

# JOURNAL



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interviewed by  
Sir Martin Gilbert

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wish the '45 Aid every success

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# INDEX

Page 5	<b>SECTION I CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS</b> Ben Helfgott
Page 6	<b>SECTION II PAST AND PRESENT</b>
Page 6-7	<b>THE STORY OF THE JEWS OF DOLGINOVO</b> Jack Kagan
Page 7-8	<b>MEMORIES OF MY COUSINS HARRY WAJCHENDLER &amp; HOWARD CHANDLER</b> Barbara Merton nee Brampton
Page 8	<b>HIS LAST SLICE OF BREAD</b> Sam Freiman
Page 8-9	<b>GOING HOME TO TELL HIS STORY</b> Sonja Freiman
Page 9-14	<b>THE SONNENSCHNEIN FAMILY</b> Janina Fischler-Martinho
Page 14-19	<b>OUR GOLDBERG VARIATIONS</b> Esther Goldberg
Page 19-20	<b>AN UNBELIEVABLE MIRACLE HAPPENED TO ME</b> Alfred Huberman
Page 21-23	<b>PILGRIMAGE TO POLAND</b> Harry Olmer
Page 23	<b>EXTRACT FROM A MEMOIR</b> Arthur Poznanski
Page 23-24	<b>MY SEARCH FOR FAMILY PHOTOS</b> Menachem Silberstein
Page 24-25	<b>THREE 'BOYS' ON A TRAIN</b> Jan Goldberger
Page 26-31	<b>INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S CENTER KLOSTER INDERSDORF 1945-1948</b> Anna Andlauer
Page 32	<b>WHERE ARE THEY NOW</b>
Page 33	<b>SECTION III HERE AND NOW</b>
Page 33	<b>FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION</b> Robert Sherman
Page 34	<b>A SURVIVOR'S VOICE TODAY</b> Judith Sherman
Page 34	<b>AN UNUSUAL EXPERIENCE</b> Jack Klajman
Page 35-37	<b>A 'LAD' MEETS THE 'BOYS'</b> Derek Simmans
Page 37-39	<b>POETRY CHOICE</b> Liz Cashdan
Page 39	<b>TREASURES OF BLACK DEATH</b> Witold Gutt

Page 39	<b>NANO VIEW</b> Witold Gutt
Page 40-41	<b>MY LATEST TRIP TO AUSTRIA</b> Anita Lasker Walfisch
Page 41-44	<b>LODZ – A TALE OF A CITY</b> Mira Hamermesh
Page 45-47	<b>FIRST HIS PARENTS, THEN HIS SON, THEN HIS WIFE</b> Alex Gross
Page 48-51	<b>MY POST-WAR MEMOIR</b> Jerzy Lando
Page 54-55	<b>THE MAYOR AND THE BOOK</b> Aubrey Rose CBE, D.Univ
Page 55-57	<b>ISRAEL TODAY</b> Aubrey Rose CBE, D.Univ
Page 58	<b>WHERE THE DAFFODILS GROW</b> Zdenka Husserl, Rachel Oppenheim
Page 59-60	<b>THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL FORUM IN THE FORGOTTEN CONCENTRATION CAMP</b> Jean-Louis Rey
Page 60-62	<b>SCHLIEBEN – A FORGOTTEN CONCENTRATION CAMP</b> Professor Ken Walzer
Page 62-63	<b>RUDOLF KASTNER</b> Rt. Hon. Sir Martin Gilbert
Page 63-65	<b>PRAGUE CONFERENCE ON HOLOCAUST ERA ASSETS</b> German Statement in the Plenary Session
Page 65-67	<b>MY PERSPECTIVE ON THE JEWISH DILEMMA</b> Otto Grunfeld
Page 67-68	<b>TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST TO YOUNG MUSLIMS</b> Geoffrey Short
Page 68-70	<b>CLAIMS CONFERENCE UPDATE</b>
Page 70-71	<b>WIDOWS' THOUGHTS</b> Maureen Hecht
Page 71	<b>SIR MARTIN GILBERT INTERVIEWS 97 YEAR OLD YOGI MAYER</b>
Page 72	<b>SECTION IV SECOND AND THIRD GENERATION</b>
Page 72-73	<b>WHAT THE JOURNAL HAS MEANT FOR ME</b> David Goldberg
Page 73-74	<b>THE EXCLUSIVE SECOND GENERATION CLUB</b> Daniela Becher
Page 75	<b>JENNIFER RUBIN</b> Shirley & Joseph Zeller

Page 75-76	<b>THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY</b> Efram Goldberg
Page 76-78	<b>HOLOCAUST EDUCATION</b> Ariel Sherman
Page 78-79	<b>"THE BOYS"</b> Denise Pearlman
Page 79-80	<b>EXPLORE THROUGH ARTIST</b> Aviva Halter-Hurn
Page 80	<b>LATEST NEWS FROM 2ND GENERAL ISRAEL, JANUARY 2010</b> Nina Hecht
Page 81	<b>SECTION V THE ANNUAL LEONARD G. MONTEFIORE LECTURE</b>
Page 81-84	<b>THE ROAD TO WAR – 70 YEARS ON</b> William Tyler MA(Oxon) M.Phil
Page 84	<b>SECTION VI OBITUARIES</b>
Page 84-85	<b>RABBI SYMCHA LIEBERMAN</b>
Page 85-86	<b>ARTHUR POZNANSKI</b> Michael Friedland
Page 86-87	<b>JOHN FOX - A TRIBUTE BY HIS DAUGHTER</b> Lesley Testan
Page 87-88	<b>MY GRANDFATHER</b> Jessie Fox Brenner
Page 88-90	<b>MONIEK GOLDBERG – A EULOGY BY HIS SON</b> David Goldberg
Page 91-92	<b>MONTY GRAHAM'S STORY</b> By his family
Page 92-93	<b>EVA JULIA GRAHAM</b> Tony Graham
Page 94	<b>JUDGE ISRAEL FINESTEIN QC</b> Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks
Page 95	<b>ISRAEL FINESTEIN</b> Aubrey Rose CBE D.Univ
Page 95-96	<b>CHARLES (CHAIM) SHANE</b> Michael Shane
Page 96-97	<b>SECTION VII MEMBERS NEWS 2009</b> Compiled by Ruby Friedman
Page 97-99	<b>SECTION VIII MANCHESTER NEWS 2009</b> Compiled by Louise Elliot
Page 100	<b>SECTION IX FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS</b>
Page 101	<b>SECTION X ANNUAL OSCAR JOSEPH HOLOCAUST AWARDS</b>
Page 102	<b>"THE BOYS" IN WINDERMERE AUTUMN 1945</b>

This year marks the 65th anniversary of our liberation as well as the 65th anniversary of the arrival of most of our members to Britain. We marvel when we cast our minds back and reflect on the path we have travelled together on our long journey. Unfortunately our original numbers have dwindled and we have lost many friends over the years. We shall remember them and always cherish their memory. We think also of those remarkable people who extended their help to us when first we came to this country. For years they graced our table at our reunions and other events admiring our swift integration into the community. Alas, they too are no longer here. The biological clock has done its work. However we are delighted to still enjoy the company and friendship of Yogi Mayer our leader and mentor at the Primrose Club. It is generally acknowledged that the Primrose Club, under the devoted leadership of Yogi, played a very important part in our rehabilitation and adjustment. His interest in our welfare has never ceased.

On the occasion of Yogi's 97th birthday, our members, together with members of the former "Brady Boys Club" who also owe a debt to him, came together to listen to his reminiscences of the past. You will find a short summary of this remarkable evening by the former Bradian Leon Rogers. The picture on the cover taken that evening is that of Yogi being interviewed by our President Sir Martin Gilbert. It was Yogi's initiative to have the book "The Boys -Triumph over Adversity" translated and published in German. The book was highly acclaimed and recommended by the reviewers and has made a great impression on the German public.

Up to now, our Journal has concentrated mainly on articles of the past especially those relating to, and affected by, our experiences during the war. We must continue to write about these experiences as they must never be forgotten. We are about to embark upon a new project and I would like to invite you to participate in this new and important venture. We have a special story to tell about

our childhood and early adolescence and our recollections of how we coped after our arrival in England are of equal importance and interest and may serve as an inspiration to others. I am asking for contributions about this period of your lives. In the light of this I'd like to draw your attention to the 1st installment of an article "My Post-war Memoir" by Jerzy Lando who is a regular contributor to our Journal.

The second group of "The Boys" stayed in Kloster Indersdorf before they came to Southampton. It will be interesting for them, as well as for others, to learn that many survivors who did not come with us to England were also looked after at this centre. I'd like to draw your attention to an article in this edition by Anna Andlauer "The International Children's Centre Kloster Indersdorf 1945 - 1948" as well as the many pictures printed alongside it.

Ariel Sherman, the granddaughter of Judith and Robert Sherman, in her article "Holocaust Education as an Important Step in the Changing World's View of the Shoa" makes some relevant observations which could be of interest for the Second and Third Generation. I quote one of her very important remarks: "As survivors pass on, the duty to remember falls upon the shoulders of the children and especially the grandchildren of the survivors. We will be the last generation with living contact to Holocaust survivors. We bear the names of their murdered loved ones and carry their legacy with us. We will be their memory, but also their voice, their life" It is comforting to know that our children and grandchildren are becoming more active and we should give them as much encouragement as possible.

This year the theme of Holocaust Memorial Day was "The Legacy of Hope". It is this message that we strive to pass on to present and future generations. We have shown that people have the capacity to survive the most unimaginable suffering, cruelty and atrocities and emerge with the ability not just to live like normal human beings but exhibit the finest aspects of human behaviour.

# The story of the Jews of Dolginovo

Jack Kagan

In June this year I received an invitation from the Belarus President Mr. Lukashenko to come to Minsk and celebrate the 65th Anniversary of liberation of Minsk from the Nazis, and to receive a liberation medal. The medal was given to me at a ceremony in the Imperial War Museum and I was pleased to have received a letter from Buckingham Palace "I have the honour to inform you that the Queen has been pleased to grant you Unrestricted Permission to wear the 65th Anniversary medal, which was conferred upon you by the President of the Republic of Belarus, in recognition of your services in remembrance of the Holocaust victims in Belarus".

In Minsk I enjoyed very much the festivities as a guest of the President. I met many interesting people. On the 4th of July there was a reception at the Israeli Ambassador's home. There I heard an amazing story about a town not far from Novogrudok and I would like to share it with you.

Dolginovo is a small town, pre-war population of 5,000 people and 3,000 Jews among them. In the Second World War the Germans occupied the town at the end of June '41 and, as everywhere in the occupied territory, the Jews immediately started suffering. The first large massacre was on March 30, 1942 just before Passover. The second final Action against the Jews of Dolginovo was on 21st May 1942. More

*Jack is a committee member of our Society and has been a contributor to our Journal in recent years. His continuous efforts to keep alive the memory of his people from Novogrodek are most commendable. He published a book "Surviving the Holocaust With The Russian Jewish Partisans" and recently compiled a book entitled "Novogrodek - A History Of A Shtetl".*

than 300 Jews managed to escape from this pogrom, amongst them many women and children. There was only one place to run to, and that was the forest.

The greatest problem for them was to get food. The farmers did not want to feed so many Jews. The Jews in turn wanted to survive so they robbed the farmer at night and threatened to kill any farmer refusing to help them. They formed a Partisan Detachment called "Victory". In the group were lots of women and 35 children.

At that time the Russians were forming a partisan movement in that area. Red Army soldiers and escapees from prisoner of war camps gathered in the area, among them Nikolai Kiselev.

Nikolai was a soldier and was caught by the Germans in the battle in the Viazma Region in defence of Moscow. He was among many Red Army soldiers being transported by train to Germany. Nikolai managed to jump the train

in the region of Vileika and found a partisan battalion "Vengeance" under the command of Vasilii Voronianski. His function was to organise partisan units composed of Jews who escaped the German murder operation in that area, as well as to find Soviet soldiers who had escaped from POW camps. Nikolai reported the situation of the Jewish camp to Vasilii and after a while Vasilii ordered Nikolai to transfer the Jews beyond the front line. The success of such a venture seemed doubtful, due to the distance and severe condition, and most of the unit officers rejected the assignment. Nikolai, Anna Sirotkova as a special recognisance agent, and five Jewish armed partisans left to escort the Jewish group eastward. It consisted of 120 men, 115 women and 35 children, the youngest being 3 years old.

The way was dangerous and hard, especially when villagers who were asked to "donate" food found out that the recipients were Jews. Nikolai was therefore occasionally obliged to use force. He was dealing daily with complaints of hungry exhausted marchers.

Nikolai explained to them, if they were to be attacked they should run in all directions; the survivors should assemble in the place of the attack in 3 days' time. In fact, a few days later they were attacked by Germans in civilian clothes. Unfortunately, 50 were killed and one elderly woman of 70 was wounded in both

her legs. They assembled in the ambush place and buried the dead.

The wounded Braina Katz had to be left behind. It was impossible to carry her. They left her food and marched on. A few days later a Russian Partisan group, with Gennady Safonov in charge, went through the area and found Braina. The partisans took her to a nearby village where she recovered from her wounds. Braina became the cook for the unit. She survived the war and emigrated to Israel, Gennady Safonov was given

the honour Righteous Among The Nations.

They were nearing the front. Kremer's 3 year old kept crying as she was hungry and afraid. It was a dangerous situation; the parents agreed to drown her. When Nicolai heard about it, he took her in his arms, calmed her, fed her with his own small ration of bread and carried her for many kilometres.

The group finally reached the area under Soviet control near the town of Velikie Luki on November 25, 1942. The younger members were

immediately mobilised in the Red Army and the others transported deep in the USSR to the town of Ufa.

After passing interrogation, Nikolai went eastwards with the remainder of the group, and then he was sent to Moscow.

He lived in Moscow until his death in 1974 and continued to correspond with several of the Jews he had rescued.

On September 28, 2005, Yad Vashem recognized Nikolai Kiselev as one of the Righteous Among The Nations.

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## Memories of my Cousins Harry Wajchendler and Howard Chandler and meeting some of the other 'Boys'

Throughout my life I have come across various "boys" at unexpected times. So meeting Krulik Wilder and his wife Gloria at a tea party at a friend's home in June 2009 was no exception. I told Krulik that I knew Victor Greenberg and had also met Harry Fox as they belong to our shul. I explained to Krulik that my late mother, Annie Brampton, was a first cousin of Harry and Hymie Wajchendler (Hymie now Howard Chandler) and Krulik asked if I would write my memories of meeting them.

It seems that while in England, just after the war, Harry and Howard Wajchendler searched and found an uncle named Mottel Wajchendler who had left for Palestine before the war. Uncle Mottel informed them that they had two aunts in London, one being my grandmother Esther Saltzman and the other, my grandmother's

### Barbara Merton née Brampton

sister Feiga Marks. Harry and Howard contacted their aunts informing them of who they were and these ladies were only too willing to take them in to live with them. This is where I first met Harry and Howard and many of their friends.

I seem to remember that the first time I met Harry and Howard was in 1946 when I was about 5 or 6 years old when they lived at my grandmother's house in South Tottenham. They spoke little English at that time but were determined to learn the language. During the day they went to work and in the evening they went to night school and it did not take them long to learn the language. Harry was funny and used to wiggle his ears to make me laugh and even when I was grown up, wiggling his ears still made me laugh. Both Harry and

Howard were wonderful to me when I was small and always had time to play with me. I think that I probably had a crush on Howard as I used to follow him everywhere he went but he did not seem to mind at all. During this time Harry and Howard used to visit my parents Barney and Annie Brampton at our home where we lived above our shop in High Road Tottenham. Many times my parents and I would go out for the day with Harry and Howard, my father taking much pleasure in using his Ford 8 car that he purchased just after the war to take us to Westcliff and other places.

In 1950 at the age of 10, I was a bridesmaid at Harry and Doreen's wedding. That was a lovely day in my childhood life that I will always remember. Harry and Doreen were very good to me, as my mother Annie had recently passed away and they thought my being a bridesmaid at their wedding

would help me get over her death. Harry and Howard always thought of others. At that time, my grandmother, Esther Saltzman, lived in Greenfield Road, South Tottenham and David Adler lived there for some time. I frequently visited my grandmother with my cousin Eve Saltzman and I remember David quite well as he was always playing the piano in the front room.

Recently I met Harry Fox who had joined our synagogue and I told him that I knew of some of the "boys." I mentioned that David Adler lived at my grandmother's house. Harry told me that he was friendly with David and he kindly gave my telephone number to David so that he could contact me. David phoned me a few days later and he told me a few stories about my

grandmother that I did not remember. I was thrilled to talk to David after all these years although, to my disappointment, he did not seem to remember either me or my cousin Eve.

I have very wonderful memories of my cousins Harry and Howard Wajchendler and will always think of them with the greatest affection.

## His last slice of Bread (A tribute to my Uncle Meyer Brzezinski)

Sam Freiman

I am writing this as there is no-one left to remember him or his family, as they were all murdered in Treblinka. Meyer was my mother's sister's husband so no blood relative. I loved him. He was a constant visitor in our house with his family, as we were in his.

He and his family were deported from the Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka. At Radom they took away his beloved daughter, aged 10, and he arrived in Skarzisko, the work camp, where I was doing slave labour.

I was in "Werk B" and he was in "Werk A". I would

*Sam came to Britain with the Windermere group in August 1945. He is an active committee member of our Society. Sonja is the wife of Sam Freiman.*

see him once a week in the showers at Werk A. He was always waiting for me and gave me his bread ration, as he said he wanted me to live. He had already lost the will to live as he was heart-broken with grief. He perished of starvation.

I am the only one left who remembers him. Before

the war he was a baker and shopkeeper. He taught me to ride a bicycle so that I could deliver chollas and rolls for Shabbat to visitors as our town was a holiday resort - Konstantin-Jeziorno, near Warsaw, Poland.

He was such a kind and happy person. I long to have only the good memories of him.

Uncle Meyer!

My real name is Solomon Frajman.

My mother called me 'Schlomole'

To my friends, I am 'Dundlela', but that's another story!



## Going home to tell his story

Sonja Freiman

It was not without some trepidation that I approached a three day trip to Warsaw. Sam had been approached by a Dutch journalist, Helga Merits - who was making a documentary about Konstancin - his home town, to speak at a festival of storytellers. Sam's health had not been too good, so I

was anxious to be within easy reach of help. However, it was OK. I now want to see the videotape.

We were accompanied by Charlotte "Shosh" Peltzman, the daughter of Bella Peltzman, whose story I gave in a previous Journal. She survived by using a Polish name and working for a German family as a nanny.



Charlotte was very energetic and used the opportunity to research her mother's early days.

Sam gave an interview, then we attended an evening of story tellers which included Sam's survival, especially the bit with the policeman who kept him away from the Germans by returning him to the Ghetto early the next

morning. This story has been told several times and published in the book by Martin Gilbert.

On our last day we were told of a woman, Feige Rotstein, who survived by hiding on a farm with a Polish farmer. We searched for her in a Christian cemetery, but she had changed her name, so this made a difficult task impossible! However, we bought a lantern-type candle and stood it on an empty space between the graves and Sam began to say Kaddish. Then I noticed that Sam was speaking in Yiddish, as if



Feige was there. He said "If you can all hear me - by now he was trying to address the lost members of his wider family, grandparents, uncles and cousins, and Yiddish came naturally.

Kaddish and Yiddish in a Christian cemetery! G-d I hope understands!

We then left for the airport. I was really happy when we touched down in London.

## The Sonnenschein Family

Janina  
Fischler-Martinho

The second Jewish-German family to settle in our road, at the very top of it, in the spring of 1939, were the Sonnenscheins. Mamma told me that "Sonnenschein" meant "sunshine" in German.

The family numbered four members: the parents who appeared elderly - maybe because of their grave countenances, maybe because of their greying hair - and two daughters: Ada and Sylvie. The former was well into her twenties, the latter only just out of her teens.

The Sonnenscheins came from Berlin and were a cultured, middle-class family. Herr S. was a lawyer by profession. They must have been people of substance as well as of professional and social consequence. They had once led a privileged, secure, but quiet and unostentatious life. Composure, orderliness, quiet dignity: these were the first outward indications as to who and what they

*Janina lived in the Krakow Ghetto from where she escaped at the time of its final liquidation in March 1943. She survived the war in hiding. Her story is told in her book "Have You Seen My Little Sister?" Like many others who did not come to England with the "Boys", she joined our Society in recent years. She is a regular contributor to our journal.*

had been. They were extremely reserved. Distant. Both their conduct and their appearance commanded respect.

They had rented a large flat in our street, just a few houses away from us. I found them very intriguing; partly, because they were foreign and inaccessible for reasons of language; partly, because of their bearing - simple and courteous, but a little disorientated.... as if they were gently groping in the dark. I see them, the

four of them, to this day so clearly. And whenever I hear the words "German-Jews" - the curtains of time part and the S. family stand there, in the void of time, in vivid, well-remembered detail. They personify unspeakable suffering and extraordinary courage.

I have heard it said many times "The Jews went like lambs to the slaughter..." I tend to bristle at that comment. It is very hurtful, for I know it to be unjust. Perhaps the S. family's plight and fate illustrate the fallacy of that statement. Little knowledge, and even less understanding of the satanic intricacy of the labyrinth through which we were led, and in which we were trapped, might cause one to arrive at that quite erroneous conclusion. Many Jews resisted on a personal, individual level, though the means of resistance at their disposal were extremely tenuous, but we do not know about them and now never shall. Even holding a poetry

recital, as we did in the Cracow Ghetto, was a form of resistance I believe.

For me, looking back more than half-a-century, with the understanding born of experience, and the knowledge I have diligently worked to acquire, the S. family symbolise stubborn, individual resistance against the most brutally ruthless, steely-cold, iron-willed regime. They followed the Stations of the Cross, labouring, heaving under the yoke of their Jewishness, and every step, just like those of Christ the Jew, was marked with blood, sweat and tears. They fought back with unflinching determination and singular courage.

Totally uprooted and alienated, they found themselves in a foreign country where they were not welcome and where they could not communicate - the language barrier appeared almost insuperable. My father and Herr S. struck up what, in due course, became a friendship. As there was no language difficulty - father's German had been acquired in Franz-Joseph's rigorous educational establishments - and as he liked the family, he was able to help them in all sorts of useful, everyday matters.

In our street, where everybody knew everybody else and where the residents behaved, on the whole, with discretion and decorum, the S. family, although quiet and unobtrusive, did not escape attention. Their superbly-tailored attire, their impeccable grooming and their Semitic features did not go unheeded. To be a Jew and a German! It was hardly possible to possess more damaging credentials in the eyes of the local population.

We never once saw the daughters in the road - strolling along in the shade of the acacia trees, taking the fresh, fragrant afternoon air. For whatever reason, they never set foot outside their flat. It may have been that their parents protected them from prying eyes and ill-intentioned minds...

The parents themselves we saw quite regularly. Two elderly figures in sombre, heavy overcoats, formal hats and gleaming footwear. They never spoke. They never smiled. They would pass by unseeing, looking straight in front of them, yet a little hesitant. But they did see. They always went round the hopscotch court my brother, Bartus, and I had drawn on the pavement, careful not to erase the tiniest corner of it.

My father used to call upon them in their flat. I know that he was always warmly and courteously received. They discussed many things with him; primarily the situation in Germany and the day-to-day changing fortunes of their country. These were the years 1939, 1940.... And, of course, the ominous clouds gathering on the European horizon. They told my father many things, things which they had experienced, seen with their own eyes... but my father would never repeat, never related anything fearful in the children's presence.

And then Germany invaded Poland and in no time at all we were all being subjected to grinding oppression. How did the S. family feel? The oppressors had caught up with them and they were again being crushed underfoot. What questions did they put to themselves? Did they ask each other: "Why did we come

to Poland? We could have gone to France, Belgium, Holland..." Ah, but there was, really, no escape. Only neither they, nor we, knew that at this stage: the autumn of 1939.

With the occupation came a tremendous shortage of food and every family spent many hours in long queues. The bakery queue was inevitably the longest. The S. couple, sometimes together, sometimes singly, were to be seen in those endless lines of weary, hopeful people.

Herr S. was of good medium height; his shoulders square, his back ramrod straight. I do not ever remember seeing him without his Harris Tweed overcoat and soft grey felt hat, which he would almost, but not quite, raise when he met me. We had taken to saying "Guten tag" to each other. He was clean-shaven and wore black-rimmed spectacles; the lenses rather thick. I do not think, with hindsight, that he was strikingly Semitic in appearance. Nonetheless, everyone knew he was a Jew. Summer and winter his face was sun-tanned. His nose was long and thin. His lips too were thin and rather stern. And from behind the thick lenses a pair of very green eyes viewed the world with calm, intelligent appraisal. There was something almost Biblical in the candour and forthrightness of that gaze.

Frau S., his spouse, was a matronly woman. Her gait, her gestures, her stance, were slow and deliberate; her carriage stately. Her smooth face, with a flat nose and full, rouged mouth, was always carefully powdered. Her eyes were very round and very brown, and so shiny as to

appear permanently moist. They were Jewish eyes. The expression so eloquent, so painful to behold, I could not have described at the time. I did not have the words. Only many years later that august, ancient tongue - Latin - yielded the precise phrase I had been searching for: "Mater Dolorosa".

In the winter of 1940, the S. family's flat was requisitioned by a German officer who wanted it vacated immediately or.... He was expecting the arrival of his wife and children from Germany, and wanted to redecorate and refurbish the apartment before they joined him. Time was pressing. The exigent ultimatum was complied with to the letter. The S. family, to whom the procedure was unlikely to be new, I imagine, moved, as ordered with delay. They moved to a nearby poor, working-class suburb - Olsza.

As they had great difficulty in finding accommodation at such short notice, they rented what they could get - a decrepit little bungalow in a truly sorry structural condition. Thinking back, I believe they must have had means. How? Where from? I do not know... I remember my father saying one day that Herr S. was dealing in foreign currency.... This was in the Ghetto days... I say, I remember... but the words, the sounds they made, are so finely tuned, so delicately spun that they are more like tender sighs, longing for a distance land... whispers in a dream...

The bungalow had no internal sanitation, and water had to be fetched from a nearby pump in a pail. The Polish winter is very harsh. Father and I visited the family in Olsza once. The

room in which they received us was clean and decent. Frau S. told us that they had had to scrub it on their hands and knees to make it habitable.

It was then that I saw Ada and Sylvie, the daughters, for the first time. I have never forgotten them. Ada, the elder sister, strongly resembled their mother. Her hair was very dark and her eyes very brown. Her mouth, brightly rouged, was like a scarlet slash in her face. She was striking, attractive in appearance, but the freshness, the bloom of youth were already fading. Looking back, it may have been because of Sylvie, who was a great beauty, that the parents so vigilantly protected and shielded their daughters from public gaze. Both girls, assiduously bent over their needlework, appeared quiet, placid young ladies.

The dingy bungalow was situated right next to Olsza's little river - the Bialucha. The shallow stream was now frozen over solid. Frau S. told us that the girls were very tempted to do some skating on it which, of course, was unthinkable! They were both, apparently, accomplished skaters who had once very much enjoyed that pleasant sport.

It was a long, severe winter, that first winter of war, and the family started casting around for more congenial accommodation. Nothing functioned properly in the bungalow. It was very difficult to keep their home warm and to cook their food. The nearby water pump had frozen hard and they had to carry the water they needed for daily use quite a long distance. They were

concerned about the girls' health and their own.

Eventually, they found a peasant cottage, all to themselves, in Michalowice - a village within easy reach of Cracow. It was dry and spacious and had a good, clean well in the garden. They were keen gardeners and were looking forward to tending the garden. They were pleased, father told us, and hoped for a period of respite and grace. Not even they had understood but, of course, the year was only 1940.

My father and I visited them once in Michalowice in that famous summer of 1940, after the fall of France, Holland and Belgium. Even I knew that the German nation was riding, in pure ecstasy, on the crest of a wave at their military victories - their leaders acclaimed wherever they appeared by rapturous, thunderous applause.

We walked both ways, father and I, even though the distance was considerable. We held hands.

On our arrival, that summer, we found the family very subdued, like people in deep mourning, but in good health and very glad to see us. The girls fetched their plaid rugs and spread them out on the grass in the garden. We sat there, all six of us, in the warm, pleasant afternoon sun, a light breeze, a cat's paw of wind, tousling our hair. The girls so welcoming, so hospitable, made me sit between them. I discovered that Ada was very vivacious. She could chat in Polish quite freely by then. Sylvie was more reserved; less willing to subject her tongue to the acrobatics of my native tongue.

Sylvie was beautiful. Like

a fairy princess. Her eyes - two luminous green stars. Her golden hair - a mass of tumbling, silken curls. Her limbs slender and graceful. She used her hands to explain... and they were white and gentle. The Great Potter himself must have drawn the blueprint and closely supervised every detail of its implementation to create such loveliness.

Herr and Frau S. and my father were talking in quiet, solemn tones, their faces grave, thoughtful... The word "Frankreich" came up time and again in their conversation....

We were offered home-made biscuits and cool cherry cordial. Sitting in that peaceful scented garden, nibbling, sipping, chatting - it was an afternoon I would always remember as one of the most agreeable and the most poignant of those long war years....

We did not see the S. family again until father ran into Herr S. in the winter of 1942 in the streets of the Cracow Ghetto where we had all been herded by then.

The inhabitants of the walled-in Cracow Ghetto world made plans for the future. Those who had health and means adapted to the prevailing conditions, trusting, believing that they would live to see the German nation vanquished. Even those, like ourselves, who only just managed to keep body and soul together believed, in the winter of 1942, that they would outlast the Occupation; that they would live to see the enemy brought to his knees and routed.

I always see the Ghetto as cold, dark and grey - the facades of the houses black with ingrained dirt and

long, ragged stains of dampness. I saw life in the Ghetto not only through my own eyes, but also through the eyes of my family - all three generations of them. I was very conscious of the different levels upon which the Ghetto population lived. There was always the Ghetto's most virulent, home-grown culture, as it were - hunger. I saw the suffering it caused.... just as I saw people who were clean, well-clad and properly nourished. I also understood the fear that stalked the Ghetto; very great fear. My mamma said one morning: "I can't sleep..." I wondered why she could not sleep but, of course, that shapeless, as yet unformed fear was working itself into every little crevice of our existence, even though we had no inkling that winter, the last of our ignorance, of what lay in store for us... Good, bright news was so rare, that when, during that long, harsh winter of 1942, glad tidings began to circulate round the Ghetto, they shook us, brought a smile to our lips, a sparkle to our eyes...

The beautiful Sylvie S. was being courted by a fine young man - Jakub Abrahamer - a rich baker's only son. They were in love. They were planning a spring wedding here, in the Ghetto.

The Abrahamer family lived in our courtyard. The expression on Jakub's face, as he crossed, morning and evening, said: "It's good to be alive. Happiness is right here, in the Ghetto. All will be well..."

In March 1942, there was a round-up in the Ghetto - ostensibly for forced-labour; at least that was what we understood. My memory at this point is rather imprecise,

except for what father told us. His words I remember quite clearly. Father, very distressed, told us that Herr S. was one of the victims. He had been taken and dispatched into the unknown... Two days later, when father came home in the evening, he said: "It is quite unbelievable, but Herr S. is back in the Ghetto. I spoke to him today. Calm, composed, impeccably turned out, not so much as a button missing from his overcoat..." (I remember that sentence so well because of "the button" - it was such a nice graphic touch to my mind). "He had escaped from the train and made his way back to the Ghetto, to his family... That man is indomitable."

Alas, in the face of what was being planned and prepared for us, there were no indomitable men.

I must explain, however, that the doors of that goods train, in March 1942, had not been chained and padlocked, had not been bolted and sealed from the outside, as they would be in future transports. Hermetically so. There were no escapes through truck doors. Nonetheless, for a man of Herr S.'s age and background, it was a feat of extraordinary bravery and resourcefulness.

And so Herr S. returned to his family, seemingly unscarred, and there was no change in their plans, except that Sylvie was poorly.

Sylvie became ill. She was running a temperature; angry red splotches appeared on her body.

The Cracow Ghetto was fortunate in its excellent medical team. Every branch of medicine, every medical skill was represented. The doctors themselves -

highly qualified, extremely competent - were singularly dedicated, courageous men. The Ghetto at this stage, in the early spring of 1942, had two hospitals. Nobody was turned away from their doors. Expertise, care, devotion in every form and shape were there for rich and poor alike.

It did not take long for those fine, capable doctors, who came and went, came and went and did not leave Sylvie unattended day or night, to make a diagnosis. Typhus. Sylvie, covered in ugly red patches, her temperature high and still rising - Sylvie burningly hot and barely conscious - was transferred from the one-room family home in Lvovska Street to the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Rekawka. Her parents and sister would not leave her side.

Yes, there was typhus in the Ghetto. But why Sylvie? everybody asked. She was young and healthy; clean and well nourished.

Jakub Abrahamer, as he crossed the courtyard, looked drawn and infinitely sad. Happiness was being wrenched from within his grasp.

Father came home in the evening and his voice quivered with pity as he said: "Sylvie Sonnenschein has died.... I have seen her father. He wept. He wept like a little child..."

In my world, in those days, men did not cry. A boy was brought up not to cry, not to give in to his emotions. For a man like Herr S., so controlled in conduct, utterance and gesture, to weep like a child... We understood that our world was being smashed, demolished - its values

trodden upon, its creeds desecrated.

I only saw the S. family, who had succeeded in side-stepping the June "Aktion", or rather just Frau Sonnenschein, once more. That summer and autumn of 1942, I made a modest contribution to the family budget. We were still a family; my brother Joseph and I, our maternal grandmother, aunts, uncles, cousins.... I traded mainly in dairy produce; milk, cheese, butter eggs. Milk was not a profitable commodity to deal in. It was cumbersome and heavy to carry. The profit margin on it was very small. But babies were still being born in the Ghetto and I had one or two customers who would expressly ask me to bring in milk for their little ones.

Child smugglers were perennial in the Ghetto. They formed quite a large clique and, although I knew almost every member of it, I did not belong to it. I preferred to be independent, to come and go as I pleased. I had a regular clientele and after greasing the Polish policeman's paw at the gate, I still made a profit. Times were very hard. Every little helped.

One day I called on Frau S., offering her my wares. They lived in Lvovska Street, on the accursed even-numbered side. It was a fatal address to have, not that any address in the Ghetto was good, as the forthcoming October Aktion would prove.

Frau S. opened the door herself and invited me into the communal kitchen where she was preparing an evening meal. She was as neat and tidy in her person as ever, but she had greatly

aged in the last two or three years. Her hair, silver-white, was parted in the middle and gathered into a bun at the nape of her neck. Her face was ravaged; the loose, pendulous flesh grey and lined. The brown, intelligent eyes dull and bloodshot; but it was her eyelids that frightened me. "She weeps a lot" I thought. "It's the salt in the tears that has burnt them... like some corrosive acid..." She was attired entirely in black; she was in mourning for her daughter.

Frau S. had five or six live, silvery herrings on the table, threshing around, half-rising up. Whilst talking to me - her command of the Polish language was now quite astonishing - she placed a herring on a small chopping-board. She picked up the kitchen cleaver, lying by it, and with one deft stroke severed the fish's head. The blood spurted out as the head, with its watery eyes, parted from the scaly body which continued to flap on the chopping-board.

I, a hardened Ghetto dweller, a young veteran, felt sick, truly sick to the very pit of my stomach. I stammered out: "You should stun it first... You are making it suffer."

She looked at me long and hard and, her voice trembling with barely suppressed tears, said: "And what about our suffering? Don't we suffer? Aren't they making us suffer?"

And so the 28th October 1942, crept quietly upon us. The second "re-settlement" Aktion. An Aktion of immeasurable brutality and swiftness which yielded, in less than twenty-four hours, 6,000 human beings for deportation to the East.... Lvovska Street, particularly

the even-numbered side, and all the neighbouring adjacent roads were cleaned out, scraped bare. Not a soul was spared.

Was it Herr Sonnenschein, for legend has it that it was a German-Jewish refugee who, addressing the SS officer commanding the Lvovska Street sector of the Aktion, courteously asked in his impeccably spoken native tongue if he might

be permitted to take his overcoat as winter was not far off...? And the officer's reply: "It is not necessary, everything you require will be there... waiting for you..."

So you see, dear reader, I am the only one to remember that fine afternoon in the summer of 1940 when my father and I joined the Sonnenschein family in the garden of their cottage in Michalowice. We sat on the

grass in the sun's pleasant warmth, under a peaceful, blue sky.... Of the six of us, I was the only one to survive the war, for the Sonnenschein parents and their daughter, Ada, formed part of 28th October's rich harvest. The last Station of the Cross; the march to the cattle-trucks and the nightmare journey to the twentieth century - German conceived, German created - Golgotha.

## Our Goldberg Variations

Esther Goldberg

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My mother never considered herself to be a survivor. Yet I grew up hearing the words 'ghetto', 'ravine', 'digging their own graves,' and 'exterminated'. I did not know what these words meant, but they sounded ominous and were followed by heavy silences. Somehow these words seemed to explain why my family included only my parents and my older brother, and why other families had other members - older members. They seemed to recall a world that was different from what I knew, a world with its own language and history, once teeming with Jewish life, now no longer in existence.

My mother is now 91. I told her recently that I have had her more than double the amount of time she had her mother. More silence. And when that silence is final, I will be rootless. How rootless was she when I was growing up, and she had no mother to turn to, no sisters to share her joys and her sorrows, no

example of the normal process of aging? She was a pioneer, a community of one.

