OBITUARIES

Barney Hochberg is dead after decades selling jokes

HOCHBERG, BARNEY

PROVIDENCE — Barney Hochberg, who ran the Joke Shop on Union Street for decades, selling exploding cigars, rubber chocolates and 2,000 other gags, died yesterday in his home at 60 Broadway at age 86. He was the husband of the late Julia (Rodin) Hochberg.

Harry Houdini, Eddie Cantor, Jack Benny and Blackstone the Magician were among his customers. Mr. Hochberg was fond of saying, "You didn't have to be a screwball to be one of our customers, but it helped."

Customers were considered fair game by Mr. Hochberg and his partner Edward I. Robinson and were apt to be targets for demonstrations of the latest gimmicks.

He retired in 1968 when his shop went up in flames. It ended 54 years of business in the city at four different locations. The business started as a plug-tobacco and newspaper stand.

The shop has since been rebuilt and is operated under different ownership.

At the Union Street store, according to Mr. Hochberg, the partners started taking in "joke books and trick stuff" that eventually became the main stock in trade.

Mr. Hochberg was born in Russia on Dec. 29, 1890, a son of the late Marcus and Rebecca Hochberg. He came to Providence at the age of 6.

He was a member of Temple Beth-El and its Brotherhood and Touro Fraternal Association, and a life member of the Providence Elks.

He is survived by two daughters, Mrs. Norma Lipson of Warwick and Mrs. Hope Katz of Franklin Square, N.Y., two sisters, Mrs. Mary Kwasha of Providence and Mrs. Anna Topporoff of Miami Beach, Fla., and three grandchildren.

The funeral service will be held tomorrow at noon at Sugarman Memorial Chapel, 458 Hope St. Burial will be in Lincoln Park Cemetery, Warwick.