



## ISAK FEDERMAN

March 14, 1922 - September 9, 2016

Isak Federman came to Kansas City in 1946, the only member of his family to have survived the Holocaust. He was a successful businessman, a loving parent, and a generous supporter of the Kansas City Jewish community. He was a character, a dramatic and humorous storyteller who could take over a room and make friends instantly. He died on September 9, 2016, at the age of 94.

Isak was born on March 14, 1922, in Wolbrom, Poland, the third child of Boruch and Ruchla Biala Federman. His father died before Isak was a year old, and his mother eventually remarried Herschel Kalisz with whom she had a fourth child. Encouraged by his mother and stepfather, he left home at the age of thirteen to study at a Yeshiva (a school for Jewish boys), but returned home in the summer of 1939 amid rumors of a German invasion. After his village was occupied he was picked up on the street by the German SS in the fall of 1939, and ordered to help build a forced labor camp nearby. Eventually, he was forced to do slave labor in eighteen camps, including Rzeszow, Plaszow, Flossenbergl, and Sachsenhausen. He built roads and barracks, worked in salt mines, and “pretended” to operate a lathe machine. He was also forced to clean up rubble from the German invasion of Russia, and later, he and other prisoners were marched into Berlin during bombing raids, and forced to clear rubble there as well. In 1944, he was shot in the head and wrist while escaping from the concentration camp at Bergen Belsen, near Hamburg, and survived in the forest for several days before being captured. He was liberated by the British Army on May 3, 1945, weighing about 80 pounds, and sick with typhus.

After Isak had spent about six weeks in an army field hospital, he went back to Bergen Belsen, where a displaced persons camp had been established, in hopes of finding information about his family. He found no surviving family members, but he met Anna (Chana) Warshawski, who remained lovingly devoted to him for the rest of his life, as he was to her. In December 1945, he heard a radio translation of a speech in which President Truman announced that 100,000 displaced persons would be allowed to immigrate to the United States. He encouraged Anna and her surviving family members to apply. In June 1946, they traveled to New York under the sponsorship of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. When they arrived, the Joint representative suggested they move

to Kansas City. In Yiddish, Isak asked him if Kansas City was in America; upon being told that it was, he said that they would go. That September, he and Anna, now Ann, were married, the first survivors to do so in the Kansas City area. Five hundred “strangers” attended their wedding, and they were embraced by the Jewish community in Kansas City. They were immediately invited to join Kerem Israel Synagogue, now Kehilath Israel. Over the years, Isak and Ann made a number of lifelong friends with whom they shared a commitment to Kehilath Israel. Isak served the synagogue in a number of ways, including as its President. He was actively involved in B’nai Brith and Jewish Federation of Kansas City, and was both a Mason and a Shriner. While he referred to himself as a “newcomer” (“green-ah” in Yiddish) he was bold and self-confident, a salesman who was hard to resist, genuinely liked by his customers, and a hard worker. In 1948, while still learning the English language, he co-founded Superior Upholstered Furniture Company. He sold that company in 1976 and after being retired “for a weekend” became restless and started K.C. Textile Company, which he eventually sold in 1996. While he would point out that his secular education stopped after seven grades, he was an astute businessman, a dealmaker whose handshake was his bond. Indeed, he was a founding director of Lenexa National Bank, and was the Board Chair who led the negotiation of its sale to Commerce Bank.

In 1993, along with his good friend Jack Mandelbaum, he co-founded the Midwest Center for Holocaust Education, which teaches the history of the Holocaust as a means to counter indifference, intolerance and genocide. Isak had always been reluctant to discuss his wartime experiences; despite that, he decided to share those experiences to help raise funds for MCHE. None of his friends were spared his pitch, as he and Jack worked to help build and finance an organization that continues to serve the entire community. He loved reading about and discussing current events and history, attending sporting events, and traveling with Ann. He was a patriot, proud to be a citizen of the United States and grateful to Kansas City for welcoming him when he had no home to return to.

In addition to his beloved wife Ann, he is survived by three children, Rachel Altman (Avrom), Arthur Federman (Diane), and Lorie Federman, by five grandchildren (Rebekah Altman, Audrey Federman, Carla Federman, Elijah Knight, and Maya Knight), and by seven great grandchildren. The family thanks the staff of Suites 2 and 3 at Village Shalom and that of Kansas City Hospice for their devoted care of Isak during the last years of his life. Special thanks to Sonia Warshawski for her love and support of Ann.

Funeral services will be held at 2:00pm Sunday, September 11, 2016 at Louis Memorial Chapel, 6830 Troost Ave, Kansas City, MO with burial following at Kehilath Israel Blue Ridge Cemetery. The family requests no flowers, and suggests contributions to the Midwest Center for Holocaust Education ([mchekc.org](http://mchekc.org)), 5801 W. 115th Street, Suite 106, Overland Park, Kansas 66211, Kehilath Israel Synagogue ([kisyn.org](http://kisyn.org)), 10501 Conser, Overland Park, Kansas 66212, or Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City

(jewishkc.org), 5801 W. 115th Street, Suite 201, Overland Park, Kansas 66211.