Yocheved Szapiro was born in a farmhouse in eastern Poland. It was 1918 and the Jews were on the run from pogroms that followed in the wake of the First World War. Many people found refuge in that farmhouse that night. Esther Chaya, my grandmother, was offered the sole bed, so that she could give birth. The next morning, the refugees continued their flight, and Esther Chaya, her husband Berel, and the newborn baby Yocheved - 'Hetchka' - also fled. They were eventually able to make their home in Sarny, in the eastern Polish province of Volyn. Two more daughters followed: Mindel in 1919 and Dena in 1928.

Yocheved is not a common name in our family tree. Berel and Esther Chaya had two children before my mother was born. Both children had died in infancy, and it was thought - such were the superstitions at the

time - they had died because they had been named after relatives who had died young. So when Esther Chaya became pregnant with my mother, she and her husband went to the Stoliner Rabbi to ask what to name the child. He said, "Name him Aaron." And if the child was a girl? "Yocheved."

My father, Ben Goldberg, like my mother, had been born in eastern Poland, and was a cousin to my mother. His father, Chaim, emigrated to the United States in 1910, leaving his wife Bracha and three tiny children, Raisa (Rose), Liebe (Lily), and Berel (Ben) in the tiny town of Czartorysk, near Sarny. When Bracha died of typhus soon after her husband left, the three children lived with their grandmother Mindel Szapiro until her death. They spent time in an orphanage, and then their newly-married Uncle Berel and his wife Esther Chaya, gave them a home, and made plans to go with them to America. It was 1921 and

life was stable in Sarny; Grandfather Berel's leather tanning business was flourishing, so the three Goldberg children left their Szapiro family and their roots and travelled to the New World on their own.

They arrived in Milwaukee to be with the father they barely knew and had not seen for eleven years. He had remarried and had a new family. With no room for the three children in the family home or heart, Rose and Lily, in their late teens, moved to Chicago. Ben spent his high school years in Milwaukee, and then joined his sisters in Chicago.

At the beginning of 1939, having lost both sisters to tuberculosis, and having established himself in the jewellery business, the thirty-year-old Ben decided to return to the Old Country, to "advertise for a wife" as he later recalled, a smile playing around his eyes. He arrived in Sarny and made his way to the home he remembered - that of his aunt and uncle, Esther Chaya and Berel Szapiro. Three beautiful daughters greeted him, but it was the twenty-one-year-old Hetchka (Yocheved) with her scholarly mind who stole his heart. My parents were married in March 1939. Hetchka accompanied Ben to Warsaw, where he received treatment for his own tuberculosis. Then she returned home to await her immigration papers to the United States.

Ten days after they were married in Sarny, Ben was back in Chicago organising papers to bring his bride to America. Six months later, Germany invaded Poland the Second World War broke out. The Soviet Union annexed eastern Poland. The United

States Embassy in Warsaw closed, though embassies in Latvia and Romania remained open. Hetchka needed six documents; a Soviet permit to travel to Moscow, a visa to enter the United States, a ticket on the Trans-Siberian Railway from Moscow to the Soviet port of Vladivostok, a Japanese transit visa for the port of Yokohama, a ship's passage from Japan to San Francisco via Honolulu, and a train ticket from San Francisco to Chicago. The most difficult to obtain had been the Soviet internal permit to travel to Moscow where the other papers were waiting.

"Wait until the war is over, then your husband will come and get you," her father advised. Decades before Fiddler on the Roof, my mother and her father relived Hodel's farewell at the train station.

Hetchka's first stop was Kiev where she met her uncle Mendel Flejsz, Esther Chaya's brother. Thinking she would return to Sarny once she had received the documents in Moscow, he prevailed on Hetchka to leave her family photos with him. She did. Years later when I was in Budapest, I saw the antique shops filled with old Jewish photographs and postcards and wondered what the chances were of finding my family on display in an antique shop in Kiev.

Hetchka reached the United States on the Japanese ship Tatuta Maru on May 29, 1941. She sent a telegram to her parents and received notice that her message had been delivered. She had no further news. On the 22nd of June, Germany invaded the Soviet Union; German troops reached

Sarny on the 5th of July. If her parents and sisters were not killed in the terror the Germans wreaked on arrival, if they survived the year in the ghetto of Sarny, they were almost certainly murdered in the forest nearby, along with 14,000 of their relatives, friends, neighbours and the Jews of the nearby villages. That mass killing was two weeks before Rosh Hashana, 1942.

Hetchka decided to become American; she cut off her braids and changed her name to Helen. Panicked about the fate of her family, she turned to study, and went to school with a Polish/English dictionary. Her first exam had the instructions: "Fill in the blank." She had to look up the word 'blank'. Always wanting to study medicine, she went into optometry. She worked for a few years, and then my brother Rick was born, and then I.

My father had discovered skiing. Having lost his sisters, and one lung, to tuberculosis, Ben was rigorous in following the accepted cure of fresh, mountain air. He and Helen had fallen in love with Idaho and built a vacation home near Sun Valley. Two years of commuting to spend a month in the winter and a month in the summer evolved into a permanent move, bringing the first Jewish family to Ketchum, Idaho, in 1958. Until the late 1960s, the town of Ketchum had 746 people, a single paved road, and one mile away, the ski resort of Sun Valley, built in 1936 by the Union Pacific Railroad as a "destination" to get people to ride the train. Union Pacific engineers had built the first chairlift there, and ski instructors had been brought in from Austria to

teach Hollywood stars to ski.

Ben would break off his business dealings on sunny afternoons in the winter to hit the slopes. Helen had given up skiing after a nasty fall in which she broke her back. Setting out her linen tablecloth and Limoges china, she would make tea, and more times than not, Ben would return from his day on the mountain with a newly-met ski companion. These guests would find my parents' home to be an oasis of culture, learning and civilisation - the only one of its kind in the area. My mother's accent always inspired the question of how this family had arrived in the wilds of Idaho.

Perhaps because my mother had not been through the horrors that her family faced, she was able to talk. And she spoke to everyone. I learned that my family had been "exterminated." It was a fact that governed my mother's every move, affected her every attitude, clouded her every perspective.

The photograph of my kindergarten class shows a dozen bright, shiny-faced children sitting on the grass. It is spring, the sun is hot, and all the children are wearing short-sleeved shirts. All but one; little Esther, with her two brown braids, is buttoned-up in her woollen coat. She should not, God forbid, catch a cold.

In 1960 when my brother was due to become Bar Mitzvah, my mother, having trained him herself with books and records brought from Chicago, packed us off to Salt Lake City, to the closest rabbi. There, at Congregation Montefiore, my brother Rick had his first *aliyah*. After that, it was Boise - one hundred and

fifty miles away - with its two synagogues that we 'frequented'. Congregation Beth Israel, Reform, built in 1896, known as the oldest synagogue continually in use west of the Mississippi, was run by the Oppenheimer and Hamersley families. Congregation Ahavath Israel, Conservative, had been built after the Second World War. Its services were run by Martin Haumann and Joel Stone. As we had friends at both synagogues, I grew up believing that we had holidays over two days so we could support both congregations. In the late 1980s the two combined and Idaho's first rabbi came to Boise, nearly one hundred years after the first Jews settled there.

Sometimes, we would go to Boise for Rosh Hashana; more often, we would go for Yom Kippur, so my mother could attend *Yizkor* service. Children were always sent outside for *Yizkor*, and I would return to the sanctuary to find my mother broken and in tears, and then, always, the silence. I could not imagine what happened during this service to leave my mother so devastated.

The other holidays we celebrated at home. On Rosh Hashana, if not in Boise, my brother and I stayed home from school and were subjected to Richard Tucker and Jan Pierce chanting the Sacred Service, courtesy of RCA records. For Hanukah we decorated the house, lit candles, sang songs, and played dreydel. On Passover, the outside Jewish world intervened and we received a shipment of matzos and macaroons from Marshall Field Department Store in Chicago. That parcel was a

life-line to a community I did not know.

One community I did know when I was growing up was Moishеле. Moishеле lived with his parents in Israel, and he was a cousin. A relative. And my age. He could not have been more exotic! It was through him - more specifically through his parents and their correspondence with my mother - that Israel came into my consciousness as a place where I had family, where other Jews lived and had equal opportunity, where there was no fear associated with being Jewish, where no one could be "exterminated" for being Jewish. During the Six-Day War, my mother was glued to the television, as if her very existence depended on Israel's survival. Her surprise and relief at the outcome gave us all confidence that the era of the Holocaust was over.

In the 1970s, as Sun Valley grew and condos were built as holiday homes, Jews from California and Chicago became part-time residents. Helen greeted each new homeowner with a housewarming present; a *mezuzah*. If Hanukah came during the Christmas holidays, or Passover during the Easter break, we would have community events, established by my mother and a California family, the Albans; otherwise, our celebrations were observed with only Lucile and Myrtle Friedman, cousins from nearby Hailey, whose fathers had come with the silver and gold miners in the 1880s.

In my youth, Idaho, and especially our area, was either devoutly Catholic or ardently Mormon. My friends wanted me to go to Catechism with them, or

to their Mormon classes. My mother politely declined. She tried to teach me Hebrew - unsuccessfully. Yiddish was not spoken in our household but my mother often read *Der Tag* and the *Forward* at the dinner table. Whatever formal education I got was the reading I did on my own - our house had no shortage of books on Jewish themes. But it was a decision I came to later that confirmed my connection to Judaism.

When I was thirteen, all of my birthday wishes came true when my father gave me a horse. "Jews don't ride horses," my mother had said. Still, Rocinante (after Don Quixote's horse) came into my life, and sanity came with her. One wintry day when I was sixteen, I was visiting the bar near where my horse spent the summer and met a couple of guys. It was all very forgettable, but then a few days later, as I was returning to school after a lunch break, I saw the two young men, dressed in suits, talking to students by the side of the road. I stopped to say hello.

They were Mormon missionaries and they saw a new candidate. For me, it was one of those life-changing moments. I was Jewish, and my grandparents and aunts had been murdered because they were Jews. I owed it to them to be Jewish. But how could I raise children to be committed Jews with little education I had? I would have to marry someone Jewish. I was sixteen, and I made this promise to myself and to my martyred grandparents.

Some time after this, I saw a televised interview with Elie Wiesel who was discussing his decision to

bring a child into this world. "How can I be the last?" he said - the last of his lineage. "What gives me the right to be the end?" It was a question I could well understand. Perhaps the rest of my life has been spent trying to answer it, and I have identified with the Second Generation community as we struggle to share the burden - and the importance - of this legacy.

In the Spring of 1983, I went with my mother to the World Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors in Washington, D.C. I had married the year before (a nice Jewish Canadian) and we were living in Edmonton, Alberta. Edmonton had a vibrant survivor community, and I became involved. My mother, still in Idaho, agreed to go to Washington with me. My husband and I were trying to have a baby, and I wanted to go to Washington pregnant - to show the survivors gathering together that the next generation was on its way. Even if I was not going to be noticeably pregnant, I wanted this to be something that this child and I would share. It did not happen as I had planned. Shoshana was born the following spring, but the sense of community I felt with the survivors and their children in Washington has always stayed with me.

After I moved to Edmonton in the early 1980s, my mother began her pioneering goal of establishing a Jewish presence in Sun Valley. Jews who came looking for Jewish life - even checking the cemetery - found nothing. One adventurous woman had even inquired with the local Catholic priest, who answered: "We don't have a Jewish community here. But

we have Helen Goldberg."

As part-time Jewish residents lengthened their time in the Wood River Valley, an *Oneg Shabbat* group met regularly at the Goldberg home. In time there were enough people to hold regular services, and a rabbi came from San Francisco to lead the group, either in the Presbyterian Church or in the Goldberg home. In 1986, another Shoah 'survivor' joined the community - a refurbished Torah from Czechoslovakia - a fitting addition to a community begun by a Jewish woman who was scarred, but not totally destroyed, by the fires that had extinguished so much of Jewish life and culture in Europe.

Today the Wood River Jewish Community has a fulltime rabbi, and has initiated plans to purchase a building as a permanent home for the community. The Goldbergs are no longer living there, but many people still remember the elegant dinners and elaborate picnics that Helen organised, and the grace and *Yiddishkeit* that she brought to the wild mountain setting.

Upon my return to Edmonton from the World Gathering in Washington, Sara Rozenberg, the head of the Edmonton Jewish Federation's survivors, invited me to participate in the Yom Hashoah service, and to belong to a Second Generation group she was establishing. Over the course of the next few years, our group organised the Yom Hashoah commemorations and *Kristallnacht* programmes, and maintained a lively Second Generation support group, organised by the head of our group, Max

Grunberg, with one of the counsellors from Jewish Family Services.

In 1988, I became co-head of our Generation After Committee with Rose Aziman, and I had to choose the speaker for our *Kristallnacht* commemoration. I had read in the *Forward* that my hero, Rudolf Vrba, was alive and well and living in Vancouver. Vrba, with fellow Slovak-Jewish prisoner Alfred Wetzler, had escaped from Auschwitz in April 1944 with the news that it was the 'Unknown Destination in the East' to which the trainloads of Jews were being sent, and that this 'destination' was in fact a killing factory. Vrba's book *I Cannot Forgive*, had been one of the seminal books of my Holocaust reading. I was keen to meet him.

Rudi Vrba's visit to Edmonton that year, and again the following year, when he was invited to speak as a guest of the Czech Cultural Society, came at a very fortuitous time in my life. In 1989 my parents moved to Edmonton in order to be near their grandchildren (two little girls). My father had developed cancer and, after making my mother sell their Sun Valley home so that she would not go back, he had died in Edmonton, never having lived there. Rudi's friendship and wisdom came at a most-needed time in my life.

I was heartsick that Rudolf Vrba was such an unknown in Canada, where he had lived for more than twenty years. I decided to try to get some recognition for him; I put his name forward for the Order of Canada, the highest recognition for Canadian

civilians. As it happened, I was to benefit far more from the *mitzvah* than he ever did.

As a one-woman cheering section, I began my research. I went through every book I could find on the Holocaust. If Rudolf Vrba was in the Index, I would get the book; if not, I would put the book back. I wrote to everyone who in 1990 was involved in Holocaust history. Elie Wiesel called him "an authentic hero;" Claude Lanzmann wrote that Rudi "deserves all the honours of mankind;" George Klein wrote from Stockholm that he had read Rudi's report in Budapest (the Vrba-Wetzler report combined with the report of Arnost Rosin and Czeslaw Mordowicz who had escaped after them in early May, which together became known as the Auschwitz Protocols). Knowing what lay ahead, George Klein had refused to board the train to Auschwitz. When I had asked Rudi for biographical information in order to introduce him before his talk at our *Kristallnacht* programme, he had answered: "Martin Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies*."

I was familiar with this name. My mother had claimed that her shtetl was "too small to be on any map" and yet I had found Sarny in Martin Gilbert's *Atlas of the Holocaust*. I had also read his pioneering *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy*. I had read it when I was pregnant with my younger daughter, Mirit, comforting myself in the knowledge that "the end of the story," for my family at least, was the growth of the next generation. I wrote to Martin Gilbert, asking him to be one of the referees in my application for Rudolf Vrba. He wrote back a

hand-written note: he would do whatever he could.

Twice I sent in an application for the Order of Canada; twice I was disappointed when the awards were announced. But it had started me on a course that has culminated in my own books: *Holocaust Memoir Digest*, a series of three volumes of quotations from published survivor memoirs arranged by theme and place, including a Study Guide for students, teachers, and librarians. As a result of these books, I have had the opportunity to travel and to lecture. Last year I wrote a course on the Holocaust that I taught at Hillsdale College in Michigan.

It was during the time when my daughters were very small that I understood the silence of some of the survivors. "Where are you going?" my little girls would ask when I went off to a Generation After meeting. I would open my mouth to answer them, look at their sweet little faces, and no words would come. I could not conjure the thoughts that would explain to them what this work was all about. It seemed as though saying the words would summon the Evil Eye and bring this reality into their lives. The distance between 'this happened' and 'this could happen' was too short. The maternal protective instinct kicked in, and during the years they were dependent on me, until they were in high school, I could not venture into public Holocaust work, beyond my own private reading and learning. So it was, I was involved in their school, in the synagogue, and found other ways to explore the community Judaism that I had not

experienced as a child.

Growing up in small Jewish communities, my daughters learned to be self-reliant and to get involved. They had opportunities to know their rabbis and community leaders. They grew up surrounded by friends who observed all manners of Jewish religious life and traditions.

My younger daughter Mirit chose to be involved in Jewish life and in Israel Action committees on campus; my older daughter Shoshana has always been committed to the Holocaust. As a child, she had memorised the Theresienstadt poet Pavel Friedmann's poem *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, for a *Kristallnacht* commemoration. When she was sixteen Shoshana went on the USY Poland/Israel trip, and afterward gave a talk in our London, Ontario, synagogue.

Shoshana's focus since her Poland/Israel trip has been on Israel. The Polish section of the trip had been traumatic, and she needed time to digest it. While at university, she spent a year at the Rothberg International

School at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and fell in love with Israel. "Just come back and finish university," I begged her. She did, and after earning a post-graduate certificate in Public Relations, she made *Aliyah* in 2007. When I asked her why, she described what life is like for so many of us in the Diaspora; the rootlessness, though now we have a home, the having to explain why she is not 'ready for Christmas.' the sense that in a family where so many members are scattered, Israel is a destination for many of our visits; the fear we all feel in our hearts for Israel - and the love we share for it. With her background and her Zionism, she is a twenty-first century pioneer, with the same optimism, courage, and hope that exemplified those who came to settle the land nearly a century earlier.

In September, Shoshana completed her first year in Israel. She lives and works in Jerusalem. She is happy. She is the same age that Hetchka - her Bubbie - was when she began her new life in the New World.

I often wonder how my

grandmother Esther Chaya, of blessed memory, is looking down on her surviving family. Her daughter Hetchka made a transition from growing up in a shtetl, brimming with Jewish life, to creating Jewish life in the wilderness. After her move to Edmonton, Helen became involved in a Chevra and Beth Tzedek. Eventually, she settled in Scottsdale, Arizona, where she became a pillar of Congregation Har Zion's educational classes.

Esther Chaya's namesake is committed to learning about the last days in the forest outside Sarny, what led to it, and what we can learn from that scene of barbarism and horror - and from the hundreds of thousands of similar scenes throughout Nazi-occupied Europe. What can we, human beings, learn about what it is to be human? How can we teach our next generations to view this humanness?

And Esther Chaya's great-granddaughter, Shoshana, has followed the Jewish dream to its logical conclusion - she has come home, to Israel.

## An unbelievable miracle happened to me

After the war lists of survivors were published, I kept studying the lists, thinking that being one of six children, perhaps one other might have survived. I wrote to the Red Cross without any result. I could not find anybody and, suffering from tuberculosis, I did not pursue it. I was recovering in the Grosvenor Sanatorium, Ashford. In Sam Dresner's room, I came across a Yiddish

By Alfred Huberman

*Alfred came to Britain with the Windermere group. He now lives in Brighton and he and his family are staunch supporters of our Society.*

newspaper, "Undzer Shtime" which was published in Paris. Knowing a few of my family had settled in France before the war, I hoped that some of them had survived. I wrote to the newspaper,

mentioning various aunts and uncles.

During an English lesson given by Mr Englehart, Sister Maria called me out, showed me a telegram.

You will understand my feelings at finding a sister I had last seen in Poland in 1942, who was now in France, and me in England thinking I was quite alone in the world. It was quite by chance that a member of my family was attending the



*Alfred Huberman and his Sister.*

funeral for someone from my home town. In conversation, it was mentioned that somebody who originated from my town of Pulawy was looking for lost relatives. My aunt Sarah heard about it, she visited my sister Idis, who was the oldest (my big sister) and asked if she had won the lottery, my sister said she had not won. My aunt told her that she had something more precious. Now we had found each other we began daily letters. In my sister's first letter she said "today something extraordinary happened to me, I could only dream about, never believing it would happen, my head is spinning and I am in a turmoil, people envy me". She said "I want to see photographs of you and see how you look". I have some of the letters and I still find it difficult to read them as they are so emotional, containing sentences like "my newly born little brother", wondering how I ended up in England, asking who was looking after me, doing my washing, etc and if I would be able to earn a living, if I was healthy and if I had the right to remain in England.

My sister had married six weeks before we found each other. Although they were just establishing their home, she still asked me if I would like to go to France. I also received letters from my Aunt Sarah who referred to me as

"mine tyer kind" (my darling child). She said that my mother (her sister) had left her a precious legacy.

I suddenly found myself with a family who were as overjoyed to find me, as I was to find them. Letters and photographs followed, with familiar names and faces, many of whom had not survived.

Once I had received a travel document I was able to travel to France where I discovered more photographs of the Polish families who no longer existed. I felt guilty and not really able to talk to the other boys with me in Ashford who had lost everyone and had no photographs.

As a child I had heard that there were two of my mother's uncles, somewhere in England, I only knew their first names - Uncle Shlomo and Uncle Perez - who had settled in England many years before the war. An uncle in France had visited them before the war. He had not survived but his daughter was able to give my sister the addresses. I discovered they lived in Brighton and wrote to them in Yiddish. They visited me in Ashford and I was invited to visit them.

After being discharged from the sanatorium, I visited them for longer periods and I was asked if I would like to live with them. I was very hesitant

because I missed being with the boys with whom I had so much in common.

As I had only been in England for a short time, it was difficult to get permission to travel. Since my sister was married to a Frenchman she was able to visit me. The first time we met, our reunion was happy and very tearful.

The last time I saw her she was my 'big sister'; four and a half years later, we were now the same height. During our journey from the airport we were able to recount the happenings of those years. My sister suggested that since I was in England and she was in France, "let's imagine that our parents and four sisters are somewhere".

Eventually I settled in Brighton where I learnt to be a tailor. Fifty-three years ago I married and we have three children. They are now married and together with their partners, are caring, good friends to us. We now have six grandchildren who give us a lot of pleasure.

Although we live in Hove, I have always stayed in touch with the boys, attending every reunion, together with the family and any other gatherings we can get to. My wife feels she is one of the boys.

Sadly, my sister died young but she has left two lovely daughters who have now become very close to us and they consider us surrogate parents. We have six grand-nieces and nephews and seven great-grand nieces and nephews, all in France, and we are always included in their celebrations. When visiting we are treated like royalty.

*It was well worth surviving!*

# Pilgrimage to Poland

Harry Olmer



***Mausoleum at Majdenek.***

I was prevailed upon by my family to go to Poland and relive with them some of my experiences, so that my children and grandchildren could better understand how the horrors of the Holocaust affected our family directly.

My grandson Danny refused to go with his school (Immanuel College) on a trip to Poland as he wanted to go with me and have a more personal experience.

On 16th July at 5.00 a.m., my two daughters - Pauline and Julia, my son Philip, together with three of my grandchildren - Miles - 13, Danny - 17 and Charley - 15, left from Heathrow on a flight to Warsaw.

We arrived to a very hot Warsaw at about 10 a.m., and were met by our very experienced driver and guide who has been taking Jewish families around the Jewish sites of significance in Poland for about 20 years.



***Crematorium.***

*Harry came to Britain with the Windermere Group and lived in the Cardross Hostel. He is a dentist and a valued member of the Committee of our Society.*

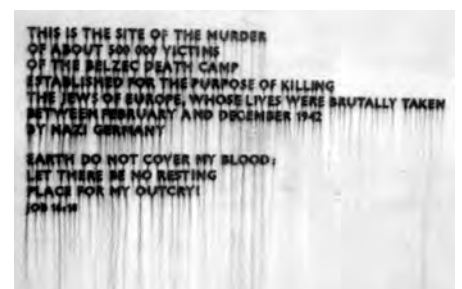
Our first stop was at the monument to the "Fighters of the Ghetto" and the "Umschlag Place" from where 300,000 Jews were sent to the extermination camp of Treblinka. We stopped outside the "Janusz Korczak orphanage (the head of the orphanage who sacrificed himself to die with the children in Treblinka).

We then left Warsaw to travel 150 km south east to the city of Lublin and the Concentration Camp of Majdanek, this is only one mile from the centre of the city. The camp has been preserved as the most authentic camp with all the gruesome reminders of the Holocaust. The barracks where the Jews lived are as they were, the watchtowers, the electrified fencing, the gas chambers, the crematorium and all the gruesome sites are in place. Here is the site where, in one day, 18,400 Jews were shot to the accompaniment of music and the only structures built are the museum and the Mausoleum where the ashes of the victims are stored.

We stayed in Lublin overnight. It is a picturesque medieval city. Before the war 40% of the population were Jewish, and it was a place of great Jewish learning. The new Yeshiva was built just before the war and contained the largest library

of Talmudic books - these were all burned by the Germans. The building itself was not destroyed, and after the war the Polish government used it as part of the university. It is now being returned to the Jewish community, but there are no Jews left in Lublin, so it is now being handed over to the Warsaw Jewish Community. As we walked along the streets in the old city, we noticed that most of the doorposts still had signs where a mezuzah used to be fixed.

The next morning we left Lublin on a three hour journey to the Ukrainian border to the little known extermination camp of Belzec. About 600,000 Jews were murdered there from April to December 1942. We later learned each train arriving at the camp contained about 1,000 people and that with true Nazi "efficiency" they would have been killed and cremated within two hours of arrival at the camp. Unlike Auschwitz and Majdanek, people were brought here only to die.



***Site of Belzec death camp.***



***Miles walking through the tunnel to reach the memorial at Beizec.***

This was an essential visit for us as my mother, grandmother, three sisters, aunts, uncles and cousins had all been taken there in September 1942. I had visited Belzec 18 years ago and apart from a small Soviet era memorial in what was an overgrown wooded area, there was no real evidence of the horrors that had taken place there. As we arrived at Belzec, we were shocked yet comforted to find that the most enormous, impressive memorial, dwarfing even Yad Vashem, had been built by the American Jewish Committee and the Polish Government in 2004. We later discovered the moving opening ceremony had been recorded and uploaded onto "You tube." It's definitely worth viewing.

A sea of rocks covered the entire site of the former camp with darker rocks used to mark the location of the mass graves. The museum at the entrance to the camp was built on the site of the train tracks and platform, with a monument of old tracks on the site of the funeral pyres. Belzec was

deserted apart from a small group of Israelis, Americans and Canadians who had just come from the Ukraine and the Museum Curator and guide who led us around the Camp.

When we reached the imposing memorial wall at the end of a long tunnel beneath the graves, one of the Israelis handed out memorial candles. After lighting the candles, our small group stood silently whilst I recited the memorial prayer and Kaddish. At this point we all broke down and cried. Our visit to Belzec was to be our family's most highly charged and emotional part of our trip.

The next stop on our journey was a visit to my childhood village of Charshnica to see what was left. As we stood at the site of my grandmother's house I met an old man and asked him whether he had lived there during the war. He told me he was born there and I asked him if he remembered any of my family. I was surprised that he remembered my father, the Rabbi who lived opposite, my uncle and his young son with whom he went to the same school, and all the Jewish neighbours. The bakery, the mikvah and the Turkish bath were all still there but derelict.

We arrived in Krakow with just enough time to shower and then went to the "Remu Synagogue" for Friday night prayers. The synagogue was full with visitors, including the group we had met at Belzec that morning.

After dinner we walked around the Jewish quarter where we were staying. This area has been rebuilt for the filming of "Schindler's List". We also visited Schindler's



***Memorial at the site of Plaszow concentration camp.***

enamelling factory which is now being converted into a museum.

Krakow is a beautiful medieval city which was not destroyed during the war and it was full of tourists.

A short distance from Krakow is the infamous camp of Plaszow, the story of which was told in the film "Schindler's List". Although there is nothing left of the camp there is a large memorial and I was keen for my family to see it as I spent over a year in this camp.

Our final trip was to Auschwitz which is about 80km from Krakow. It was pouring with rain when we arrived and the camp was heaving with visitors. We joined a tour with an excellent guide who showed us the horrors of both Auschwitz and Birkenau. Birkenau is where the Jews were brought in by trains from all over Europe for selection of the fit and young who were put to work, but the majority of the Jews were sent to the gas chambers. Although no trip to Poland would be complete without

a visit to Auschwitz and it was important that my family pay their respect to the 1.2 million Jews who were murdered there, it lacked the

intensity of the other two camps that we had visited.

Although the trip was harrowing, I am pleased that my family has been

with me and will remember and be able to pass on what they have seen to family and friends and future generations.

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## Extract from a Memoir

One of my closer friends, Adash, in spite of his young age, apart from other abilities, was a skilled milliner. From some scraps of fabric, probably left from bits of an old torn blanket, he fashioned for me a cap. I cannot imagine from where he managed to acquire the thread and needle and of course a knife with which to cut the bits of fabric into the required shape and size. These items were not easy to organise. Eventually he confessed that the boxes which contained the munitions we produced had on both ends carrying handles constructed of twisted yarns. Whenever he could, when engaged in carrying the boxes, he would unpick some of the yarn and tear off a length, which he used in lieu of sewing cotton. The cap proved a godsend; it kept my

Arthur Poznanski

*An extract from Arthur Poznanski's memoir referring to his friendship with Alec Ward (Adash).*

shaved head as well as my ears from freezing during work in the open fields in temperatures which at times fell well below zero. The willingness after a hard day's toll to devote his meagre leisure time to such a task may prove something about his character and quality of friendship.

Most of the boys of the Youth Kommando developed a close friendship and tried to help each other whenever possible. We did not know much about each other's background but this seemed of no importance. We were roughly of similar build and height and somehow shared a

trust in each other's goodwill and honesty. Adash told me that he hailed from Parysow, somewhere near Lublin, which was far from the corner of the country where we used to live. He had a large family and several siblings. His father, a glazier, was very proud of him when he displayed, even in his childhood a good singing voice and a love of music. It must have been this affinity to music and singing which brought us closer together. Well, I used to sing whenever I had sufficient energy left, but mainly to subdue the gnawing pangs of hunger.

He is the only other survivor of this part of my Odyssey through that inferno who is able to attest to the veracity of this narrative. He survived unspeakable hardships and was finally liberated in the nick of time.

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## My search for Family photographs

Many of us - including me - all Holocaust survivors, were left with no photographs of our families.

For myself, I have almost forgotten what they looked like - father, mother, sisters and the rest of my close family.

All through the years, I tried, time and time again, to find some way to get information as to where I could find these photographs.

Menachem Silberstein

My daughter, my granddaughter and myself followed many possibilities, including the Buchenwald Archive and the Washington Holocaust Museum, as well as many other leads.

I was one of a group of Jewish prisoners who were sent from Czestochowa to Buchenwald in December 1944 just before the Russians came in December 1944.

When we arrived, we had to give away all our belongings. Through all the war years I succeeded in keeping my family photographs with me.

When I arrived in Buchenwald, the family photographs were taken away from me by an SS officer. He placed them in a brown enveloped, wrote my name and prison number on it and promised to return them to me after the inspection and shower. I saw



*Standing at the monument stone in Rehmsdorf.*

the same man later but instead of getting back my photographs, I got a hiding!!!

My granddaughter, who is working in Berlin, got in touch with the Office of The Archive in

Buchenwald and then I got an invitation to come and visit them in the hope that they could help me in my search.

In September of this year my wife Nachama and I arrived in Berlin and, together with our granddaughter Tal and her friend Sabine, we drove to Buchenwald. We were very nicely received by the lady in charge of the archives there. She had prepared all my papers with details of my name, prisoner's number, date of arrival there, as well as details of the barracks in which I was housed - small camp barrack 52. On her desk she showed me her copy of "The Boys", translated into

German. She knew I was one of "The Boys". She told me that all personal belongings, documents, photographs, etc., had all been sent to another archive in Germany to be kept and preserved. She gave us the address and gave us an 80% chance that I would find the photographs and have peace of mind. Tal, my granddaughter, is following it through.

I was told that I was sent from Buchenwald to Reimsdorf for "Hard Labour" and she asked me if I knew that Reimsdorf was one of the deadliest labour camps on German soil. Of course I knew.

We also went to Reimsdorf. there we met Czossek Lothar, Reimsdorf Bei Zeitz D.6729 1, Beethoven str.

We had an appointment with him. He is now 81 years old. During the war his family lived opposite the camp. His father was

an anti-Nazi. They took him to prison and one of his sons, then 16 years old - Gossek - was not accepted to join the 'Hitler Jugend', so he decided to write a diary about the prisoners in Reimsdorf Camp.

He met us and took us to see the camp, which still exists. He put up a monument at the entrance. We lit a candle in memory of all those who died there.

The Barrack I was kept in still stands. It was very emotional. Then he took us to the Town Hall, where he put up a Museum in memory of the prisoners. There you can find his:

- (1) Books he wrote about Reimsdorf
  - (2) Maps of the camp
  - (3) Photographs of how it looked then
  - (4) All kinds of documents
  - (5) Many objects left by the Germans while retreating and also by the prisoners
  - (6) Photographs of the exact route of the "Death March" from Reimsdorf to Thereisenstadt.
- We were 2,775 prisoners on the day we left Reimsdorf and only 75 (among whom were some of "The Boys") when we arrived in Thereisenstadt.

## Three 'Boys' on a Train - Simcha Liebermann, Koppel Kandelzucker and Jan Goldberger

Last year (2009) I have been reminded of my first meeting with many of the 'Boys', as two dear friends - Simcha Lieberman and Koppel Kendal (Kandelzucker) - both

Jan Goldberger

*Jan came to England with the Windermere group and stayed at the Loughton & Belsize Park hostels. He is an active member of our Committee.*

passed away. We were together at the very end of the war and it is this I want to relate.

We took a journey together in April 1945 from Schlieben concentration camp in East

Germany to Theresienstadt, where many of us were liberated. Schlieben had an ammunition factory where we all worked producing the Panzerfaust - a German anti-tank weapon. As the Allied Forces advanced in 1945, this camp was closed down and all of the inmates were transported to other concentration camps. A curious part to this was that some trains were loaded with Panzerfaust - essential ammunition to the army - yet not important enough to take precedence over the transportation of slave labour. We unloaded some of these wagons to make room for our own journey.

Simcha Liebermann, Koppel Kendal and I were thrown together on these trains, none of us knowing where we were destined for. We joined together as we seemed to be the youngest and smallest. We huddled, like three mice together in the corner of a wagon, guarding this small space carefully. At night, in particular, we made it obvious that nobody was to touch this tiny little bit - this small space that was ours. We picked the corner of the train, because this was more comfortable than being in the crush in the middle. The two old German soldiers guarding us took up the centre of the wagon leaving a very cramped space for the rest of us, only occasionally allowing us out of the train to relieve ourselves.

The journey took about two weeks, making a zig-zagging

route rather than a direct one - from Schlieben to Dresden, Chemnitz and then South to Theresienstadt. In particular, I recall the train stopping at a point above Dresden and seeing the remains of this city - chimney stacks left standing in the wake of the Allied assault.

Around this time, we were running out of food, people were dying around us and one wagon was set aside for the dead bodies. Even the German guards were hungry. Periodically the train stopped and we were locked in as the guards went to the nearest village or town to find food for themselves. The train was continually travelling in areas of Allied bombing and the train would stop as soon as there was any bombing. The German guards sensibly ran and hid, leaving us behind, locked in the train.

There was a man on this train that we called *Mazroche*. When we got on the train he had a small bag of grains that was wet. He probably ate this and drank water, and then was terribly ill with diarrhoea, dying one night. In the morning we awoke to a tremendous mess from this man. All around us people were perishing from hunger, whilst the three of us survived through us sharing what little we had and Koppel's initiative. For the three of us, we had a stroke of good luck. In Schlieben some people had been rewarded with a packet of tobacco for being good workers. Koppel was among those rewarded

and still had the tobacco with him. This was to prove essential. Koppel began to trade small amounts of tobacco for food with the guards. This food was shared with Simcha and me. We had one warm meal in this time, cooking potato and beets in a bucket we had. At this time the tobacco was running low and we gathered some leaves, drying them on the remains of the fire, rubbing them down, and putting them back into the packet to make the tobacco last longer. Incredibly the guards never knew, and still thought they were having only tobacco. This continued throughout the journey, trading what was now a mixture of tobacco and leaves. Today there are warnings on the side of cigarette packet warning of the harm they do but in this instance, it was cigarettes that truly saved us and fed us. They were life-enhancing.

Perhaps there was something in the fact that those who shared on this journey came through it and the person who kept what they had to themselves did not. This chimes with some of the early experiences after the war where the 'Boys' seemed to 'share' so much.

After about two weeks the train arrived at Theresienstadt, where the three of us were split up, meeting again in Prague as we prepared for our journey to England. The three of us remained very close friends until the day they died.

# The International Children's Center Kloster Indersdorf 1945-1948

By Anna Andlauer  
(Translated by  
Hanna Corbishley,  
London)

In June 1945, immediately after the liberation of Germany, not only thousands of adult displaced persons were roaming the streets or living in provisional camps, but also many foreign, parentless and homeless teenagers, who had survived the concentration or labour camps.

UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration)<sup>1</sup> was the organization to help the Allied Forces to care for these displaced persons until they could be repatriated or emigrate.

In the US zone of Germany UNRRA Team no. 182 was designated to set up a safe haven for the countless non-German children with no parents or guardians around.

One of its workers was Greta Fischer (1910-1988). She had volunteered for this task a few days before the end of the war. She was a Czech Jewess, 36 years old, an experienced nursery school teacher who had managed to escape from her homeland in time, though her parents perished in the concentration camps. During the war she had worked in several nurseries, day and residential, caring for very young children. There she got in touch with the beginning of trauma therapy for children as it was developed by Anna Freud in the neighbouring Hampstead War Nurseries.

