

**Les Fleurs de l'Orient et l'Occident**  
**Its Growth and Reach**  
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Article for Avotaynu

## **What is Les Fleurs de l'Orient?**

Les Fleurs de l'Orient and l'Occident is the name of a web site which includes a genealogy project, personal documents & publications as submitted by various authors, a bibliography, references and links to genealogy sites, a compilation of Franco-Egyptian words and expressions spoken and written by many French speaking residents of Arab lands in the Middle East, a Message Board and photos and memorabilia about the families mentioned.

### **Genealogy**

The genealogy project had started with the Farhi families but now covers the genealogy of the major families originally from the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East. It has been expanded to cover linked Sephardim, Ashkenazim and Karaites families with their own ancestry and descendants in their new countries of adoption. The geographical distribution of the families listed covers the world from Argentina to New Zealand. Les Fleurs can be found on the Farhi web site at <http://www.farhi.org>.

### **History of the Farhi Genealogy & Milestones**

In 1979, at the passing of my father, I discovered a suitcase of documents that came with us to New York City after our (2<sup>nd</sup>) exodus from Egypt. It was my first encounter with Genealogy. With time, I developed a passion for the history of the Farhi and their achievements over the centuries. Among the items that survived the journey was four pages hand written in Arabic by my grand father probably before his death in 1940. He had drawn 4 families tree of the Farhi he knew as of that time. In the Sephardic traditions, only descendants of the men were recorded, the daughters once married were not longer named Farhi and were dropped.

By 1984, these first 4 branches were translated into English, drawn up on a Macintosh computer into a graphic tree using the Mac's first draw program. These trees were mailed to every Farhi I could find. I found them in the phone books from around the world either if I was visiting that country or the page brought back by a friend.

Between 1988 and 1995, these 4 pages grew to 21 branches and about 200 copies of the tree were mailed to the participants of that effort. The 21 families were mainly from Farhi who originated in Ottoman Empire (Turkey and Bulgaria) but were now living in France, Israel, Canada Brazil and the US.

In 1995, after moving back from Asia to Europe, the late Maurice Hazan of Paris tracked me down. Maurice had retired and actively developed a genealogist hobby. He had compiled a tree of about 8,000 names of the major families living in Egypt that he was related to. His maternal aunt was married to Gabriel Farhi and he had taken an interest in the Farhi as well. However his tree included the families of the Farhi women and their spouses.

Maurice showed me, how with from my 1984 copies of the Farhi tree and the help of a couple of professional British genealogists namely Lydia Collins and Morris Bierbrier, he had included the descendants of the Farhi women, their husbands and their own ancestry as well. Since Maurice was also a Macintosh user, he suggested a genealogy software (Reunion) and I moved my 21 branches away from a pure graphic representation into a database. For several years, we cooperated on our research and kept a copy each other databases.

So by 1998, with the genealogy of the Farhi women and their descendants (only), the 21 branches grew and printing and mailing the updated graphics became a challenging effort.

In 1999, after a visit to Beth Hatfutsoth Museum, where I discovered the way they were disseminating the data they had on the Farhi, I decided to publish my own tree on the Internet and allow free access of my database of about 1,200 names. I registered a domain name (farhi.org) and with a modified genealogy website sample package, my web site was launched. Instead of mailing reports, I directed queries to the Website.

