

[New Jersey](#)
[The Jewish Standard](#)

[New York](#)
[The Jewish Week](#)

[Pittsburgh](#)
[Jewish Chronicle](#)

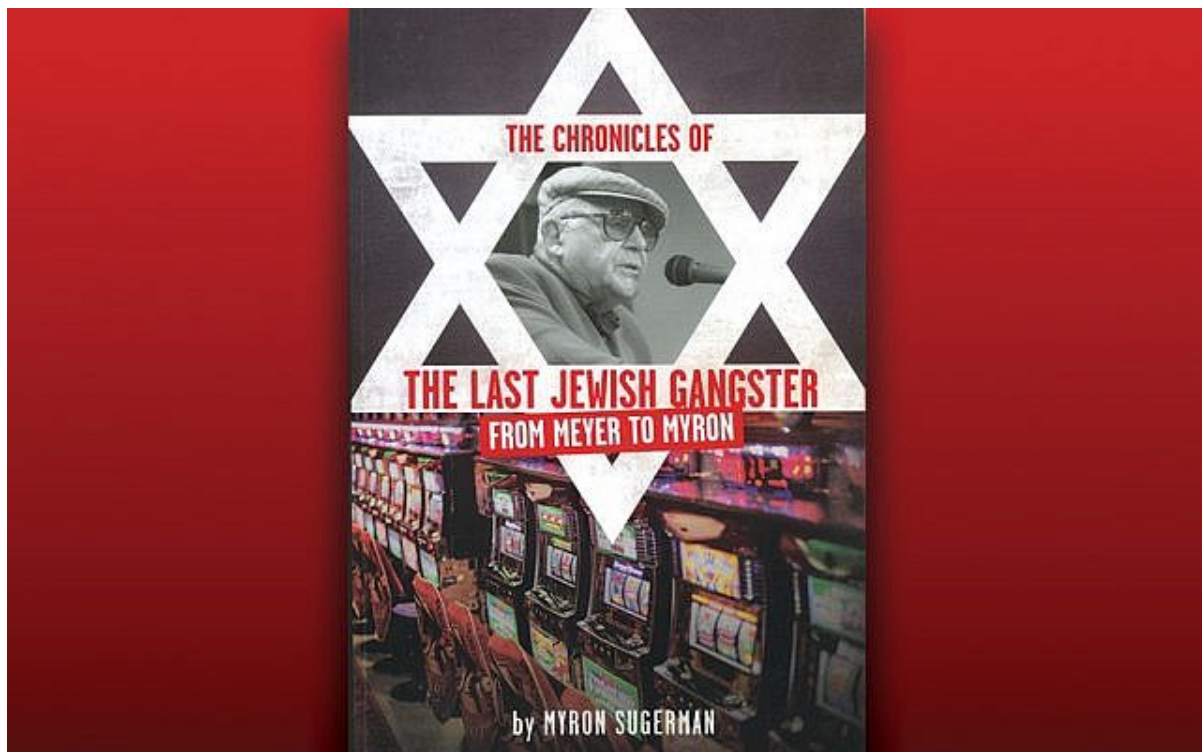
[United Kingdom](#)
[The Jewish News](#)

[For Publishers](#)
[Become a Times of Israel Partner](#)

‘Chronicles of The Last Jewish Gangster: From Meyer to Myron’

Wherein the titular protagonist from New Jersey regales with tales of mobsters, machers, and mayhem

By [Wallace Greene](#) July 12, 2018, 11:51 am [0](#) [Edit](#)



From “The Untouchables” to “The Al Capone Story” to “Goodfellas” and “The Godfather” — and including many other television and movie depictions of mobsters in America — we have some idea of the gangster life. But missing from the largely Italian and Irish narrative is the Jewish gangster component.

Myron Sugerman's memoir, "The Chronicles of The Last Jewish Gangster: From Meyer to Myron," is an enthralling account of the author's six-decade career as an international outlaw in the field of slot machines, juke boxes, pinball machines, arcade machines, gambling machines — especially gambling machines — and casinos, as part of the Jewish mob, with connections to the Genovese and Gambino crime families, the Yakuza, the Cali cartel, and many other nefarious groups.