During the immediate post-war period Greta Fischer became the Principal Welfare Officer of the international and multi-lingual UNRRA Team 182. She wrote

several reports about her sensitive work with the traumatized youngsters, who had just survived the worst. American photographers documented the team's care for these child survivors. Today these photos and reports are valuable documents of what the young survivors needed most and what the team did to help them.

In June 1945, UNRRA Team 182 took over Kloster Indersdorf as their base, an old monastery and a former Nazi young people's educational institute, near Dachau. The American Army requisitioned the building and some nearby villas and thus the first centre for unaccompanied children in the US zone of Germany was set up as a model for other similar camps throughout the country. Its official name was "International D. P. Children's Center Kloster Indersdorf in Germany." Today these premises are in use by the Vincent de Paul school, in rooms where once 25 or more young Holocaust survivors slept.

Eleven, later seventeen UNRRA volunteers couldn't care on their own for 200 or 300 traumatized youngsters. Adult displaced persons had to be found; Greta Fischer trained them to look after the children. Particularly helpful collaborators with UNRRA were the Sisters of Mercy, who owned the big building

and who had cared for children there until they had been chased out by the Nazis. These tender-hearted sisters were recruited right at the beginning to help with child care and kitchen duties. Even though contact with the German population was to be largely avoided, one inhabitant of the town of Indersdorf, Centa Probstmayr, was employed as bilingual secretary, thanks to her knowledge of English. She became trusted with all the correspondence of the director of Team 182. Some stateless people who had found early shelter in the town, such as Elfriede Neumann, and a few others, also worked for the centre. They sewed clothes for the children, cooked and cleaned.

## Conditions at Indersdorf

The space in the cloister was not ideally suited to a children's centre. The residents found the stark white walls much too sterile, and the convent-like atmosphere depressing. It took a great deal of cleaning effort and renovation to create an environment suitable for children. There were almost no playthings, no outside play space, and even the playgrounds in the town proved unsuitable, since after their dreadful experiences, these young people felt an intense hatred and showed a very negative outlook towards the Germans. It seemed best to avoid any contact with the indigenous population.

There was constant movement and change, and beds had to be shifted nearer and even over each other in order to use the individual spaces to their maximum advantage. There were dayrooms, extensive kitchens, a large dining room, a small laundry, a tiny gym, a few workshops, and 20 hectares of land with good vegetable plots and flower gardens, eleven cows, thirty pigs, four horses, and two hundred chickens. Greta Fischer describes the village of Indersdorf as if the war had never touched it. Neat houses with window boxes, well tended gardens, a few well-provisioned shops, and a small number of craftsmen. To begin with, all the centre's needs were supplied either by the US army, or the plentiful stores held by UNRRA. However, inevitably there were shortages, and during these times the town's craftsmen were employed to provide play materials, sports equipment, child-size furniture, and were even required to build sets for drama productions. The town's baker provided cakes and biscuits.

### **Isolated children of many nations**

There was constant coming and going at Kloster Indersdorf. 200 to 350 youngsters at a time found a temporary refuge - mainly babies and toddlers under the age of 3, or young people between 12 and 25. The majority were between 14 and 18, but they were all classified as "children."

The babies turned out to be either children of East European forced labourers or they came from "Lebensborn"<sup>2</sup> institutions.

There were no Jewish children under the age of 12, because they had hardly survived the Holocaust. All the Jewish youngsters were concentration camp survivors and older than 12. Most of their parents and siblings had perished in the camps or had gone missing. The gentile teenagers had been abducted from German occupied countries and forced to work for German families or businesses.

For these young people strenuous attempts were made to find their missing parents or, in most cases of babies, to find non-German families into which they could be adopted. Through the good offices of the military authorities and many consulates it became possible to send most of these children back to their countries of origin, or to facilitate emigration to Palestine (Israel), England, France and Switzerland, later also USA and Canada.

Additionally, starting at the end of 1945, more and more young Jewish refugees arrived - in most cases not survivors of concentration camps. Astonishingly, most of them had survived the Holocaust, mainly in Eastern Europe, where they had hidden in forests, some sheltered by the partisans, others in convents or monasteries or in families with false identities. At Kloster Indersdorf these orphans could prepare themselves for their future life in Erez Israel.

Altogether, in the first three years after the war, the centre was able to bring more than 1,000 traumatized young people back to life.

### **The arduous work of the children's centre.**

The UNRRA workers had many tasks. They had to find the children, to take care of them, to attend to their individual needs, to provide them with an education, to try and find their relatives or to organize adoption procedures, and much more.

*One Convent Sister writes in her letters as follows.*

"On August 17th the first batch of little ones, from 2 months to 2 years, arrived. On August 27th the first lot of 15 to 24 year-old camp survivors appeared. And so it went on. On one day, 30 to 40 Polish youngsters 14 to 18 years old, came in. Then there came another group, from 12 different nations, boys and girls, some little, some somewhat older. Nearly all of them are full orphans. Most of the older ones, predominantly the Jews, had lost their parents and siblings in the concentration camps in the most gruesome manner. Their stories are harrowing."<sup>3</sup>

The care of 300 mostly undernourished, physically sick, (TB, diphtheria, catarrhs, open sores) and psychologically very damaged children was an overwhelming task.

There were youngsters who had been processed through 14 different camps. No sooner had they escaped one, than they were caught and stuffed into another. Some had survived in forests and caves, some had worked in quarries and handled dynamite. They spoke of the most horrendous experiences in a zombie-like state, as if they were quite normal circumstances of everyday life. Some spoke in

shrill and over excited voices, and, as Greta Fischer reports, it took a very long time to get them to relax and play. Some child survivors couldn't talk at all.

Their memories were completely blocked. "You must understand, those who survived blocked out really absolutely everything. Their will to survive and the rage to live blocked out everything." A vital part of the team's work was to help the children talk about what had happened to them. They listened to the teenagers for hours and hours. Greta Fischer observed that those youngsters who had had early good years were stronger than some of the others.

The Indersdorfer secretary, Centa Probstmayr, left behind among her work

reports the heartrending story of Kurt Klappholz, who had seen his parents for the last time in 1942. He told of hunger, humiliation, murder, and how he, after all he had experienced, himself became like a cowed animal, totally unreceptive and apathetic.<sup>4</sup>

Greta Fischer remembers 16-year-old Szlama Weichselblatt, the only survivor of a 94 person Jewish community in the Polish section of the Ukraine. He managed to survive for 17 months with 30 fellow sufferers in underground passages, till all but he had perished. He returned to his village, but found the family home completely empty, apart from a few photographs. He heard about the UNRRA project and made his way to Indersdorf on foot. Here it took a long time to

make him feel safe, loved and wanted. Later on his father was found in America, but it took another 16 months, owing to the strict entry criteria, before he was allowed to join him.

*In a letter from one of the convent sisters we read the following.*

"The great majority of these 13 to 20 year-old-children have survived dreadful experiences in the KZ camps. Often they were the only family member left. Father, mother and various siblings were done to death before their very eyes. So their hatred of all things German is fully understandable. A 17-year-old Polish Jew, a good natured, intelligent, boy was in the Center. He lost his reason in the camps during the murder of his parents. He



*Photo: The teenagers created free-form dramatic skits to express their psychological trauma. Here they're recreating a scene from the concentration camps. (The boy in the back is Salek Benedikt. He now lives with his family in London.) Greta Fischer noted: "We did everything possible to lighten the hearts of these children; with these skits the children could release their terrible memories." This was an early form of psycho drama. (USHMM, photo archives)*

was the epitome of misery. This charming young man sat on the stone steps for half of each night and cried like a baby."

After all they had gone through these young survivors were in many ways "older" and more experienced than the UNRRA staff. Thus, as a first reaction they were allowed to do as they pleased. Miss Robbins, the Centre's first director, believed that these poor children, who had lived through such dreadful experiences, should first be allowed to do whatever gave them pleasure. In the Childrens' Council they took their first steps in democracy.

Greta Fischer stated the educational aim of the centre in the following manner. "Firstly, all the children must be assured of their safety, security, and sense of belonging. They should feel that it is the staff's privilege and pleasure to care for them and build them up physically and psychologically."<sup>5</sup> To this end all children needed a goal in life - a hope of what the future could promise for them. Greta complains that the world was largely closed to these youngsters. For instance, the US had strict criteria and only allowed in young Holocaust survivors with great difficulty. In particular, with the smallest children it was often almost impossible to discover their identities, as the relevant documents had been destroyed by the Nazis. Sometimes there was just a first name - Barbara or Monika - nothing else. All these tiny children demonstrated symptoms of neglect - for instance, head swinging for hours on end, crying for no apparent

reason, or total apathy. They were far behind in their development and had the emaciated bodies of famine victims. A great deal of patience, personal attention and demonstrations of affection were needed before the first smile was seen on the faces of these little ones.

There were never enough staff to cope with the night duty. Greta remembers how during the night she often fed, comforted and cared for 25 to 30 tiny ones, while trying to snatch a few hours of sleep herself.

Older children and young adults took much longer to trust another person and to smile. 14-year-old Manfred, for example, a German Jew from Stettin, was deported to a KZ with his parents in 1940. Despite all obstacles the family managed to stay together till 1944, when his mother perished in the gas chambers. He believed his father was killed while trying to escape. This young man shrank from all human contact, and it took a very long time for him to respond to the warm and caring atmosphere which reigned in Indersdorf. He learnt to laugh, but the signs of his suffering remained etched in his face.

Greta was astonished to find how high the ethical standards remained in many of those who had been forced to lie and steal in order to survive. However, the desire to wreak revenge on the Germans always broke through. So it was understandable that there were always fights between the Centre children and the indigenous population.

The need for nourishment and personal possessions was also very strong. Frequently,

staff found bread hidden under pillows, though there was an abundance of food on offer. Greta reported that after all these years of hunger, many of these children ate far in excess of their requirements. But she understood that only when the person is emotionally normal again, is it possible to regulate the food intake.

Many of these youngsters had forgotten that it is usual to sit down to eat and to use cutlery. It was difficult for them to learn that they did not have to wolf down every morsel of food at the speed of lightning. In the dining room tables were set out as in family groups, with an adult at each one to act as role model. As they began to feel more at home, older youngsters began to be expected to behave in a responsible manner and to carry out routine tasks, thus finding some security in everyday activities. The older ones were required to help care for the little ones and play with them. They often volunteered to do so as they were missing their little siblings who had been killed in the death chambers.

The children were encouraged to pick out clothes to their own taste from the sewing room. Greta Fischer reported: "One seems to see the entire personality of a child change when he discards his old, dirty, misshapen garments for clean, neat-fitting, non-institutional ones. The provision of clothing has been fully as important for the purpose of re-establishing a sense of personal dignity as for decency and warmth."<sup>6</sup>

The carers tried to give each child as much individual attention as possible, in

order to compensate for lack of mother love. Under Greta Fischer's leadership they made every effort, through various stimulating activities, to promote their growth and development. So play materials for throwing, pushing and pulling were ordered from the local crafts people. Indersdorf witnesses report that the UNRRA teenagers mostly played football on the landing of what today is the savings bank, while local youngsters of the same age envied them their leather footballs.

Some of these young people could neither read nor write - they had missed so many years of formal schooling. Instead they had been forced to undergo a gruesome learning process in life, which made them seem like little old people, rather than children. The years of privation made them extremely eager to learn. Among the more than 20 nationalities, German was the common language, but every possible effort was made to unite these children with their mother tongue, and to celebrate their national festivals, customs and folklore. So lessons were given in Polish, Yiddish, German, Hebrew, Ukrainian and Hungarian. All the youngsters learnt English, in the hope that they would be able to make use of it later in life. Naturally, there were considerable age differences in each class. Some of the older ones showed astonishing gifts for dancing, singing and artistic activities. In consequence there remain today, hanging on the walls of some Indersdorf houses, cherished paintings which at the time

were bartered for fresh eggs and other products. These youngsters were taught the skills to fit them for practical careers, such as carpentry, tailoring, motor mechanics or farming on the cloister land. They could become painters and decorators, or even artists.

*One of the convent sisters reports as follows.*

"One notable group was known as the Kibbutz Jews. These young people wanted to emigrate to Palestine, and to that end needed to learn all they could about garden and field work. There were about 30 boys and girls, all somewhat older than the rest. This group was always quiet and very well behaved. Every morning at 7am they were already in the fields or at their studies, and always completed the work they were allocated. Their teachers never had any complaints about them. However, there were occasions when the gardener wanted to go out mornings or evenings to pick cucumbers, and found none there. The workers had already taken their reward."

The convent sisters were disturbed at the unhindered communal get-togethers in the bedrooms and the close relationships between the young men and women. They felt their behaviour was far too free and easy, not to say shameless. For these youngsters who had experienced unimaginable horrors together with a comrade of either sex, it was imperative they were not separated either in the dining room or in the sleeping quarters.

Tensions and differences of opinion were unavoidable

between individuals and groups, in particular between Polish Jews and Gentiles. Those who had been brought up in German families perceived Jews as monsters. The centre staff tried hard to instill in them mutual respect and recognition.

Many of these youngsters could not be deterred from trying to return to their homes as fast as possible to find out if any family members were still alive. After all that they had gone through, they were determined to fight their way through all the difficulties and obstacles on the long road to Poland, Hungary or Rumania, despite cold, heat, days without food and devious ways of getting across borders. The UNRRA workers kitted them out with clothes, food and the necessary papers. These youngsters were extremely skillful at exploiting the tiniest clue to the possible whereabouts of their relatives. A few actually did find themselves back with their families, but most had to accept that no one of theirs had survived. At their place of origin they left behind their Indersdorf address and on the return journey collected other lost children and brought them back to the Centre. For Greta Fischer this was a heartening and visible sign that they had found the Children's Centre a safe and caring haven. Occasionally, months later, a brother, sister, aunt or uncle would emerge, very seldom even a parent, and then there were emotional and moving scenes of reunion. Mostly, however, there was vain hope and expectation, and disappointment.

## The end of the UNRRA Children's Centre

The health and medical facilities in the Indersdorf cloister were on the whole excellent. There were regular check-ups, vaccinations and disinfections. Trips to Munich were made for the dentist, optician, X-rays etc. Unfortunately, on two separate occasions, there were unavoidable infectious outbreaks, and the preventative vaccines came too late. Once the little ones caught chicken pox, but more serious was the outbreak of diphtheria, which led to the tragic deaths of four children.

In July 1946, Greta Fischer and her UNRRA team with 250 youngsters and 76 babies and toddlers, moved to a beach hotel and several villas on the shores of Lake Chiem. From Indersdorf they transported cots, bedding, kitchen utensils, poultry and quite a few freshly slaughtered pigs. Although the scenery by the lake was more picturesque, they missed the help of the convent sisters and the much better organization

and conveniences of the old cloister.

At the same time, Kloster Indersdorf became an all-Jewish children's centre and housed a Polish and Hungarian Kibbutz. These young Jewish refugees from Central and Eastern Europe prepared themselves for their life in Palestine. Their madrichim insisted on their self-government and independence, so that the new UNRRA team and later the IRO (International Refugee Organization) mainly provided the food and the clothing. Most had gone through dreadful experiences, were completely orphaned, and put their survival down only to their capacity for work. They arrived emotionally drained, full of hate and aggression, and when they left on August 18th 1948 they completely trashed the interior of the cloister in the mistaken belief that it had belonged to the Nazi party.

In 1947 Greta Fischer was finally able to travel with 100 difficult to place youngsters via Marseilles to Montreal, and there she stayed for five years, while she endeavoured

to integrate them into Canadian society.

In 1955 she achieved her Masters degree in Social Pedagogics with a thesis on the integration of 40 young Jewish refugees into the Montreal community. During the last 20 years of her life, she founded and inspired several social organizations in Israel. Until her death in 1988, she stayed in touch with many of "her children", deeply believed in "her" children's inner resources, admired their "indescribable rage to live" and honoured the miracle of their survival.

Now, more than 60 years later, these child survivors live in England, Canada, USA, Israel and all over the world. Each year there is a reunion of the "children from Indersdorf". The next meeting will be April 26th till April 29th 2010. In case you are a child survivor who was in Indersdorf, please contact Anna Andlauer ([andlauer@onlinehome.de](mailto:andlauer@onlinehome.de))

*In 2010 a book will be published on this topic:  
"Zurück ins Leben"  
by Anna Andlauer,  
Antogo Verlag*

1. As early as 1943, two years before the birth of the United Nations, representatives of 44 countries met in the White House in Washington to bring UNRRA to life. The aim was to meet head on the spread of hunger, disease and economic destruction there would be at the end of the 2nd World War. Today it is the UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency).
2. A Nazi organization which provided maternity homes and financial assistance to wives of SS men and to unmarried mothers in line with the racial and eugenic policies of Nazi Germany
3. Sister Dolorosa's letter, archives Heimatverein Indersdorf e.V.
4. Kurt Klappholz later became a well-respected lecturer at the London School of Economics and stayed in touch with Greta Fischer till her death in 1988 in Jerusalem.
5. Greta Fischer papers relating to Kloster Indersdorf displaced children's center and to UNRRA's postwar work in Europe, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.
6. Greta Fischer papers relating to Kloster Indersdorf displaced children's center and to UNRRA's postwar work in Europe, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, page 20

# WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



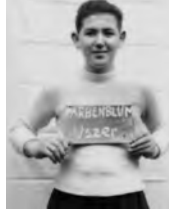
Auspitz  
William



Birnbaum  
Moshe



Bucchführer  
Alfred



Farbenblum  
Uszer



Feldbaum  
Berek



Feldman  
Laszlo



Fijalko  
Josef



Fischer  
Wladislaus



Fuchs  
Josef



Fülöp  
Jenő



Fürst  
Lazar



Grussman  
Sinaida



Junger  
Moses



Junger  
Samuel

Anyone who knows the whereabouts or what happen to the boys and girls listed and illustrated please contact Anna Andlauer (andlauer@onlinehome.de)

All these people have one thing in common, namely they all spent sometime, after the war in Kloster Indersdorf...



Kamer  
Eugenius



Klajman  
Jankiel



Klein  
Sandor



Klein  
Erno



Kleinman  
Szlama



Krieger  
Nina



Meisels  
Bela



Munkacsy  
Tibor



Rajnsztajn  
Samuel



Rajnsztajn  
Maier



Rolnik  
Natan



Schwartz  
Otto



Stern  
Alfred



Stroh  
Peter



Swinik  
Chaim



Traub  
Beno



Troper  
Jankiel



Weiss  
Julius



Witelson  
Wolf

## FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

Robert Sherman

*Robert is the husband of Judith and both are regular contributors to our Journal.*

Every Saturday morning in the synagogue Jews recite a prayer on passing down the tradition from generation to generation, “I’dor vador.” Holocaust survivors are preoccupied with the same wishes that the Holocaust not be forgotten and serve as a lesson to future generations. We ask ourselves what and how should we pass down that which will be relevant and resonate in the lives of future generations and impact their behaviour both in memory and in action? And how can we help them to differentiate between the horrors of reality and entertainment? And how can we keep the focus on the Holocaust as a distinctive part of Jewish history and memory, but not the whole of it as testified by the courageous way that survivors rose from the ashes as Jews in a larger life-enriching context? How can we universalize the experience of the Holocaust and the rebuilding of life after trauma as a distinctive part of all of human history?

I think we want to preserve the memory of those who were murdered and those who were persecuted and starved and diseased and brutalized. We want to emphasize the consequences of hatred and the uses of hatred for political, national, religious or ideological purposes, especially when embedded into law and applied as the law and the right thing to demonize some “other” as inhuman and the cause of all woes. We want all people to

understand and shun the destructive inhuman consequences of hatred. (That still leaves us with the problem of dealing with serious differences among people.)

How can we pass on the memories and inspire succeeding generations to remember and to act in different times with different values, technologies, tastes, and sensibilities in the face of continuing anti-Semitism and anti-Israel behaviours and continuing genocide? These are not new questions and they have occupied survivors for decades. Many actions have been instituted on both a personal and communal level and on the world stage. A few examples are Holocaust museums, commemorations, study centres, national anti-hate laws, the world court, a United Nations resolution, thousands of published memoirs, recorded interviews and programmes, documentaries, feature films, and survivor presentations to many kinds of audiences. Second and third generation members are encouraged to participate in Holocaust remembrance activities.

We have to inspire younger generations to pick up the work. But we also have to allow them to do it their way in their relevant languages, images, music, drama, and literature. We have spoken to our world in our ways. We have to inevitably hand over

the reigns. Whenever one generation passes on to another, the other will want to do things their way, whether in business or in Holocaust remembrance. We need to accept and encourage the changes. If we have properly inspired and taught, the essence of Holocaust experiences and goals will be preserved and perhaps enhanced.

We inspire by our own lives and behaviour and by clearly “expecting” the next generations to carry on individually, in family circles, in communal organizations, and by creating alliances with non-Jewish persons and organizations, and by contributions in the many media of the times. To keep remembrance alive the third and fourth generations need to talk about the Holocaust as if they personally experienced it. Like the Exodus experience, they need to consult and study original sources and repeat excerpts to one another collectively. Otherwise the Holocaust will be relegated to history-ancient history. We can initiate such traditions where they are yet to exist.

The generation of survivors has worked hard to create a continuing legacy and to create the structures that will enable the story and lessons of the Holocaust to be embedded in the hearts and minds of future generations of Jews and human kind; embedded both as tragedy and for the heroism of committing to life and rebuilding meaningful and successful lives.

# A SURVIVOR'S VOICE TODAY

Judith Sherman

To-day we have age lines  
and laugh lines  
and sturdy shoes - a promise we kept  
when way way back we said  
"feet, we you shall have soles for your toes  
and splendid options to roam  
in all directions"

To-day we say - yes; we say - no;  
feel our muscled choices  
use has made them strut and strong

To-day we know this -  
daily bread - daily had is  
as good as it gets

And we know too  
a human is a mighty awe  
a human is a tale of all  
World, your brother's keeper be  
but don't make a list

of who the brother is

To-day we know love  
to-day we know song  
our children are grand  
our grandchildren grander

And to-day and day after day  
for seventy years  
we are owned by a past we cannot abandon  
in our souls in our pores  
we are where they were and bring them along  
and take them along  
in acts of day, in dreams of night

To-day we are old, our tale is told  
you witness to witness  
be garbed in care  
be girded by strength  
and see to it  
that our tale does not repeat

## An unusual experience

After the war ended, I believed that I had no living family members or relatives. Recently, I discovered that I have a second cousin named Rose who lives only two blocks from my house in London, Ontario, Canada!

As an acquaintance in the local Jewish community, she came over to visit my wife Sonia and me one day. Rose told us how her mother's name was spelled the same way as mind (Klajman - a very unusual spelling). Rose said her mother was born in Warsaw, Poland (like my mother) and that her mother came from a large family of six girls and two boys. I remembered that my father's brother had a large family like that. She also told me that her grandfather was a furrier, just like my father. The coincidences seemed quite striking!

Jack Klajman

*Jack was in the Northampton hostel and received his education at the Ort School. He went to Canada in 1948, together with many of our "Boys". He now lives in London, Ontario. His story was published by Valentine Mitchell under the title of "Out of the Ghetto".*

Rose told me that her mother went with her boyfriend to Russia, where many young Jews fled to after the German invasion of Poland in 1939. Rose was born to the couple after they married in 1943. When the war ended, they left Russia for Poland to find out if any of their relatives had survived the war, but they found no one. They then went to France, and from there to Israel. That's

where Rose grew up. After she served in the army, she got married, had two kids and emigrated as a family to Canada. That marriage ended in divorce, but she later re-married, to a man named William (Bill) Klein. He is a dentistry specialist who graduated from McGill University in Montreal but moved to Hamilton and eventually to London to practice.

Initially, I had a hard time believing that she was my cousin. But as I lay in bed thinking about it one night I realized that, in fact, she is my second cousin. Neither of us thought we had any surviving relatives. To think that not only were we wrong - but we ended up living so close to each other in a small Canadian city - it is still very hard for me to believe.

# A Lad Meets The Boys

Derek Simmans

I was born in Ilford, Essex, England 1936 and within a few years I was to experience the effects of World War II on our family life. My father was 38 when it started and working for Becton Gas Works as a crane driver, due to the nature of his work he did not enlist into the Armed Forces. I had an elder brother Albert born 1931 and so together with our mother Ellen (Nell) we entered the War Zone in 1939. Certainly during the War years Ilford was a War Zone; undoubtedly the local "civilians" were soon to be in the front line. Ilford is a part of the East End of London. Luftwaffe bombers may have been aiming for the London Docks nearby, but too often they decided to bomb the important factories in Ilford. These concentrations of factories were to attract the Flying Bombs in later years.

Many youngsters had been evacuated, but our family were to stay in Ilford. The attitude of my parents was, "If we go we go together." This decision was to provide me with many memories of the war, but a lack of education was the sum result. But being so young this front line life became our unquestioned natural form of existence. It could be even very exciting, for the young. With the planes overhead, dog fights to view, and "Old Bill" the Barrage Balloon tethered nearby. The thud of the moveable guns outside our house, and the big guns opening up at Barking Park shook the house. We lads could not appreciate the

worry experienced by our parents, nor could we fully appreciate our possible fate, as we collected cuttings from the newspapers, shrapnel from the streets and followed the troop movements on the maps.

When the siren sounded, we threw down the mattress from upstairs and hurriedly carried it to secrete it under the old oak table in the living room. We did this operation, since anything left in the damp conditions of the underground "Dug Out" shelter soon became mouldy and wet. Hence the shelter life which had been our first source of defence, was abandoned at the earliest opportunity. It was fun to Albert and me, but we did notice a change of expression on our parents' faces and new anxiousness in their voices. When they told us to hurry ourselves, we did not question it, even though we were often half asleep. Our life-style led to an early resignation to our fate, although in later years one can only guess at the effect on our parents' minds, during this terrible time in us young lads' life.

We lads loved the excitement of listening to the radio, which began with, "This is the BBC from London." The sound of Big Ben, which I was later to learn, was a sound of hope for many. Then the Special Messages which oddly began with the bass drum beat of Beethoven's 5th Symphony, repeated many times, since it was the Morse code for the letter "V" for Victory. This would then be followed by

more excitement with coded messages like "The White Rabbit had returned to his Warren". Little did I realise then, the danger that the White Rabbit had endured for our freedom in occupied France.

I remember the local St Luke's church roof, burnt by incendiary bombs, the glow of the red light flickered across the sky, a magnet for further bombs. We "lads" knew the various sounds. The steady drone of the Dornier Bomber, the spluttering of the VI rocket as its engine stopped and the swish of the air over its silent form passing over our house. VII rockets were later falling within half a mile of us without any warning, due to their speed. After the "All Clear" siren, my Mother saying "we have been lucky this time, but some poor devils, have died."

I particularly remember the time that the Luftwaffe tried to destroy the dock area. As the glow illuminated the sky to the East, the Dockland area, my father was jumping on his bike and cycling towards it, with my mother pleading with him to stay at home. Then my brother going to the South West to Leyton County High, since his first school "The Abbey" in Barking, had been destroyed before he went there. So Albert was also travelling towards another war zone. How can any mother deal with all this? I was too young then to fully understand her inner emotions, but they were to be in the forefront of my thoughts many years later.

Naturally, during the early part of the war, much

discussing was made about our involvement in the war. One must remember that my parents had only been young during WWI and my father had just missed being directly involved in this war. Discussion was expected at home, with the current events surrounding us. I remember my father saying that the communists called Winston Churchill a "War Monger" and that these people were not supportive of our efforts until Germany attacked Russia. Fortunately, my mother and father often discussed various topics in front of us lads. This was probably because we were in the front line, with them, "fellow" warriors. They also took us to the cinema to see the Pathe News. Even though TV was unavailable then, we lads were constantly kept well informed of the world events.

We lads remember the troops and tanks going through Ilford to supply the D-day landings in Normandy. Street parties were soon to follow in the celebration of victory in Europe. Only years later did I find that a Simmans relative had died in a Wellington Bomber coming back from Germany. Although many members of our family had been at Dunkirk and would later be at El Alamein and in India, we had been very fortunate as a family.

I still did not quite understand why there was a war until one day towards the end of the war; my parents took us lads to the cinema in Barking. I cannot remember the film, but I clearly remember that week's Pathe News.

There were all these people in their pyjamas, so terribly thin. As the camera moved

round, there was the horror of the piles of dead bodies. I was confused. Remember, I was only 9. Then my mother said "Poor Devils, now we know what we were fighting for."

We still continued to visit the cinema; we lads watched the long lines of refugees returning to what was left of their homes. They all had this vacant expression, which I had not witnessed in England, even during the darkest hours. So I have vivid images of the whole scenario of war.

England gradually removed the scars of war left around us. Bomb sites were our playground. My schooling had suffered, and I had to work hard to satisfy my father, who discovered to his horror that this lad's education was lacking, in everything but war. Life was to take its natural course, with hard work, National Service in the R.A.F., marriage, family life and eventually retirement. Indeed we lads had been fortunate. We had been protected by our parents' care, good fortune and our armed forces. As a family we remained united.

### **Our later life**

Many years after the war I was to spend some time travelling to various European countries in the course of my work. Once I had to visit an important German customer. I knew that he was about my age and it was with mixed emotions that I prepared to go. I arrived at the factory and was ushered into his office. He was on the 'phone. He motioned for me to sit down. Behind him was a picture of Winston Churchill alongside

one of his well-known historic war-time speeches that I used to listen to on the wireless. This threw my mind back in memories and my defences were completely confused. He put down the 'phone and obviously he had been observing my interest. His first words were "Great Man, pity the world never listened to him earlier." "How true" I said, "it may have been easier to control and saved so much pain and suffering."

My second anecdote happened about 1991, I was pushing my dear mother in her wheel chair. My route often took me near to the cemetery at Barkingside North Ilford, nearby was Fairlop aerodrome where the R.A.F had taken off to engage the Luftwaffe. This day I decided to walk into the cemetery where I found the graves of the many airmen who had given their lives. They it was who we young "lads" had watched, twisting and turning in the air above us. My mother asked me to stop and she said with sorrow on her face, "Poor lads, they defended us. How their parents must have suffered. How young they were." She was always concerned for others.

### **The "Lad" meets the "Boys".**

My wife Valerie and I were walking along the beach front at Westcliff on Sea Essex one beautiful sunny day in October 2007. Since it was such a lovely day, we decided to walk further towards Chalkwell. We had never done this before. We stopped and looked at a notice board which pointed out the various bird life which arrived along this stretch of the beach.

Many of these birds migrate from Europe at this time of the year and it was somewhat significant that we meet David Kutner, for the first and only time as he took his daily stroll along the sea front. As a result of this all too brief meeting, David told us that he was born in Poland, and showed us his tattoo number B-7623. He said that he had written some of his story down, and at my insistence he sent to me a brief write-up of his terrible experiences in Auschwitz Concentration Camp. I felt that his story should be better documented and deposited it in the Essex Record Office. David was undoubtedly now an Essex man and his life story should never be lost.

David's original write-up had left some questions unanswered, and to help future readers of his story; I contacted him and we spoke over the 'phone and he wrote to me with some more details. As a result, I have added his life in England then sent the completed story to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem who now hold this record.

Why did I do all this? It seemed the most natural thing to do, no doubt driven on by the memories of seeing the cinema images of the Concentration Camp liberation and the thought that "We Lads" were indeed lucky, since we still had our family after the war, and although our life had been hard, how could it compare with David's life, and the loss of his parents, and long separation from his only surviving sister, Franja?

A seemingly unknown hand is guiding us in life. We had never walked towards Chalkwell, but it was Valerie, my wife who had insisted on this occasion, to walk the extra mile. Sadly David was to die only a few months after our first and only meeting. If we had not gone the extra mile, we would have never met.

David's family were later to present me with a copy of Martin Gilbert's book "The Boys." Now I know what happened to some of the "Boys" that I had seen at the cinema all those years ago. Indeed, when I asked

David for a photo to add to the story, he showed a well-fed young man. "Who would have realised what I had been through, looking at that photo just a few months after arriving in England," were his words.

A year after David's Kutner's death, the family invited us to the laying of the stone. Like a member of their family, we were to be welcomed by all. We were well looked after and there we sat and talked to Ben Helfgott, Ivor Perl and other members of the diminishing family of "Boys." They had their own loving family now. This family, of "Lads" and "Boys" were together around a table in the Synagogue Hall. Many years after the terrible events, that had affected all our lives.

What had been my most moving moment whilst talking to all the "Boys" was their total lack of hatred. They, who had lost many of their family, had an inner peace. Let us pray that the world will learn this peace from them.

## Poetry Choice

Liz Cashdan

(Reprinted from Jewish Renaissance July 2009  
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Alongside the poems by Radnoti, we have two poems by Holocaust survivor Witold Henryk Gutt. He was born in Przemyśl in Poland in 1928, and in 1943 was taken to the camp at Krakow-Plaszow and then to Natzweiler near Strasbourg where he was forced to work as an electrician. In 1945 he was marched to Dachau and from there to Riem airport where he was finally liberated by the American army. After he got to England as part of the

group known as The Boys, he took a degree in Chemistry and then worked in the Scientific Civil Service.

He wrote papers on high-temperature chemistry and the durability of materials. It was not till later that he wrote "high temperature" poetry based on

the "durability" of his own determination to survive. These poems are evidence of his experiences but they are much more since the apparent bleakness of the language matches the bleakness of Gutt's experience in Nazi camps. It is always remarkable to find that as readers we can be enriched by reading about something we'd rather not read about provided that the language used is appropriate.

Adorno may have said "To write poetry after

Auschwitz is barbaric,” but I would contend that

because of the concentration camps we need poetry even more. Auden had written earlier that “poetry makes nothing happen, it

survives in the valley of its making.” The Polish poet, Wislawa Szymborska, trying to work out what poetry was, wrote: “But I just keep on not knowing and I cling to that. Like a redemptive handrail.”

As Gutt writes: “We must cry first, and then move forward. This is what we do.” Gutt’s poems are indeed part of the handrail that helps us all to move forward.

## Heart of Darkness

High on a mountain in the Vosges forest,  
Natzweiler camp.

The approach to the Champ du Feu is enchanting among the trees and vistas.

Inside, sinister clean streets between low barracks.  
What goes on here? Experiments on Jews, shaming medical science.

The Scandinavian prisoners are hopeful and safe.  
They will survive and Red Cross parcels will help them.

There is no work and we wait  
In the afternoons the musselmen walk in slow circles on the parade ground before  
Their imminent death from exhaustion.  
They are like the chained and emaciated black prisoners in ‘Heart of Darkness’.  
Conrad understood such horrors could happen. His vision predates these events.

We are examined by ‘friendly doctors’. For what purpose?

Amazingly, after a week, the intended itinerary rolls,  
And we leave by train for the commando at Neckarelz  
to work as electricians in the aircraft factory  
Inside a sandstone quarry.

The Neckar is beautiful.  
Barges move slowly in the calm water between the hills.

Soon the red-tailed American fighter planes will be overhead, flying low.  
They recognise us and do not fire.

The promise of survival is in the air in the summer of 44.  
But much is still to come before the Americans shoot their way into Dachau.

## Dauchau, April 1945

This is where it all began.  
‘Arbeit macht frei’.  
Many have died here.

The big barracks have circular wash-basins and water,  
but there is no food and we are starving.

We walk about in the small space in front of our barracks and wait.

Unexpectedly, tinned food is given out to be used on a journey.  
We suspect the worst, a death march, so we eat the food and wait.

Suddenly there is gunfire.  
We climb over the gates to the main concourse leading to the parade ground.  
There are soldiers in green firing at the SS in their towers.  
They are Americans, some speak Polish.  
It is unbelievable, we are free.

The gunfire continues, some prisoners fall, dead within seconds of survival,  
trying to overcome the SS without weapons.

Horowitz and I share the moment of liberation.  
I think of my mother, and he of his wife whom we left together in Przemysl ghetto.

Later our fears that they were murdered are confirmed.  
We must cry first, and then move forward.

This is what we do.

Witold Henryk Gutt.

## Treasures of Black Death

A remarkable exhibition under this title is on view (19.2.09 - 10.5.09) at the Wallace Collection. The exhibition presents two hoards of medieval gold and silver jewellery and other previous objects found in Colmar, France, in the nineteenth century and at Erfurt in Germany in the 1990s.

Both hoards were buried at the time of the Black Death in the middle of the fourteenth century by Jewish families who were expelled or murdered because the Jews

Witold Gutt

were blamed for spreading the disease.

Among the jewellery on display are three of the earliest known Jewish wedding rings.

On display also are silver vessels, coins and silver ingots used as currency recognised across state boundaries.

The Black Death laid waste to Europe, wiping out a third of the population and terrified local people who searched for a scapegoat;

suspicion immediately fell upon the Jewish population. Fleeing persecution, the Jews concealed their most precious possessions, hoping to return. Sadly, a combination of the plague and pogroms meant that they remained uncollected. It is believed that the attacks on Jews arising from the Black Death constitute the most serious, extensive and prolonged persecution prior to the Holocaust. It is for this reason that I have decided to prepare this note for the Journal.

## The Nano View

Witold Gutt

Value the next minute  
Forget the large view,  
Concentrate on the micro  
or even the nano.

This way, by seeing  
a very small area,  
you may avoid some  
things you may wish to forget.

# My Latest Trip To AUSTRIA

Anita Lasker Wallfisch

**F**or geographical reasons I combined two separate invitations.

The first was from a remarkable team of two people who have devoted their lives to keeping 'The past in the presence'.