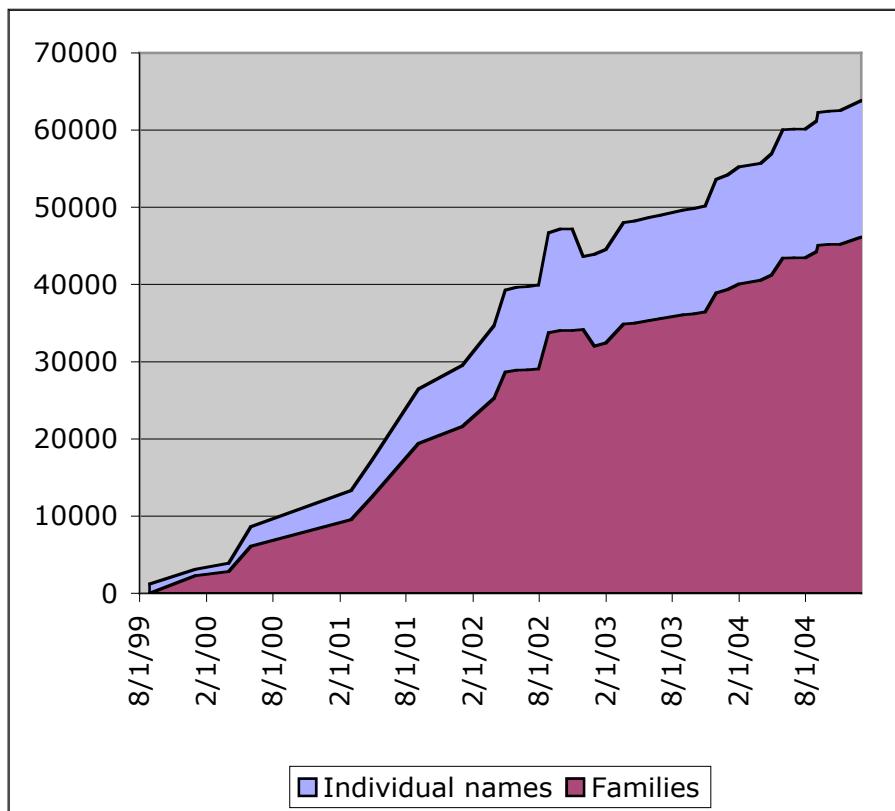
To get visibility, I wrote to search engine operator requests to list my site. One of them was the soon-to-be-born: Google. I came to learn of their existence in 1998 as one of my son's roommate at Stanford went to work for them. Google accepted to send their crawling robots to Farhi.org and indexed its contents very early on. This early start gave The Fleur de l'Orient a high ranking on Google results page that in turn brought in more genealogists seeking to add their parts but also a few detractors.

In May 2000, Maurice Hazan passed away before he could create his own website, in his memory and to preserve his work for other to share, I added his 8000 names to the Fleurs de L'Orient and linked them to the Farhi Spouses. The genealogy effort was now one big web of linked families. Any family linked to a person already existing on the site by marriage including its Ancestry and Descendancy was added.

As more people found relatives on this site, they volunteered to publish their own work and the number of persons listed on the site grew to its present size.

Recently, I have stopped adding new large branches but create new tree on the same website.

Here is a chart of that growth of the Fleur de l'Orient tree.



## Web Site Major Rules

Unlike most commercial genealogy sites, Museums (Beth Hatfutsoth) and Churches (the Mormon Church) where individuals post their own trees, all the trees and branches viewed on the Fleurs de l'Orient are linked by marriage into a giant web of families. The trees are constantly updated and corrected as new data flows in. Furthermore, the site, which is free of advertisements, banners and pop-ups, is updated monthly.

## Naming of the Site.

The name of the website Les Fleurs de l'Orient was chosen to represent the website of the Farhi. It was based on the origin of the Farhi surname (פרחי) which in Hebrew share the same letters as flower (perah). L'Orient of course is a reference to their recent origins. In French, Les Fleurs de l'Orient also means the “cream of the crop” of the Orient (families).

As a matter of fact “Fleur” is Ishtori son of Moses son of Nathan described the origin of the Farhi surname. He explained how he received the name HaParhi in

the introduction of his book *Kaftor va Perah* (written in the late 1340). He was named after the town of Florenza where his parents lived. Flora is “flower” in Spanish as *Perach* in Hebrew. Ishtori became known as HaParhi (the Parhi. The surname later became just Farhi.

Isthori was born in Florenza, a small village near Barcelona, the date of his birth is approximately 5040 by the Hebrew calendar - about 725 years ago that is 1280 ad. He was raised in Provence, studied in Trinquetaille (Arles) at the Yeshiva of his grand father Rabbi Nathan (Ranbam may have been a student at his father's Yeshiva). At the age of 19, he studied astronomy with Jacob ben Makir in Montpellier.