# Events

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**SEP** **Funeral** 02:00PM

**11**

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The Louis Memorial Chapel

6830 Troost Ave, Kansas City, MO, US, 64131

**SEP** **Shiva** 07:00PM

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Village Shalom

5500 W. 123rd St., Overland Park, KS 66209, KS, US

**SEP** **Shiva** 06:00PM

**12**

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Village Shalom

5500 W. 123rd St., Overland Park, KS 66209, KS, US

**SEP** **Shiva** 06:00PM

**13**

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Village Shalom

5500 W. 123rd St., Overland Park, KS, US

**SEP** **Shiva** 06:00PM

**14**

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Village Shalom

5500 W. 123rd St., Overland Park, KS, US

**SEP** **Shiva** 06:00PM

**15**

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Village Shalom

5500 W. 123rd St., Overland Park, KS 66209, KS, US

# Comments

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“ Dearest Mrs. F., Rachel, Art, Laurie and extended family,

I was saddened to learn of Mr. Federman's passing. I fondly recall childhood memories filled with your husband/father and your family. What an amazing life story he had, and I now feel doubly and triply honored to have had him as part of my personal history.

May the Omnipresent comfort you among the rest of the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem--which includes all of us.

With sincere condolences,  
Terry/Esther Liba (Greenberg) Krause & Family

**Terry Krause** - September 15, 2016 at 06:34 AM

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“ Diane, Art and family, We send our deepest sympathy and love to you.  
Ester and Chuck Udell

**Ester Udell** - September 12, 2016 at 02:27 PM

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“ The Family of Isak Federman:

When I read his obituary in the Kansas City Star yesterday I wished I could have known him. What a man - what a life.

John D. Yeazel

**John D. Yeazel** - September 12, 2016 at 10:15 AM

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“ Dear Art, Diane, Ann and Family,  
What a sweet wonderful man your father was. He always had a smile on his face, which we saw often when visiting our father Jay. The story told in his obituary was an amazing story that really touched us. He was quite a special man. We know he will be dearly missed by the many lives he touched. May his memory be a blessing. Our thoughts are with you.

Amy & Hal Pollack



Amy Pollack - September 12, 2016 at 12:59 AM

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“ Arthur, Diane and family. My thoughts and prayers are with you . May he rest in peace.

Michael S. Myer

michael myer - September 11, 2016 at 11:00 PM

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“ Dear Ann and family,

Our sincere condolences.

Isak was a genius in the furniture business, one of my dads favorite clients. He was a gentleman, an icon to the community and a loving husband.

Isak will be missed by all.

Larry and Randi Haith - September 11, 2016 at 03:31 PM

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“ Our sincere condolences to the family. Isak was a genius in the furniture business, a loving sweet person, an icon in the city and will be missed by community. A truly beautiful person.



**Larry Haith** - September 11, 2016 at 03:24 PM

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“ I will miss Isak's sweet smile in Suite 3. I hope to continue to see Ann from time to time, and want her to know how enriched my life is for having known them this short time. Peace to you all.  
Susan Tannewitz-Karnes

**susan Tannewitz-Karnes** - September 11, 2016 at 12:42 PM

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“ Thoughts and prayers to all of you during this difficult time. I always enjoyed my visits with Anne and Isaac at Village Shalom. Lots of love Louise Chase

**louise chase** - September 11, 2016 at 12:09 PM

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“ What an incredible life story of grit and grace. Condolences to Judge Federman and his family. Karen Maxcy

**K Maxcy** - September 11, 2016 at 11:27 AM

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“ B"H

Dearest Channa, Shelly, Avrom, Art, Diane, Lorie, and family,  
Isak was truly "A Mighty Man of Valor." May his precious Neshama be comforted and bound up in the bond of eternal life.

Blessings to your entire family.

Mark and Ellie Mandelbaum



Mark and Ellie Mandelbaum - September 11, 2016 at 10:02 AM

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“ To our dear, dear Ann and all the Federman family. Our lives have been enriched by not only knowing sweet Isak, but by being a member of the Synagogue, Kehilath Israel, that he enriched with his care and far-sightedness. His impact in the Jewish community will be felt for generations. We will miss him greatly.

Felicia and Seymour Weiner - September 10, 2016 at 10:50 PM

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“ Deepest sympathy on your loss

Carol Miller - September 10, 2016 at 09:56 PM

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“ Dearest Ann and family.

Anyone that knew Isak feels your sense of loss. His beautiful smile and kind heart will live on in all of us. May his memory be for a blessing.