They call themselves 'ELYSIUM BETWEEN TWO CONTINENTS' because they function in America as well as Europe, stage performances and concerts always somehow related to 'what has been'. They also run workshops for budding singers etc.

Neither of these people are Jewish and I think they are doing a remarkable job in keeping the past alive.

They invited me to speak at one of these workshops which took place in a monastery in Benried by the Starenberger See nr. Munich. A beautiful place, but I have to admit that I prefer hotels to monastic accommodation.

From there I went to Austria. First stop Salzburg where I spoke in a school and in the evening in the 'Kultur Zentrum'.

Stefan Zweig lived in Salzburg for many years, in fact till the 'Anschluss' when he started a nomadic life ending in South America where he and his wife committed suicide.

There is now a STEFAN ZWEIG museum in Salzburg.

Alas, the original house which he had to sell for next to nothing could not be used because someone else lives in it now and has no intention of giving it back!

For those who have not read the article I wrote some time ago about a previous visit to this area, here is a short resume.

Some two years ago I was invited to speak at the Documentation Centre in Berchtesgaden, Hitler's famous 'Berghaus', where he entertained his minion. Now there is a Documentation Centre there where I had been invited to give a talk.

All evidence of the previous occupants have been obliterated so that it should not serve as a pilgrimage place for new Nazis[!], and if you want to spend time up there you can stay in the very impressive Intercontinental Hotel and admire the view!

I assure you it was an eerie feeling to look at the very trees that Hitler used to look at!

I was assigned two young Austrian students who were working as guides at the centre. They were supposed to keep me entertained on the day I arrived. I declined the offer to visit Herbert v Karajan's grave! Salzburg is a stones throw away from Berchtesgaden and we spent some very pleasant hours just walking around in this beautiful little town.

I kept loosely in touch with one of these students and when I arrived in Salzburg on my last trip, he was waiting for me in my hotel, and told me the following story:

Just by the way... he knew his grandfather was a committed Nazi!!

He suggested to his Boss at the Berghof that it might be a good idea to organise a trip to

Auschwitz. The reply was: ..... Auschwitz??? What has Auschwitz got to do with this? Needless to say that the young man was outraged... organized a trip to Auschwitz on his own with the help of the Auschwitz committee and according to a report it seemed to have been a great success.

The story is of course a lot longer than I am telling it here.

I finally got to bed in the early hours and promised this young man that I will try do whatever I can to make this story public.

I resumed my talks in various places in Austria, talked about the Berchtesgaden story to people only to learn that it was common knowledge that the Berghof had become a pilgrimage place for Nazis.

An article in 'DerSpiegel' confirms this by writing that: ..... somewhat hidden up there near the house where Hitler used to live is a noticeboard saying that it was here that the Holocaust was planned. The word Holocaust has to be regularly repainted because it gets scratched out every week! What's new!

I promised my young Austrian friend to try and do something about this and mentioned this sad state of affairs to an Austrian reporter who came to interview me. He seemed very disturbed and sent me an e-mail that a German

reporter will ring me any moment now... this was weeks ago. I am still waiting!

My next stop in Austria was Klagenfurt: Haider country!!!

Among other commitments I was asked to say a few words at the inauguration of a 'Gedenkstaette' at the Loibl Pass.

I had never heard of this place.. In fact it was a sub-camp of Mauthausen. Prisoners were made to dig a tunnel through a mountain separating Austria from Slovenia under conditions that I do not have to go into here.

Thousands of people - mainly French - died there.

The significance of this is that on the Slovenian side a memorial has been

erected some 50 years ago. The Austrians only got round to it now.

In fairness to Austrians I must mention that if it had not been for the tireless efforts of some local people, absolutely nothing would ever have happened at all and everything would have conveniently been left to sink into oblivion.

After all, we are in Haider country. Haider may be dead but his evil spirit has certainly not been extinct.

The ceremony there was very moving. Hundreds of people were present. Representatives of various nationalities and even some very old survivors and an encouraging number of school children of

all ages who spoke in both languages, Slovenian and German.

I admit that I was ignorant of what this part of Austria really represents and why it is a hotbed of Nazism. It all harks back to the first world war when countries were cut up artificially with the result of fostering extreme resentment of the population who suddenly lived on territory that used to be 'ours' so to speak.

What's new!

I had a chance to air my grievances at an interview with the Sueddeutsche Zeitung . . . for what it is worth.

So I am ploughing on regardless.

Anita Lasker Wallfisch

## LODZ – A Tale Of A City

Mira Hamermesh

*(This article appeared in The Guardian on Saturday 31st October in the 'Family' Section, but under a different title. It's a personal story that links the dramatic history of Lodz Ghetto with the fate of its inhabitants, including members of Mira's family)*

**A**s a teenager, Mira Hamermesh defied her parents and fled Nazi-occupied Poland. Her mother starved to death in the Lodz ghetto, her father perished in Auschwitz. Last August, 65 years after the ghetto was liquidated, the film-maker returned for a reunion of its few survivors.

I came to England after the second world war as one of the scores of people who had managed to flee from the carnage brought against Europe's Jews. I settled in London where I studied painting at the Slade School



***Mira Hamermesh with one of the cattle trucks used to transport Jews to the death camps, preserved as a memorial.***

of Fine Art, later becoming a filmmaker. I married, brought up a family, and led a fulfilling life. My English friends knew that Poland was the country of my birth but little about my life there. They were surprised to hear that at the end of August, I planned to go back to join a gathering of ghetto survivors to commemorate 65 years since the liquidation of the Lodz-Litzmannstadt ghetto. Survivors were to gather from many continents, some accompanied by children and grandchildren, to participate in the event for the last time in their lives.

"Why go?" I was asked by friends over drinks. "You never mentioned that you had been in a ghetto." "I wasn't, but my parents and all my extended family were." After a pregnant silence, my friend George raised his glass. "Let's drink to Mira's luck!"

Yes, I was lucky - but luck comes at a price. The lucky ones, like me, as they grow older, discover that they are shackled to the shadows of known and unknown people, dead or alive.

During the flight to Poland, riding the clouds, I was hit by a kaleidoscopic flow of memories about my life in Lodz before the war. My parents had three children; my brother was followed by two daughters of whom I was the youngest. We lived in a comfortable, modern apartment in the centre of the town with members of our extended family living close by - father's four brothers, mother's three sisters, and my numerous cousins. The Lodz telephone book had many Hamermesz - the original spelling of our name.

Father took pride in

Lodz, Poland's second most important city after Warsaw. I recall walks with him, listening to rags-to-riches stories. Five hundred thousand residents thrived in the energetic climate generated by Lodz's economic, social, political and cultural spheres. Unlike any other Polish city, it had a unique mix of ethnic nationals - Poles, Jews and Germans - who somehow managed to coexist, if not always in harmony. Before the war, the Jewish population numbered about 230,000, almost half the city's population.

Hitler's war against the Jews brought about not only the annihilation of people physically, but also of their personal documents. In my own battle to seek traces of memories, the few family photographs I had played a vital role. I took them with me to Lodz. Mother's photograph never fails to revive a sense of her presence. My nostrils still hunger for the scent of her perfume. It was taken at the Marienbad spa, the summer before the outbreak of war. It shows a statuesque woman, well-dressed, with Polish features. It does not reveal that she was anxious, fearful about the future. I'll never know what kind of foreboding had made her say: "Danger everywhere ... I feel it in my bones." Father was photographed wearing a fashionable ski hat, bringing memories of the crisp, white Carpathian mountains. In a crowd of blond, sky-blue eyed Poles, his Mediterranean looks drew attention. He had a cheerful disposition and trusted people, knew the names of plants and trees, and was fond of horses. I resemble him in looks. My sister inherited mother's

Slavic features, as well as her anxious nature, while my brother's Nordic appearance, in the Nazi racial new order world, was a ticket to safety.

Landing at Lodz Reymont airport, my heartbeat quickened, and I was hit by jumbled memories about the outbreak of war. Unlike Warsaw, Lodz did not resist the invaders. It could not, because on 8 September 1939, immediately after the German troops entered Lodz, the local German-speaking population became an aggressive, swastika-wearing fifth column. We watched in horror as flags with swastikas and portraits of Hitler appeared in the windows of their homes and shops.

I was a bookish teenager with a passion for films, Latin and ice skating, filled with desire to see the unknown world. Then, suddenly, the war! I watched the German troops passing under our windows, greeted enthusiastically by local Germans. History in the making was parading before my eyes. I must confess, at first I found it exciting.

Not for long. I reacted with hatred and rage to my first experience of a German soldier entering our home. Hans, a worker in father's modest rubber factory, who went for his summer holidays to Germany as a Polish citizen and returned a fully fledged member of the Wehrmacht, had come to pay a visit. "Well, Jew," he greeted my father, "your home is going to be mine. Soon we Germans are going to move all the Jews out from this town." Before leaving, he warned father of dire consequences if anything was sold or removed. It broke my heart to see my resourceful

father humiliated and stripped of authority.

The idea to leave Lodz came to me after a succession of daily proclamations forbidding Jews from anything that makes life bearable: owning businesses or practising their professions, using tramways, entering cinemas, congregating for studies or prayers. I had become obsessed with the idea of joining my sister in Palestine who, a year earlier, as a young Zionist, had persuaded our parents to let her study there. My desire to leave created havoc. Mother blamed Father. "You've filled her head with stories that everything is possible if one wishes hard enough." She wrung her hands in despair. "And you, Miss Fantasy, forget about your crazy ideas. It's war - and families stay together!"

Father could see that her words were falling on deaf ears. "Let her learn that getting to Palestine is a pipe dream." For safety, he appointed as chaperone my 17-year-old brother, whose task it was to bring me back safely.

It was a rainy Sunday in November when the hour of separation came. We were standing ready with backpacks, facing my tearful mother. She broke down: "I'll never see you again!" Her embrace held me rigid, her warmth was like a magnet, and I knew that if I stayed one second longer I'd never be able to tear myself from her. "I'll never see you again!" she lamented, and I slid from her arms and, without looking back, ran down the stairs, chased by her sobs.

My parents only learned some months later that my brother and I had managed,

against all odds, to get away from the German-occupied part of Poland to the part annexed by the Soviets. In Lvov, a Polish city already Sovietised, we found shelter with family friends. It was not for long. Soon afterwards, my brother was picked up by the Soviets and, after a year in prison, forced to sign a confession that he was a spy. He was deported to a gulag in Siberia. Meanwhile, I made my way to the then neutral Lithuania where, thanks to my sister, I got on to a list for Youth Aliyah, an organisation formed to rescue Jewish children from the Nazis. I reached Palestine in 1941, where I was reunited with my sister, and later - amazingly - my brother. I finally settled in London in 1947.

My mother's lament often echoed in my head. I consoled myself by making plans for our future joyful reunion. But the sorrow I had caused her caught up with me with a vengeance when I myself was about to become a mother. In the hospital delivery room, when I called out in pain - "Mama, Mama" - it revived her lament. My son's arrival was greeted with tears of joy mingled with tears of longing for my family. By then, I had already learned of my parents' fate. Mother, Fajga Hamermesz (née Lerer), died of starvation in May 1943. And father, Josef Meir Hamermesz, who had miraculously stayed alive until the end, was deported to Auschwitz with the last transport from Lodz in 1944.

This year in Lodz, I chose to stay at the Grand Hotel. It was where Father used to take us on Sundays for a treat of ice cream. Its lobby was crowded with arrivals,

and I watched many joyful reunions between survivors who had not seen each other for many years. I was hoping that during the four days of organised events I might meet some survivors who had known my parents in the ghetto.

Lodz-Litzmannstadt ghetto was established in February 1940. The area chosen was a poverty stricken slum district called Baluty. Before the walls built around it were finished, and it became hermetically sealed off from the rest of Poland, its streets were filled with chaotic scenes of families forced to vacate their previous homes, desperately seeking a place inside the overpopulated ghetto. My parents and other members of our family would have been among them.

As well as the catastrophic conditions of hunger and typhus epidemic which began to wipe out the population, the Germans chose Lodz ghetto as a stopover station for Jews deported from major German and European cities, including Berlin, Luxembourg, Prague and Vienna. On his arrival in Lodz, one wrote in his diary: "We know now that hell exists, for Ghetto Lodz-Litzmannstadt is its pit." The destinations of approximately 20,000 new arrivals were Auschwitz or Chelmno, a lesser known extermination camp. These foreign Jews were deported ahead of the Lodz Jews. Gypsies from Romania and Hungary were also sent to Lodz. The Germans had established a mini-ghetto within the Jewish ghetto where they were liquidated.

At the reunion, stories included heated discussions about Chaim Rumkowski. A distinguished-looking man in

his 60s, I remember him pinching my cheeks when I was a girl and he ran the Jewish orphanage. He was appointed by the Germans to run Lodz ghetto and will never be forgiven for carrying out the command to deliver 3,000 children for deportation. "Give me your children," he asked the starving Jews who had gathered to hear him speak. By then, they knew about the gas chambers in Auschwitz and Chelmno, the two death camps with direct rail links from the station built to serve the ghetto. In the end, Rumkowski also died in Auschwitz.

In my quest to learn more about the Lodz ghetto, keen to know what my parents would have faced there, I engaged a survivor in a conversation about Rumkowski. "This puppet dictator who fancied himself king of the Jews? A murderer of children, he was!"

A woman interjected angrily: "Why not tell her about the schools, the children's summer camps in Marysin, the concerts and other cultural activities that Rumkowski provided? And hospitals? In our ghetto, people were not dying in the streets like in Warsaw."

"If you ask me," a bearded survivor addressed me, "history is still undecided whether he was a villain or a hero. No other ghetto survived as long as ours. In the end, Lodz had the largest number of survivors. Look what a huge crowd we make."

A survivor in a wheelchair pushed by his grandson, on hearing my name, greeted me: "You must be one of the Hamermesz daughters." He gripped my hand and I held on, as if his wrinkled,

arthritic hand was a bridge for me to walk over into the world of the ghetto. "I was the doctor on duty in the Lodz hospital when your father brought your mother in."

The grandson wheeled him outdoors to the nearest cafe, ordered coffee and tactfully left us alone. "Before your mother was taken ill, I saw her passing in the street. She was so emaciated that her dress hung on her like a tent."

Seeing me close to tears, he consoled me. "She was very sick when she was taken in. Swollen from hunger, and jaundiced, and we doctors had no proper medicines. Your father would bring her his own bread and soup which, believe me, were starvation rations ... potato peel was a medicine obtained on prescription ..."

We were sitting in Piotrkowska Street. Its art-nouveau architecture had been the pride of the city, it was where Mother used to take us shopping for new clothes. And here Uncle Bernard had his large wholesale shop of felt materials fronted by a huge signboard, "Hamermesz & Son". "You know, your mother was a very lucky woman. She had your father sitting by her bedside, day and night. Also important was the fact that none of her three children had to suffer with her in the ghetto. She knew that your sister was safe in Palestine. About you and your brother, she was worried. Your father kept telling her that if bad news did not reach them, it was a good sign."

"Let me tell you something else," he added. "She was lucky to die when she did."

She was spared the brutal scenes of the deportations to Auschwitz ..." Later I learned that he talked from experience. He was one of the doctors forced to make lists of critically ill patients earmarked for deportations.

The next morning, I went to mother's grave. In the ghetto section of the cemetery, where hundreds of thousands of Jews were buried without proper graves, she was lucky to have one. Afterwards I followed people gathering at Radegast, the station which has been transformed into a memorial, with a single cattle truck preserved as a relic. Father would have been forced inside one, sealed in with 100 or more people, before it carried him towards the gas chambers of Auschwitz. My hand touched the carriage, still full of unclaimed ghosts.

Yet, the Lodz commemoration turned out to be a celebration of remembrance. The hardships experienced by Lodz's ghetto population equipped them to be master-teachers for the future: they learned the hard way how to rebuild wrecked lives. My parents' experiences of the Final Solution, from which I was saved, have left me with a lifelong unease, made bearable only through creativity. Whether in my films, my painting or my writing, the unspeakable evil endured in the Lodz ghetto is the pivotal force that has always driven me.

*Mira Hamermesz's memoir The River of Angry Dogs is published by Pluto Press, priced £12.99*

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# First His Parents, Then His Son, Then His Wife...



*How Faith  
Sustained  
Alex Gross  
Through A Series  
Of Unspeakable  
Tragedies*

Boruch Shubert

If society gave out medals for optimism and endurance, Alex Gross would surely be a prime candidate to receive the lion's share. His series of horrifying experiences during the period when Europe was engulfed by the Holocaust would be enough to defeat any person. Miraculously,

however, Gross survived the war with his physical and mental capabilities intact. He went on to achieve great success in the United States as a real estate magnate, communal leader and family man. But the spectre of tragedy continued to haunt him. In two separate incidents, first his young son and then his wife were suddenly and violently taken from him, causing Gross to re-examine his deepest beliefs yet again. This, then is the story of a Jew who has lived through an excruciating amount of persecution and personal heartache - but refuses to relinquish his faith in G-d and trust in man's potential for good.

The story of Alex Gross begins in the town of Munkacz in Czechoslovakia's Carpathian Mountains, where he was born in 1928. His parents raised their seven sons and one daughter with a powerful mixture of love and examples of concern for others that has left its mark on Alex to this very day. "My father never left the shul on any *Shabbos* until he made sure that any stranger who passed through our village had a place to eat", Gross recounted to GOOD FORTUNE. "My mother took in a lot of other people to live with us, yet she never complained or asked for anything".

With the onset of World War II, Czechoslovakia was annexed by Hungary and its inhabitants became subject to official anti-Semitism. The

adolescent Alex was stunned to see his Gentile neighbours turn against his fellow Jews. In 1944 the oppression intensified as the Nazis arrested Jews and forced them to abandon their homes. Alex was then fourteen and still carries vivid memories of the brutal conditions at that time. "It was *Pesach*," Gross told GOOD FORTUNE. "Every man, woman and child was taken into the ghetto. We had no shelters and it was very cold. The typical day in our area in the winter was ten to fifteen degrees below zero with snow up to your chest. They did not give us any food or water. The ghetto was really nothing but a temporary station on the road to death." The feeling of being trapped was pervasive among the Jewish population. As Gross put it. "The local people wanted to get rid of the Jews too. Where could we hide? Who would want to endanger themselves?"

After some time, the Nazis emptied out the ghetto, transporting the Jews to Auschwitz by train. Packed with approximately 100 other human beings into a cattle car, Alex travelled for many days under intolerable circumstances. One poignant memory stands out in his mind against the background of inhumanity. "I remember my father kept saying to me, '*Yankele, ich vill das di vest laiben* (I want you should live.' My mother kept looking at me and saying, '*Yankele, her vus dain tate zagt*

(hear what your father tells you)'. That has stayed embedded in me.

In spite of the unspeakable atrocities he witnessed, Gross never succumbed to despair. Not only did he lose a number of relatives and friends to the Nazis, but both of his parents perished in Auschwitz. Through it all, he says, his faith sustained him.

After the war, Gross spent some time in different parts of Europe before finally travelling to the United States in late 1949 to live with relatives already residing here. During this period, he continued to reunite with one long-separated sibling after another, eventually discovering that all were still alive. (His stepbrother had died from typhoid on the day of his liberation.) "I can't explain why in our family so many survived," Gross commented. "It is a miracle to me."

The succeeding years brought Gross new opportunities to restructure his life and aim for success. He worked at various jobs while diligently pursuing a college education at night. Along with two of his brothers, Gross began to develop his own building business, which involved the creation of manufactured housing and specialised communities. In order to advance his career, he took courses in construction and real estate at Ohio State University.

In 1960, Gross decided to relocate to the South. He and his brothers acquired 2,500 acres of undeveloped land in Conyers, Georgia, east of Atlanta, thus forming the nucleus of Atlanta Suburbia Estates Ltd. The thriving land development company would soon be the envy of established competitors. And while Atlanta has been the primary focus of Gross's community developments, it is by no means, his only interest. Over the years he has left his imprint on other sections of the country as well. By now this visionary real estate entrepreneur has been responsible for the establishment of over 40,000 housing units in eighteen states. It is probably not too far-fetched to conjecture that the destruction and devastation witnessed by Alex Gross in his earlier years implanted deep within his soul an unquenchable desire to rebuild the world around him, to create environmental splendour out of barren terrain and bring long-lasting beauty into the lives of his fellow human beings.

Alex Gross had made it through the Holocaust alive, consequently reasserting his belief in a Supreme Being who rules the world and ultimately protects the Jewish nation. He had managed to pass an unparalleled test of faith and will. Having defied seemingly insurmountable odds, he had emerged from total ruin to form a brand

new life. But it would soon become evident that G-d wished to put him to the test still again.

Gross had married, becoming the proud father of three daughters and one son. His joy was further increased when his son celebrated his bar mitzvah. About a year later, while the family was in the process of moving to Atlanta, the teenager was killed in an accident with a farming machine on a plot of his father's land. "I really wanted to die," Gross told GOOD FORTUNE. "I did not want to live. Then I took a look at my wife and I started realising how fortunate I am. I took a look at my three beautiful daughters and I started realising how blessed I am." No matter how daunting the situation, Alex Gross was able to summon up a sense of hope.

Nine years later, Gross was once again forced to plumb the depths of his courage when his wife of twenty-five years was attacked and murdered in downtown Atlanta. To this day, the perpetrator has not been caught. Exhibiting his trademark fortitude, this survivor of repeated affliction has since remarried, thereby gaining three stepsons. Amazingly, his faith has remained undiminished. "I was brought up to believe in G-d," he stated emphatically. "He has His reasons."

Religion and devotion to Jewish principles have always played a key role in the life of Alex Gross. In

more than seventeen years, he has almost never missed a *Shabbos* or *Yom Tov* service in Atlanta's Beth Jacob shul, led by Rabbi Feldman. Active in several Jewish organisations, Gross also established a *Chesed* Society in his shul, naming it after his late wife, who had been quietly involved in goodwill work on behalf of needy Jews. On a broader scale, he has garnered quite a bit of media attention for the numerous lectures he has given on his Holocaust ordeals to fraternal organisations, such as Kiwanis and Rotary clubs. Feeling especially compelled to educate the next generation of Americans about the dark side of mankind's recent past, he has travelled to many colleges and public schools across the South, painstakingly recreating his personal history and impressing students with the necessity of fostering a peaceful world in which justice and fairness prevail.

Asked if he had one specific message he wished to impart to a new generation of Jews, Gross replied: "Remain good Jews - believe in Hashem and be charitable. You should always be devoted to the Jewish people and do your best to make sure that the world can survive as a viable place to live." Words to live by - from a man who has lived through the worst of times and arisen to fashion a life resonant with the spirit of idealism.

# My Post-War Memoir

Jerzy Lando  
BA (Hons) Hum (Open)

## First installment

### *Chapter 1 The Aftermath*

The distant sound of thunder, faint at first, was getting louder, more prolonged, threatening and intense. The curious thing about what sounded like a violent electric storm was the absence of even a single cloud in the bright sky. It did not take long to realise that the din was not of a storm but that of Hamburg being bombed. Our guards seemed to be getting friendlier with every day, and one morning, when we woke up we saw none at the open gates. This happened on 3rd of May 1945, when British troops reached Sandbostel P.O.W. Camp, half-way between Hamburg and Bremen.

I had survived close to six years of the Nazi occupation of Poland, including several selections for deportation from the Warsaw ghetto to Treblinka gas chambers and two years of clandestine existence on false papers on the "Aryan" side of the city. In early 1944 a colleague at work, an officer in the underground Stronnictwo Narodowe affiliated to the A.K., the Polish Home Army<sup>1</sup>, invited me to join it. It was an extreme right-wing organisation and far from an ideal choice for a Jew. But to the outside world, I was not a Jew and I knew of no other way of getting prepared for the expected confrontation with the German army. In recognition of the two years' service in the school's cadet corps, I was given the rank of Cadet Officer and chose "*Hetmanski*" for my pseudonym.

Under the command of Captain Lech Grzybowski<sup>2</sup>, I took an active part in the 1944 Warsaw uprising. I was slightly wounded by shrapnel, of which one small bit remains lodged in my hand. As we were about to surrender, I was promoted to the rank of staff sergeant<sup>3</sup>. Under the terms of the capitulation, along with other combatants, I was sent to the Lamsdorf Oflag<sup>3</sup> in Upper Silesia at the end of September. At Christmas 1944, at the approach of Soviet troops, we were transported to the Sandbostel P.O.W. Camp. Now, at long last, at the age of 22, I was a free man, I had no need to hide or fear anyone.

Among the first British soldiers to enter the Camp was Sergeant Saul Polack from Liverpool, short, bespectacled and of an unmistakably Jewish appearance. When I told him that I was Jewish, he refused to believe me. 'You don't look like one', he insisted. I offered to pull my trousers down to prove it. 'It proves nothing,' he said, 'many Gentiles are circumcised for health reasons.' It was my recitation of the opening of the Pesach prayer "Ma nishtana halajla hazae" that convinced him. Amazed to meet a Holocaust survivor, he embraced me warmly and we remained close friends during my stay in Germany.

I had to find out what had happened to my parents, to my brother and the rest of my family. Fortunately, I

remembered the address of Mr W Alt, father-in-law of my uncle Edek, at 70 Allenby Street in Tel-Aviv. It was Edek who replied to my letter. His family, all freed from the concentration camp, were with him in Tel-Aviv, my mother had returned to our pre-war apartment in Lodz and Mr Alt had received news about Michal who now lived in England. I got anxious - why did he not mention my father? I wrote to my mother who had just heard from Edek that I was alive and well. Her reply was shattering. My father was apprehended by the Germans only two weeks before the Russian troops arrived and there was no trace of him ever since. He had managed to swim across to reach the shore, but not to get out. And Michal, diagnosed with schizophrenia<sup>5</sup>, was recently admitted to the Long Grove Mental Hospital in Epsom. I wished to go back to Poland, but my mother urged me to stay in Germany for the time being, as former members of the Polish Home Army were being imprisoned by the Communist regime or sent to Siberia.

When Saul heard that apart from Polish and English, I was fluent in German, French and had some understanding of Russian, he introduced me to his commander, Major Jennings who was looking for an interpreter. He was responsible for dealing with tens of thousands of refugees and P.O.Ws from all parts of Europe, stranded in Northwest Germany. He offered me the post of interpreter with the 205

British Military Government and I remained in its headquarters in nearby Bossum for 10 months.

After I woke up one night with a toothache, I was recommended a dentist, some 10 miles away. He had a beautiful daughter of about my age. We were attracted to each other at first sight and I became a frequent visitor to their house. We were often left on our own, but never ventured out together, fraternising being frowned upon. I found it hard to reconcile the impression of a cultured and humane family with their fellowmen's indescribable cruelty.

The Long Grove Hospital contacted Mr Alt in Tel-Aviv, whom Michal had named to be notified in case of his death. Mr Alt gave the caller my mother's address as Michal's next-of-kin and she received some papers of Michal, which included a list of addresses. One of them was of Dr Joseph Rosenberg, apparently his only visitor at the hospital. He immediately offered to make all the arrangements for her to come to London but, because of travel restrictions, she had to wait till early autumn to get a passport, visa and ticket. I was most anxious to meet her; I was granted one week's compassionate leave and provided with all the travel documents. I boarded a ship in the Hook of Holland and after an overnight sea voyage, the first in my life, during which I was violently seasick, I landed in Newhaven. Here I got the first view of the land I had for so long dreamt to see. It was unwelcoming, hiding behind a thick mist in heavy rain.

I decided to go first to Oldham, where Elizabeth,

Michal's wife lived. She would be best able to tell me about Michal's life since he came to England. Betty, as she called herself, was in her late twenties, tall and bony, not very feminine, with black smooth hair and brown eyes, not what I would consider as a typical Anglo-Saxon. She lived with her parents and worked for her father, Mr Robertshaw as a dental nurse. Their semi-detached house, with a small back garden, very much like all other houses in the same street. Unfamiliar with the English way of life, I was surprised to see each family living in a separate house and not in apartments; only a rich country could afford such luxury.

Weak flames from smouldering coal in an open fireplace made their simply furnished lounge look rather than feel warm. Family photos on the shelves around the walls made me feel jealous; I had none to remind me of my past and of my family<sup>6</sup>. I received a warm welcome from Betty's parents; there was curiosity in their eyes, I doubt if they had met many foreigners before me. After dinner, I was shown to a small bedroom on the upper floor. It was cold and uninviting, the fireplace looked sad, as if it has been waiting for a long time to be used. I shuddered when I got into bed, the sheets felt damp as if they barely had time to dry from the laundry. It was the Lancashire air. I was not sorry to leave the next day.

In the morning, Betty told me a great deal about her husband and herself. In the autumn of 1939, Michal, four years my senior, managed to smuggle himself from the German-occupied Poland to then neutral

Lithuania, continued on to Sweden and then to England, showing incredible pluck and ingenuity. He felt there at home, as at the outbreak of the war he was a third year student at the Manchester College of Technology, one year away from getting a degree in Textile Manufacturing. His mental illness was due to the appalling treatment he had received while serving with the Polish Armed Forces in Britain. His fellow soldiers treated him cruelly, as he was a Jew, brutalised and bullied him until, unfit for service, he was finally released in late 1943<sup>7</sup>. They met shortly afterwards and got married at the Manchester Register Office the following May. She decided to leave him before long, Michal gradually becoming impossible to be with. They lost contact and the notice of his admission to the mental hospital less than a year after their wedding, was the first thing she heard about him since their separation. His condition must have deteriorated since their wedding. A textile technician at the time of the wedding, he is named as labourer on admission to hospital, as can be seen by comparing the admission and the death certificate.

In the afternoon, I took a train to Euston and from there I rushed to mother's furnished room in Seven Sisters Road, close to the Manor House tube station. Many tears must have rolled down her cheeks in the two years since I last saw her. At 46, she had not lost her good looks, except that she looked worn out and tired. Early next day, we travelled to Epsom, where we found Michal on his own, lying in

bed in a cell with a small barred window just below the ceiling and a spy hole in the door. The cell was hardly large enough for the bed and the two chairs that were brought in for us. I found it unbearable to see him failing to recognise us six dreadful years after he had bid us goodbye. Distressed, we went back to London where I stayed until my leave ended. Mother saw him every day after my departure.

Mother remained in London for a couple of weeks, visiting her many relatives, some close, some distant, whom she last saw during the holiday she had spent in England with my father in August 1939. Her cousin, Mrs Kliger found her the present accommodation. Of greatest help to her was Dr Rosenberg, a Polish ex-refugee. Since he came to England, he became rich, his apartment in Regent's Park Crescent was most luxurious, and he was soon to establish a private hospital in the West End. He was Michal's closest friend. It was hard to part with mother when I had to return to Germany, but she was at least surrounded by family and friends, all of them keen to make a Holocaust survivor most welcome.

Whenever I was granted leave from my job as an interpreter, I travelled to Brussels and was lavishly entertained by my aunt Mania and her husband Abek. They took me out to many performances at the *Opera de la Monnaie*. I had never been to an opera before and was overwhelmed by the experience. Their pretty 13 year old daughter, Jenny, had survived the war hidden by nuns. She accompanied me with her

closest friend, Rose, on walks around the city and in the surrounding countryside.

In April 1946, I received from mother the news I had been impatiently waiting for. Following an amnesty, ex-members of the Polish Home Army were no longer prosecuted and I could join her at home with nothing to fear. On a visit to Hamburg, much of it in ruins, I bought a civilian set of clothes. It was painful to part with my companions and with my German girlfriend. I returned my military uniform, boarded a passenger boat in Bremen and, after passing through the Kiel Canal, disembarked in Szczecin, to complete my journey to Lodz by train. It took a long time, enough to think about my recent past and, not without some misapprehension, about my future.

The home to which I returned and where mother was living was our pre-war apartment in the luxury block of flats owned by my parents at No 6 Swietokrzyska (of Saint Cross) Street in Lodz. But there were many changes. The street was renamed *Square of Paris Commune*, the building looked shabby and neglected. The lift did not work. We had a lodger, Wladyslaw Kendra, imposed by communist regime and paying a nominal rent. A renowned concert pianist, he lived in our apartment with his family and a grand piano, on which he was practising almost every day and night. In the communist hierarchy, musicians figured at the top of the list and were given the best accommodation available. Although Wladyslaw had been a close school friend of my brother, the relations

between his family and my mother were strained. My old room's furnishings had not changed, except for a grand Blutner piano, which my mother got the caretaker to bring down from an empty apartment on her arrival when she saw that my pre-war Bechstein had disappeared. This room also served as the bedroom for Halinka, my second cousin, a war orphan whom my mother had taken under her wing. She was a big girl of my age, good looking, with a mass of black curly hair and black shining eyes. To get to her room at night, she had to pass through my brother's former bedroom, where I now slept. I don't remember the circumstances, but soon after my arrival I found her in my bed one night and on most of the following nights.

The large textile factory at Pomorska 75, which my father owned before the war, was now owned by the state. It was managed on behalf of the Ministry of Industry by my uncle, Elias, husband of Hela, my mother's youngest sister. My father, for whom under my mother's constant pressure and frequent nagging he had worked before the war, thought little of his ability, technical or otherwise, but now, after Polish managerial classes were decimated, he was regarded sufficiently skilled to run a large factory. As a Polish proverb goes, "where there is no fish crab's fish". Privileges he was entitled to, above and below board were many. The war years have left a tradition of "szaber", legitimizing whatever contravened the laws imposed by the occupant; these practices, deeply ingrained, did not stop under the new communist

regime. With most goods on strict ration, there was a flourishing black market for textiles and Elias, with his team, knew how to draw profit from it. He became wealthy. My uncle and aunt were indebted to my mother for rescuing them from a certain death in the Lodz ghetto by smuggling them at great expense to join us in 1942 in the Warsaw ghetto. They showed now their gratitude by making sure she lacked nothing. Elias bought her two diamond rings to replace those she had to sell to pay for their rescue and, when she left Lodz for England, he gave her enough money to tide her over for some time.

Reading newspapers was a revelation. They contained no proper news, only sheer communist propaganda, expressed in crude, foul language. Every article extolled the virtues of the regime that had the

audacity to call itself “democratic”; in Orwellian double-speak, words changed their meanings. They falsified the Polish past history and vilified all whom they saw as enemies of the people. For example, in reference to the pre-war foreign minister, Beck: “Beck is a trained flunkey in the Imperialist service, knows all the designs of his masters and knows the limits of a lackey’s entitlements”<sup>8</sup>. Or: “Our whole nation from child to old man demands and expects that traitors and enemies who sold out our fatherland to our enemies be shot like rabid dogs”<sup>9</sup>.

The news about my brother’s death reached us at the end of June 1946, accompanied by all the papers required for mother to travel to London. She got there just in time for his funeral. I applied for help to the British Consulate in Warsaw, told them about my

service with the British Military Government, and got a visa, as well as a free ticket for a flight in a British military aircraft to Croydon airport. It took a little longer to get a passport, so that by the time I arrived in London on 6th July I had missed the funeral by a couple of days. It was Michal’s friend, Dr Joseph Rosenberg, who had organised my mother’s journey and who used his influence to get Michal buried at the United Synagogue East Ham Cemetery at no cost to us. The hospital’s Notice of Death states that on 25 June at about 8.50 p.m., the nurse on duty, while paying a routine visit to his room, found the bedstead on end, with the patient suspended from the upper rail by his nightshirt. By the time the doctor arrived, he was dead.

*End of first installment.*

- 1 Polish Underground Army loyal to the Polish Government in exile in London
- 2 Podchorazy plutonowy
3. Prisoners of war camp for officers
5. It was also called dementia praecox at that time
6. Two years later, my uncles in Brazil sent me many family photos, my parents used to send them out regularly.
7. In a leading article in the Guardian of October 22 2005. Oliver James reports that according to the latest medical research into mental illness, “the fact that some two-thirds of people diagnosed as schizophrenia have suffered physical or sexual abuse is shown to be a major, if not the major cause of the illness.”
8. “Beck to wytresowany wyga imperisalistej sluzby, znci zamiary panow, zna tez granice lokajskich uprawnień.
9. Caly nasz narod od dziecka do starca oczekuje i domaga sie fylko jednego: zdrajcow i wrogom, ktorzy zasprzedawali wrogom nasza ojczyzne. rozestrelac jak wsciekłe psy.

*End of the first installment*

Jerzy Lando is the author of his wartime Memoir,  
*Saved by my Face*, Mainstream Publishing,  
 Edinburgh 2002.

# CHANUKAH PA



# PARTY 2009



# The Mayor and the Book

In 1932 two people sat side by side at a dinner. Her name was Vera. His Meir. There was a degree of silence as they pondered in what language they could converse. As Akavya says “know where you have come from”.

Vera had been born in Riga, Latvia, one of six in a notable family. Her ancestor was the famous Chassidic Rabbi, Schneur Zalman, way back in the 18th century.

Her later widespread family included the names Isaiah Berlin, Yehudi Menuhin, Schneersohn, Even Meir Berlin, later known as Bar-Ilan, after whom the famous university was named.

Yet why was Vera there, this woman who had been a musical prodigy at 12, whose home was constantly visited by Tevye’s creator, Sholem Aleichem? It appears that a trade fair was taking place in Tel Aviv. Chaim Weizmann, later in 1948, Israel’s first President, prevailed upon Vera to go to Egypt and encourage its participation in the fair. She went and succeeded.

Vera had been a Hindin, one of the few wealthy Jewish families amidst a sea of poverty.