After the 1306 expulsion of the Jews from France, he moved with his two brothers to Barcelona via Perpignan. After 7 years in Florenza learning the Torah, he decided to leave his family and home country and go to Israel. He later traveled to Toledo and reached Cairo in 1313 where he met Maimonides 's grandson. After several years in Cairo, he traveled to Bisan (Scythopolis) Palestine, Jerusalem but settled in Bet-Shean.

As a geographer and rabbi, he wrote a book "Kaftor ve Perah", which was reprinted in 1549's in Venice and in 1897 in Vienna. A modern version was published in Jerusalem in 1946.

He died in Palestine in 1357 while traveling to Jerusalem. We do not know if he was ever married or had any children. However we assume that his two brothers stayed in Spain and their descendants left after the Spanish Inquisition either to North Africa but mainly to the Ottoman Empire where they are records of settling near Smyrna. We do not know how the Farhi arrived in Smyrna after the Spanish Inquisition.

We expect that some went to North Africa in the Berber areas and later in coastal cities as we do have Farhi in today's Algeria and Morocco. No link has been found with these families or those of the Ottoman Empire where the majority settled. From Smyrna, they fanned out to all areas of the Mediterranean Sea from Algeria, Tunisia, Italy, Yugoslavia, Austria, Bulgaria, Rumania, Anatolia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Libya, Sudan and Yemen.

Starting in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century they traveled to Europe, North America, Central & Latin America. My personal effort has been to trace all these descendants and with their help go back up their own ancestry lines.

### **Trees of the Fleurs de l'Orient**

Since the original Farhi tree grew the web site display required new software that allows dynamic reporting and viewing of the data. New trees were easily added .

Under the new database approach, a tree can be seen by the general public (under the privacy filters) for researchers & genealogists with an account ID and password, to have access to some private data on living Furthermore the pages can be viewed in different languages (French, German, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, Greek, Portuguese and English).

### Les Fleurs de l'Orient

The major Sephardic families of the Middle East, which are linked to the Farhi's. The tree includes the extended families of their spouses and their own relatives from Asia, Australia, Europe and the Americas.

From several other sources, records of Farhi unlinked to others have been found and compiled in three separate files namely:

### Istanbul (Farhi 1880-1980 Wedding and Death Records)

This tree contains the records of the Farhi who married or died in Istanbul from the 1880's to 1980's.

### Izmir (Farhi 19th century Birth Records)

Farhi families who lived in Izmir (Smyrna) during the 19th century. This extract of records of the Jewish Community (ca 1990's) was submitted by Refael Farhi of Izmir.

### Farhi (Individuals from Several Others sources)

List of individual Farhi found in different records such as Yad Vashem, 1920 & 30 US and UK Censuses, and other found documents on The Advancement of the Sephardic Studies & Culture website. Records of Farhi already shown in the Fleurs de l'Orient have not been duplicated here.

### Karaites (From Egypt, Russia & Crimea)

An extensive genealogy effort was made by David Elishaa to compile the Karaite Jewry originally from Egypt, Russia and Crimea and now spread all over the world. The tree covers about 12,625 individuals and 8,663 families. To explain the Origins of the Karaites David Elishaa wrote:" It took me more than 20 years to build, search, and make the Family Trees of mostly those that are born in Egypt and they are more or less all Related to each other. I added many names from books or information gathered from Karaite living in different countries, and specially " The Karaite Jews of Egypt" by Mourad el-Kodsi ."

The Karaites, a Judaic sect that goes back for centuries to the 1st Millennium. In 1172 there were about 500 living in Constantinople. In

1947, there were about 5,000 in Egypt and 10,000 in Russia, Crimea, & Lithuania. Today, they are now mainly living in Israel; US with some still in Lithuania They follow the written Torah only and disregard any other Talmudic documents.

This tree is linked to Les Fleurs de l'Orient through the couples of Massouda to Farhi and Lichaa to Ezri.

