

A Message from the President - JHSFC Mourns the Passing of Lester Sharlach, z”l



Dear Friends,

The Jewish Historical Society of Fairfield County mourns the passing of Lester Sharlach, a founder and second president of The Stamford Jewish Historical Society, now known as The Jewish Historical Society of Fairfield County (JHSFC). Lester Sharlach was a true visionary and a real mensch.

Elaine and Lester recently celebrated their 69th wedding anniversary with their family, socially distanced in their garage. After a brief illness, he passed away, one week before his 91st birthday. A private graveside burial was held by the family and plans will be announced for a memorial service at a later date. He is survived by his wife, Elaine, his sons Jeffrey and Brian Sharlach, his daughter Debra Sharlach Rosner, three grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, Harry (who does not think he is a dog), and a community of friends and admirers.

Lester Sharlach was one of the “magnificent seven” founders of The Jewish Historical Society, incorporated in 1984. That small band of people in Stamford has grown to cover all of Fairfield County with over 300 members. Over the past 36 years, Lester served as mover, all-around handyman, and second president of the organization. In 2017, Lester Sharlach was honored with JHSFC’s highest award, the Pioneer Heritage Award in recognition of his pioneering, tireless, and continuous work for the Society. When you think of exhibits, think of Lester Sharlach! When you think of oral histories, think of Lester Sharlach! When you think of “Remembering the Family Store,” think of Lester Sharlach!

For the past several years, Lester had been the driving force behind the creation of a JHSFC presentation about local Stamford merchants. First a slideshow, “Remembering the Family Store” is being made into a documentary film that is scheduled for completion later this year. Only a few weeks ago, Lester Sharlach realized that the African American community was not represented in the film. So he made it happen. The additional interview was done this week! JHSFC dedicates the documentary and its premier event (Lester’s dream), to this local, family store owner, *our Lester*.

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Do you know that Lester Sharlach...

- was born and lived his entire life in Stamford
- operated Roven's Curtain Shops in Stamford, Greenwich, Wilton, and Westport
- was one of the co-founders of Liberty National Bank (1972)
- had a large postcard collection, which he presented as a slideshow and lecture, to many local groups
- was a co-founder, along with his wife Elaine, of the Southwestern Connecticut Chapter of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)
- was honored, along with Elaine, by the Triangle Community Center in Norwalk, in 2017 for "35 years of making Fairfield County a better place for the LGBT community"
- accompanied Harry, their certified therapy dog, weekly to the Jewish Home for the Elderly and Waveny Center (Elaine was also part of the team)
- lived in the Turn of River area of Stamford on a tract that was formerly Geriak's Dairy Farm, the place they celebrated Elaine's *Sweet 16* together in 1948

Lester Sharlach was a man for all seasons, filled with a lifetime of stories!

Lester died just a few hours before the JHSFC program "Yiddish and Music: Ravishing, Reverent and Magical" with composer Alex Weiser. Elissa Kaplan JHSFC President presented this heartfelt tribute when introducing the program.



Click to view JHSFC Tribute to Lester Sharlach, z"l

JHSFC Program, July 16, 2020

<https://youtu.be/MD9mREGoTFo>