All my love,  
Marlene

Marlene Krakow - September 10, 2016 at 09:52 PM

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“ Dear Ann and family. I truly treasure my friendship with Isak - starting when he was president of KI and I helped him write his speeches to the Congregation for the high holy days so they would be correct English. It was all his ideas, I was just the copy editor. He more than repaid me, by being the first volunteer as a blood donor for me prior to my open heart surgery in 1973. The Federmans were wonderful friends and exemplary models on how to be Great Americans and Great members of the Jewish Faith. Isak's memory will be a brilliant beacon for all to follow.

**Marian Shear** - September 10, 2016 at 09:52 PM

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“ God bless you Sir. You were a fine man.

**Tom Fowler** - September 10, 2016 at 08:44 PM

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“ Isak will always be remembered for his service to the Jewish community. Especially to Kehilath Israel. May his memory be for a blessing.

**Leslee and Marc Price** - September 10, 2016 at 04:27 PM

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“ My father, Alex Wacknov was President of Kerem Israel Synagogue and helped to welcome Isak and Ann to Kerem Israel Membership and introduction to the general community.

Both Isak and Ann were delightful people to become acquainted with and know. Isak was always a gentleman, with a most generous heart and spirit. Truly a Mensch in every respect. May he rest in peace.

Paul Wacknov

**Paul Wacknov** - September 10, 2016 at 04:12 PM

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“ My dear Ann, Art, Rachel and Lorie,  
Stan and I wish to express our condolences to you and your family. Isak was a fine gentleman to everyone he came in contact with. He will be sadly missed but remember he will always be in your hearts  
Marlene and Stan Katz

marlene Katz - September 10, 2016 at 04:07 PM

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“ A memory of Isak that I shared w/ him several times. When I returned from the Air Force in the early 1950's, I immediately became active in the KC JEWISH FEDERATION. I was assigned solicitation cards of several persons that I didn't know.

At that time, most of the cards called for personal calls. I tracked down Isak at a mfg plant where he was working at about 22nd & Holmes, or 22nd & Charlotte. My memory of the plant itself is now vague, but I specifically remember that it was on the 2nd floor, and he was "spreading" goods, or maybe "cutting" goods at the time I called on him. He explained that he would be glad to make a contribution, and he signed the pledge card that had his name on it. It may have been the very 1st Federation contribution that he ever made.

While my memory has it that it was a somewhat modest pledge, it started off a history of community "giving" for which Isak & Ann were well-known . I was well-aware at the time that he was a recent "New American", or as he would have said in Yiddish, that he was a "green-ah", so I thought how v ery big of him to listen to my Federation Solicitation, and to make a pledge right there on the spot.

(can't get this cockamamie comptr. to do what it is supposed to do. Plz forgive me. Believe me, when a comptr. is involved, I am truly a "green-ah")

From that little encounter evolved a good friendship that lasted until the last time I saw him at an event some place in this Jewish Community. I am very grateful for having that opportunity, and for Ha-Shem to have directed him to KC, where he & Ann & the Federman progeny to have lived & prospered. Ha-makom Y'neichem Etchem Btoch Sh'ar Aveilei Tzion V'Yerushalayim!  
Kol Tuv, from M J Rosenbloom (aka Maynard)

Mary Abbey-Rector - September 10, 2016 at 04:01 PM

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“ My thoughts and prayers are with all of you now. How fun it was growing up next door to you in Prairie Village. Isak was always so kind. He lit up a room when he smiled. We kept in touch when our family moved to Overland Park and the Federman's moved off Mission Road. I loved spending time there with them and, of course, Shelly, Art and Lorie. I didn't see them much after I moved to California but they were always in my thoughts. They were a big part of my life growing up in Kansas City. Isak will remain with us in spirit. Every time I think of him I smile.

My love to all,  
Cinde Studna Smothermon

Cinde Studna Smothermon - September 10, 2016 at 03:54 PM

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“ So sorry to hear of your loss. May his memory be a blessing for Ann, Shelly, Arthur ,Lorie, and their families.

Frieda Soble - September 10, 2016 at 03:31 PM

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“ Ann, Art, Diane and the entire Federman family--we extend our deep sadness at Isak's passing. I will never forget his sharing his personal journey during the Holocaust with me and allowing me to write about it. He changed me forever--and I am so grateful. May his memory be a blessing.  
Ruth Baum Bigus & Larry Bigus



Ruth Baum Bigus - September 10, 2016 at 02:17 PM

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“ Barbara & Skip Rein lit a candle in memory of ISAK FEDERMAN



**Barbara & Skip Rein** - September 10, 2016 at 12:45 PM

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“ I don't think I have ever enjoyed reading a obituary as much as this one! Isak was in my Mom's unit ar Village Shalom and I got to know him a little bit. Sorry for your loss, he was quit a man.

**Karyn Erlich Weiner** - September 10, 2016 at 12:16 PM