### Weiner & King (Manchester)

The tree of the King, Weiner, Musaphia, Salzedo, Goodenday & many other Manchester families has about 9,275 Individuals, 6,511 Families submitted by Josev King. Since many Sephardic families from the Fleurs de L'Orient settled in Manchester in the mid 1800 to take advantage of the Industrial revolution and its textile industries, the sons and daughters have intermarried with the Ashkenazim who came from Holland and Eastern Europe in search of fortune as well.

### Peixotto & de Salzedo (Portugal, Holland)

These families are linked to Les Fleurs de l'Orient through Annie Goodenday and David van Abraham Salzedo. They represent the Dutch and Manchester families that intermarried with the Sephardim who had arrived from Aleppo and Syria. This tree has 5,498 Individuals and 3,817 families.

These Peixotto may be related to the Picciotto of the Ottoman Empire, but we do not have a link. The Picciotto of the Ottoman came through Italy and some of the families (those with the French particle of nobility “de” chosen after having refused the Austrian “von” particle) were Consuls from 1800 to the early 1900 to the Sublime Porte of the European powers including the US. Their name could be the Italian version of the Portuguese original name Peixotto. Some Peixotto descendants are found in today's Brazil. Judith Berlowits is the author of that tree.

### Nizard (France & Tunisia)

The Nizard families are linked to the Fleurs de l'Orient via their Tunisian descendants. The Nizard tree consists of 383 Individuals and 285 Families. However the French Nizard can be traced to the 17th Century and no link has been found to the Tunisian branch (19th century). It is likely that one Nizard emigrated from France to Tunisia. At the moment we do not know which one. The Tunisian Nizard tree has been submitted by Elisabeth Bochner, Joelle Nizard, and Dominique Nizard. The French Nizard submitted by Andre Nizard.

### Gubbay (Iraq)

The Tree of the Gubbay originally from Iraq and the Ottoman Empire. was created by Lucien Gubbay as the basis of his book: Origins (First edition 1989 and updated in 2005). Lucien's mother was Renée Farhi and many of his entries are already in the Fleurs de l'Orient. That tree consists of about 730 Individuals and 527 Families.

### **Fleurs de L'Orient Statistics**

As of February 2005, the web site had close to 99,000 names and over 70,000 families broken down as:

<b>Tree</b>	<b>Individuals</b>	<b>Families</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Fleurs de l'Orient	69,309	49,826	70%
Karaites	12,525	8,663	13%
Weiner & King	9,275	6,511	9%
Peixotto & de Salzedo	5,498	3,817	6%
Farhi (Others)	891	710	1%
Gubbay	730	527	1%
Nizard	383	285	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>98,611</b>	<b>70,339</b>	

From these totals about 5,100 individuals and 3,400 families are not shown on the web site mainly because of their objections. But more on that later.

### **Major Families**

Sephardic Ottoman Empire Bulgaria & the Balkans, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey North Africa (Algeria, Tunisia & Morocco), Europe: (UK, The Netherlands) Ashkenazi Alsace-Lorraine, Manchester, South Africa

### **From the area of Turkey, Syria and the middle east, we can list the following family names**

Altaras, Anzarut, Barcillon, Benzakein, Cattaui, , Cicurel, De Picciotto, Dwek/Douek, Farhi, Harari, Jubes, Lisbona, Menashe, Setton, Rossi. Based on similar spelling of the surnames, les Fleurs de l'Orient major families have about 1700 Farhi, 935 de Picciotto, 762 Battat, 600 Harari, 480 Dwek etc. The Levi and Cohen are so generic that they are not necessarily all belonging to the same families. The top 25 surnames are as follows:

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Surnames</b>	<b>Total</b>
1	FARHI +	1704

2	LEVY +	1347
3	COHEN	970
4	DE PICCIOTTO +	935
5	BATTAT	762
6	HARARI +	608
7	DWEK +	487
8	BEKHOR	473
9	SASSOON +	465
10	CICUREL +	397
11	SOMEKH	386
12	ANTEBI	385
13	DREYFUS	384
14	WEIL +	338
15	LANG	305
16	HORESH	288
17	BARCILON +	286
18	ARIE	275
19	BIGIO	245
20	MASHAAL +	243
21	SUTTON	233
22	SALAMA	232
23	MIZRAHI	225
24	KAHN	213
25	GUBBAY	212

## Shoah & the Holocaust

Since January 2005 marked the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, it was appropriate to mention that about 167 persons listed in the Fleurs de l'Orient died in Concentration Camps during WW II. Using data collected from Yad Vashem and other sources, a total of 67 Farhi (including spouses) also perished during the Holocaust. Here are the grim statistics of the Farhi who died based on their country of Deportation.