And Meir? A much simpler explanation will do. He was an heroic figure, a city founder and father, Mayor from 1922. Walk about this lively, buoyant Tel-Aviv and you will see his surname, Dizengoff, gracing a street, a square, a park. His name is inextricably linked with the city’s development.

The two of them sat side by side. Vera was mistress of a host of languages. When she and her family escaped from

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*Aubrey is a lawyer of great distinction and has played an active role in many fields. Vice-President of the Board of Deputies; he was an original member of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative; he set up and chaired a working party on environment which led to his book “Judaism and Ecology”. He spent five years as a Commissioner of the Commission for Racial Equality. He is a co-Chairman of the Indian Jewish Association; a Trustee of various charitable trusts and is Deputy Chairman of the British Caribbean Association. His latest book “The Rainbow Never Ends” is his autobiography.*

Bolshevik Russia in 1920, they lived in France. Vera became friend of the great artists from Diaghilev to Bakst.

Suddenly it dawned on the two diners that they both spoke Russian and then they were away. Both were charmers. Both were conversationalists. Both were achievers. In true gallant fashion, and in French, Meir dedicated to Vera a collection of historical photos recording the growth of this ostensible suburb of Yafo (Jaffa) into a major metropolis in its own right. He wrote a brief message in French in honour of her visit and signed it.

Now this is but a preamble to the kindness of the city’s first citizen in seeing me today, 4th June, 2009. The great man Meir passed away in 1938, the ebullient woman

Vera in 1985 but not before, in her 94th year, penning the story of her life.

How on earth did I get involved? Vera had one child, Irene, enormously and variously gifted, but one who suffered from an illness brought on by the horror of life under the Nazis and traitorous Vichy France. Irene, for the last 10 years of her life could not leave her home. The 60,000 chemicals in the air would fell her at once.

Irene knew I was writing books. She presented me with her mother’s manuscript to edit. But it required much more than editing.

I spent three months on it and eventually a decent book emerged, published under the title “Vera”. She mentions her mission in Tel-Aviv in 1932, concentrating particularly on the problems of camel riding in Egypt!

The original Tel-Aviv book, presented by Meir, passed to Irene, who in turn passed away in 2005 and the book passed to me. It was an historical document. I was asked to present it to a university, but it seemed to me ideal for the city’s library or archives, especially in this 100th year of celebration.

We come now to Tel-Aviv’s Mayor. My friend Rami Puri came with me to Rabin Square on the morning of Thursday 4th June. The street names here are a history lesson in themselves. Who would believe that there still remain streets named Allenby and King George V, neither of whom were Jews or Israelis. Only the English could compare, retaining a statue of George Washington in Trafalgar Square.

Rami and I had limited

expectation of whether we could see the Mayor who is enormously busy during this centenary year, and yet, surprisingly, we did see him. He was affable, thrilled with the book, "a treasure".

He is a tall man, with strong, bold features, a firm determined chin, and the bluest of eyes. He turned the pages of the sepia photographs, nodding appreciatively. He was glad to

receive it. Without Rami with me I doubt whether I would ever have got this far. In a way Rami's presence as a Tel-Aviv lawyer vouched for me.

Mayor Ron Huldai and I stood together holding the book open at the city's insignia with flags behind us, as we were photographed. I formally presented the book, the Mayor formally accepted it on behalf of the city.

There were smiles all round. As we left he said, with a mischievous twinkle, that in New York and other places, it might take two months to get an appointment with the Mayor, but here in Israel.....

All I can say is, what a book, what a city, what a Mayor!

LETTER HERE FROM  
RON HULDAI

## Israel Today

Aubrey Rose  
C.B.C., U.Univ

(June 2009)

Modern Israel is one of the greatest experiments in world history. It is unlikely that its argumentative, intense, Jewish inhabitants, consumed with daily problems, would see it in these terms.

Yet here are 6 million Jews - the number echoes - dwelling in a sliver of land at the edge of the Eastern Mediterranean, amidst a sea of hostility, among hundreds of millions of Arabs.

This tiny nation is the third Jewish sovereign state in the Holy Land, its predecessors harking back two and three thousand years. Its very name, Israel, denotes struggle, and struggle has marked its sixty years of existence. Incidentally, in view of current discussions, there has never been a Palestinian State and the word 'Palestine' never appears in the Old or New Testaments.

Modern Israel, its survival and development, is a modern miracle. No nation has overcome six decades of constant physical hostility, wars, hi-jacks, boycotts, assassinations, suicide bombers, terrorisms and yet remained positive.

No nation has endured

such an avalanche of subtle, sustained campaigning of public misinformation, vicious propaganda, blackmail, on a world scale, using all manner of modern forms of communication, and yet has maintained a high morale and optimism.

Which nation has absorbed the poor and afflicted from 120 other states, integrated them without the help of UN, EU or other international body?

As I walk the streets of busy Tel-Aviv or beautiful Jerusalem, I am struck by the sheer energy of the people.

They have emerged from Russia, Ukraine, Middle Europe, Western Europe, Britain, United States. They came, escaping Arab racism and warlike actions, from Morocco, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Ethiopia, of many shades of skin, many levels of education and social evolution.

Despite the bickering, the tensions, the political confrontations, the religious separateness, I just marvel

at the underlying, sometimes incomprehensible, unity and cohesion. The latter emerges from the unique revival of Hebrew, from military service of men and women, from the open society of free expression, from an independent, respected Supreme Court, and not least, from the endless threats, and more than threats, from beyond her borders.

In what other nation will you find the purest forms of both socialism and capitalism? They dwell side by side. Two founders of Kibbutz Lavi sat with me, the older of the two explained its blend of agricultural and industrial activity. Internally, individually, money, wages, play little role, the principle, in theory and in practice, is "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need". Where else in the whole wide world does such a place exist?

And there are 280 of them, each with its own version of this basic teaching. Marx, from his Jewish origin, might have been pleased, but he would have been appalled by the absence of class division and antagonism. Here true equality reigns, as does fraternity.

Go to Tel-Aviv and you will find a buoyant Stock Exchange, a capitalist enterprise if ever there was one, its securities market regulated by a national authority, encouraging investment from abroad, replete with its own bank and investment houses from within and without. Pure capitalism.

This paradox that is Israel extends to religion. All faiths can practise here, and do. This bit of land, Jerusalem especially resonates in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, but other faiths flourish in freedom. The Bahai, with its universality, even has its world headquarters in Haifa, the country's main port.

Indeed, amidst those men adorned with beards and black hats, women with wigs and ankle length skirts, there is even a Jewish group who oppose the very existence of the State because it was not set up by the Messiah. A handful even believe that a certain Rabbi was the Messiah.

On the other hand, swathes of people see religious beliefs and practices as irrelevant, whilst others have tried to adapt the ancient inheritance to modern times. And so, many spiritual flowers bloom, including today, a surge for spirituality amidst the mantra-like formality of endless daily prayers and ritual. But even formalities have a place and give a structured certainty to those who either need them or were brought up to value them. This is feature of all religions, not just Judaism.

I am intrigued how people make a statement of their identity by their clothes, their hair, their head covering, long skirts and so on.

What concerns me is that constant head covers reduces the important take-up of vitamin D from the sun. Perhaps this may explain the host of pale faces seen here.

This is a true democracy. Governments are changed peacefully through the ballot box, in stark contrast to the process in the Arab world. Women have equality, though still afflicted by unfortunate religious impediments in the realm of family and domestic affairs.

Good folk are trying to remove the hardships caused by literal application of ancient law. Change will come. I am reminded of Disraeli's remark that the story of the Jewish religion is one of development or else it is nothing.

Benjamin would be delighted to learn that Jerusalem has a street named after him. Indeed, the names of streets in this land are a history lesson in itself.

What perpetually intrigues me is how open is this advanced society now over 60 years old, yet many Arabs, Palestinians, refer to 1948 as a "catastrophe". They are right, but for the wrong reason. The catastrophe was not the creation of the State, but the Arab contempt for the United Nations by trying to destroy Israel at its birth in 1948. Five Arab nations attacked the new State. Indeed had the Arab world complied with the law, there could have been a Palestinian State in 1948, living for 60 years alongside the Jewish State, instead of now, in 2009, agitating for a state - that is the real catastrophe.

I recall Abba Eban's remark that the Palestinians "never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity". They have a chance now (June 2009) but can't see it.

The other disaster was that

the Arabs created the refugee problem, both the 660,000 or so Palestinian refugees and the 850,000 (approx) Jewish refugees. The latter fled for their lives from Arab racism, and, to this day, have never been compensated for the considerable property they left behind. The Arabs and their supporters conveniently forget Jewish refugees.

I remember, in 1949, walking amidst the tents that housed Iraq's Jewish refugees on the hillsides. These folk have long been integrated - heaven knows how - into Israeli society, whilst Palestinians, their children, grandchildren, still remain - to the eternal shame of Arabs - in camps. Israel was poor, yet behaved admirably. Arab countries are choked with oil money yet failed their Palestinian brothers. The contrast is stark, yet internationally, rarely acknowledged, if at all. Oil speaks. Simple humanity and facts, are rarely heard.

The Nazi, Adolf Eichman, may be the only instance of capital punishment in Israel in the last 60 years. The death penalty has been abolished (Nazis apart) even for the foulest of terrorists. This is the mark of a civilised society. Compare that with all Israel's neighbours, especially the almost fascist-like Iran, where heads are chopped off regularly, to no Western protests.

And this highlights the problem. It is not just an Israel-Arab problem. It is much more than that. It is the difficulty of peaceful co-existence of groups who live close to each other yet have different traditions, moral and gender assumptions and values, religious tenets and practices, resulting in conflict, murders, wars. History is strewn with such conflicts.

It seems particularly to afflict the Muslim world today. One and a half million perished in the Iran-Iraq war a few decades ago. Since the 1930s no one has used poison gas except Arabs against Arabs or against Kurds. Muslim minorities have found it difficult to live as a minority, as expressed in violence, from China to Thailand, Philippines to Nigeria, let alone the blasphemy of 9/11 in New York and 7/7 in London.

I am no expert on the Koran but I believe among fine moral teachings it also talks of 'Holy War'. No war can ever be 'Holy'.

I prefer the Hebrew prophet who referred to the time when men would learn war no more. I prefer too the words of Jesus, "Love one another as I have loved you".

Is there a Moslem equivalent? There may well be but it is not apparent in practice in the last decades. Yet there have in the past also been Jewish and Christian 'Holy Wars'. They are hopefully in the past. I hope the expression 'Jihad' can join them.

It is so sad for the Arab world, which has a wonderful cultural and scientific tradition, that terrorism on a world scale has erupted from Islam and from no other faith. My hope is that more Arab peace-lovers will have the courage to speak out.

What is the cause of this crisis in Islam, and crisis it is, as the Shia-Sunni division confirms. It is nothing new, it happened in the Christian tradition for centuries. Did a Pope really send a terrorist to murder Elizabeth of England? Look what happened to the Huguenots or the Catholic genocide of the Khazars in Southern France.

The conflict, based on religion or ethnicity is never-ending and I have not even mentioned the unmentionable Nazi German's sub-human destruction of millions of Jews, a constant background, to the life of the State of Israel.

Orthodox Jews hope for the Messiah. Many Christians await his return. As the world sinks amidst ecological, population, moral, social and technical problems never was there a better time for some Messianic appearance or revelation.

It may come, but possibly in a form few of the devotees expect. The present is a perpetual problem but it is good to look ahead. Who knows what may happen to this afflicted globe, rolling around on its axis as man, mere man, continues to struggle with himself.

People talk about the Israel-Palestinian issue, but the problems go wider and deeper. I have but to mention Iraq, Taliban, Al-Queda, the murderous bombings in Madrid, Mumbai. So much proceeds from the challenge to Islam, and to other faiths, of the rise of human rights. I do not believe any of these conflicts can be resolved until there is equality, under the law, of men and women. And that is a major problem in Islam and in other traditions. Look at 'Seti' in Hinduism (self-immolation of widows).

There used to be a slogan 'Land for Peace'. What has happened in Gaza has put paid to that idea. The only correct slogan is 'Peace for Peace'. Is there a desire for peace in the hearts of all concerned? That is the only test.

Despite its wonderful efforts Israel has one alarming failure. It has no idea how to present its case, no understanding of public

relations in this world of instant communication. Perhaps it has given up on this; that would be a shame. After all, Israel can honestly say:

1. She is the only country in history to give up more land than her own size for peace.
2. She is the only country in history to give up oil wells in the cause for peace.
3. She gave up Gaza in the cause of peace and in return suffered 5,000 missile and rockets on her towns and villages, certainly a war crime.
4. The abolition of capital punishment, unlike her neighbours.

Just look at how Arabs in Israel have access to hospitals, universities, public offices, parliament. There is nothing comparable in the Arab world, yet in that world potentates are so often treated by Jewish medical experts - not a word of this reaches public ears.

There is so much that fascinates me about this old-new people and country. Different problems have produced different leaders. My friend, Ariele, now 94, feels there has been a growth of materialism and commercialism as against the idealism of earlier years. He is probably right, but Israel is not alone in this process. He bemoans the lack of leaders like Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir, but then, other times, other leaders.

I ended my two week visit to Israel full of admiration for all that has been achieved, and just hope that some kind of peace may one day have a change.

# Where the Daffodils grow

The children from the Holocaust made their first home in England.

Memories of Windermere, Lingfield and Isleworth were shared at Beth Shalom on the 21st June 2009 for the Lingfield Reunion. Our last get together was in 1997. We were all excited to meet up with each other, and were conscious of those who were unable to come and be with us. With us to celebrate this special occasion were Sarah Moskovitz and her husband Itzik. Sarah wrote the book "Love despite Hate", which tells the stories of the children from childhood to adulthood and how Alice Goldberger, herself a refugee from Germany, encouraged us in so many ways. She was assisted by Sophie and Manna. Later on after Manna left, Gertrude and Susie.

We were greeted by Marina with her usual warm hug, had a delicious lunch in the

Zdenka Husserl  
Rachel (Eve)  
Oppenheimer

Dome, which on this occasion was decorated with photos of when we were very young. Stephen Smith then gave a talk on how Beth Shalom was started, and then went on to talk about the new project the "Journey", which tells the story mainly about the Kindertransport. This new exhibition is aimed for the young children. We went then to the memorial garden, and visited Alice's rosebush. We ended the day by having dinner at Blooms.

Some of you who might be wondering who the Lingfield Children are. In 1945, when the last of the bombers left Prague, among the Boys (which included Ben Helfgott) and Girls, there was a very small number of children, some were as young as 3 years old.

Our first rehabilitating centre was at Windermere, where among all the officials meeting us at the airport, we had our first glimpse of Alice. She was

trained as a child therapist at the Hampstead Nursery by Anna Freud. After a short stay at Windermere, we older children moved to the very beautiful country home Weir Courtney in Lingfield, Surrey. Daffodils grew in abundance in the gardens and nearby woods. This house was owned by Sir Benjamin Drage, a member of West London Synagogue. It was here that we started to have a normal and happy life. We went to the local junior school and learnt how to speak English, and also how to mix with other children. We had many activities, ranging from putting on plays, for the benefit of visitors (mainly from WLS, who helped to support us, and also some of the "Boys" who often came to visit us) to learn music, arts and crafts, and also how to look after animals. What was so lovely at Lingfield House was how we were treated as individual people by Alice and her staff.

In 1948/49 we moved to Isleworth, so that we could go to Secondary School: and also to go on Shabbat to Synagogue.

Alice prepared us for our future lives for when the home would close. This sadly happened in 1957, when so many of us left to follow our careers.

Alice was honoured on "This is your Life" on the 25th October 1978 and many children came from abroad.

Alice would surely have been delighted that our reunion was so very special, and that the bond amongst us was as strong as ever.



*Weir Courtney*



*Alice  
Goldberger*

# The First International Forum in the forgotten Concentration Camp Schlieben

Jean-Louis Rey

I came the first time to Schlieben in May 2005 with my wife. It was Thursday, Ascension Day, called "Männertag" in this part of Germany, which was, 15 years before, located in the "Deutsche Demokratische Republik". The little town seemed to be sleepy. Nobody outside, no shop or pub open.

I didn't know very much about Schlieben; I only knew that, here, was a concentration camp in which my grandmother (on my mother's side) was a prisoner during the last war. I knew too that she worked as a slave for the HASAG, Hugo Schneider AG. There inmates manufactured the well-known "Panzerfaust".

My grandmother was a member of the French Resistance, a member of the SOE's network "Prunus". She was the secretary of Lieutenant Martin Perkins (Pertschuk) a young English officer, chief of this network. members of it were arrested on April 13th 1943, including Perkins and my grandmother. Perkins was later deported to Buchenwald where he was murdered in March '45 with five other English officers. It was a few days before the camp was liberated on April 11th 1945.

After a few months as a prisoner in German military prisons, in France, my grandmother was sent to Ravensbrück and, in July '44, to Schlieben.

Reading the tourist information on the "Market Platz" of Schlieben, we discovered that a monument was raised in the cemetery to the memory of the "Opfer Des

Fascismus" - Victims of Fascism. On the right and left side of it, two great bronze tables were put. Names and dates were engraved on it.

The only person there was an old lady, sweeping the paths. My wife (she is German) explained who we were and why we had come there. The lady said very kindly that the camp was not in Schlieben itself but in Berga, a hamlet, one kilometer to the north. She told us too that someone was writing a book about the history of Schlieben. In this book, she said, we would find "everything about the camp".

We went to Berga, didn't find any trace of a camp. We found only a young man. We asked him the same question. He answered that the camp was somewhere here, but he didn't know exactly where.

Just back from Schlieben in Paris, I 'phoned the Schlieben City Council. A man confirmed that someone was writing a book to be published next July. He promised to send me a copy. I did not receive it.

The following August I visited Schlieben with my wife. There we met my "phone correspondent" and the "Ortschronist", Hans-Dieter Lehmann, the author of the book. He gave us his book (sold it) "Die Geschichte des Schliebener Landes". I asked him where the camp was and where I could get testimonies, pictures or archives. The answer was very disappointing. No hope of information. Perhaps in

Buchenwald or Ravensbrück, but..... At the same time, he offered us a little book "Das KZ-Außenlager Schlieben", from Walter Strnad.

I read Lehmann's book ..... was not satisfied. I read too the one of Strnad and... was not satisfied. Nevertheless in this book, I noticed under some pictures a name: "Uwe Dannhauer-Schlieben". I found his telephone number and 'phoned. He was a very nice man. He agreed immediately to help me. He was living in Berga, on the exact site of the camp. He told me too that a friend of his, Uwe Schwarz, living in Cottbus, was interesting too. The father of this friend was a prisoner in Schlieben; he stayed and married there after the war. The following October I visited Schlieben again. Under the guidance of Dannhauer, I discovered the ruins of the camp and I realised that the camp made up a large part of what today is Berga.

Since October 2005, I have been in Schlieben 15 times and met other people and collected much material about the camp. I became good friends of Uwe Dannhauer, Uwe Schwarz and their families.

At the beginning of 2008, Hans-Dieter Leymann, "Ortschronist" of Schlieben, had an interview with me for the "Amtsnachrichten für das Amt Schlieben", the bulletin of the little town; the Mayor of Schlieben suggested I organise a forum to explain what "is my relationship with Schlieben". I agreed.

Two weeks ago, Uwe Dannhauer, Uwe Schwarz

and Jean-Louis Rey, sponsored by the city of Schlieben (2,000 citizens), invited other partners to "The First International Forum" about the "Forgotten camp of Schlieben".

It was a very great success; radio, TV and newspapers gave reports. More than 250 people came and listened closely. People understood better that the history of this camp is a part of their "Geschichte", not only of the

"Häftlinge". We exposed the plan of the camp, explained who were the women (1,200 in July '44 to 243 in April '45) and men (about 3,000) imprisoned there.

We saw Ron Rosenblat's (USA) father's interview by S. Spielberg, telling of his experience in Schlieben; Prof. Ken Waltzer (USA) made an exposé about "The Angel at the Fence, a Holocaust Memoir Fraud" and Holger Worm (Germany), a German

historian, made one about the products of HASAG. "Bürgermeisterin" and local politicians came, as well as young and older citizens.

Next year, the second Forum could be called "The non-Forgotten camp Schlieben"; we hope that many people will come and that, 65 years after, survivors will tell us their experience in Schlieben and their hope for the next generations. You'll be welcome!

## Schlieben: A Forgotten Concentration Camp

Schlieben is a relatively unknown concentration camp. It is without formal status as a memorial by the German government. Moreover, since World War II the site was an East German army base and today parts are deserted, returning to nature, while others are inhabited, with villagers living in recycled barracks from the former concentration camp.

Schlieben is located on an elevation about two kilometres north and above the brick and cobblestone village of the same name, a 90-minute drive south and west from Berlin. The countryside is marked by rolling green hills and flatlands, and by ubiquitous tall steel windmills gathering energy from winds that turn huge turbines. The area is quite poor, with diminished job opportunities in the new Germany and new Europe.

Earlier, the Schlieben concentration camp functioned in 1944-1945 as a sub-camp of Buchenwald where slave labourers were brought to work for the Hasag Company and manufactured *Panzerfaust* (hand-held anti-tank weapons). About five

Ken Waltzer, Michigan State University

thousand men were brought from Buchenwald and one thousand women from Ravensbruck as prisoners. There were also Italian POWs and others at the camp and German women volunteers from the village worked alongside many younger prisoners.

Of the male prisoners at Schlieben, there were 294 Piotrkower, largely from the Di-Fi factory on the Bugaj, brought to Buchenwald, December 2, 1944 and taken to Schlieben on December 8, 1944. (Another 60 prisoners on this transport remained at Buchenwald, including several ghetto leaders, Warszawski and Gomberg. and 15 children and youths.) Among the Piotrkower who were at the Hasag operation were Ben Helfgott, Zvi Mlynarski (Tsvi Dagan), the Rosenblat brothers, Isaak, Abraham, Sam, and Herman, Idel Gomolinski, and others.

Recently, on April 17-18, 2009, there was an international forum at the village on the history of "Schlieben, a

*Forgotten Concentration Camp.*" Amateur historians with ties to the camp and its history or to the village, including Uwe Schwarz of Cottbus, Germany, whose father Faivusch was a prisoner, Jean-Louis Rey of Paris, France, whose grandmother Odette was a prisoner, and Uwe Dannhauer, the deputy mayor of Schlieben, organized the forum and publicity and helped generate a large turnout.

Piotrkower descendant Ron Rosenblat of New York, the son of Sam and Jutt Rosenblatt, and I also participated as American visitors. We were assisted by a local translator.

On Friday, April 17, Uwe Dannhauer led a group of about 35 people plus reporters from Berlin on a walking and driving tour of the site, including old buildings and bunkers and the remains of factory and foundry deep in the pine forest. Uwe made a special effort to show Ron Rosenblat the remains of the *Gisserei*, or foundry, where his father and uncles had slaved, pouring liquid chemicals into the grenade heads. Ron was

agitated by the discovery, standing on ground deep in the forest where his father had been years earlier.

Then on Saturday, April 18, the forum took place in a tightly packed town hall. Of special interest, Ron Rosenblat spoke of his father and uncles and played a portion of Sam Rosenblat's Shoah Visual History Foundation videotape on Schlieben. I spoke about the recent Holocaust memoir fraud, *Angel at the Fence*, which focused on Schlieben. Of course, there was no angel at the fence, and Schlieben was anything but a place for young love to blossom along a camp fence. It was a brutal place where prisoners were forced to slave long hours, day and night, without adequate food, were exposed to dangerous chemicals without protective equipment, and were tormented by SS guards sent by Berlin to make the prisoners sustain production.

Ron Rosenblat and I also took lots of pictures of the former concentration camp and its ruins, of the *Banhof* where trains arrived, of the barracks and kitchen buildings which have been recycled and are still used, and of a mass grave and memorial in the village cemetery, including 100 Jewish prisoners most who died during an October 12, 1944 explosion that is still unexplained. We also photographed Hasag paraphernalia and Panzerfaust weapons on display at the town hall connected with the forum.

At the forum, Holger Worm, a German policeman offered a history of the Hasag ammunition firm and its connection with the camp, which opened using slave

labour in the June-July, 1944. Uwe Dannhauer instructed about the camp's layout and design. Uwe Schwarz gave a history of the men's camp and Jean-Louis Rey spoke about the women's camp.

Then, following a break, Ron Rosenblat made it possible for many Germans in the area to hear - probably for the first time, in his own words and own voice - the testimony of a former Jewish prisoner about the work and routine in the camp. Sam Rosenblat, who made the tape in 1996, talked about the dangers faced by those who worked cooking the chemicals and pouring them into the grenade heads that they would turn yellow from exposure and suffer internal organ damage from the toxic fumes. "*We got yellow, lost our appetite to eat, our eyes popped out, it was indescribable*," he said, and the translator explained to the audience.

Finally, I told the gathering about Herman Rosenblat, Sam's brother, and his search for fame with a false story and about how Sam in his final days stopped speaking with his younger brother. A few questions rounded out the gathering - then people spilled out and continued talking about the history of a forgotten camp and about future efforts to create a promotional association, put up memorial signs, create a small museum/archive, and win site designation. A second forum on the camp is being talked about for next year.

For the Piotrkower who came to Schlieben in late 1944, nearly six months after the camp was opened, things were quite difficult. The stronger ones, Sam thought,

were put to work with the chemicals in the *Geisserei*. Others worked inside the factory assembly, and still others worked on the transportation Kommandos, lifting, carrying, unloading, and moving goods and equipment. The youngest prisoners, like Ben Helfgott, Zvi Hersh Mlynarski, and Herman Rosenblatt worked in the *Zuenderpackraum*, packing triggers. Other prisoners called it the *Kinderpackraum*, because so many youths were there. Ben Helfgott recalled: "*The workshop was warm, the work was sedentary, packing on an assembly line, and the German women volunteers shared their food with the boys.*" Conditions in the barracks were also difficult. Sanitary conditions were terrible and Helfgott remembered the lice in the ceilings that dropped down on prisoners in their bunks at night. Many prisoners were covered in blood from constant scratching.

There was also insufficient food at Schlieben and many prisoners weakened sharply. "*Forget it from food - we were starving, starving*," another prisoner has told me, complaining there were not even leaves to eat in a camp set in a pine forest. At times, additional food was available by barter with the Italian prisoners, who were permitted outside the camp. They smuggled in vegetables, carrots and other things. Other prisoners stole sugar beets off the trains or organized potatoes from the kitchen cellar. There was also some danger from the Allied air war at Schlieben, although the camp was deep in the forest and was bombed apparently only once. Most

of the prisoners took pleasure in the bombings which severely impacted nearby Dresden and Leipzig, slowed night production in Schlieben, and indicated the war was going poorly for the Third Reich.

Finally, in the early spring, 1945, as the Russians approached from the east, the Nazis evacuated Schlieben and took most prisoners in two transports in April to Theresienstadt. Most prisoners, including most of the Piotrkower, were liberated in May by the Russians a short time after. While some returned after liberation to Poland, most did not have anything to go back

to, and most who did return, like Ben Helfgott, had dangerous experiences. Subsequently, many younger Piotrkower were part of the group of "boys" taken to Prague and flown in British planes to Great Britain. Among these were Ben Helfgott, Zvi Hersh Mlynarski, and Herman Rosenblat; Sam and Isaak Rosenblat, who were older, accompanied the group as counsellors.

It was a special experience for me to be at the former camp with Ron Rosenblat. Ron followed his father's footsteps from Piotrkow to Buchenwald with Sam when he was alive and he had

recently been in Piotrkow after his father's death. The trip to Schlieben was rounding out the circle for Ron, and being with him meant that I got to share in it. It was also special to meet Uwe Schwarz and Jean Louis Rey after more than a year of virtual email friendship. They had taught us both so much about the camp. Finally, it was a thrill to see interest from area Germans in the history of the camp, the fate of the prisoners, and the possibility to do preservation and memorialisation at the site and even to create a small museum/archive. We have only just begun.....

## Rudolph Kastner

Martin Gilbert

Was Rudolf Kastner a traitor to the Jewish people, who saved a few friends while allowing more than 400,000 Jews to be deported to Auschwitz, knowing their fate, but refusing to warn them? Films, plays, books and articles portray his actions in this way.

The truth is very different. Kastner was not a villain, but a victim, who was cruelly deceived by the mastermind of mass murder, Adolf Eichmann.

The story is this. On 7 April 1944 two Slovak Jews, Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler, escaped from Auschwitz, bringing out the news that Auschwitz was a killing centre. On April 25, the very day their report reached the Zionist leaders in the Slovak capital Bratislava, an intercepted copy also reached Eichmann, who was then in Budapest preparing the

imminent mass deportation of Hungarian Jews.

Eichmann realised that Kastner - deputy chairman of the Hungarian Zionist Organisation - and his Zionist colleagues in Budapest, would learn the truth the moment Kastner next went to Bratislava, a journey he was planning to make within the next few days. Realising that Kastner and his officials would then alert the Jews of Hungary, Eichmann acted without delay, summoning to SS headquarters in Budapest one of Kastner's colleagues, Joel Brand, head of the Zionist Assistance and Rescue Committee.

Taking Brand into his "confidence", Eichmann masterminded the following deception with brilliance: "I am prepared to sell you all the Jews," he said. "I am

also prepared to have them annihilated. It is as you wish." Eichmann claimed he would save the Jews of Hungary - the only surviving large mass of Jews in Europe - in return for Brand going to Istanbul and negotiating with the British and Americans for a vast amount of supplies and money. "Goods for blood" was the phrase Eichmann used.

The deportation of Hungary's Jews would still take place, Eichmann said, "but there would be no killing until the answer was received." But Brand must "hurry as the Germans cannot keep women and children for an unlimited period as it costs money." In deportation, Eichmann assured Brand "the treatment would not be too harsh". But the Allies must agree to give the SS more than 5,000 lorries ("one lorry for 100 Jews," Eichmann suggested),

40,000 kilos of coffee, 10,000 kilos of cocoa, 10,000 kilos of tea, two million bars of soap, and large amounts of foreign currency - principally US dollars.

In 1960, when the deception was revealed by Brand at the Eichmann trial, Hannah Arendt commented: "Eichmann's cleverest trick in these difficult negotiations was to see to it that his men acted as though they were corrupt." Rudolph Vrba, who had risked his life to try to warn Hungarian Jews of their true fate, later called Eichmann's deception "a clever ruse to neutralise the potential resistance of a million people".

Eichmann told Brand that while the negotiations with the Allies were taking place, the Jews of Hungary would be taken to a special holding camp, and housed and fed, to await the day that the "deal" was signed. Then they would then all be taken to the safety of neutral Spain or Portugal. Not one of the deportees would be harmed. But if the Allies rejected the deal they would all be killed. Kastner and his colleagues had no option but to send

Brand to negotiate. Eichmann had made it clear that the whole Hungarian Jewish community could be saved. When the deportations began on May 15, they were therefore confident that no harm would befall the deportees. Their overriding concern was to get the Allies to agree to the deal as quickly as possible. On May 24 Brand was driven from Budapest to Vienna and then sent by air to Istanbul. Eichmann was in no hurry. The longer the negotiations were drawn out, the more Hungarian Jews were reaching Auschwitz on a daily basis and being murdered there, at times 10,000 in one day, while the Hungarian-Jewish leadership was convinced that they were unharmed awaiting the signing of the deal and the safe transfer of all the deported Jews to a neutral land. As proof that the deal was real and that he could be trusted, Eichmann offered, while the negotiations were still continuing, to send a train with 1,684 Hungarian Jews to safety in Switzerland. A few

were Kastner's friends, most were not. They left Budapest on June 30. Eichmann's word, it seemed, was good as his bond.

It was only in the first week of July 1944 that details of the actual murder of Hungarian Jews at Auschwitz reached the West, brought by two further Jewish escapees, Czeslaw Mordowicz and Arnost Rosin. Suddenly Eichmann's deal was exposed as the grotesque deception it had always been. So swift was the international outcry that the Hungarian Government forced Eichmann to halt the deportation from July 8.

Of the 437,000 Hungarian deportees, more than 350,000 had been killed. There had been no holding camp and no exchange of Jews for goods and money. Those Jews in Budapest - 120,000 in all - who were about to be deported to their deaths in the following two weeks, were saved by the international outcry.

Not a crime by Kastner, but Eichmann's cruel deception plan, had led to the death of the majority of Hungarian Jews.

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## Prague Conference on Holocaust Era Assets (German Statement in the Plenary Session)

**Germany**  
**Prague, 29 June 2009**

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

"The Federal Government and the vast majority of the German people are very much aware of the immeasurable suffering that was caused to the Jews in Germany and in the occupied territories... Unspeakable crimes were committed in the

name of the German people which engage a moral as well as a material compensation in respect of individual losses of Jews as well as Jewish property for which individual claimants can no longer be traced."

Those, Mr. Chairman, were the words pronounced by Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, before the German Parliament in September 1951. At the

occasion of a visit to Jerusalem in April 2007 our present Chancellor Angela Merkel affirmed: "Only by fully accepting its ever lasting responsibility for this terrible period and for the most cruel crimes in its history Germany, my country, will be able to shape the future - only this way and not through anything else."

These words remind us that the Federal Republic

of Germany has from the very beginning acknowledged and will continue to stand by its responsibility for those immeasurable crimes committed against millions of victims of the Nazi regime. These victims include the Jewish people murdered during the Holocaust and many others throughout Europe, in particular those in Central and Eastern Europe. When Foreign Minister Genscher signed the German-Polish Border Treaty in November 1990 in Warsaw, he said this: "We do not forget what the name of Auschwitz means not only for the Jewish people. It remains a permanent reminder of the need to preserve human dignity, to respect other religions, other peoples and other ethnic groups." And he reminded the audience: "50 years ago the Polish people became the first victim of the war launched by Nazi Germany." And later the people in the former Soviet Union, the Russians, Ukrainians and others, were killed and tortured, their homes destroyed.

In recognition of its special responsibility Germany has participated in the 1998 Washington Conference on Holocaust Era Assets and it has taken an active role in the preparation of and the participation in this Prague Conference which will mark another crucial step in addressing important issues related to the Holocaust era.

The declaration of Chancellor Adenauer, as quoted in my introduction, opened the path towards the Luxembourg Agreements signed one year later in September 1952 with the Government of Israel. At the time it had been made clear by the German

Government on the one hand and in Israel as well as among the Jews around the world on the other hand that material compensation of the Holocaust survivors was not the only issue in coming to terms with this catastrophe which was afflicted by the Nazi regime to the countries and peoples and to the Jews in Europe and beyond. Nevertheless it was important in order to acknowledge responsibility and to help the victims in starting a new life after their previous lives lay in ruins at the end of World War II and after all the horrible experiences they had gone through.

Recognizing the challenges of this situation the Federal Republic of Germany, starting in the early years has, over time, built up a differentiated and fairly embracing system of trying to do some justice to the victims. Let me only mention a few programs here:

- More than EUR 45 billion have been paid out to survivors in pensions under the Federal Compensation Act.

- More than 2 billion EUR have been paid out under the Federal Restitution Act where former Jewish or other victims' property confiscated by the Nazis, could not be restituted.

- Following the Washington Conference and based on the German-American Agreement of 17 July 2000, more than EUR 4.5 billion was paid to victims of forced labour, most of them from Central and Eastern European countries.

- Equally based on the 2000 Agreement roughly EUR \$300 million was paid in Holocaust insurance claims by German Insurance Companies under the ICHEIC scheme. German Insurance Companies have reaffirmed their voluntary commitment to honour legitimate claims of Holocaust victims. Companies presently do and will continue in the future to honour such claims out of their own funds over and above their previous funding of the German Foundation.

Based on its experience Germany is well aware of the problems arising in the context of compensation and restitution. We engaged in serious endeavours to implement the Washington Principles on Nazi Confiscated Art on all levels of Government. We have significantly strengthened provenance research in museums, libraries and archives.

We also acknowledge that today, 64 years after the end of World War II, most of the Holocaust survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution are at an advanced age, and many of them find themselves in a precarious economic and social condition. They will need all the attention of the countries where they live. On the other hand my country will continue its support.

I would like to point out, Mr. Chairman, that overall the Federal Republic of Germany, by the end of 2008, has paid out EUR 66 billion in compensation to Holocaust and other victims of Nazi persecution. As of today,

Germany is shouldering more than EUR 600 million per year in compensation payments, most of it either directly to Holocaust survivors through BEG pensions or by supporting the various funds administered by the Jewish Claims Conference. Let me add: Everybody knows that money is important. Yet we also know that nothing we do can bring back the dead or heal the physical and psychological wounds inflicted.

With all the importance due to the issues of restitution or compensation for property losses and of the social welfare of Holocaust survivors who are still with us, the subject of Holocaust Education and Remembrance will additionally need immediate as well as long term attention of the States participating in this Conference and even beyond. Against the background of what happened in the heart of Europe only some 60 years ago it cannot be accepted that there are still people in the world, and prominent people

among them, who continue denying that the Holocaust ever happened. Antisemitism and xenophobia are still frequent phenomena in many countries. It is, therefore, urgent as well as essential that we address these issues by giving this chapter of European history a firm place in our education systems, both at schools and at universities, that we promote research, and that we encourage remembrance in terms of commemorative days and memorial sites, such as former concentration camps. This will help to keep alive the memory of the victims and to anchor the historical message among the younger generations: Never again!

Mr. Chairman, when tomorrow we will all gather at Terezin and join in the Terezin Declaration, we will present a document that addresses these issues. It aims at rectifying the consequences of Nazi acts of persecution against individual victims of the Holocaust. For the record and for the purpose of clarification I should add

that Germany's active support of this Declaration does not in any way reflect on Germany's position on other matters relating to World War II or its aftermath which have no bearing on issues dealt with during this Conference.

