin Round Table."

"Ancestors is an exciting project which everyone can relate to," said Ms. Slesin. "Whether you are looking for roots, identity, connections, or your biological parents, everyone has a unique family history."

"Ancestors," she continued, "is about good family stories and how to get at them."

"We are excited to have Ms. Slesin join us on this series," said Station Manager Mel Rogers. "She brings a great deal of experience and knowledge with her to the project."

Ms. Slesin began her career as a freelance film editor. Then in 1980 she made the transition to Independent Producer/Director beginning with nine comedy shorts for the original "Saturday Night Live" as well as several short films for Sesame Street.

Subsequently, she directed "Directed by William Wyler," a feature documentary about the late Hollywood director. In 1990 she produced and directed "Stood Up," An AfterSchool Special which aired on ABC.

"Ancestors" will be America's first in-depth look at the significance of searching for family roots and is scheduled to air in fall of 1993.

FEATURED STORY

A family history story submitted by the public.

When Wanda Craaybeek, of Boonville, North Carolina, found out that her ancestors were slave owners, she was unprepared and horrified. Her family had never discussed that aspect of their history.

"I was devastated to learn part of my family owned slaves. It was wrong. I wanted to know all I could and learn if I was related to people I was never told about.

"In my 23 years of researching my family history, the most touching of many experiences was when I discovered and met Roxie, the great granddaughter of Hanna, a slave woman my family once owned. It was the most joyous reunion I have ever been fortunate enough to be part of, for we brought our families together after 125 years of segregation.

"Amidst my searching and following Hannah's family, I found a part of my family I never knew, nor did Roxie. We were able to fulfill the prayers of her grandparents, who as slaves secretly prayed in the woods, on my ancestors' plantation, for the day when black and white could live together in peace, with love and friendship in their hearts. She and I were able to make the prayers of the past, realities of the present.

"From all the whole ugly, devastating era of slavery and through all the quiet decades that followed between our families, two women have found something beautiful. We are learning about each other and our families. Our histories may be quite different, but we share our heritage."

MIRIAM WEINER, ADVISORY BOARD



Miriam Weiner first became interested in her family history by accident.

"While meeting with previously unknown cousins in New York," said Weiner, "I began to sketch out a family tree as a way to remember who everyone was." Now, 25 years

later, she is an award-winning genealogist.

Weiner, of New Jersey, is the granddaughter of Jewish immigrants from the Ukraine and had dreamed of meeting relatives who stayed in the Ukraine.

In 1991 her dream became a reality. She was able to travel to the Ukraine and visit three cities where she met some 50 lost relatives for the first time. She also visited the local archives in Priluki to search for records on her family.

According to Weiner, this was the first time an American Jew had

been allowed this kind of access to these Soviet archives.

While in the Ukraine Weiner obtained a copy of the birth record of her grandmother, Miriam Odnopozov Rabkin, for whom she was named. This had a great impact on her. Although they never met she feels a special bond with her grandmother who was killed by the Ku Klux Klan in 1924 after immigrating to the United States.

"Many people believe that all the Jewish records were destroyed and there's nothing left to see. This is not the case," Weiner says.

Many records were destroyed during World War II, but there are many that were unharmed. The biggest problem created by WWII is that many records were moved without documentation of where they were sent. Now, according to Weiner, "many of the records have become lost and untraceable."

There is an urgency in documenting Jewish heritage today. Very few immigrants and holocaust survivors are left to tell their stories today. Family histories must be recorded before these people pass away taking their stories with them.

CONCEPT MEETING

Writers and genealogists were brought to Provo, Utah from around the United States for a two-day concept meeting in July. The meeting helped to further define the content of the 13 "Ancestors" episodes.

"The combination of writers, genealogists, producers and directors made this meeting a success," said Executive Producer Sterling VanWagenen. "We are now at the point where we can begin to write treatments."

Guests in attendance were: Myra Gormley, Feature Writer for the *LA Times*, and on-line genealogy

expert for Prodigy; Sandra Luebking, Lecturer/Author, faculty member at Stamford University, Ala., and Editor of Forum Magazine; Aviva Slesin, television and film director, Academy Award for "The Ten Year Lunch"; Ray Wright, Brigham Young University Professor; Tom Daniels, LDS Family History Library, Public Relations Manager; Jayare Roberts, Family History Library, Ancestral File Growth Coordinator; Ray Matthews, Family History Library, Senior Reference Consultant; and Ken Nelson, Family History Library, Senior Reference Consultant.

ANCESTORS

Executive Producer.....	Sterling VanWagenen
Director.....	Aviva Slesin
Producer.....	Tom Lefler
Producer.....	Scott Swofford
Associate Producer.....	Tori Bahoravitch
Assistant to Producers.....	Stephanie Ririe
Director of Development.....	Mel Gee
Development Researcher.....	Mark Phillips
Public Relations Coordinator.....	Jason Memmott
Outreach Coordinator.....	Diana Simmons
Designer.....	Amy Floyd
Designer.....	Mark Wadsworth

For more information or to submit stories write to:

ANCESTORS
KBYU-TV C-302 HFAC
PROVO, UTAH 84602

or call Jason Memmott or Tori Bahoravitch
(801) 378-0050

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