Austria: 6, 5 Yugoslavian born & 1 Egyptian born

Bulgaria: 2 from Bulgarian occupied territories.

France: 33 including 6 Bulgarian born; 10 Turkish born & 17 French born

Greece: 2 from Salonika

Italy: 1 from Trieste

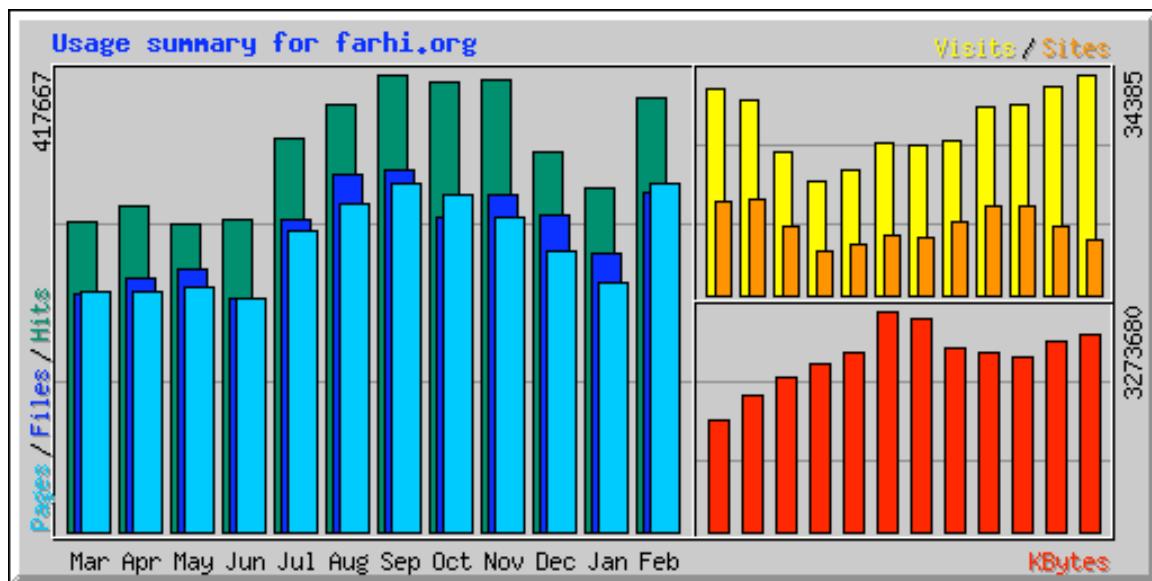
Romania : 4

Yugoslavia & Croatia : 19

The somehow low casualty number is probably due to the fact that most of these families lived in British controlled countries outside the reach of the German occupying forces. One could only imagine what it would have happened had the Germans not been stopped at El Alamein (Egypt) in 1942.

## Web Site Statistics

The web site is updated monthly and a special page tracks the monthly changes. Over the years the site drew in size over 300,000 pages and popularity and Visitors The home page had 83,720 visitors but over 306,000 pages were visited during the last 12 months.



## Power of the Internet

The visitors are mainly from the US and Western Europe, a large number of the US hits are from Search Engines (31%), but we can see that people are looking at Les Fleurs de l'Orient from all over the World. Here is a breakdown of these visitors for January 2005. The high number of Dutch hits is unusual and unexplained.

