

Otis P. (Perry) Seligman
February 14, 1898 to March 9, 1943

By
Arthur Scott

My dad was born into a family of wealth and privilege in Santa Fe, New Mexico on February 14, 1898. He was the son of Governor Arthur Seligman who was also born in Santa Fe. Arthur's father was Bernard Seligman a prominent Santa Fe merchant and trader on the Santa Fe Trail. Otis was educated in the public school system until he was sent to New Mexico Military Institute at Roswell, New Mexico. Here he completed two years of college and was drafted into World War 1. He only served a couple of months on active duty before the armistice was signed in 1918 and he was released. He lived in Cleveland, Ohio for a year with relatives, met, and married my mother; Doris Lillian Gardiner, a Welsh immigrant from Cleveland in 1921. They returned to Santa Fe that year where my father worked as a bank clerk at The First National Bank of Santa Fe and where his father was President. He began as a messenger boy and worked his way to assistant cashier. My sister Joan was born in Santa Fe on November 25, 1927.



My Father boarding train to Cleveland, Ohio from Lamy, NM 1920.

On September 12, 1932 Time Magazine noted "A Federal Grand Jury indicted Otis Perry Seligman, cashier of the First National Bank of Santa Fe, N. Mex. for an alleged

shortage of \$25,941 in his accounts. Said his father, Governor Arthur Seligman, president of the bank, after making good the shortage: He will have to take his medicine.” Nine other bank employees were also indicted. The total amount missing was reported by Bank Examiners as \$72, 941.23.

He and eight others pled guilty. One pled not guilty. Otis was sentenced to a total of 30 years but the sentences ran concurrently so that the maximum time served would be five years. In addition he was fined \$10,000 payable to the US prior to release. He received the harshest sentence because, as an assistant cashier, he was considered a supervisor and officer of the bank.



Taken October 8, 1932 at Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary, Leavenworth, Kansas. In the picture he appears to have a blackened right eye. Interesting because he had been in US Marshalls custody from September 8 when he was sentenced.

On September 8, 1932 he and six others were sentenced to terms in Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary in Leavenworth, Kansas. Two were given suspended sentences and one (Trujillo) was tried, found guilty and sent to La Tuna Federal Prison in Texas. My father began serving his sentence in Leavenworth on October 8, 1932. His father, mother, wife, and group of friends saw him off at the Albuquerque train station while he was in custody of US Marshals. His entry fingerprint card described him as follows:

“RECEIVED: Oct.8,1932
FROM: D-New Mexico
CRIME: Natl. Bank Act
MIL. Or CIVIL: Civil.
SENTENCE: 5 years
DATE OF SENTENCE: Sept.9, 1932
BIRTHPLACE: New Mexico

RELIGION: Jewish
EDUCATION: College 2
OCCUPATION: Banker
MARRIED: Yes CHILDREN: 1
RESIDENCE: Santa Fe, New Mexico
HABITS: Smoke

DESCRIPTION:

AGE: 34
HEIGHT 5' 6"
WEIGHT: 119
BUILD: Sl.
HAIR: Blk Skgy
EYES: Sl Dk
COMP: Rud
CHIN: Bld
MARKS AND SCARS: Tatoo anchor 3 abv left
elbow ext. Tatoo butterfly right forearm
ext. Tatoo dagger right shoulder ext.
Chin dimpled. Bites nails."

They did not note his blackened right eye which had to occur while he was in the custody of US Marshals. His health was described as "Good" "High blood pressure and heart trouble past two years." He was assigned duties as a prison clerk. His prison work record was noted as "excellent" during his entire term. According to the prison visitor's log, during his incarceration at Leavenworth, my mother visited him at least 13 times, his sister visited about 3 times. Both my mother and his sister, Richie March wrote him innumerable letter and he responded frequently. His mother and father visited once and it was in newspapers across the country.

My father was an avid fisherman, hunter and outdoorsman. Among his most frequent visitors was his best friend and hunting buddy, Lou Gardesky. According to his mail log, he received innumerable letters from my mother but few from his father and mother and very few that were answered to his mother and father. It is easy to surmise that there was "bad blood" between him and his father.

When his father, Governor Arthur Seligman, died in office in 1933, my father was furloughed to attend the funeral. He left the prison with a US Marshall on September 26, and returned to Leavenworth Penitentiary on October 6. Governor Seligman's will left both he and my Aunt Richie each \$100 with the remainder of the estate going to my grandmother.