We are confident that the Terezin Declaration will contribute to focus international attention and opinion and to encourage national and international institutions to deal with them in a manner which does some justice to the victims of the past and helps to prevent such a disastrous course of history from ever repeating itself in the future. My country will not tire in keeping up its efforts to draw the lessons of the darkest period of its history.

In concluding, I would like to express my deeply felt gratitude to Chairman Milos Pojar and his team and to the Government of the Czech Republic for all their efforts in organizing this extraordinary event.

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## My Perspective On The Jewish Dilemma IN MEMORIAM – HENRY GREEN

Otto Grünfeld

These are my credentials, in case you may suspect me to be some antisemitic infiltrator poking his nose into Jewish affairs.

My mother was Jewish, daughter of a Cantor in Bohemia, originally from Poland.

My father was Jewish, from Slovakia.

*Otto came to Britain with the Windermere group. He was a teacher in music but he has had an abiding interest in psychology which led him, in his later life, to counselling. He has written his story under the title "The Survivor's Path". He has lived for most of his life in North Yorkshire.*

Both were murdered in Concentration Camps, my mother in Auschwitz, my father in Mauthausen.

That makes me a Jew by birth, if not by practice. My programme, in brief, attempts to throw some light on the Jewish situation as I now see it, and, as a Holocaust survivor, have experienced it, and still do.

The Jewish dilemma, generally speaking, appears to be entwined in the four-fold aspects of race, religion, culture and social position which hold Jewish people captive, as it were, determining their destiny.

They are racially Jewish, look it or not, like it or not.

They are religiously Jewish, even when - strangely - they profess to be agnostic, atheist, nihilist or convert.

They are culturally Jewish, age-old tradition, custom and know-how having put their stamp on them.

They are socially Jewish because of their sense, more or less conscious, of their Jewish identity.

Obviously, for an Israeli citizen this makes no odds; but in the world the Jew calls the Diaspora these aspects are crucial ingredients in the cocktail we call society, where race, creed, custom and appearances play a decisive part. It is, therefore, understandable that the Jew tends to feel an outsider; and is seen to be somewhat of an outsider; as well as virtually becoming one under certain circumstances. Thus, he is being looked upon, at best, as acceptable and OK; or, generally, as one one can tolerate; but then, so often, as inferior, unpleasant, undesirable, grasping, and worse. It adds up to a persistent sense of insecurity in the Jewish psyche.

We Jews, like the gypsies but more so, are history's casualties, remnants which

normally would not have survived, but refusing to quit the world stage. Despite appearances we are tough, enduring specimens who against all the disasters in our history continue the struggle for existence, like the rest of mankind. And not unlike the rest of humanity our gifts and adaptability present a dizzying spectrum of orthodoxy and liberalism, pignicketiness and freedom, an unholy materialism and wholesome spirituality, artistic flair, philosophical insight, psychological acumen. By and large we exercise a gentle form of humanity. Our parenting is permissive, but our marriages lasting. As social creatures we resemble the chameleon who is able to change the colour of his skin if need be: but we do not change our inner self.

With such qualities in hand, so to speak, we Jews are indeed survivors, given the amount of practice life has thrown at us over the centuries. But sometimes the will to live forsakes us as overwhelming existential insecurities assail the soul, wounded and drifting with no haven in sight. Then, too often and sadly, the toughness disintegrates, giving way to ultimate despair.

For let us be clear: the existential challenge which each of us is inevitably facing, is this:

We are all visitors on this earth, now we arrive, now we go... a bitter pill to swallow, as we know. Not owners of our planet, merely its temporary keepers.

As Jews we are also quasi

'visitors' in the country of our birth, dissimilar if not basically different from the rest of the population.

Yet, on another count, Jews become 'visitors' when they find themselves in the Displaced Person category, uprooted, struggling to grow the vital roots for existence again in foreign soil.

Finally, the Holocaust Survivor, the one who feels redundant, guilty, his past steeped in horror, his present seemingly barren, his personal future apparently meaningless, the archetypal left-over.

One might be tempted to declare, categorically, that in this case the Jew-survivor faces an insoluble dilemma, a no-win situation. This impression, vague but pervasive, was there when the first flush of being set free had its follow-up interview with the world outside camp. It was then that the battle began, one I describe as 'surviving survival'. It took as many forms as were the numbers of victims, and as many outcomes. Nevertheless, a modicum of accommodation has been reached, life tending to compromise in so many respects, Jewish life in particular; and the survivor has continued to practise a more than generous measure of psychological acrobatics to make a go of it.

There is, though, the need, greater today than ever before, to edge our way towards a more inclusive humanity where Jewish, Christian, Moslem etc. cease to collide like some monstrous tectonic plates

causing global eruptions. Fundamentally we are all alike, 'visitors' and victims included, subject to one simple dictum:

'Get on with each other, or else ....!'

Not so much by our thoughts, beliefs, achievements, successes and honours, but by

what we ARE, how we ARE in our intercourse with the world, that our duty lies; in a daily struggle during which bitterness, anger and resentment, as well as appalling memories, need be kept at bay, and hatred avoided. Nor the dialogue be broken before its appointed end. And the meaning of survival I, for myself,

believe to be in persevering as a witness to man's potential for evil and madness, reconciliation and forgiveness. Thus here we stand, hopefully not subject to racial, institutional, ideational or other prejudice, but adding perhaps a measure of love and compassion in aid of our mysterious NOW.

## Teaching the Holocaust to Young Muslims

How do young Muslims in British schools react to learning about the Holocaust? Until I carried out my recent research we had no idea, although there were certainly reasons for thinking they would react badly. In the first place, the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is constantly in the news and Muslim students aged 13 and 14 (when the Holocaust is taught in English and Welsh schools) are very likely to be aware of it. Their sympathies, one assumes, lie overwhelmingly with the Palestinians and they may well be reluctant to learn about Jewish suffering when the injustice (as they see it) that befell their co-religionists is effectively ignored both by Israel and by much of the international community. Secondly, there appears to be an increase in anti-Semitism among British Muslims that is no doubt related to the conflict in the Middle East. According to the 2006 report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Anti-Semitism, the growth of anti-Semitism might not be confined to extremist groups, for the report states that that 'the views of radical Islamists do seem to be entering mainstream

Geoffrey Short

discourse.' Another factor likely to have a bearing on the way young Muslims relate to the Holocaust is the nature of Islam itself. Specifically, there are a number of passages in the Koran where Jews are portrayed in a negative light. They are, for example, deemed guilty of 'falsehood' and 'distortion' and assumed to have been transformed into apes and pigs because of the contempt that Allah felt for them. For these reasons, there has to be a degree of concern about how the Holocaust is taught and how it's responded to in schools with a largely Muslim catchment area. In order to discover whether the concern is justified (and I assumed it would be) I carried out a small-scale study in 2007. I interviewed history teachers selected at random from fifteen comprehensive schools in south-east England where the student body was predominantly Muslim or where Muslim students formed the largest single ethnic group.

The results of the study confounded the main prediction in that the majority of teachers had no difficulty

broaching the Holocaust with their Muslim students. On the contrary, the students generally responded very well and, in some cases, enthusiastically, notwithstanding the allegedly anti-Semitic culture that prevailed in two of the schools and which is likely to have been present in others. It would seem from this paradoxical situation that such anti-Semitism as exists in the schools stems from and is restricted to the Middle East conflict. Whilst the students may be hostile towards Israel, they bear no ill will towards Jews *qua* Jews. The majority of schools were genuinely committed to Holocaust education as evidenced by the amount of time they devoted to it in history lessons and in other subject areas and by their involvement in Holocaust Memorial Day.

That said, there are a number of ways in which the teaching was not as effective as it might have been. First, only a few teachers took advantage of the opportunity the Holocaust affords to probe their students' beliefs about Jews, an essential preliminary undertaking if students are to be convinced that Nazism is an unmitigated

evil. For this lesson to be learnt, the murdered Jews of Europe (as an ethnic group) have to be seen as entirely innocent of the charges laid against them and thus in no way deserving of their fate. However, if students subscribe to pejorative stereotypes of Jews and these stereotypes are left unchallenged, Nazi persecution becomes understandable and quite possibly acceptable, a 'lesson' wholly at variance with the aims of Holocaust education.

Another respect in which the teaching could have been improved relates to the failure to discuss the role of Muslims during the Holocaust. Providing information about those who rescued Jews is important because of the likely impact of such knowledge on the minority of genuinely anti-Semitic students who are inclined to think of Muslims as implacably

hostile to Jews. These students may well come to reflect on their prejudice and even abandon it in order to make sense of the rescue. Alerting students to the formation of an SS division in Bosnia is, of course, likely to have the opposite effect, but they should nonetheless be made aware of the fact partly in the interests of historical truth, but also because students should know that the Muslim population of Europe was not at the time (as it is not now) a monolithic entity in terms of its attitude towards Jews. In addition, all students should know that collaborators were to be found across Europe and were drawn from a variety of religious and other backgrounds.

Finally, it was noted that approximately half the teachers were unfamiliar with the longstanding opposition of the Muslim Council of Britain to

Holocaust Memorial Day. The Council has recently ended its boycott and thus the issue itself is no longer important. All the same, the lack of familiarity is worrying because it suggests that some teachers in schools with a substantial Muslim presence do not keep themselves abreast of developments in the wider Muslim community that may be relevant to teaching the Holocaust (and possibly other topics) in such schools.

It is tempting to conclude on the basis of this study that any concern as to how the Holocaust is taught in predominantly Muslim schools is largely unwarranted. The study, however, was small-scale and highly localised and had it been conducted in another part of Britain, or in another part of the world, the results might have been very different.

## Claims Conference Update

### *Negotiations*

The Claims Conference negotiating delegation meets regularly with representatives of the German Ministry of Finance and other German government officials to press a number of issues of concern to Jewish victims of Nazism.

In its 2009 negotiations, the Claims Conference attained two very significant breakthroughs regarding compensation for certain Nazi victims.

### *Hardship Fund Second Application Permitted*

Jewish victims of Nazism who applied to the Hardship

Fund and were not eligible for payment under German government criteria will now be able to file a second application. Most have never before received a Holocaust era compensation payment.

This agreement may affect 13,000 Jewish victims of Nazism in 36 countries, including the U.K., as well as Israel, the U.S., Germany, Australia and Canada, resulting in more than €33 million in additional payments directly to needy Nazi victims.

The Claims Conference has approved more than 343,000 Nazi victims for payment under the Hardship Fund, which was established in 1980 after five years

of Claims Conference negotiations. The Fund issues one-time payments of €2,556.

The Claims Conference has been pressing the issue of the second application very intensively with the German government for a number of years. Previously, once a final decision had been made on a case, a second application was not permitted under the German rules based on changed circumstances. This decision affects Nazi victims rejected by the Hardship Fund who are alive as of 19 March 2009.

In accordance with the German Government rules governing second applications, persons who in connection with an application for

one time assistance under the Hardship Fund Guidelines received a payment from the Claims Conference are not entitled to apply.

A second application is not a guarantee of receiving a Hardship Fund payment. The eligibility criteria for this program are determined by the German government, and applicants must meet those criteria to receive a payment.

Full eligibility criteria for the Hardship Fund and applications are on the Claims Conference website, [www.claimscon.org](http://www.claimscon.org).

This is one in a series of Claims Conference successes in liberalizing the eligibility criteria of compensation programs including the Hardship Fund. For example, in 2008, the Claims Conference negotiated Hardship Fund eligibility for additional approximately 6,000 Jewish victims of the Leningrad Siege. In 2003, the Claims Conference negotiated an amendment to income restrictions for the Hardship Fund.

### *Eastern Europe Pensions Increased*

Jewish Holocaust survivors living in need in Eastern Europe who receive pensions from the Claims Conference will receive significant increases resulting from negotiations with the German government.

The increase in pensions will result in an additional estimated €60 million being paid over the next 10 years to approximately 13,000 Holocaust survivors in 22 countries.

Furthermore, payments from the Central and Eastern European Fund (CEEFF) will

be the same to eligible Holocaust survivors living in countries of the European Union and non-EU countries, a change from the current German government regulations. This will result in a 35 percent increase in monthly payments for CEEFF recipients living in non-EU countries, and an 11 percent increase for CEEFF recipients in countries of the EU.

Beginning in January 2010, all recipients of CEEFF payments will receive €240 per month. Currently, under German government regulations, approximately 7,580 survivors living in EU countries receive €216 per month but 5,340 survivors living in non-EU countries receive €178.

The Claims Conference has been intensively pressing the German government for a number of years to increase CEEFF payments and to equalize all CEEFF payments, as the cost of living in the region has risen substantially.

"We are very pleased that these survivors, double victims of both Nazism and Communism, will receive these increased payments. With living costs rising across Eastern Europe and elderly survivors often lacking access to basic social services, the Claims Conference has long maintained that monthly pensions must be increased to survivors in this region," said Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat, former U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary, who for the first time participated in negotiations as Special Negotiator for the Claims Conference. "These increased payments will help ease these last years of their lives, and the Claims Conference will continue to

advocate on their behalf for as long as necessary."

Eligibility criteria for CEEFF payments are determined by the German government. For detailed information, see [www.claimscon.org](http://www.claimscon.org).

The Claims Conference continues to negotiate with the German government on a range of issues relating to Holocaust compensation and assistance to Jewish victims of Nazism. In recent years, the Claims Conference has prioritized obtaining funds for homecare for Nazi victims around the world, and will continue to press this point in further talks. The Claims Conference also continues to fight for equal rights and benefits for Jewish victims of Nazism in Eastern Europe as those given to victims in the West from Germany.

### *Prague Conference on Holocaust Era Assets*

Seventy years after the beginning of World War II, 46 nations gathered in Prague this year to examine and call for action on outstanding Holocaust-era issues, in what was likely the last international gathering of its kind.

At the Prague Holocaust-Era Assets Conference in June, the Claims Conference and World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO) called for the countries of Eastern and Central Europe to restitute property stolen or lost in the Holocaust. Numerous countries have yet to enact meaningful legislation that could restore stolen properties to heirs or Jewish communities. Continuing efforts in this area have brought some progress in individual countries in recent years,

showing us that though the task is arduous, it can bring results.

The Claims Conference was responsible in Prague for directing a spotlight on the increasing social welfare needs of Jewish victims of Nazism around the world and for the need to obtain international funding of vital social services for elderly, needy Jewish victims of Nazism in their final years.

In reports presented at the conference, the Claims Conference also noted that most participating countries have made little or no progress regarding looted art; called for the return or registration of items of Judaica, especially Torah scrolls; and pointed out the need for international funding of Holocaust education, documentation, and research.

The Jewish groups represented in Prague reminded those countries that this issue is about history, not money, and about fairness, not finances. Nothing will bring back those who

perished. But as Claims Conference Chairman Julius Berman stated at the conference, regarding the restitution of Jewish property and looted artwork and Judaica, "Nazi victims and their families should get back what was unjustly taken from them. No one here would demand any less for themselves."

The Claims Conference continues to monitor implementation of the Terezin Declaration, signed by the 46 countries participating in the conference and calling for action in all the areas highlighted by the Claims Conference at the gathering.

#### *New Executive Vice President Outlines Priorities*

In July 2009, Gregory Schneider was appointed by the Claims Conference Board of Directors as Executive Vice President. Mr. Schneider said that his priorities will be negotiations with the German government to obtain additional and

ongoing funding for the social welfare needs of elderly Nazi victims; property restitution in Eastern Europe; and obtaining pensions and one-time payments for Nazi victims who have not yet received them due to German government criteria governing Claims Conference programs.

"Though all of these challenges are great, so are our strengths. The Claims Conference is an international coalition, bound by common purpose, driven by irresistible moral imperative and unified in a determination to succeed, with a resolute understanding of what is at stake. Ultimately, there can be no true amends made to Holocaust victims and nothing the Claims Conference achieves can truly be called justice. Nevertheless, we must strive to ensure that every Holocaust victim lives their remaining years in dignity," said Mr. Schneider.

## Widows' Thoughts

By Maureen Hecht

I've just returned from a funeral. Yes - another one. They are so frequent these days. It is frightening. This time it was sweet Charlie (Shane) who never said a bad word about anyone. He fought for his life in the camps, he fought for Israel, but he lost his fight against cancer in the end. The first time I went to see him in hospital and saw the dreaded words Cancer Ward on the wall, I could not accept it. Death came soon after. But what of Anita, his wife of so many years? She is in a poor state herself.

Over the years there have been many widows left in our crowd. We often talk about Benny (Newton) and Frank (Farkas) who loved a game of cards. They were hosts and hosted every weekend, sometimes into the night. We remember Bernard (Dreihorn) and Koppel (Dessau) - perhaps they are playing now in Heaven!

But recently I have been listening to and thinking about the most current bereaved spouses. Before

David (Herman) left us I 'phoned Olive to see how she was coping. She told me that she just could not let go. She knew there was no hope but that was how she felt. On the other hand, two days before Koppel died, Vivienne wished that he could go to sleep and not wake up, because he was in such pain. Her wish was granted. Millie (Graham) related the story of a beautiful sunny day when the children were taking photos in the garden. But someone was missing - Monty. Anita has delighted us at times on her courting days when her 'friends'

taunted her that Charlie would not come back from Israel - he did and brought up a wonderful family. A few weeks ago they sat on their balcony surrounded by beautiful flowers and imagined they were on a cruise. That was how their life together ended.

All the boys are strong characters and the spouses have had to stay in the background most of the time. They have quietly got on with bringing up the family and seeing that they have been well educated, etc. They have a right to be proud because they are wonderful children who will see that no harm

comes to them. They will keep themselves busy with their grandchildren and the rest of the family. They will always be there for them.

..... (phone rings) 'yes.... sorry to hear that - when did this happen? Give him our love.....

## Sir MARTIN GILBERT Interviews 97 Year Old YOGI MAYER

Leon Rogers MBE., JP

**S**ome 200 former members of the well-known Brady Clubs in the East End of London and, as well, members of the '45 Aid Society, met recently at the Hendon Synagogue to hear Sir Martin Gilbert CBE conduct an interview with 97 year old Yogi Mayer.

The theme of the evening was his life and times in Nazi Germany and his early days in Great Britain as a refugee and soldier, as a parachutist member of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) during World War II.

Yogi was born in 1912 and grew up in the Rhineland-Pfalz region in Germany. He spoke of his time growing up as a very independent young man in Germany at a time when it did not bode well for Jews exercising their human rights as individuals and citizens of the country. This led to Yogi being summoned before the notorious Head of Gestapo, Chief Reinhard Heydrich, "forbidding him to speak in any public or closed meetings of any kind". This was in April 1935.

He has no bitterness towards the Germany of his childhood in spite of evading arrest for political activities and having to emigrate with his wife Ilse and child Thomas to London in 1939. After the war had ended, they discovered that his wife had lost all of her family in Concentration Camps.

He spoke movingly of his times as a child - "a bit of a tear-away" - and his adolescent days attempting to overcome many obstacles and cruel oppression faced by Jews in Nazi Germany. He was an orphan and, as a young student, took part in the opposition to what was happening. He recalled stories about his attendance at the 1936 Olympic Games and how he evaded arrest during the 1938 notorious "Kristallnacht".

Finally, Yogi spoke of the difficulties he had arriving in this country and attempting to join the Army which branded him and many others as Aliens. However, he gained a place eventually in the Pioneer

Corps and in the "Special Operation Executive" (SOE) as a parachutist.

Yogi was awarded an MBE for services to young people and also an Honorary Doctorate of the University of Potsdam. In 2004, at the age of 92, he wrote the book 'Jews and the Olympic Games'. He also makes frequent visits to the country of his birth, talking to groups of students, as well as at schools and conferences, about his experiences.

The evening was a great success and the audience and Sir Martin Gilbert paid tribute to Yogi for his contribution to young people through Brady and through the Primrose Club which was established for the young survivors of the Concentration Camps.

Yogi is looking forward to 2012 to celebrate his centenary and he will probably be one of the few people who attended the 1936 Olympics, cheering on competitors in London and being interviewed again.

## What the Journal has Meant to Me

I wish to thank the Journal and those who make its publication possible. It certainly serves a wide variety of needs to a good many of its readers. But it has served me especially well. It has enabled me to know my father in a particularly meaningful way. Of course my parents were dutiful. They were always there for us. My father worked hard and long hours but he was not an absent parent. He was engaged and the family dinner table was our central meeting place. His presence was felt in the house when he was there (and when he wasn't, "wait until your father gets home" was a warning voiced by Mom more than once -and it created the intended trepidation).

I worked for my father at his factory as a young boy and intermittently through my college years. We were teenagers during the turbulent '60s and would argue and debate issues expressing our thoughts and learning his. But it wasn't until my family moved to set up factories in Miami and Costa Rica that something happened that would permit me to form a special bond with my father. I was in graduate school in Michigan visiting the family in Florida when my father asked if I could do him a favour. "I know you're very busy with your studies, but I was hoping you could help me out with something". He handed me about 30 legal pad pages. Each line filled with his barely decipherable scrawl. (That's another story: My father was born left-handed

By David Goldberg  
Son of Moniek & Fay  
Goldberg

but the nuns who taught the compulsory schools in Poland would rap his hands with a ruler when he tried to write with his left hand. They succeeded. He would henceforth write with his right hand but his penmanship always left a lot to be desired.)

He told me that he wanted to submit an article to the Journal of the '45 Aid Society. I was familiar with the Society and had seen the Journal in our house over the years. Needless to say, my father's formal education had been tragically interrupted. He was clearly a fast learner of English. He had no trouble speaking extemporaneously when the occasion called for it. He spoke concisely though his grammar sometimes following the rules of Yiddish more than the rules of English but he had no problem presenting his thoughts. He knew how to make his point. He had been doing the crossword puzzles in ink for years and his vocabulary was very good. But he had not written an essay for a good many years. He wanted me to edit what he had written down. Of course, I took the pages back to Ann Arbor.

After about two weeks I transcribed his handwritten notes onto typewritten sheets. (What I could have done with a computer or word processor back in the '70s.) I telephoned (what we could have done with email back in those days) and said, "Dad, I reviewed and organized

your work. You don't have material here to write one article, you have three different articles. You have so much to say that you have to decide which of the following you want to submit as your first article". Thus began our collaboration.

Over the years we have worked together on a number of articles. The give and take has given me priceless insight into my father's history, opinions and values. A few years after we started I became briefly acquainted with a Second Generation group associated with a Florida International University in Miami. One of the administrators told us of a project to establish an audio library of Survivors' stories. I mentioned it to my father. He was aghast. He looked at me with dismay, "don't you know me at all? I would never speak to some stranger about these matters"? This was to change later but it made me realize that the kinship he shared with the Boys and his landsleit was so very special and private. His sense of privacy extended to a deep-seated aversion to seeking any psychiatric care as a result of the trauma. He would cope with his pains and traumas by himself and keep his stories to himself for a good many years. The articles written were no exception - they were not about experiences in the camps. They were about the person he became as a result of his family upbringing, the camps and his years in England with the help of the '45 Aid Society. The articles, and his chosen

lifestyle were an affirmation of Life - they did not dwell on the losses, death, and destruction he witnessed and experience. They were about the rebuilding of life and his gratefulness to those who helped along the way.

My task as editor lessened over the years. I found myself offering fewer and fewer changes to his texts. But I also found myself becoming more and more familiar with issues and ideas that he directed to men and women who had been friends since their early adulthood. In effect, I was becoming more familiar with him - at least on a level that went beyond the intimacy learned growing up with a father and being in business with him (I joined the family business shortly after graduation) throughout

most of my adult years. I was extremely fortunate in this regard. He has since become very ill and is very reflective about all phases of his life and the lives of his ancestors and progeny.

I started writing this in August, 2009. About two years ago, we were told that his condition was dire and his time was to be measured in months (2, 4, 6...) He soberly understood his position and started setting benchmarks beyond the doctor's range: Six months to dance at his granddaughter Miriam's wedding - he danced at her wedding. Fourteen months to mark the 60th anniversary of his marriage to my mother, Fay. It seemed pretty unlikely but he had a small party at our shul marking their 60th last March. He set

other benchmarks: a simcha planned by one his landsleit or one of the Boys. He made some but not others. It has become clear to me how important the '45 Aid Society and the Journal are to him. His last request of me was to contribute an article. Unfortunately, he is too ill to review it and be my editor. He has missed the '45 Aid Society reunion for the past two years due to his declining health. But, even with a recent turn for the worse, he set the 2010 reunion marking 65 years since his Liberation as his goal. He truly desires, with all his heart, all his soul and all his might to be at the reunion. His wishes are to attend the Reunion - next year in London, next year in Jerusalem.

## The Exclusive Second Generation Club

What does being "Second Generation" mean? It will mean different things to different people but this is what it means to me at this moment in time and I hope that some of my thoughts will resound with you. My father's and grandmother's very lucky experiences whilst positive have none-the-less impacted on my life and the way I view various issues.

I am so extremely grateful for the miraculous survival of the lucky few and respectfully remember the millions who tragically perished. How can I honour these individuals and how can I show my gratitude that my family was spared?

Galvanising my father into writing his memoir and writing this article is a humble first step in the right direction. We have been back to Poland and the Ukraine.

Daniela Becher

My father already gives talks to schools with tremendous results and I have attended a few, taped them and am now in the process of bringing his life into the 21st century by putting it all on computer. No mean feat as my skills are not technology based but I soon will be.

I am also acutely aware that as my life journey proceeds new richness enters with new lessons and realisations, some good and some not so good but I always embrace life with optimism and dogged determination. I have from a very early age sought the wisdom of my elders, for through them I have often received an accelerated experience and knowledge of life which has for the most part stopped me from making some unwise choices. Alas, not all, as I do

not always listen!

As Second Generation we have a duty to listen to our parents and record their experiences for once they are gone, that's it. It is a painful process but a very necessary one. You may have to cajole ever so slightly with love and compassion but the knowledge you accrue comes from source and not from a watered down version that you remember, handed down recollections which will be further diluted by your children to their children's children. Who knows whether in ten years time the Holocaust will be taught on the national curriculum? We must be there to ensure that the memory lives on and this is why we need to document everything. This is our respectful way of ensuring that our dead are always a symbol of the madness and

evil humans are capable of when their hearts are filled with hatred and prejudice.

It is difficult for children to identify with six million but they can understand the story of one individual, one family and identify with it. I have witnessed this myself for it allows children to feel compassion, love, and you can see their brains working to distinguish the difference between right and wrong. They go away with a basic code of decency towards their fellow humans. I was touched to see the love and respect they had for my father and how very sorry they were that the Holocaust ever happened. As my father says in his book, children have a wonderful malleable mind and when confronted with prejudice they may well remember his talk to them.

**“You have got to spread the gospel because Frank and I and a few others are an endangered species. We are going to disappear. It is more difficult to present to adults as their attitudes will have crystallised and set. Children are more susceptible to ideas and something might stick.”**

Going to schools will have a huge impact, not just on current generations but on future generations and it is within our power as Second Generation to do so. Our legacy is to turn tragedy into hope. This despicable episode in history must never happen again to the Jews and in my humble way I will do everything in my power to educate and inspire so that this never happens again - ever! I am also greatly aware of all the appalling cruelties that have been

committed and are still being committed by humanity since the Second World War. The lesson has obviously not been learnt. The Holocaust is fundamentally about the Jewish people but its implications are far reaching “all persecution is abhorrent”. No-one should be discriminated against because of their creed or colour of their skin. No child should mourn the death of a parent or loved one unless lost through natural causes”.

I remember a few years back at a “45 Aid Society” function, sitting next to Pivnik who after a few glasses of wine became somewhat emotional. He looked at me with tears in his eyes and showed me his tattoo. I have to confess that my stiff upper lip and carry on regardless approach failed me somewhat and my eyes watered. The pain this gentleman was carrying was still raw after all these years. May he rest in peace, now. I held his arm in my hand and placed an ever so delicate kiss. He smiled back at me.

A year and a half ago I was diagnosed with a ghastly disease. Having enjoyed a very healthy existence up to then, both my dear father and I were utterly horrified. We got through it. In fact, I miraculously sailed through all the draconian treatments unscathed, but it was still a horrid journey which I never want to repeat, nor do I wish it on anyone. When Ewa, a very dear friend of ours and a survivor, asked me: “How did you manage to stay so positive and strong throughout?” My answer was simple and to the point: “After what you and others went through in Auschwitz and the other camps, I did not dare to feel sorry for myself”. We looked into each other’s eyes and she smiled at me and held my

hand. I never wanted to let my formidable mother and grandmother down. This inner strength and tenacity has served me well and I have been richly rewarded. My prognosis is excellent.

I was blessed with the best medical attention possible, a Syrian surgeon, and a Jewish reconstructive surgeon who worked together in the operating theatre, in harmony to save my life and make me beautiful. These men are truly awesome and compassionate. Their love of humanity goes beyond our restrictive thinking. I love these two men more than words can say and always will. They have both experienced prejudice but have none-the-less excelled and I want to live in a world and contribute to a world which will be kind to their gorgeous children.

Our survival has come at a huge cost and this is an opportunity to ensure that our children, indeed all children grow up in a world in which they are not discriminated against. Our responsibility is multi-fold, it is historical, it is moral and it is humanitarian.

There are words and place names that every child must know about and cringe with horror at their mention. Ignorance is not an option.

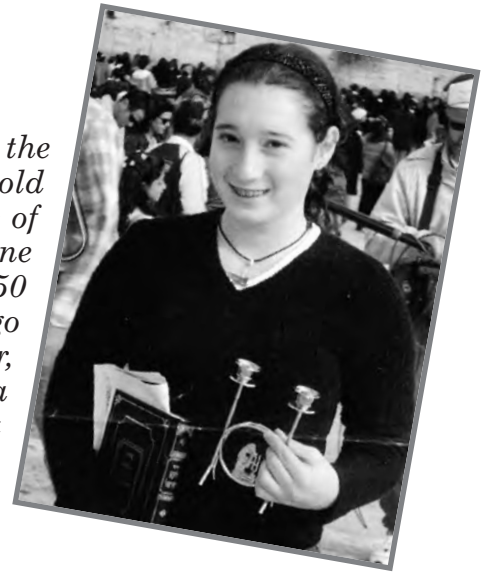
**My mantra:**

***“The ultimate ignorance and narrow mindedness is the rejection or blinkered view of something you know nothing about and refuse to investigate further. Persecuting others in order to feel superior is the height of cowardice.”***

Who is laughing in the face of Mengele, Himmler and Hitler and all that ghastly murderous mob, now?” Me Me Me and you!

# Jennifer Rubin

*An introduction by Shirley and Joseph Zeller about one of the granddaughters, Jennifer Rubin. When Jennifer was 12 years old and in the 6th grade, she wrote a beautiful essay about her love of Israel and her dream to one day visit Israel. She was the only one chosen from her school, Solomon Schechter on Long Island, one of 50 children from around the world, including 6 from America, to go on a free trip to Israel. She was accompanied by our daughter, her mother, Gail. It was Israel's 50th Anniversary. This was a B'nai mitzvah programme. All 50 children were Bar and Bat Mitzvah at the Kotel in Jerusalem. Jennifer said it was an experience she will never forget*



*Jennifer wrote this article when she came home from her trip to Israel. It was published in the magazine **Jewish Women**.*

*She has gone to Israel twice since then; once when she was in college with Birthright, and again as a staff member with Birthright.*

*Jennifer, who will be 23 years old on April 9th 2009, is now at Hunter College in New York City getting her Masters in social work.*

**M**y name is Jennifer Michelle Rubin. I live in Roslyn, New York, and I am 13. Recently I was fortunate to have gone to Israel on a tour with my mother. I went with 40 other children and their parents from around the world. It was for Israel's 50th birthday and a B'nai Mitzvah program.

What a wonderful experience! I have always wanted to become a Bat Mitzvah in Israel and that dream became reality. I had always thought of Israel as my own country. It's on the other side of the world and I will always be welcomed. I have had a great love for Israel ever since I was born, but actually to be in Israel and to experience all the wonderful things that Israel has to offer is an amazing feeling.

There is no much to see and learn about: Masada, the Western Wall, Yad Vashem, the Knesset, the Dead Sea, Ein Gedi springs and waterfall, Israeli air force bases, Rabin Square in Tel Aviv where Prime Minister Rabin was assassinated, the Baha'i Temple in

Haifa, the wildlife safari in Ramat Gan, museums, and national parks.

My favourite part of Israel was Jerusalem. The historic sites were amazing to see. All the sites I've learned about in day school for the past eight years of my life and I finally got to see them. It is great to have touched and kissed the Western Wall for the first time.

Going to Israel is the best thing that has ever happened to me. I look back on my trip and I wish that some day I will return.

Becoming a Bat Mitzvah at the Western Wall was a great honour. It was a lot of fun and an experience that I will never forget. These are memories I will always treasure and will be able to pass them on to my own children. Israel is a very special place to me and I hope all Jews will be able to go there for a visit.

Jennifer Michelle Rubin  
13 years old  
Roslyn, New York

## The 60<sup>TH</sup> Wedding Anniversary of Joseph & Fay Goldberg

**T**his morning was my grandparents, Joseph and Fay Goldberg's 60th wedding anniversary. At the anniversary celebration the three generations present included: the 1st generation of survivors who refer to themselves as "The Boys", the 2nd generation, their

Efram Goldberg

*Efram is the grandson of Moniek & Fay Goldberg.*

children, and finally, the 3rd generation, to which I belong. As time inevitably passes, the survivors grow older and the world is at risk of losing

their experiences, strength and hope.

Despite what my grandmother may think, it is more than just her delicious soup which brings me to their house once a week; it is much more than that. I have listened to the stories my grandfather told me about

his experiences, before and after the war. I have heard many names, and the people became faceless legends in my mind. Having the opportunity to hear my grandfather's narrative and then having met many of these people at the anniversary party was an amazing experience. Putting faces to the names, and encountering their personalities brought his stories to life. Family friends that were at my father's bar mitzvah and watched him grow up, are the same friends that have watched me grow up. My grandparents' friends belong to all walks of life: parents, grandparents, great grandparents, Olympic champions, successful businessmen, doctors, and active Zionists, all of whom have amazing stories.

My father told me that in his early post-war years, almost all of his parents' friends, save for a few, were survivors, and most of them were "Boys." Each of them has dealt with their experiences in the Shoah in

different ways. While some let the demons of their past take control of their lives, this was not the case of my Grandfather. The anniversary today was much more than just a "simcha", celebrating sixty wonderful years of marriage. It was a tangible testament to his victory over the atrocities committed against him and our people. Each day together is not only proof of their victory over the Holocaust but also to his continuing triumph over cancer. The sixty year union of my grandparents represents a unified effort to perpetuate our Jewish heritage and culture to the generations to come.

Today was a day of hope. I recently asked my grandfather to share his story with me, All I could do was listen. I could not relate. I could understand but never comprehend. My generation has its own struggles and while I do not compare the problems I have faced in life with what my grandparents went through, I use their

experience to help guide me and try my best to walk in the spiritual path set down by those before me. I have hope that by tapping into the spiritual strength provided by my grandparents I can overcome any difficulty I face in my life. Just as my grandparents judge themselves through the eyes of their parents, and my parents judge themselves through the eyes of their parents, I also must judge myself through the eyes of my parents.

The real victors of World War II were not only the Allies, but each and every Jew who not just survived, but had another chance at living. My grandfather has a wonderful wife, four wonderful children, ten grandchildren and one great-grandchild. He worked for what he has, started and built up a clothes manufacturing company, worked hard all his life, is very spiritual, and has a charming "neshama". By all means I do not choose to call this surviving, I call it living.

## Holocaust Education as an important step in changing the World's view of the Shoah

I am the third generation in a family of Holocaust survivors. My grandmother, Judith Sherman, was imprisoned in the Ravensbruck Concentration Camp at the age of fourteen. This touches me deeply as I am close to this age. She recently documented her experiences in a book entitled *Say the Name: A Survivor's Tale in Prose and Poetry*.

A very powerful adage among Jews is "Never forget". However, it is becoming

Ariel Sherman

*Ariel is the granddaughter of Judith and Robert Sherman.*

obvious that this view is not shared by all. As survivors pass on, the duty to remember falls upon the shoulders of children, and especially the grandchildren. We will be the last generation with living contact to Holocaust survivors. We bear the names of their murdered loved ones and carry their

legacy with us. We will be their memory, but also their voice, their life.

Due to my personal connection, I sense the urgency for Holocaust education, which is often severely lacking. I recently spoke to an eighth grader who had never heard of Hitler, and another who had no knowledge of the Holocaust. I attended a Jewish middle school where we devoted an entire semester to learning how the Holocaust came

about, the events that took place during the Holocaust, and its aftermath. While I realise most schools do not have the time or means to teach the Holocaust so extensively, I believe it should be covered more thoroughly. I currently attend a public high school. My sophomore year history textbook contained but one single paragraph on the Holocaust - one small paragraph to convey the murder of 13 million people, both Jews and non-Jews alike. Today my grandmother asks, "world of ethnic cleansing - who is clean?"

Today, neo-Nazis and anti-Semites are becoming more vocal. Many people find comfort in the lies spread by these groups. I find myself having trouble with the notion that a civilized country could so easily be persuaded to participate in such barbaric acts. If I, the granddaughter of a survivor and avid student of the Holocaust, find comprehension difficult, how will a generation of children with limited education be able to understand? How easily will they be swayed by those who disseminate lies, twist the truth, and rewrite the past?