Country	Hits	%
Argentina	499	0%
Australia	2,547	2%
Austria	209	0%
Belgium	1,930	1%
Brazil	2,321	2%
Bulgaria	189	0%
Canada	2,468	2%
Denmark	244	0%
France	14,406	11%

Germany	754	1%
Israel	6,369	5%
Italy	1,713	1%
Japan	1,649	1%
Lebanon	126	0%
Mexico	713	1%
Netherlands	14,517	11%
Non-Profit Organizations	539	0%
Poland	407	0%
South Africa	147	0%
Spain	189	0%
Sweden	587	0%
Switzerland	3,774	3%
Turkey	293	0%
United Kingdom	3,450	3%
United States	30,129	23%
United States Educational	1,473	1%
United States Search Engines	40,825	31%
Uruguay	272	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>132,739</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Privacy

One of the biggest issue of controversy about Genealogy sites is the issue of loss of Privacy for the individuals listed.

Besides the fear of identity theft in the US and developed countries, the legal issues are legislated differently in each country. In most countries, the publications of personal data such as date of birth or any personal data for a living person is either prohibited or frowned upon.

In Australia & UK, the Privacy Laws requires prior authorization from the person so data about him/her could be to be published.

However in the US, there are no State or Federal Laws Privacy Laws but US General Accepted Practices that prohibit the publication of anything about a living person besides his first name and family name.

In France and Continental Europe , the privacy laws on the books are more restrictive: everything that could identify a person (including his name) is prohibited if the person objects to its publication.

Based on these criteria, the data in the Fleurs de l'Orient automatically do not publish any personal data on living persons born after 1910. Data on deceased persons are published as there is no issue of privacy anymore.

Consequently, any person's data will be deleted upon simple written request to the webmaster.

### **"I Cherish my Privacy" Fallacies**

Over the many years that the site has been operating, I received many requests for removal under "I cherish my privacy" reasons. All were honored and the person's names and his family have been removed. The main fears of privacy breach cited are numerous including those listed below.

### **Social Security Number Privacy Issues**

The single greatest source of grief in the US is the widespread overuse and abuse of the Social Security numbers. Schools required it. Insurance company uses it for a contract number. Local state used to force residents to have it on their driver license (and some states even used it as a license number). Lawsuits abound over the misuse of this number, and it was that number combined with someone name and date of birth (both very easily obtainable) that let somebody steal thousands and damage a credit rating.

The US Social Security Administration requires two pieces of information in order to get approval for benefits. 1. Soc. sec number & 2. mother's maiden name in the exact form as in their records. When one fills out the Social Security application for a newborn, the mother's maiden name must be given and evidence thereto (e.g. mom's birth certificate)

Therefore if someone steals a Social Security number he needs to find out the mother's maiden name to redirect benefits. In this case, Genealogy site are a good source of information. However it requires two premises, 1) to find out the Social Security of the person that is qualified to get benefits ( over 62 years old) and then find out his mother's name.

Unfortunately, Social Security numbers used to be found on bank or brokerage statements, which are inevitably discarded, in your daily trashcan ( vs. shredded). Any one going through household refuse could easily reestablish someone's identity. Luckily, in the past few years, financial institutions no longer print these numbers in full on their monthly statements.

### **Credit Card Fraud (mother's maiden name)**

This issue is indeed an overblown misconception.

The credit cards companies use a long list of criteria to determine the Identity of the person calling them (an attempting to steal one's identity) and usually at least three questions are asked (such as Birth date, address, recent charges) before they are ascertaining the real identity of the caller. In certain cases, even the joint account holder has to put the account holder on the phone to complete certain account modifications. And they asked him/her a different sets of 3 questions before they could proceed.

The best way to put that maiden name issue to bed is not to register his mother's real maiden name with anyone. Use her nickname, or any other name that you could remember, like your dog's name.

The only case if credit card fraud I encountered (from someone listed on my web site) was from one of his associate at work who had an axe to grind against him. An inside "job".

### **Job Opportunity (people will guess my age)**

A few requests, I received were based on the assumption that one could guess someone's age by the birth and death dates of his deceased relatives. Therefore denying him off hand a job or assignment. Usually, the age can easily be guessed at interview time.