Mr. Sugerman's narrative also is a treatise on topics such as aging, respect, trust, adventure, greed, and man's tendency to be his own worst enemy. Amid the many stories and anecdotes, the book also contains many life lessons, such as disquisitions on how to differentiate a calculated risk from gambling, and how to maintain your place in the world as you grow older. Bon mots such as "greed kills more people than pistols" fill the book, as do expressions in Yiddish, Spanish, Portuguese, and other languages. The style of the book is very folksy, as if Mr. Sugerman is schmoozing with you over a cup of tea.

Mr. Sugerman learned his trade from his father, the late Barney (Sugie) Sugerman, who started out with a candy store and jukeboxes in Newark before World War II, before he branched out. Myron Sugerman has installed tens of thousands of gambling devices in casinos, clubs, bodegas, bars, and goulash joints across the United States, Europe, Latin America, South America, and Africa, and dealt with the mob bosses in many different lands, communicating with them in their native tongue. He speaks seven languages.

"The Last Jewish Gangster" follows its author from 1959 to the present day, as he traversed the globe, from Europe to Africa to South America to Asia, rubbing shoulders with dangerous men and such legendary mob figures as Longie Zwillman, Meyer Lansky, Joe "Doc" Stacher, Gerry Catena, Tony Bananas Caponigro, Tommy Ryan Eboli, and many others. The story covers everything from his dealings with the fearsome Cali cartel to helping famous Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal track down Dr. Josef Mengele in Paraguay. Mr. Sugerman also recalls how Meyer Lansky's group and the bosses of Bally Manufacturing Company sent him to Lagos, Nigeria, to run a joint venture gambling machine operation with Arabs from Lebanon.

This book contains something for everyone — real life crime stories, scary adventures, 20th-century history vignettes, and the Jewish religious philosophy and perspective of a man who has lived a long life and seen more than most of us can even imagine seeing. Aside from admiring and respecting the early Jewish mobsters, Myron Sugerman was and is still an admirer of Zev Jabotinsky and the Lubavitcher rebbe.

Mr. Sugerman always dealt fair and square and made sure everybody got the right end of a deal. He is proud to have helped a lot of people achieve financial independence. Mr. Sugerman says he learned early in life that truth is man's best friend. He tried always to answer to God's law, and sometimes even to man's law. However, since there are discrepancies between God's law and man's law, Mr. Sugerman spent 19 months as a guest of the U.S. government penal system — but he is very sanguine about this experience.



Mayor Fiorello La Guardia destroying slot machines owned by Meyer Lansky and Frank Costello circa 1940.

Myron Sugerman is an expert on a bygone era of old-school gangsters, their ethics, their morality, and their sense of right and wrong. This book tells the story of a man who grew up at the feet of some of the most famous Jewish, Italian, and Irish gangsters, and understood the traditions of that world. The book includes touching stories, such as flying an elderly Jewish mobster to Israel and saying kaddish for one of the chevra, with people wearing ski masks instead of kipot.

When Dustin Hoffman needed old timers who knew Dutch Schultz so he could play the part of Schultz in the movie “Billy Bathgate,” Mr. Sugerman arranged a meeting with Little Itzig, Louie the Rush, and Max Puddy Hinkes at the Second Avenue Deli.

Mr. Sugerman reveres the memory of his father, who died when Myron was young. Mr. Sugerman says the “uncles” took over and raised him in the world of the Kosher Nostra.

His memoir takes the reader back to his roots in postwar Newark — today, he lives in Maplewood — and then takes you from casinos and bars in the remotest parts of Africa, including Nigeria, Namibia, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, to adventures throughout all of South America, including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic.

He also discusses the history of the Jewish mob (with help from Italians and Irish) and their contributions to the Jewish people both here in the United States during the 1930s — fighting anti-Semitism and the American Nazi Party — and in the 1940s after World War II, securing illegal weapons and providing cash

for both the Haganah and the Irgun in Palestine — pre-state Israel — in the struggle for Jewish statehood.

“I’m the last man standing of a generation of a world that once was,” Mr. Sugerman says. “Those were men who in their own way cared for their people and their community.”

Myron Sugerman now is lecturing on the Jewish mob all over the United States.

Wallace Greene received his Ph.D. in Jewish History from Yeshiva University. He writes and lectures on Jewish topics.