After Governor Seligman's death in 1933, his successor, Governor Hockenhull and the New Mexico congressional delegation petitioned the White House for a Presidential pardon in his behalf. The request was turned down by President Franklin Roosevelt on October 16, 1933. Efforts for a pardon continued to no avail, however, these political efforts most likely were responsible for a somewhat early parole. He was credited with

480 days good behavior and he was released on parole on September 12, 1934 after serving about 2 years.

He returned to Santa Fe and became secretary/treasurer of the Santa Fe Radio and Typewriter Company at 123 West Water Street. He did radio and typewriter repair at least from December 1934 through May 1937. I don't know the final disposition of the company. I was born in Santa Fe 1938 (a third generation Santa Fean).



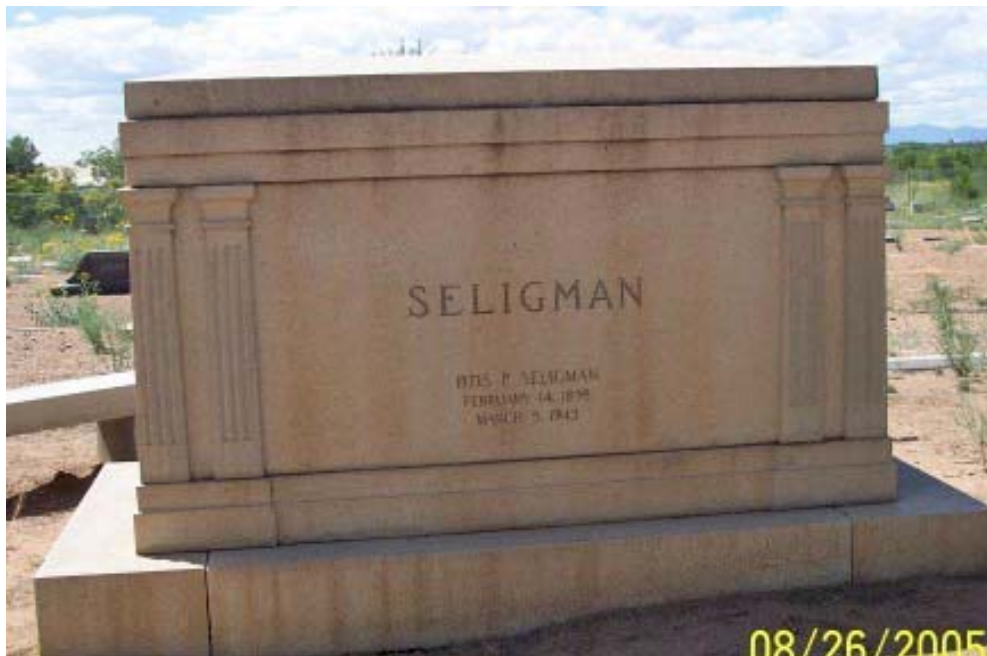
My dad and me at our ranch in Cow Creek, NM in 1938.

I remember my father as being very kind and loving to me, proud to have a son, and his showing me off as a toddler. My father was an avid outdoorsman and loved to bird hunt and fish. He bought ten acres in a very remote part of the upper Pecos on Cow Creek. He had a two-bedroom log cabin built from logs taken from the surrounding forest. There was no indoor plumbing, running water, or electricity. The creek provided water, heat and cooking was by wood and lighting was by kerosene and white-gas Coleman lanterns. I recall following him along Cow Creek while he was and learning about trout fly or grass-hopper fishing. I remember a story my mother told about his ability to catch trout with his bare hands but I don't remember ever seeing it. On the dark side, he was a bad alcoholic and I remember times he was a quite drunk and on one occasion my mother thought he was suicidal and sent me as a four year-old to take his .38 revolver out of the bedroom drawer and bring it to her. He died of heart failure (as did his father) on March 9, 1943, when I was five, and he was buried at Fairview cemetery. I can remember his

funeral at Fairview cemetery in Santa Fe, NM very vividly. To this day, I don't attend funerals.



My sister, Joan; me; and Otis Seligman. 1941



Father's grave Fairview Cemetery, Santa Fe, NM.

Sources Used include;

National Archives, Kansas City Region, Leavenworth Penitentiary

New Mexico State Archives, Arthur Seligman Papers

Time Magazine archives

Various Newspaper archives from 1932 and 1933

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