The spring of eighth grade coincided with the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Ravensbruck Concentration Camp. My grandmother returned to the camp with her two sons and me. She returned with three generations of life behind her, an act of defiance against the Nazis. I had heard her story, watched the interviews, and read extensively about Holocaust experiences. Yet, I still found it challenging to comprehend the horrors these victims endured. It was not until I travelled around

Eastern Europe and saw the devastation of the Nazis' actions that I actually began to feel the horror myself.

My family started our journey in Germany. There are reminders everywhere of the madness that once ruled this country; the Gestapo building, plaques, statues, and ruins of buildings hit by bombs. We began to make our way through Slovakia, the birthplace of my grandmother, and the Czech Republic, specifically visiting Jewish sites. We visited synagogues that once served Jewish communities of thousands. Now all that remains is the ghost of the life that once flourished there, a mere shadow of its former grandeur. The most powerful and disturbing event for me was a visit to a synagogue in Slovakia. The temple, once an essential part of Jewish life, is now a warehouse. This once holy structure that housed the sacred books of Judaism now houses chicken wire and plywood. The patrons of this business paid no attention to the grand columns inscribed with Jewish text or the magnificent Magen Davids that bedecked the ceiling. The only reminder of the temple's former purpose was a small plaque on the wall, surrounded by bullet holes, mentioning the number of Jews killed from this village. Our guide told us that the region is nearly devoid of Jews. Most were deported, and the few survivors had nothing to return to. This was frequently the case as we continued our tour. The few functioning synagogues were lacking in funds, and the small, ageing congregations almost guarantee their eventual collapse.

The Shoah wiped out entire cities of Jews, eliminating future generations. The Holocaust against the unborn is just as devastating as the loss of the living.

Our generation must take it upon ourselves to become educated on this subject. We must continue to remind the world what occurred not so many years ago. History has a habit of repeating itself: witness Rwanda, Bosnia, and Cambodia. The countries change, names of the despots change, politics change, but the victims' suffering remains constant. We can combat this by joining organizations dedicated to tolerance, and campaigning against hatred and violence wherever it is manifested. Justice Robert Jackson described the Holocaust as being "so calculated, so malignant, and so devastating that civilization cannot bear their being ignored because it cannot survive their being repeated." Yet here we stand over sixty years later facing the same intolerance, anti-Semitism, and indifference. There is no guarantee this hate will not advance further.

The Shoah is not just a recollection of the horrors of the body, but of the darkness of the soul when the light of G-d's world seemed extinguished by the brutality of mankind. Too many people feel that learning about the Holocaust is inconsequential and has no relationship to them. However, Simon Wiesenthal urges, "For your benefit, learn from our tragedy. It is not a written law that the next victims must be Jews." As the eyewitness generation vanishes, both teaching and documenting the Shoah becomes increasingly essential. It is said that a single person can

change the world. I feel that dedicating more time to Holocaust education can act as an important step in changing the world's view of the Shoah, and encouraging remembrance.

Today my grandmother writes: "We are old, our tale is told

But you witness to witness

Be garbed in care

Be girded by strength

And see to it

That our tale does not repeat

The survivors have given us their legacy. They have told their story. They emphasize the love of life over destruction, hope rather than despair, reconciliation rather than revenge, remembering rather than forgetting, acting rather than following. Now is our time. We must work to ensure these stories do not become mere folktales. It is our duty to make "never again" a call to action, to make the slogan a reality. We can begin to make a change by preventing indifference. The Holocaust is part of human history, and the

memory belongs to everyone. Through education, we can begin to combat the evil of ignorance, the destructive power of hate, and create a world free of genocide and ethnic cleansing. The more people who stand up to hatred and violence instead of standing by, the more potent the force it will be. Jewish tradition states that while we are not required to heal the world, neither are we free from the attempt. The world must vow to never forget the Shoah, lest history repeat anew.

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## "The Boys"

Denise Pearlman  
(nee Pomeranc)

When Ben Helfgott recently asked me to write a few words about The Boys and my reflections on being one of their second generation, I hesitated and procrastinated. The task is too enormous: The Boys are larger than life and words alone cannot capture their essence.

Nevertheless, here are some personal reflections which I hope will resonate with my fellow second generation cousins and provide a hint of the importance of The Boys in all of our lives.

When my brother Stephen and I were little, we were puzzled about the mysterious absence of grandparents on our father's side. We quizzed our father Issaak Pomeranc

("Pom") and he simply said "the Germans took them away and I never saw them again". Somehow, we never questioned why we had at least thirty uncles - they were family and that was that!

We grew up seeing our uncles and our second generation cousins regularly and the support network provided to our father over many difficult years cannot be over emphasized. I believe that this is the essence of The Boys: as children they had their families torn away from them and destroyed, but instead of despairing in isolation they came together

as one extended family, to provide love and support to each other and their respective wives and children.

When our father was ill in hospital, for months on end, every single day there was at least one or more of The Boys quietly sitting with him. When he was so ill only family was allowed to visit, of course Harry Balsam was allowed in: "this is his brother" we told the nursing staff, and it could not have been more true.

As little boys of no more than 12 to 13 years, The Boys experienced human suffering and loss beyond belief. Every winter, my husband Michael and I are astonished at how they withstood the freezing

temperatures in thin rags. Every Yom Kippur I marvel at how they survived years of starvation. The older I get, the more I wonder. Most of all, I am amazed at their mental strength. They have survived not just in body but in spirit and that is the truly remarkable characteristic of The Boys.

Aptly named, they have never lost their sense of fun or love of life. They tease each other relentlessly, pulling each other's leg and making mischief if they can. Naturally, as they were boys, every one was given a nickname - and those names have stuck for the last 65 years!

At the last reunion, Krulik and Zigi were a double-act worthy of Laurel and Hardy. They did my later father proud when they repeatedly challenged my daughter's boyfriend Mike: "you schmuck, what are you waiting for? If I were a few years younger....!" Mike has taken it well and is about to run the half marathon for the '45 Aid Society.

Their robust sense of humour extended at times to some colourful language. A

typical example was given to me by the much loved and recently departed Kopel Kendall, who told me that Harry Balsam would call him up and routinely greet him with "how are you, you drekman, why haven't you f...ing called me you little b.....d?" Only when Harry called and said "Hello Kopel is everything ok?" then Kopel would knowingly respond: "Tell me Harry, who died?"

I feel a particular affinity with the children of The Boys, my second generation cousins. We have grown up together; shared similar trauma and understand some of the hidden suffering of our parents. I remember sitting with my brother and Stephen and Cohn Balsam at a glittering charity ball a little while ago. As the opera singer sang out, I looked around at the opulent surroundings; the women in ball gowns and diamonds; the well fed men in tuxedos and thought of our fathers huddled starving in a bunk in Buchenwald and felt moved by the astonishing journey that had been travelled and how they, at their lowest, could not have imagined that

their children would one day be so fortunate. It is our inherited obligation to remain close and to continue the work started by the Boys. We must also pass on this legacy to our children.

My father did not talk much about the Holocaust, although as a child I remember him shouting in German in his sleep. He only gave me the briefest insight. In recent years The Boys have had the courage to speak about their experiences and give testimony. This is a truly invaluable contribution to future generations and a slap in the face to the Holocaust deniers.

The Boys and their humour, their love of life and their love for each other is limitless. For me, all I can say is that I feel privileged to have known them and to be part of their warm and loving family. They have been an inspiration to me and my brother when times have been difficult. We have only to look to The Boys as a shining example of how to keep our spirit and never lose courage.

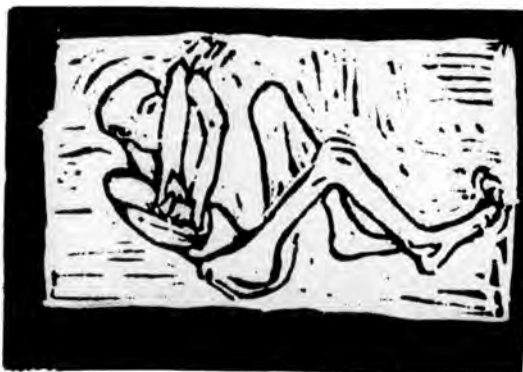
## Explore Through Artist

Aviva Halter-Hurn had just finished her Honours Degree at Camberwell College of Arts and Crafts when her father, Roman Halter, put on an exhibition of his work called 'Remembering for the Future' in 1988. This inspired her to produce a set of prints 'Auschwitz through Lino-cuts'.

"As a daughter of a Survivor I had grown up hearing about all the atrocities of the Holocaust. I

Aviva Halter-Hurn

*Aviva is the daughter of Roman and Susie Halter.*



tended to push it all to the back of my mind, not really wanting to believe how horrible one man could be to another. I found it hard to comprehend how my father had managed to survive. A whole chapter of his life, that was so alien to me and played such an immense part of the man he is.

“Through these prints which I took directly from the pictures drawn in the camps on scraps of paper, wood, or whatever else they

could find to draw on, I could glimpse into the horrors of what my father had been through and for the first time mourn my father’s family who I never knew.”



## Latest News from 2<sup>ND</sup> Generation Israel, January 2010

Nina Hecht

*Nina is the daughter of Jack & Maureen Hecht.*

2<sup>nd</sup> Generation Israel is the only English speaking Children of Holocaust Survivors group in Israel. Tricia Wermuth and I are always trying to raise our profile and increase our membership. We therefore decided to open our membership to anyone who is 2nd Generation and not just children of ‘The Boys’. This not only increases our membership but for some people this is the first opportunity they have had to speak about being 2nd Generation. Myself, Tricia and everyone who has attended our gatherings have found it very interesting to hear their parents’ unique story and sharing their 2nd Generation experiences.

By including 2nd Generation who are not children of ‘The Boys’ a different perspective can be seen.

Our major concern is, of course, the poverty that many Holocaust survivors in Israel currently live. We would love to emulate the wonderful fundraising both the ‘Boys’ and 2nd Generation have done and hope to have a fundraising event this year.

At our last meeting one of the things we discussed was the archive at Bad Arolsen in Germany. One of our members had recently

returned from Germany and the amount of information being held there is astounding. He was given details and documents pertaining to his parents that he would never have been able to find otherwise. He had first contacted them by email several months earlier. It takes that long for them to gather the information as the archive is so vast. Once they have located what you have requested, you can either go there in person to collect it or they can mail it to you.

As always I feel extremely proud and privileged to be a daughter of one of ‘The Boys’. To me you are all my heroes!

Thank you also to Philip and the 2nd Generation UK team.

## THE ROAD TO WAR – 70 YEARS ON

William Tyler MA(Oxon) MA,MPhil  
(former Principal of The City Literary Institute, London)

There is a slim but fascinating volume of history published in 1946 by Harold Nicolson, the author and diplomat. It is a history of The Congress of Vienna in 1814/15, which sought to put Europe back together again after the ravages of Napoleon Bonaparte.

It is particularly interesting because Nicolson was a junior diplomat in the British team at Versailles in 1919 trying to do the job of rebuilding Europe all over again. Finally, of course, having served in Churchill's wartime Government and having lost his Parliamentary seat in the 1945 Election, Nicolson wrote his book in the following year when again Europe was picking itself up from a war that had devastated the continent. Nicolson saw these three events as linked.

What has all this got to do with *'The Road to War'* in 1939? Well the broad brush of history tells us a great deal.

Modern Europe arguably began on 14th July 1789, when the Parisian mob stormed the Bastille prison and unleashed the Revolution upon France, and via Napoleon's armies, the twin ideas of nationalism and democracy were spread across Europe. So effectively spread that the diplomats and politicians assembled at Vienna couldn't, however hard they tried, reverse or even halt the flow of history. The future of Europe was destined to lie with those twin ideas of nationalism

and democracy. Or, as Levi Strauss wrote in 1988, 'The Revolution put into circulation ideas and values which fascinated, first Europe, then the world at large.'

One result of this is that the German Confederation of The Rhine established by Napoleon to replace the moribund Holy Roman Empire was re-established at Vienna. The truth is that Napoleon's political solution of a German Confederation had been built upon the military defeat of the most powerful German state, outside of Austria, Prussia, at the battle of Jena in 1806. A humiliation that was to have appalling consequences, as in the aftermath of Waterloo, itself part payment of Prussian revenge, nationalism took root in Germany without the concomitant amelioration of democracy.

The manner in which German unification arose is significant. It might have been thought, or at least hoped, that German liberalism, which in the revolutionary year of 1848 looked to bringing nationalism to Germany in tandem with democracy, would gain the ascendancy. After all, meeting in assembly at Frankfurt the representatives of the German States offered the crown of Germany to the Prussian king, Frederick William IV. What would have emerged would have been a constitutional Parliamentary monarchy. It never stood a chance. Frederick William wrote to a relative in England that he felt insulted by being

offered a crown 'from the gutter, disgraced by the stink of revolution, baked of dirt and mud.'

The 1848 Revolutions across Germany were crushed and thus Germany's rise to nationalism was destined to be a darker story of war. Firstly with Denmark, then with Austria, and finally with France, in which sweet revenge for Jena was obtained at the battle of Sedan in 1870.

Militaristic Prussia, not laid back Austria or German liberalism, was to prove the catalyst which brought a united Germany into being. It was proclaimed by Bismarck at the conclusion of the Franco-Prussian War on 18th January 1871, in of all symbolic places, The Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. France was humiliated and the loss of the province of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany was a particularly bitter pill to swallow.

For a hundred years after Napoleon's defeat at Leipzig in the battle of the nations and his first abdication and exile on Elba, Europe had avoided a full scale European war. Bismarck's wars, the Crimean war, and other smaller conflicts were nothing on the scale of the Napoleonic wars - more men were present at Leipzig, for example, in a single battle, over  $\frac{1}{2}$  million men, than until the battles of The First World War.

Europe was kept at peace by the so-called Balance of Powers, which after the assumption of power in Germany by Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1888 and his dismissal

of Bismarck two years later became a system of Alliances between two 'blocs'. By 1914 The Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, German bloc versus the French, Russian and British bloc. War was almost inevitable given Germany's militaristic stance and the Kaiser's own attitude. He famously said at a speech to the North German Regatta Association in 1901, that Germany must have its 'place in the sun'.

War finally came in 1914, over, as Bismarck had long ago predicted, 'some damn foolish thing in the Balkans' - in this case the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne by a Bosnian Serb terrorist group, 'The Black Hand'.

Within weeks Europe, including ourselves, was at war. Almost by accident it seems we fell into this war. There is a revisionist view favoured by some young historians today that Britain need not have gone to war in 1914. We hadn't, they argue, gone to war in 1870, so why in 1914? This entirely, in my view, misses the point that Germany in 1914 was not Prussia in 1870. If we had not gone to war we should have been forced to war with Germany at some point in the near future.

France seized back Alsace-Lorraine in 1918, at the war's end, and the bitterness between the two countries simmered on. Not unexpectedly, given French Premier Clemenceau's view expressed at The Peace Conference in Versailles that Germany should be made to pay for the war and that the German economy should be reduced to the state of a medieval agricultural one.

The overall conditions imposed upon a defeated Germany by the victorious allies at Versailles were draconian. So unlike those

imposed on a defeated France in 1814/15.

This earlier European history is the context in which to begin the signposted road to war in 1939. At this point in our exploration of the causes of World War Two, we leave the minor roads and join the motorway - the motorway to hell, to the Third Reich, and to world war all over again.

The Treaty of Versailles, which Germany had no choice but to sign, can now be seen not only as the end of one war but the start of another. The conditions imposed on Germany, in addition to the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, the removal of industrial German plant to France, the heavy, nigh impossible, reparation payments placed on Germany, a ban on any future merger with the new rump state of Austria, an embargo on Germany joining The League of Nations, the loss of territory (especially the so-called Polish Corridor, the temporary loss of the Saar and the demilitarisation of The Rhineland), the restrictions placed on Germany's military forces, ranging from no submarines and aircraft to restrictions on the number of weapons and men were heavy, onerous and, moreover, dangerous. Nicolson, in retrospect, believed that the terms imposed on Germany at Versailles were a contributory factor leading to World War Two - a point now almost universally accepted by contemporary historians. The argument is a simple one. Germany was angered, embittered, humiliated by the terms of Versailles and looked for a way of salvaging its pride. A situation exploited to the full by Hitler and The Nazis.

However, one is still left

with a question for which there can be no definitive answer, would Hitler and Nazism have arisen in Germany if Versailles had been more accommodating of German needs? Writing eight years before Hitler's assumption of power, Winston Churchill warned of the inherent dangers to German stability of the harsh terms imposed at Versailles. He wrote, 'Let it not be thought for a moment that the danger of another explosion in Europe is passed ..... the causes of war have been in no way removed; indeed they are in some respects aggravated by the so-called Peace Treaties and the reactions thereupon.' This poses another unanswerable question, if it had not been Nazism that used the terms of Versailles to stir up revolution in Germany and overthrow Weimar democracy, might it have been Marxist-Leninism instead? In other words, Versailles was a disaster waiting to happen.

With hindsight it might have been more politic to blame the Kaiser, perhaps even bring him to trial. It might have been better to have pushed on to Berlin and enforced an unconditional German surrender rather than the Armistice signed at Compiegne. All this was to be spun and used by the Nazi propaganda machine; not least the surrender of France in 1940 being conducted in the same railway carriage as used in 1918.

As Churchill warned in 1925 the problems inherent in the Versailles settlement would emerge sooner rather than later. They did so ten years before Hitler came to power. In 1923 The French and Belgians occupied the Ruhr. France sought German coal as recompense for the non payment of reparations.

Coal needed for French steel production. Post-1945 this is to be the economic building block upon which the European Union is to be constructed - The Iron and Steel Community. The occupation itself was a fiasco as the German population responded with wide-scale strikes. It did however spark riots against the German Government, most notably the Nazi's Munich Beer Hall Putsch. The French were forced to withdraw in 1925.

In addition to Versailles, Germany had been caught up in an economic crisis, and when hyperinflation set in Hitler had another issue to exploit. Hyperinflation reached its peak in November 1923 when a new currency was introduced, the Rentenmark. Nazi spin blamed the bankers and speculators for the disaster, and as many of these were Jewish it fuelled Nazi anti-Semitism.

Now we *have* begun to talk about Nazism even though we haven't reached 1933 and the assumption of power by Hitler. This places quite another layer on the whole question of German nationalism, expansionism and militarism. In the same 1925 article already cited, Churchill wrote, 'The campaign of 1919 was never fought; but its ideas go marching along. In every Army they are being explored, elaborated, refined under the surface of peace, and should war come again to the world it is not with the weapons and agencies prepared for 1919 that it will be fought, but with developments and extensions of these which will be incomparably more formidable and fatal.' And once Hitler is in power in Germany the whole prospect of war becomes ever more real but also ever more

sinister. In 1940, at the time of The Fall of France, Churchill spoke of the danger of sinking into the abyss of a new dark age.

In 1936, exactly halfway between Hitler's assumption of power and the outbreak of The Second World War, Churchill in an article entitled 'How to Stop War', wrote: 'The modern work presents the extraordinary spectacle of almost everybody wishing to prevent or avoid war, and yet war coming remorselessly nearer to almost everybody.' Why should this have been so? Churchill answered his own question, 'The thinking people in the different countries could not agree upon a plan; the rest continued to gape and chatter vacuously at the approaching peril until they were devoured by it.'

In the same year, Churchill enumerated the reasons for the coming war, 'First stands the rapid and tremendous rearmament of Germany.... The second is that the recent actions of Germany have destroyed all confidence in her respect for treaties.... The third is that practically the whole of the German nation has been taught to regard the incorporation in the Reich of the Germanic population of neighbouring states as a natural, rightful and inevitable aim of German policy. The fourth is that the financial and economic pressure in Germany are rising to such a pitch that Herr Hitler's government will in a comparatively short time have only to choose between an internal and an external explosion.' This essay amongst others was published in book form, '*Step by Step*' in 1936. In an epilogue, Churchill adds, 'Here then, in an hour when all is uncertain, but not uncheered by hope and

resolve, this tale stops.'

The final countdown had begun. In 1936 came Hitler's Occupation of the demilitarised Rhineland. It was a massive gamble for Hitler. It paid off because there was, to use Churchill's phrase from his earlier essay, no allied coordinated plan. We now know that Hitler had given orders for immediate withdrawal if German Forces met opposition. Hitler said, 'If France had then marched into The Rhineland, we would have had to withdraw with our tails between our legs.' There was no opposition and the message given to Hitler was therefore a clear one. He could virtually do what he wished.

In February 1938 Hitler demanded of the Austrian Chancellor concessions to the Austrian Nazi Party. He refused and Hitler's armies invaded. In a final broadcast, Von Schuschnigg, the Austrian Chancellor, concluded by saying, 'God protect Austria.' Having broken the conditions of Versailles with the Anschluss, Hitler next sought to take up the cause of Germans living in the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia. Nearly a quarter of the population was German. Lord Runciman was sent with a British mission to the area. He recommended that the country should be returned to Germany. His report contained this sentence, 'I regard their [Germans in the Sudetenland] turning for help towards their kinsmen and their eventual desire to join the Reich as a natural development in the circumstances.' Prime Minister Chamberlain travelled to Munich to meet The Fuhrer, and with no Czech Government official present, signed away the Sudetenland to Germany.

Again what messages are being given to Hitler? That he can push and every time the Allies will concede. In March 1939, Hitler from the now occupied Sudetenland invaded the whole of Czechoslovakia. Again no action from Britain and France. At this point Chamberlain changed his position. Too little, far too late to stop Hitler now. Chamberlain asked in a speech, 'Is this the last attack upon a small state [Czechoslovakia] or is it to be followed by others? Is this, in effect, a step in the direction of an attempt to dominate the world by force?'

The Nazi invasion of Poland later the same year was to prove the spark that sent the whole of Europe back to war. We went to war on 3rd September 1939, Chamberlain saying in his national broadcast to the nation, 'This morning the British Ambassador in Berlin handed the German Government a final note stating that unless we heard from them by eleven o'clock that they were prepared at once to withdraw their troops from Poland, a state of war would exist between us. I have to tell you that no such understanding has been received and that consequently this country is

at war with Germany.'

One consequence remains to be stated. Eight months and one week after Britain's declaration of war, Chamberlain was removed by parliamentary pressure as Prime Minister and Winston Churchill, he who had warned for so long and so eloquently of this war, took office. Margery Allingham, the writer, in her book written in 1941 for an American audience, wrote of Churchill taking office on 10th May 1940, thus: '..... whatever the outward danger, all was well and true again.'

And that is another story.....

## SECTION VI OBITUARIES

### Rabbi Simcha Lieberman

Rabbi Simcha Lieberman was for many years the senior lecturer in "Codes" at Jews' College, London. In this role he provided a last link between Jewish orthodoxy in the UK and the lost world of traditional rabbinic scholarship that had flourished for centuries in Eastern Europe, and which the Holocaust destroyed. The manner of his departure from Jews' College became a *cause célèbre* within Anglo-Jewry, a defining moment that symbolised the ever-widening rift between orthodoxy and ultra-orthodoxy within Britain's Jewish community.

Simcha Bunim Lieberman was born in Warsaw in 1929, into an illustrious rabbinical family of Gerer Hassidim - that is, followers of the influential pietistic movement founded by Rabbi Yitzhak Meir Alter in the town of Góra Kalwaria

This obituary appeared in The Times

*Rabbi Simcha Lieberman, rabbinical scholar, was born on December 29, 1929. He died on June 28, 2009, aged 79.*

(central Poland) in the mid-19th century. His early education - steeped in the study of the Talmud and its commentators - ended abruptly with the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939. At first a prisoner in the Warsaw ghetto, Lieberman was spared extermination because as an able-bodied teenager he was considered fit enough to be transferred to Majdanek, where he worked as a slave labourer. His complicity in numerous acts of sabotage earned him brutal torture. In all, Lieberman endured incarceration in seven camps, ending

up in Theresienstadt, from which, in 1945, he was rescued and brought to England through the good offices of Rabbi Dr Solomon Schonfeld, son-in-law to the then Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, Dr J. H. Hertz.

Through the patronage of Schonfeld and of the Talmudic scholar Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky, Lieberman completed his formal education at the famous Etz Chaim ("Tree of Life") Yeshiva (rabbinical seminary) in London and at the Gateshead Kollel (Institute of Higher Rabbinical Studies). Abramsky recognised in Lieberman his own qualities as a Talmudic expositor able to synthesise and analyse, with apparent ease, the vast literature that had accumulated over the millennia explaining and expounding upon the core

Talmudic texts. There was virtually no aspect of this literature with which Lieberman was not familiar. He added 20 volumes of his own to this canon, while earning a living as a rabbi and Talmudic decisory.

In 1971 Lieberman joined the academic staff of Jews' College, the rabbinical training academy established in London in 1855. Lieberman's appointment was a coup for the institution (then an associate college of the University of London), and he attracted many students who would otherwise have gone to study at more traditional yeshivot. But among Lieberman's colleagues at the college was Dr Jonathan Sacks, the protégé of the college's then chairman, Stanley (now

Lord) Kalms. Sachs's and Kalms's vision for the college was not shared by Lieberman - in particular the widening of the rabbinical training curriculum. The college's president, Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits, kept aloof from these simmering differences. In 1984 Sacks became Principal of the college. The following year, with Jakobovits's approval, Lieberman was summarily dismissed.

The "Lieberman Affair" divided Anglo-Jewry, but in the wider rabbinical world the support was more on Lieberman's side. Lieberman had powerful and wealthy friends (most of them his former students), and they saw to it that he had the best legal advice money could buy.

In May 1985 Kalms, Sacks and Jakobovits agreed to have the matter decided by a Beis Din (rabbinical court) specially constituted for this purpose - the first time a British chief rabbi had consented to have his authority challenged in this way. But the Beis Din never convened. An out-of-court settlement was reached the night before it was due to sit.

Lieberman retired to the northern Israeli city of Safed, where he continued to teach and to publish. His funeral, on the Mount of Olives (Jerusalem), was attended by some of the greatest living Talmudic authorities.

His wife Chava (an Auschwitz survivor) predeceased him. He is survived by 11 children.

## Arthur Poznanski

There were many ways in which Holocaust victims became survivors. Even today the remnant of the Jews marked for murder talk about luck, about kind people who took pity on them or how, through superhuman endeavour, they managed to work their way through the death camps. Arthur Poznanski put his survival down to a metal spoon.

Poznanski was in a train cattle car on the way to Mauthausen and managed, with a group of other youngsters to jump and begin an escape - but not before being shot and wounded by an SS guard who left him for dead. The bullet had been deflected by the spoon in his pocket with which the prisoners had been issued.

After the war he was able to come to England and begin what he hoped would be a career as an opera

This article appeared in  
The Times

*Arthur Poznanski, Holocaust survivor, was born on November 7, 1927. He died on August 10, 2009, aged 81.*

### POLISH JEW WHO SURVIVED THE HOLOCAUST TO THRIVE IN THE UK AS AN AMATEUR SINGER

singer. The ambition did not translate into great success. But he sang for the rest of his life and it was his voice for which he will be remembered by many in his local synagogue.

He was born Artek Poznanski in 1927 in the tiny Polish town of Praszka, close to the German border. It was one of the first places in the country to be overrun in 1939. His father was the headmaster of a Jewish

school and later senior master in a much bigger school in another town that had both Jewish and Gentile children. His mother was a teacher of the violin.

In 1942, only a few days before his 15th birthday, his parents and the younger of the two brothers were taken away. He never saw them again. The two boys had not been arrested because they were working at the Hortensja glass factory near the ghetto of Piotrkow.

Artek was taken to Buchenwald camp and lost contact with his brother Jerzyk, whom he was convinced had died. From Buchenwald he was taken to Flossberg near Leipzig, where he recalled being "terrorised by bayonets and rifle butts" as he was made to stand in the open air in freezing conditions. From there he and 30 others were packed together in a

railway wagon to travel to Mauthausen in Austria. In Czechoslovakia a few jumped and were shot as they did so. Artek jumped and, though wounded, managed to drag himself into the woods adjoining the railway track. It was 1945 and he was taken into the home of a family. They later arranged for him to go to hospital where he was rescued by Allied troops.

Soon afterwards Artek was shown a photograph of his young brother Jerzyk, who he was told had survived, too. Jerzyk was in Theresienstadt, which the Nazis had tried to demonstrate as a model village, but which was, in fact, a transit station for the death camps. At the end of the war he tried to get into the camp, now in Allied hands, but was told that it was quarantined. He swam its moat and hid in the sewers before getting into the hut where his brother was.

Later that year the two boys were among a group of 732 young concentration camp survivors who came to Britain. They called themselves "The Boys", although there were girls among the party and dozens of them remained firm



friends for the rest of their lives.

They were placed in a large centre near Lake Windermere, from which they eventually, with the help of the Anglo-Jewish community, began to pick up new lives. Artek became Arthur and for a time lived in the East End of London at the Jews Temporary Centre, which had been set up for a different influx of immigrants at the turn of the century. Jerzyk (now George) went to live in Gateshead where he studied at the local Talmudical college and trained as a watchmaker.

Intent on a singing career, Arthur toured the country in small-scale opera

productions. He had the starring role in *I pagliacci* and was Mercutio in Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Not quite good enough to make star status, he became a manager in a relative's textile company and stayed in the trade until retirement. He kept singing. He was choirmaster at the Ilford Synagogue in London and composed numerous pieces of music featured in the services there. At his funeral on the day after his death, a choir made up of singers from all over London performed one of his works, "as a kind of requiem", as his son Victor said.

He was regarded as a standard bearer for the survivors and felt it was his duty to retell the story. In a BBC interview in 2007, he said: "We have a lot of trouble all over the world. Hatred, discrimination and violence is still erupting and even genocides on larger and smaller scales. By quoting what happened to us we can influence people to abandon this type of pursuit and live in peace."

In 1960 he married his wife Renee, who survives him. They had a daughter and son.

## A Tribute to John Fox

Lesley Testan

To say "he will be missed" is an understatement.

Those four words seem entirely inadequate for a man who left such an impression on so many lives.

He woke up with a purpose every day and went to sleep knowing that he'd "fixed something" or at least figured out how to go about it.

Whether it was changing a light bulb or replacing a broken gate hinge that

had seen better days, Dad could always find something to fix.

Dad fixed peoples' lives the same way. From the time he became active in the union world; his daily existence was to find jobs for those who needed them or to have others rehired by reasoning with their employers. He kept

at it until all avenues and possibilities were exhausted. He never gave up on people who he thought were in need. He always gave them his all.

The idea of caring for those in need was in his core. His parents had been role models for him and he took their example to heart. He often told of stories from his childhood in Poland. These were stories of how those with more would always take

care of those with less. The old were never abandoned by the young. Family always came first, but the caring had to go beyond the inner circle of family and friends.

In turn, dad set an example for all of us. To be charitable was to be honourable and an unquestionable duty in one's life. He taught us that we should give and that the rewards for giving were in the act itself, not in what you would get in return.

The horror and the sadness of the Holocaust were never welcome in our home when we were young. As children, we knew why we didn't have any grandparents, and so little family from dad's side, but we were never encouraged to dwell or fixate on the cruel realities of how that had come to be. Our family life was all about living and moving forward to the bigger and better things that life had to offer.

The wonderful and fun times that we all shared together as a family made for endless new memories for dad, for all of us. Good memories that he so deserved after all that he'd gone through and lost in his own youth.

If ever a person cherished a second chance at life, it

was dad. I think that's why he never wasted a single moment.

Once we were older and had children of our own, he made sure that he shared all of the stories that were inside of him. He made us write everything down. There was an urgent need in him to tell us every detail so that nothing and no one be forgotten with the passage of time.

In august of 2007, he led our family on a journey back through Tuszyn and Piotrkow-Trybunaiski, eventually making our way to Thereisenstadt. We have 20 hours of film, dad speaking through almost all of it. He told us both good and bad stories. We followed in the very same footsteps that he and his family did over 60 years ago. At the age of 80, he successfully led over 20 family members through the places that our family had lived in. His ability to remember the smallest of details enabled us to know the people that we would never know in our own lifetime.

Even then, his illness was taking its toll on him both physically and mentally. But he was so driven to accomplish what he had set out to do on this trip that he

pushed through it with the strength of a man half his age. It was impressive and heartbreaking at the same time because I knew that he felt he was handing over his legacy at this point. He was entrusting his children and grandchildren with the history of our family. The importance of what he was doing kept him going, when it would have been so much easier to stay home and rest.

The legacy that dad left behind seems to grow each time we run into someone who knew him. He touched so many lives, more than we'll ever know.

What we do know is that he left behind his loving wife of 56 years, Betty. She was the reason that the three (I was eighteen months old) of us moved to America in 1956. It might have been her idea, but it was Dad's destiny to make his life there. He loved America and treasured the opportunities that it offered him. He was a true patriot in every sense.

I, and my two sisters, Lynne and Jacqueline, miss him each and every day. His five grandchildren have endless memories of him to hold in their hearts.

As I said, "he will be missed" is an understatement.

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## My Grandfather

I could not have wished for a better grandfather. Because I was the only granddaughter, the other grandchildren were boys, he always called me his 'rose among the thorns', and when I was around him, I always felt safe.

He always had a way of doing that to people. When you were with him, you just couldn't stop having this feeling that nothing bad

By Jesse Fox Brenner  
(age 14 years)  
19th April 2009

*Jesse is the granddaughter of John & Betty Fox.*

could happen to you. He always knew how to cheer someone up.

I remember when I would be upset, he would always sit me down and talk to me. He

would always say how there are better things to worry about and I shouldn't waste my time on the small stuff. Then he would finish it off with a joke. He told this one joke that was so simple and had no point at all, but somehow when he told it, it made me laugh.

I loved my grandfather very much. We were always so close. He spoke at my school about the Holocaust

and I still hear kids saying how cool he was. Some kids say their grandparents passed away when they were 2 or 3 so they don't really remember them, or they never saw them. So when they did pass away they didn't really get upset or feel sad. I am happy that I don't get the chance to say that. I once said to my brother Sam that I am proud to

be recognized as John Fox's granddaughter. To be recognized as someone's granddaughter who touched so many people and changed so many lives, is an honor.

The five of us are the luckiest grandchildren alive. Not just because he was our grandfather, but because we had the chance to know him. We got the chance to witness, with our own

eyes, the wonderful things he did and the wonderful way he acted. I feel confident saying that no matter what problems we are faced with or situations we find ourselves in, we will know how to handle it the right way because of how we saw him act in problems or situations towards people and because of what he stood for and believed in.

## Eulogy for Moniek Goldberg

David Goldberg Delivered August 31st 2009

I'd like to recite a poem entitled  
**A Man In His Life** by Yehuda Amichai  
translated from the Hebrew:

A man doesn't have time in his life  
to have time for everything.  
He doesn't have seasons enough to have  
a season for every purpose. Ecclesiastes  
Was wrong about that.

A man needs to love and to hate at the same moment,  
to laugh and cry with the same eyes,  
with the same hands to throw stones and to gather them,  
to make love in war and war in love.  
And to hate and forgive and remember and forget,  
to arrange and confuse, to eat and to digest  
what history  
takes years and years to do.

A man doesn't have time.  
When he loses he seeks, when he finds  
he forgets, when he forgets he loves, when he loves  
he begins to forget.

And his soul is seasoned, his soul  
is very professional.

Only his body remains forever  
an amateur. It tries and it misses,  
gets muddled, doesn't learn a thing,  
drunk and blind in its pleasures  
and its pains.

He will die as figs die in autumn,  
Shriveled and full of himself and sweet,  
the leaves growing dry on the ground,  
the bare branches pointing to the place  
where there's time for everything

My father was born into an orthodox home in Glowaczov, Poland in 1928 where scholarship and singing were treasured. They were observant of Jewish law. His father taught him the reasons behind our devotion. He instructed him that our teachings are all built around developing a community that maintains the dignity of the individual. My father remembered how his mother and father did their best to help those in need. His mother, who operated a small home based business with his father would tell him that he brought them good luck as

they began to achieve a modest measure of prosperity following his birth.

This was all shattered when he was only 11 years old. Germany invaded Poland and their Jewish community suffered the degradations and horrors of being forced into a ghetto. He was sent away to labor camps by the time he was 13 while his mother, father, and three sisters remained in the ghetto of Kozienice. They were eventually packed into cattle cars and sent, by rail, to their deaths in Treblinka. He survived the concentration camps and was liberated 3 days after turning 17. My father rarely spoke

of those terrible times. The pain he felt was for the fate of his family; knowing and not knowing of their suffering and fate. The rage he had was against the world that allowed it all to happen. He treated his personal travails as trivial against the suffering of others.

The British Jewish Community resettled those orphaned youths and, after a few months following his liberation, my father was living in the Loughton hostel. It was there that he was to establish dear and longstanding friendships. In 1963 this group of survivors formed themselves into the '45 Aid Society and

affectionately became known as "The Boys" - of the 732 who came to England only about 100 were girls. Having no families, these survivors became family to each other. It was there that he met our mother, Fay, during a "mixer" with her Habonim group from London. Last March marked the 60th anniversary of their marriage.

My father's faith in God was profoundly challenged. Where was the God of Justice when the righteous suffered, crying out to him? Where was God while the sadists tormented the innocents? I suspect that his belief was incinerated in the crematoria along with his mother, father, three sisters, countless aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, and neighbors.

But his faith in Jewish teachings, in our people, and in Zionism, only waxed stronger. Rather than fall into despair he found meaning in life and he came to mean a great deal to the people in his life. His family had been destroyed but he and my mother made a family: Three sons and a daughter. Later: 10 grandchildren; 5 granddaughters, 5 grandsons and a great grandson. They had virtually no money, no rich relatives or benefactors - yet they managed. My father's formal education stopped when he was 12 years old but still he loved learning, reading and arguing. He was a driven, aggressive, ambitious man who always worked hard to provide for his family, going into business with a partner as a clothing manufacturer in Detroit when he was in his early 30s. He later learned Spanish from audio tapes and set up a factory in Costa Rica when he was almost 50 years old.