### **Protection of Children**

In some cases, removal was motivated as jilted high school friends were seeking to harass their now reluctant partners.

### **Real Reasons for Delisting Requests**

However after a careful investigation of each request, I believe a few were unrelated to identity theft and real privacy issues. The implied reasons were to hide its origins, religion, mixed marriages or hide from family & associates. Anti-Semitism in the country of residence was often mentioned.

Many disagreed with the principle of "amateurish" genealogy as a hobby and the publication of the name of living people.

In few cases, it was plainly:

- 1) "I do not want to be associated with you" as I found out that many requests came from public figures who had professional listing that usually came after Les Fleurs de l'Orient in the Google ranking.
- 2) "I do not want my tree published on your site". Requests were received from people who found their genealogy data posted in the Fleurs de l'Orient after been

submitted by members of their own family or found on many other genealogy sites. One request even came from a Genealogist who had her home address and telephone number listed on her own site.

## **Remedies**

Initially, I used to inquire about the reason of each request and replace names by initials and kept the real name in a confidential field. Later I decided to remove them completely from the database that is published monthly and never argue with requests.

## **The Human Factor & Cases of Self Censorship**

In addition to generally accepted principles, the Privacy rules, I do eliminate data that may endanger the persons involved either professionally or in their local country. I had a few people living or working in “developing” countries where their faith could jeopardize their status or work. Indictments and Criminal records are also eliminated unless officially published by the family. Family gossips or feuds are also passed on as well as underworld connections or assignments with Secret Services (MI6, CIA or Mossad etc...), which are obviously revealed after the death of the person. Requests by the individual or relatives are always honored.

## **Phishing & Other Sources of Identity Data**

Identity theft through Phishing is a new scam that lure e-mail users to reveal private information. Phishing involves the use of e-mail messages that appear to come from your bank or another trusted business, but are actually from imposters.

Phishing e-mails typically ask you to click a link to visit a Web site, where you're asked to enter or confirm personal financial information such as your account numbers, passwords, Social Security number or other data. Although these Web sites may appear legitimate, they are not. Thieves can collect whatever data you enter and use it to access your personal accounts.

A PC Hard disk sent for repair, can also be copied without the knowledge of its owner. The fraudulent repair shop could have a complete copy of everything on your system.

## **Benefits in Cyberspace**

The growth of the Fleurs de l'Orient can be attributed to its visibility and sharing

freely the data, so everyone can contribute the results of their own research or findings. Sharing is a big part of our genealogical research. However, we just need to use good judgment in what we say and where. Self-censorship of the data is sadly used and needed.

However the most important benefit derived is the personal satisfaction of helping people find their roots, meeting new friends either via the Internet, email or in person new friends and in many instances lost ones after our new Diaspora.

Connecting members of the large tree has been also rewarding in a few cases of inheritance of distant relative or abandoned funds in Swiss bank accounts during Word World II .

The Fleurs de l'Orient real accomplishment will be the preservation of our roots for our children and grandchildren to discover when they will be interested in Genealogy.

## Acknowledgements

The site would have not been possible without the benevolent data submissions by the following genealogists (a few listed here): Benjamin Angel and Jean-Daniel Greub, Claude Cicurel & Nicole, Romano & Jessica Attie, Dan Brook & Josev King & Marcel Glaskie, David Elishaa (Karaite Tree) & Walter Marzouk, Emilio Picciotto (z'l) & Harry Antebi & Elizabeth Antebi, Giancarlo Luxardo & Moshe Souroujon & Marcel Labaton, Helen Bekhor & Ronny Schaul & Trudy Chityat & Alfred Somekh & Grace Marshall, Lydia Collins & Morris Bierbrier, Nicolette & Jimmy Mawas & Lucien Gubbay, Maurice Hazan (z'l) & Remy Hakim, David Lisbona & Deborah Mintz, Mathilde Tagger & Shelly Darshati, Daniela de Picciotto (z'l) and hundreds of others as important. Sorry if I have forgotten one (you).

Also to be thanked are the non-genealogists who contributed articles about their background, experience and just thoughts.