

South Africa experience built the foundation for Julius Shattil's life in the United States

By Siegfried Shattil

Julius Shattil was the 13th of 14 children with **Anne** being the 14th. He was born sometime during the middle of planting season, so he took June 15, 1887 as his birthdate.

When he was 14 years old, he left his Lithuanian home and the grinding mill that his father ran for the farmer's grain. He followed his brothers to the new frontier of Africa.

He made his way to a port in Spain. Not having any money, he became a stow away on a freighter loaded with crates of oranges destined for South Africa. He and the other stow aways ate the oranges during the trip and when empty, threw the crates into the ocean.

Upon arrival in Cape Town, he learned that the Boer War was in progress--but he was still able to enter the country. He was finally able to find one of his brothers who was surprised to see him. He did not welcome him so Julius turned on his heels and walked away.

He eventually located two other brothers and went into business operating a gold mine in partnership with them. Since the Boer War was on, he had to join the army, was put into uniform, but never had to serve in the war.

Julius used to say that his oldest brother (whom he never knew because of the age difference) was a pioneer with Cecil Rhodes.

After a few years he had enough of the gold mine and left to work for a man named Solomon who ran a general store concession in another gold mine.

After learning the business, and saving his money, he opened his own general store in another gold mine. Since these were concessions and only one store was permitted at a mine, the residents had no choice as to where they could purchase food, supplies, clothing, liquor, etc. All sales were made "on account." At the end of each month when the miners were paid, they in turn paid off their indebtedness at the general



Anne with brother Julius behind the counter in the Shattil grocery store in 1910.

store. All accounts were memorized as no written records were kept and few disputes ever arose.

As time went by, Julius knew he had enough money to last him for many years. He had enough of this isolation. He sold his concession store and decided to come to the United States.

One of his customers paid off his final debt with a check that bounced. Just before Julius was ready to leave the country, he went to his customer's Cape Town bank to cash the bounced check. Still there were insufficient funds in the account to cover it. So he went to a dentist to have his teeth fixed and then returned to the bank to try to cash the check again.

Again, he was told there were insufficient funds to cover it. So Julius asked if the account was short one pound. He was told "no." Then he asked if the account was two pounds short. Again, the answer was "no." He then asked if the account was three pounds short and was told "yes." At this point, Julius made a three pound deposit into that bank account and after the bank recorded the deposit, he again presented the check for payment. The bank cashed it and he then left the country.

Julius' ship came to New York City

and after clearing immigration he headed west and ended in Covert, Michigan where he purchased a fruit farm.

He sent money for his younger sister, Anne, as well as other relatives and friends and they all migrated to the United States and to the Covert, Michigan fruit farm. They all worked the farm and had a bumper crop.

After buying crates and boxes they shipped the entire crop to a commission house in Chicago which handled the shipment and sale. After the entire crop had been sold, Julius was surprised to receive a bill from the commission house for shipping charges plus the shortage in the sale of the crop to cover the advances made.

After working all year and not deriving enough to break even, he decided that farming was not for him. He immediately sold the farm back to the people he had bought it from. He still had thousands of dollars from his years in Africa so he decided to find something else to do.

He went to Virginia, Minnesota to visit his **Milavetz** cousin to get some advice. He remained a short time and then took a train to Chicago.

He checked into a hotel and walked around town looking at stores, becoming

ing familiar with the city and how business was conducted in the "big city."

Money, he had plenty of, which he deposited in a bank. He then took a job, not to earn a living, but to see how business was transacted. He was paid \$3 a week but his living expenses were \$7 a week. At that rate, he knew that he had to learn fast and get into some line of business.

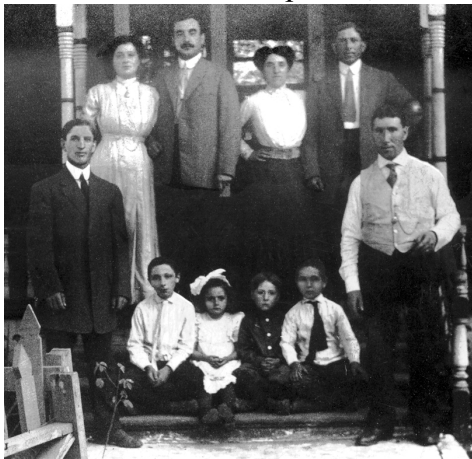
His brother **Isadore** was owner of a grocery store but it was failing. He took over the store and Isadore left for Decatur, Illinois where he opened another grocery store. Julius rented a three bedroom apartment for himself and Anne at 4715 St. Lawrence Ave., which was one block from the store. Later, he sold this store and opened a grocery and market a block away.

Anne worked in the store and finally she started hounding Julius to get married. He knew no women in Chicago and never went out on a date. But as luck would have it, when Anne was growing up, her parents decided to send her to a relative in Memel, Germany (now Klaipeda, Lithuania) for her education. She attended school with **Ann Rabinowitz** and they became fast friends.

She decided that Ann Rabinowitz would make the right wife for her brother and ultimately the match was made and they were happily married for 62 years.

In 1920, Julius' sister became engaged to **Ben Menke**, whom she married soon after.

Siegfried was born on Feb. 14, 1914. **Arthur** was born on Aug. 31, 1915 and **Melvin** on April 28, 1920.



Julius, left, at the Shattil Fruit Farm, Covert, Michigan.

Once again, Julius decided that he had enough of the grocery business and sold the store.

He started looking for something else and came across the Golden Rule Hardware. He agreed to buy it but the seller insisted that the payment be only in \$5 bills. There was no problem, but the bank had to find enough \$5 bills to cover the purchase.

That fall, a fire started in the furnace room of their apartment building. It destroyed most of the flooring. They found another three bedroom apartment at 4816 S. Michigan Ave. It had a wall safe in the front bedroom. They never knew the combination and never opened it so they put a picture over it to hide it.

Every summer in the 1930s, Julius and Ann took vacations out of the country. Some were cruises and some were to foreign countries such as Israel, Italy and European tours. Every winter, Julius and Ann spent several weeks in Hot Springs, Arkansas. On all their trips they always teamed with another couple with similar interests.

The hardware store was the family's guiding light. Even during the great depression from 1929-1936, there was business. Many of the building owners who had accounts at the store occasionally fell behind in their payments. Rather

than lose the business, Julius told them he would extend their credit, interest free, until they could pay their bills.

Even during the depression, when Siegfried was ready to go to college, he was able to attend the college of his choice.

Julius was philanthropic with the synagogue, Hadassah, Marks Nathan Orphan Home, Teachnion Society and similar organizations. He always made sure that his donations went directly to the sponsoring organization. It was characteristic in the '20s and '30s for men with beards (to give the impression they were rabbis) would go to businesses soliciting contributions for organizations. At one appeal for funds, Julius asked for the name and address of the organization so he could mail the check directly. In every instance, Julius was told that he could not do that, because the solicitor would not get his commission.

Julius and Ann began to vacation in Miami, Florida for three months every winter. After 10 years, they bought a condo there so they could stay longer. Declining health forced them to sell the condo and move permanently back to the Chicago area to be near their sons.

Ann died on July 6, 1974 at the age of 79. Julius followed on Sept. 27, 1975 at the age of 88.



Julius, in 1918, driving the Shattil's Grocery and Market delivery car