He established this as a family business in a foreign

country with only a dozen machines and meager savings after he and our mother sold the house in Michigan, and he built it, after 20 years, to staff over 1,000 people. These years were both difficult and glorious. His entire business career was often riddled with struggle: Good years - Bad years; some years teetering on bankruptcy - some years earning a good profit. He succeeded, in large part, because customers, employees, and creditors, admired his honesty and industry and trusted him to be a man of his word.

He took great pride in his management style and the tremendous loyalty he instilled in his staff. He truly believed in the value of every person in the production chain, particularly those at the lower rungs who kept the work flowing. He was a compassionate businessman who put a physician on staff and worked to extend dental care to people who had never seen a dentist in their lifetimes. He was deeply touched to learn that his former employees in Costa Rica had arranged prayer circles for him once they heard he had contracted cancer.

I recall a conversation we had when we were driving home from our small factory in Detroit which we called The Shop. I was working for him and attending University at the time and we were talking about life issues, earning a living and so on. Being young and caught up in the zeitgeist of the late '60s early '70s, I was saying how earning a lot of money was not a goal of mine - that making a difference or bettering society was a more worthy commitment. My father didn't object to this display of what we used to call

"idealism". He felt strongly that those who were consumed by their need to make money to the point where they held no other interests might get rich as far as their bankers or neighbors were concerned but risked remaining poor as *menschen*, as people. "Yes", he agreed, "money is not everything. But, let me tell you", he said with a deep sigh of pathos, "It's better to be the one granting the loan than the one having to ask for it."

In those later years, he was fortunate to have friends, fellow survivors, and *landsleit* who were in a position to help when his pride permitted him to ask.

He strived to build a business and earn a good living. First and foremost, his commitment was always to my mother and our family. He remained engaged with his friends, loved music, read vociferously, and later wrote articles for the '45 Aid Society's Journal on issues ranging from debates about what he considered the obnoxious notion of "survivor's guilt" to travelogues, to panegyrics of fellow survivors or of those who showed them kindness during their years in the hostels. My father and mother worked hard to attend the Society's annual reunions marking their Liberation with events held in London and in Jerusalem to mark Yom Ha'amtzmaut - Israel's Independence Day. It broke his heart not to have attended for the past two years.

Generosity or *Tzedaka* was not something to be reserved for when you made it or became rich. It was a lifelong responsibility and if, by good fortune you are able to get more you just give more. At the risk of sounding trite superlatives I can say that my father was certainly the

most generous person I have ever known. He loved giving help, financial and otherwise to his family and friends and institutions. He truly enjoyed assisting his grandchildren in any way he could. He instructed a few of the children at our shul with the chanting their Haftorah. This was a labor of love. If he could help with time, with money, with instruction he was happy to. This is what gives meaning to life. This is what it means to be part of the community. This was how he honored his parents, his wife, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

He was not a quiet man by nature. His voice was always loud and authoritative when we were young, especially when he lost his temper. He couldn't believe that our sweet cousin, Helen, whom he loved, was a little afraid of that booming voice in those early years. He was sharp with his criticism and not too liberal with his praise when we were growing up. But that was the point: to have us grow up - not to coddle us. Our family business meetings more closely resembled a David Mamet play than anything heard in a corporate board room. We all, at times, employed the tactic of yelling loudest so that our view would prevail. But nobody yelled louder, or with more righteousness than Dad.

We have a family joke: "Yes! But how did he say?" When my father recounted stories about how he set someone straight, how he gave them a piece of his mind, how he shamed them with logic, truth, and righteousness he would relive his arguments. "Yes!" we would ask, "but what did the other person say?" No matter, he would just go on with his side. And like all of us who enjoy getting the last

word he was honored when Martin Gilbert, a historian who was knighted for his biography of Winston Churchill and long associated with the '45 Aid Society, wrote a book about this group entitled "The Boys".

Gilbert gave my father the last word in his book. I'm proud to mention that the quote was picked up by the New York Times in their review. Understand that Joe was known by the Boys, landsleit, and my mother by his Polish name, Moniek. Sir Martin concludes his book with these words:

"Moniek Goldberg, who lives in Florida, wrote: 'Fifty years on I reflect that I could tell my father that I have not forgotten what I learned as a boy. I helped my fellow man when I could. I have seen man behave worse than beasts, but the Jews remembered what Rabbi Hillel taught us, 'If you find yourself in a place where there are no men you must strive to be a man'. We were amongst the beasts, and I am proud to declare that we upheld the dignity of man.'"

He could have gone on to report that he was true to his father's other teachings as well. He lived with Derech Eretz as a devoted husband, dedicated father, loving grandfather, fair and caring boss, loyal friend, trustee at our synagogue, and an inspiration to us all. He did his best to remain faithful to the memories and values of his family. He took the commandment of Bikur Cholim-offering comfort to the sick, seriously. He volunteered to talk to school children on behalf of the Holocaust Speaker's Bureau. He believed strongly in Jewish continuity and did his best to pass it on L'Dor V'dor from generation to generation. I only hope that we, his progeny and

friends can do likewise. He lived a long, full life. He had time, 81 years, but like the subject of our poem he didn't have enough time for everything and it seemed like he had to do everything all at the same time. Like the subject of our poem he loved and hated at the same time. He lived daily with the loving memories of his parents and family emblazoned in his soul as he lived with nightmares as vivid as the Auschwitz tattoo B323 indelibly inked to his left arm. He lived.

My father was not a quiet man. Even though he is gone now his words, teachings, and love will always be with us. I can envision him singing with his family on erev Shabbos in Poland. I can hear him loudly - very loudly singing El Adon from our seats at our Shul in Sunrise. I can hear him plaintively reprimanding us when we were children and barking orders when we were in business together. I can hear him playfully teasing my mother or taking a line from a song they danced to while dating and declaring it publicly at their 50th wedding anniversary: "Fay, you are my everything". I can see him bouncing my daughters on his knees while singing a little ditty and see him hugging my girls when they graduated college. I can hear him davening shacharit services on the Yom Tovim. I can hear him speaking extemporaneously at his 60th anniversary party or 81st birthday thanking everyone. I can hear his voice reduced to a raspy whisper from his bed last week. He has become quieter but never quiet.

I look around and see, in this room people that he truly loved, and on behalf of our family, and if I may be so presumptuous, on his behalf, thank you for attending and showing him respect.

# Monty Graham's Story

On September 12th 2009, Monty's grandson James, proudly sang Anim Zemirot. He had originally been practising for Dad's second age barmitzvah but sadly this wasn't meant to be for Monty passed away on June 21st 2009, aged 82. However, in remembrance for his beloved grandfather James continued to practise hard and sang it in Watford Synagogue on what should have been Dad's special day.

Monty was a quiet, but warm and friendly man who had an immense strength and kindness and who always made time to talk to people. His passing means survivor numbers continue to dwindle and at this sad time our family has been reflecting on our history and looking ahead to the future.

As Monty was preparing for his barmitzvah, he was taken to the ghetto in his hometown of Sosnowic in Poland. His mother and youngest brother Benek, age 6, were rounded up to go to the gas chambers. Dad recalled how he crept up to the fence one night where they were being held and how his mother begged his little brother to crawl through a small hole in the fence. Unsurprisingly, a terrified young Benek would not let go of his mother and there was a painful and quick farewell as his mother made my father leave before he was caught: they both knew they would never see each other again.

Dad continued to live with his middle brother, Zelek, and father, Kalma in the ghetto for a while. His brother Zelek used to jump over the fence to fetch bread and water, until one day he never returned. Years later Dad discovered he had been

By his family

shot dead climbing back into the ghetto with desperately needed food.

Not long after, Dad had to say goodbye to his father when he was taken to Auschwitz, and then to Heidebreck labour camp, where he loaded limestone for a year. He was then moved by wagon to Buchenwald. He no longer did hard manual labour but became a man of many talents - working the fields, learning French in order to relay messages between soldiers, wiring electrics and even learning how to lag pipes! In short, Monty taught himself any skill that would make him useful and so avoid the gas chambers. For three years his strength of character, resourcefulness and determination to survive kept him alive.

Towards the end of the war, along with thousands of others, Monty was forced on a Death March. In temperatures below freezing, starving and with frostbitten toes, he walked hundreds of miles across Poland from Buchenwald to Gross Rosen and then on to Theresienstadt, watching person after person collapse with exhaustion, only to be shot where they fell.

Predictably, he succumbed to illness by the time he arrived in Theresienstadt in 1945 and so was unaware that the Russian liberators had arrived. In fact, he was so ill the Russians thought he was dead and put him in a cart heading for a mass grave. It was only when dad groaned as one of the soldiers checked the cart that their mistake was discovered. He was pulled out and put on a cart bound for hospital.

After liberation Monty went to Lake Windermere with other survivors to recuperate. He spent three years recovering on farms in the South of England, until he met his wife Millie on Bournemouth Beach. They moved to Cricklewood and made a life together, raising a family.

Although Monty's story of survival needs to be heard, we feel it is also important to talk as representatives of the second generation, to explain how having a father who survived such human suffering has marked our lives.

We grew up knowing our dad was a "Holocaust survivor" and that his - our - family had perished, but we did not really understand what this meant. On Yom Kippur Dad would talk about his family and reflect on his childhood, the times spent in the camps. He would relay stories that paid testament to his natural survival instinct and to the charming, hardworking and strong man he was.

Like the time he befriended a dentist who hid him in his cupboard to prevent him being rounded up for inspection. He also found ways to earn cigarettes to give to the soldiers to appease them and he talked about how a piece of meat which had been smuggled into the camp was hidden and cooked by sitting on it for hours. At meal time, once a day, he would wait until the end of the soup queue, as he realised all the nutrients would congeal at the bottom of the pot, which would make a more satisfying and healthy meal!

He lived through much hunger, suffering and perse-

cution but always held onto hope; for him, the memory of his family and his Jewish heritage.

Visits to Yad Vashem as teenagers made us truly understand the horrors of our father's childhood. These weren't just stories, but actually had happened to our family and relations. But it is not until we have our own families can we really understand the feeling of the impact of dad's family being ripped apart.

Working at West Herts College, Helen discovered the real importance of our family history. The lack of knowledge of the 16 to 19 year olds about such a vital part of history stunned her as it's this ignorance and lack of understanding that contributes to anti-Semitism in the first place.

But have the lessons of the Holocaust and Second World War been learnt? In recent times we have witnessed Rwanda and Darfur, not to mention the rising anti-Semitism that is flourishing throughout Europe. No, the lessons do not seem to have been learnt.

So, how do we try to change our own and our children's futures?

Well, the obvious answer is education. Whether through schools, communities, colleges, politicians or, most importantly, the media, we all need to somehow work together to teach tolerance, understanding and respect for each other's colour, race and religion. Our father somehow through his suffering retained his faith in humanity and G-d and this in itself is a lesson to be learnt.

A few years ago, Kelvin and Helen retraced the footsteps of our father and his family and visited Auschwitz. Only by seeing the cattle sheds, which had been converted into towers of five high bunks, and feeling the cold, harsh environment can you really truly begin to understand what the Jews, blacks, Gypsies and communists - all those who weren't of the Aryan race or disagreed with the Nazi regime - went through. It was a highly emotional visit, which every person should experience.

Our father wasn't able to grieve for either his family or the years he lost suffering in the camps and our only consolation is that he has finally been reunited with his loved ones. We try to draw inspiration from his life. For even through his ill health in later years he always had a smile and an inner resilience to get through hard times.

The fact that dad was able to live such a long and happy life is a credit to our mother's love and care. Together, they supported us, taught us how to make the most of life, the importance of family and instilled in us the values of honesty and hard work.

My father's indomitable spirit lives on in his children, Kelvin, Lorraine, David and Helen and grandchildren Jonathan, Naomi, James and Danielle. In dad and his family's memory, we have to tell his story as often as we can to ensure the horrors and lessons of the Holocaust are never forgotten in the hope that it will never happen again.

## Eva Julia Graham

**E**va Julia Graham, born Zilina 14 August 1938, died London 21 December 2009.

Eva Julia Folkmann was born in Zilina in northern Czechoslovakia one month before the notorious Munich Pact, which heralded the dismemberment of that country. Her father, Geza, was an engineer having obtained his degree at the University of Brno; her mother ran a ladies fashion business. Her family was called Wittman and were from the town of Zvolen

Tony Graham

where they were ran a prosperous cheese-manufacturing business.

In March 1939, a German puppet government under Josef Tiso was set up in Slovakia. At first the same restrictions on Jews were put in place, but after March 1942 the deportations started. In 1944, following a national uprising, the Nazis took over the country, implementing even more rigorous policies. By this

time, before their own deportation and murder, Eva's parents had placed her in the care of a convent in the centre of Zilina, where appropriate papers, including a baptism certificate, were provided, and it was here that she was hidden until the Soviet liberation in 1945.

Some of her mother's family in Zvolen survived the war, having moved to remote mountain villages, and Eva came to stay with her aunt, but as times were very hard for them, the opportunity to live with

her maternal uncle who worked for UNRRA in London was seized.

Three months after her arrival, her uncle died (he is buried in Hoop Lane, where she was taken every Sunday by her grieving aunt, Gabriella Wittman).

She was a dressmaker and, with a daughter of her own, took the opportunity to send Eva to the home for refugee children from Europe which was run by the West London Synagogue at Lingfield in Surrey.

Having started her English education in Haverstock Hill, near her home in Howitt Road, Eva continued her education at the local school in rural Surrey for the next couple of years when, because the number of residents had diminished and because of the remoteness from the West London Synagogue (for Sunday classes), a property was purchased at 42 The Grove, Isleworth, known as Lingfield House,

Eva attended local primary school and later Acton Technical College, where she trained in hotel management. Apart from Sunday classes, Eva at this time became active in the West London Junior Membership, thanks to her communication skills coming to the attention of Michael Goulston, then the chairman of the youth section of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. Eva became the Secretary of this group, and was asked to attend the annual conference at Finhaut in Switzerland in 1956.

Her conference costs were paid for, but Eva needed to make her own travel arrangements. She was introduced to two young men from Alyth JM who had room in their car for her. This was the start of her journey

through life for the next half century.

After a somewhat bumpy start, romance soon blossomed, especially in the welcoming environment of the Fellowship Youth Group at Alyth.

Eva was married on 8th September 1957 at the West London Synagogue by Rev Dr Werner Van der Zyl. She was given away by Rev Andre Ungar, and Tony's best man was Neville Sassienie.

Eva started working in the hotel industry as a receptionist, but after her marriage she came to work in Grahams busy radio and television family business located in Clerkenwell, where she covered for Tony who at that time was in the Air Force.

Eva's first home was at 19 Minster Road, NW2, the erstwhile home of Tony's grandmother, but on her birthday in 1959 was able to move next door to Tony's parents. This proved a great benefit as the baby-sitters had only to walk through a gap in hedge.

At Alyth Gardens, Eva soon became a leading light in the nascent Young Marrieds Group adding new life-time links forged in the youth groups.

Over the years Eva became active in many aspects of Synagogue life. She sang in the choir for about twenty years and was a regular congregant for over fifty years. She cared for the old and sick people, and provided consolation for the bereaved. She worked to promote adult education and helped organise a major exhibition of Jewish Art over thirty years ago. She organised synagogue flowers, helped with the embroidery which have adorned the Synagogue for many years, and

helped cook meals for elderly congregants.

Above all, Eva was able with others to make Alyth such a welcoming place for members and strangers alike.

Apart from her role in raising Suzanne, David and Peter, Eva was a life-long supporter of the wider community. At Christmas each year she would help Joyce Rose distribute meals to the lonely old people in the London Borough of Barnet.

She worked for many years as volunteer in the early days of the RSGB, first at Seymour Place and then at College Crescent in Finchley Road. When the organisation moved to the Sternberg Centre, Eva moved next door to be the school welfare officer at the Akiva School.

Eva's greatest achievement in recent years was as a volunteer at the North London Hospice, where she served for twenty years. With sad irony, the day she left two years ago the cancer was at last diagnosed. She fought this bravely for two years, winning most of the battles. Only in the last weeks did she try to climb an unsurmountable mountain.

She had her family and friends by her side for the last weeks of her life. Having been in synagogue for the occasion of her grandson's Barmitzvah, and having had herself the honour of reading from the Torah only two months previously, she was content with her life's work. She died very peacefully in the North London Hospice where she was lovingly cared for during her last few days. Twenty of her former colleagues met for special prayers the following morning.

# Judge Israel Finestein QC

Elaine and I want to send our deepest condolences to the family of the late Judge Israel Finestein of blessed memory. We, like you, feel bereaved. Judge Finestein - Shmuel as his friends always called him - was a quite exceptional man, and the whole of British Jewry was enlarged by his presence.

The outward Judge Finestein was the man we admired: President of the Board of Deputies, one of Anglo-Jewry's finest historians, a leading member of literally dozens of organizations involved in the past, present or future of the Jewish community. People turned to him for leadership because he had in full measure the three qualities of a leader set out in the first chapter of Devarim: he was wise, understanding and full of knowledge. He saw leadership not as an ambition but as a responsibility. He was a man of duty and principle, integrity and compassion. We were blessed by his leadership.

But the private man, Shmuel Finestein was

## The Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks

*Israel Finestein was a Vice-President of our Society. He took a great interest in our affairs and attended many of our reunions and other activities. He was highly respected and much loved by our members. This beautiful eulogy was delivered at the funeral on behalf of the Chief Rabbi and reflects very well how we all felt about Judge Finestein.*

even more impressive. Here was a man of warmth and generosity of spirit. He had a wonderful sense of humour, which always took you by surprise, because its approach was camouflaged by his judicial demeanour. I cherished him as a friend, a mentor, someone whose advice I often sought. I loved the clarity of his mind and speech, the deep historical sense he brought to matters of the moment, and principled humanity of everything he said and did. He was a noble man, an edel man, a gentleman and

together with his beloved Marion, so gracious in her own right, and so sorely missed these last few years, they were a living role model of Jewish values in action.

Shmuel had unusual gifts. He spoke not in sentences, but paragraphs, sometimes even in complete chapters. He could deliver a perfectly constructed speech lasting an hour without a single note. How he did it, I have no idea. He could also tell you what you needed to hear in such a way that you could hear it: he was the rarest of creatures, a Jewish diplomat. And he cared. He cared for Judaism, for the Anglo-Jewry whose history he knew better than anyone, for its customs and traditions and tolerance. He loved the United Synagogue, and especially his beloved St. John's Wood community. He respected Rabbis and always treated them with respect. He was gentle, benign and wise, and Elaine and I loved him for these things.

He wrote a distinguished chapter in the history of the community whose historian he was. It is conventional to say at such times: we will miss him. And we will. But on this occasion such words are not enough. I for one will set his memory before me, as I hope we will each do in our way. For this was a man who showed us what it meant when we say of Judaism, *der-achha darkhei noam vekhol nectivoteha shalom* 'its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace'. He was one of the true sho'tim, a judge who was also a leader and a role model. As we mourn his passing, may his memory inspire us that we may continue the history he wrote and the history he helped to make.



# Israel Finestein

“I have made tea. Let us sit at the table.” This was the usual request, made with innate courtesy, when I visited him in the last years in his flat high up in St John’s Wood. I don’t think Israel (or Shmuel, as he was better known) was a domesticated being, but he always made me welcome. In previous years, his wife Marion would be in charge, but she had departed sadly some time ago, and he missed her so much. They had fitted together admirably.

As I sat at the table, I noticed the many manuscripts at one end, and the biscuits at the other end. We began to talk, I began to listen. I loved to hear his balanced, judicial voice, expressing views with distinctive clarity and fluency, imparting a breadth and depth of knowledge in an ordered fashion. I intervened only occasionally. Being with him was a pleasure, an education.

Look in Who’s Who or the Jewish Year Book and you will see how he developed from his native Hull to become Prizewinner at Trinity in Cambridge, from

Aubrey Rose C.B.E  
D.Univ.

Q.C. at the Bar to the Bench, how our multitudinous Jewish bodies gloried in him as President or Vice-President. His name meant something, carried weight, a marker of serious endeavour. His efforts for Jewish students, education, Anglo-Jewish history, are noteworthy alongside his dedication to Orthodoxy and learning, attending a Talmud class up to a month before his passing.

For three years I had weekly, almost daily, contact with him. He was President of the Board of Deputies. I was his No.2. He was often in Court and I had to substitute for him, report to him. We worked closely at gathering after gathering, whether with Cardinal Hume, or leaders of other faiths, other minorities, and, of course, with those who came from Israel. Always he was respected, just as he respected others. He possessed a natural dignity.

He possessed, too, a delightfully dry sense of

humour, uttering his words soberly while a smile crept slowly over his features. He had much support from family members, particularly his wife’s family. Shmuel was a man of courage. Recent years had seen the accumulation of disruptive illnesses. He bore them and remedial treatments with calmness, whether at home or in hospital, but he knew that something inside of him could burst at any time with fatal results, and this is what happened.

In recent years we have seen the departure of another world, of notable men and women, some of The Boys themselves, dear Frank Cass, active Simon Reiss, munificent Sidney Corob; so many men of renown. Prominent among them is my, our, outstanding friend, Israel Finestein. Our community, and so many, miss you, Shmuel, but we have gained so much from your wisdom.

In the world ahead you deserve an honoured place, just as you have had here with us.

25 November 2009.

# Charles (Chaim) Shane

Charles (Chaim) Shane passed away on 29th October 2009 - he will be sadly missed by his darling wife Anita whom he adored and shared 59 wonderful years with, his two Sons Michael and Elton, their wives Linda and Susan and his wonderful grandchildren Daniel, Katie, Samantha, Georgia and Sarah.

Chaim like most of ‘The Boys’ had in recent years

Michael Shane



spent much of his time educating as many people as possible about the Holocaust telling his story. He had devoted the last 4 years caring for Anita who will miss him terribly.

Chaim was a survivor in every sense of the word and this was typified by his last days at Michael Sobel House, during which time he touched the lives of everyone he came into contact with, teaching both humility and generosity

- everyone loved 'Charlie Boy' as they called him. Chaim's book 'Memories' was published in October 2009 and all the staff read his most amazing story of survival and his life from childhood to now. Despite his suffering in the early years and although Chaim did not relish his suffering at this time, he placed no blame and started what was to become his final fight. Time after time he defied medical opinion to such a level until staff had to admit that 'Charlie Boy'

was going to do things his way.

Chaim was a determined and driven man - some may even say stubborn, but with this he was both kind and generous and finished whatever he started. At 75 he taught himself how to use a computer and Microsoft Word and with minimal help spent five years remembering and writing about his life - culminating in his 199 page book.

He was a member of Pinner United Synagogue and an

honorary member of Hatch End Masorti and when recently asked by nurses if he was religious, he responded "*I believe in the Almighty with all my heart and all my soul*". As one would expect, he was admired deeply by his children and grandchildren but that admiration stretched far beyond his close family. Chaim means Life and Chaim certainly knew a thing or two about life and how to live it. All we can now say is "L'Chaim - To Chaim, To Life".

## SECTION VII MEMBERS NEWS 2009

Compiled by Ruby Friedman

### BIRTHS:

- Mazeltov to Nigel & Angela Cohen, daughter of Lottie Malenicky and the late Moshe Malenicky, on the birth of a second grandson Jack Sonny.
- Mazeltov to Marie & Bob Obuchowski on the birth of a great-granddaughter Amelia Gia, born to Louise and Ben, daughter of Susan and David Bermange.
- Mazeltov to Pauline Balsam on the birth of a great-granddaughter Macey, born to Natalie and Marc. Natalie is the granddaughter of the late Harry Balsam and the daughter of Rochelle & Stephen Balsam.
- Mazeltov to Nechama & Menachem Sylberstein on the birth of a great-grandchild.
- Mazeltov to Arza & Ben Helfgott on the birth of their grandson Noah, born to Laura & Nathan.
- Mazeltov to Thea and Isroel Rudzinski on the birth of several great-grandchildren.
- Mazeltov to Anna Jackson and the late Ray Jackson on the birth of a granddaughter, born to Ruti & Oren.
- Mazeltov to Tina & Victor Greenberg on

the birth of their grandson Ronny Meyer, born to Debs and David.

- Mazeltov to Olive Herman and the late David Herman on the birth of a grandson, Luke David, born to Sarah & Paul.

### BARMITZVAH:

- Mazeltov to Pauline Balsam on the barmitzvah of your grandson Jack, grandson of the late Harry Balsam and son of Amanda & Colin Balsam. Mazeltov to Sheila Wino on the barmitzvah of her grandson Ben, son of Karen & Robert. Ben is the grandson of the late Ray Wino.
- Mazeltov to Marion and Meir Stern on the barmitzvah of their grandson Dotahn, son of Lelia and David.
- Mazeltov to Tina and Victor Greenberg on the barmitzvah of their grandson Joey, son of Janie and Alan.
- Mazeltov to Shirley and Alfred Huberman on the barmitzvah of their grandson Sammy, son of Susan and Maurice.

### BATMIZVAH:

- Mazeltov to Pauline & Harry Spiro on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter Hannah, daughter of Roz & Leslie.

- Mazeltov to Arza & Ben Helfgott on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter Lucy, daughter of Thea & Michael.
- Mazeltov to Pauline Balsam on the batmitzvah of her granddaughter Emily, daughter of Amanda & Colin and the granddaughter of the late Harry Balsam.
- Mazeltov to Beatrice and Leon Manders on the batmitzvah of the granddaughter Kylie in Israel.

## WEDDINGS:

- Mazeltov to Beatrice & Leon Manders on the marriage of their grandson in Israel.
- Mazeltov to Moshe Nurtman & Jessie Nurtman on the marriage of their son Saul to Melanie.
- Mazeltov to Evelyn & Aron Zylberszac on the marriage of their granddaughter Natasha, daughter of Fiona & Armon, to Daniel.
- Mazeltov to Jeanette and Ziggy Shipper on the marriage of their grandson Robert, son of Michelle and Marcus, to Claire.

## DIAMOND WEDDING ANNIVERSARY:

- Hearty mazeltov to Faye & Moniek Goldberg on this special occasion.

## DEATHS:

- Mayer Bomszytk
- Rubin Orzech
- Daniel Falkner
- Leah Goodman
- Nat Pivnik
- Johnny Fox

- Helen Lazar
- Martin Lampert
- Herbert Elliot
- Monty Graham
- Marcus Klotz
- Simcha Lieberman
- Arthur Poznanski
- Moniek Goldberg
- Monty Burgerman
- Kopel Kendall
- Joe Moskowitz
- Chaim Shane
- Eva Graham
- Leo Frischman
- Martin (Moniek) Buki.

- Sincere sympathy to Ivor Weider and family on the loss of his wife Marion. Condolences to Alan and Justin on the loss of their mother Wendy

- Sincere sympathy to Victor Breitburg on the loss of his wife Lucille.

## 3RD GENERATION NEWS:

Congratulations to Katya Farkas on passing her A levels and will be taking up a place at Oxford University, and to Violet Farkas on gaining 6 A\* in her AS examinations. Katya and Violet are the granddaughters of Carol and the late Frank Farkas and daughters of Emma and Alan Farkas.

Congratulations to Leron Vellerman on receiving an A\* in Ivrit GCSE. This is a great achievement as he took the examination two years early. Leron is the grandson of Hettie and Alec Ward and the son of Lyla and Barend Vellerman.

Many congratulations to Laura Friedman and Paul Wilder on completing the 2009 London Marathon in record time.

# SECTION VIII MANCHESTER NEWS 2009

Compiled by Louise Elliott

**F**irst of all I must apologise to our Manchester readers. Each year I keep a note of events but unfortunately, through a computer glitch, it was wiped off so I can only go from memory - so here goes:

**March 2009.** We have three Mazeltovs - Rhona, the wife of Jack Aizenberg, reached the young age of 70 years with a celebratory ladies lunch.

Alice Rubinstein's granddaughter Suzanne gave birth to a baby girl, a little brother for her son. Suzanne is the daughter of Rosalind and Robert Nathan.

Marita Golding's granddaughter Amy became engaged. She is the daughter of Marita's son Dr. Jonathan Golding and his wife Lesley.

Arek Hersh was presented with an MBE for all the work on Holocaust education and we all wish him a hearty Mazeltov and hope he continues with this work for very many years to come.

The son of Anthony Sommers and his wife has been awarded a place at Oxford University to carry out his clinical work which will lead to becoming a doctor. A hearty Mazeltov to his parents and to his Grandmother Hynda. Grampa David would have been so proud of him.

Some of our members attended a presentation at the Manchester War Museum, organised by the A.J.R, when presentations were made by Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and others, of a Memorial Book containing details of deceased families who died in the Holocaust. The occasion was well attended and a very nice reception was provided.

**April 2009** The Yom Hashoah gathering took place on the 21st April and it was very well attended. I would think there were about 550 people present which included many children who had to sit on the floor through lack of space. To start with, the Standards of the Association of Jewish ex-servicemen and women were received and Shalom Goldblatt gave the call of the Shofar. A very moving performance of Schindler's List was given by the violinist Oliver Morris. This was followed by the lighting of six Memorial Candles by four generations - Reszika, Stephen, Lawrence and David Fruhman and by Talia and Zack Leinhard Sammy Bomsztyk (the grandson of the late Mayer and Lily Bomsztyk gave the D'var Torah and then a Tribute to Mayer Bomsztyk by his granddaughter Natasha Field. The Survivors Legacy was by Sam Gontarz and the Pledge to Remember by his son Adrian. Dorca Samson gave a very moving speech about her life ably assisted by her granddaughter Aleesha Gould and by Sophie Mechlowitz. Similarly, Arek Hersh spoke, assisted by Liora Tamam (his granddaughter) and Menachem Portnoy and, finally, Rachel Kahan, assisted by Kayley Kahan (her granddaughter) and Janina Isaacs. As usual, Chazzan Michael Isdale sang Keli Keli, assisted by the B'yachad choir from King David School and later the Chazzan sang El Maale Rachamim. Reverend

G Brodie said Kaddish in unison and there were 60 seconds of silent reflection. Finally, the National Anthem and the Hatikva, after which the huge crowd dispersed in a very orderly fashion. The Chairperson of the Yom Hashoah was Tania Nelson (daughter of the late Mendel and Marie Beale) and thanks must be given to her and her secretary Jacky Field (Mayer and Lily Bomsztyk's daughter) for all the hard work they are putting in and for taking over the responsibility not only with Yom Hashoah but with arranging the annual Shool service to commemorate the liberation of our members with a Kiddush thereafter and also arranging the annual visit to the Cemetery where we have laid a stone for the six million who perished in the Holocaust. For the time being, I am continuing to let our members know of these events but hope that they will continue their good work for very many years to come.

**9th May 2009** The service at Steincourt Shool to commemorate the liberation of our members took place and as usual most of the members were able to attend. Reverend Brodie spoke eloquently as usual and the service was followed by a Kiddush to which all the congregation were invited.

**16th May 2009** We heard that Toby, the grandson of the late Sam and Elaine Walshaw, and the son of Brenton and Karen Walshaw, was barmitzvah and we send hearty congratulations to all the family.

**June 2009** - Marita Golding's granddaughter Amy (the daughter of her son Dr. Jonathan Golding and his wife Lesley) was married. Mazeltov to all the family

**2nd June 2009** Herbert Elliott, the husband of Louise, passed away.

**June 2009** - Rochelle, the daughter of Estelle and Clive Fisher and the granddaughter of Sam and Hannah Garden, became engaged - Mazeltov from all.

**June 2009** - Mayer Hersh was awarded the Ann Frank Life Achievement award and he is invited to a lunch by Penguin Press, followed by a tour on the Thames, then to the Houses of Parliament. The presentation will be at the House of Commons by Lynn Featherstone and

the presentation will end with a reception on the day that Ann Frank would have been 80 years old.

**July 2009** There was a production of Dr.Korczak's Example produced at the Manchester Royal Exchange Theatre which was well attended and was very emotional. After the show finished, Dorka Sampson spoke of her experiences during the war and Tania Nelson the Chairperson of the 2nd Generation also spoke.

**July 2009** Robert, the husband of Alice Rubinstein's granddaughter Suzanne, is a teacher at a Church of England School in Bury and Alice was invited to speak to the pupils as to her experiences since arriving in this country with the Kindertransport.. She was made very welcome by the pupils.

**Aug 2009** The wedding of Adam, son of Paul and Suzanne Levy and grandson of Adash and Zena, took place in London. Mazeltov to all the family.

**Aug 2009** The Barmitzvah of Joshua, the son of Gillian and Peter Swead and grandson of Sam and the late Blanche Laskier, took place in London and some close friends and members of our Society travelled down to London to join in the festivities. Mazeltov to all the family.

**On the 6th September 2009** there was the unveiling of the Memorial stones for the late Mayer and Lily Bomsztyk. There was a huge gathering of friends and family and Jacqueline their daughter made a very moving eulogy. Reverend Brodie also spoke and said it was so very strange not to see them walking to Shool on Shabbos. There were many Second Generation present and we all said goodbye to our very fond friends and Kaddish was said by their two sons, Brian and Warren.

Adash & Zena's granddaughter Zoe, the daughter of Frances and Neil, achieved in her exams 9½ A\* - a very good result - Mazeltov

**On the 13th September 2009** the wedding of Lauren Golding, the daughter of Dr.Jonathan and Lesley Golding and granddaughter of Marita and the late Maurice Golding, took place and we wish all the family a hearty Mazeltov.

**On the 13th Sept 2009** we had the annual Memorial Service at Agecroft which was very well attended even though many Second Generations had gone to weddings, but there were quite a few new faces. Reverend Brodie, as usual, conducted the service and was assisted by Dayan Berger and several other Ministers. Chaim Ferster was very emotional when the Survivors' story was read by him and his son Stuart responded to him with the Pledge. The sun was shinning down on us all and New Year's greetings were given by and to our gathering.

Sam Gardner has won second prize in a painting competition at Heathlands, the home where his wife Hannah lives. No one knew he had any artistic talent, but he has now painted some wonderful scenes. He came third in the same competition last year but has surpassed himself this year.

**October 2009.** Brenda Wertheim, the daughter of Marie and the late Martin Wertheim, who is very involved with the 2nd generation in America, has just been promoted to the board of the Next Gen and is now Vice-President Advertising/Programming Next Generation. Well done Brenda, carry on the good work. For further information, go on to [www.nextgeneration.org](http://www.nextgeneration.org). It's very interesting.

**October 31st.** Dorca Samson's granddaughter Elisha gave birth to a 7lbs 6oz baby boy, a first great-grandchild for Dorca and her late husband Nat. Hearty mazeltov to all.

**November 2009.** Mazeltov to Karl and Estelle Kleinman on the birth of their first granddaughter in Australia, born to their son Andrew and his wife Lauren.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The annual Leonard G Montefiore lecture will take place on Tuesday, 23rd February 2010 at The London Jewish Cultural Centre, Ivy House, 94 – 96 North End Road, London NW11 7SX. The title of the lecture is “Evaluation of the year 1940 – 70 years later”. Speaker – William Tyler.

\* \* \*

### YOM HA'SHOAH

The communal Yom Ha'shoah Commemoration will take place on Sunday 11h April 2010 at 11am at Hyde Park. Further details will be announced in due course..

\* \* \*

### 2008 ANNUAL REUNION

The 65th anniversary of our reunion will take place on Monday 3rd May 2010 (Bank Holiday) at The Holiday Inn Hotel, Regents Park, Carburton Street, London W1.

As always, we appeal to our members to support us by placing an advert in our souvenir brochure to be published by the Society.

Please contact:-      Zigi Shipper  
                                 57 Oundle Avenue  
                                 Bushey  
                                 Herts WD23 4QG  
                                 020-8420 4035

\* \* \*

We look forward to many of the 2nd and, perhaps, 3rd generation joining us for all or any of these events.

## **THE ANNUAL OSCAR JOSEPH HOLOCAUST AWARDS**

The '45 Aid Society offers up to two Awards of £600 each to assist successful candidates to participate in the Holocaust Seminar at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, which is held from 1st - 22nd July 2010.

Applications are invited from men and women under the age of 35 who have a strong interest in Holocaust studies and a record of communal involvement. After their return, successful candidates will be expected to take a positive role in educational and youth work activities so as to convey to others what they learned and gained from their participation in the summer seminar at Yad Vashem. However, before applying for these Awards, candidates should obtain permission from Yad Vashem to participate in the seminar.

Those interested should write, enclosing their CV and other details, not later than 28th March 2010 to:

Ruby Friedman  
4 Broadlands  
Hillside Road  
Radlett  
Herts WD7 7BH



Aron Bulwa



Cyglbaum



Julek Silberger



Bergman



Chil Brauner



Moishe Glajwitzer



Max Lewkowitz



Bela



Shamo Frajman



Victor Breitberg

# “THE BOYS” IN WINDERMERE AUTUMN 1945



Moniak Etkind



Sam Young



Lolek Weinstein



Ray Winogrodski



Haskel Rosenblum



Harry Susskind



Mietek Sternfeld



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**Annual General Meeting 2009**



**The Boys in Cardross in Scotland in 1946**



**Chaim Liss and  
Michael Preston  
in Lodz  
Cemetery**



**1st and 4th Generation at the Annual Memorial Event**

# YOM HA'SHOAH 2009

