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The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the International Tracing Service

By Sara J. Bloomfield

There has recently been substantial misinformation on an issue of vital importance to Holocaust survivors—the opening of the International Tracing Service (ITS) archive. It is important to set the record straight. The survivors deserve better.

Located in Bad Arolsen, Germany, the ITS, the largest closed Holocaust archive in the world, is being prepared to be accessible beyond the ITS for the first time since it was created over 60 years ago. This is happening only because of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the extraordinary and tireless efforts of Paul Shapiro, the director of its Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies.

Over the past few years, the Museum has led an aggressive effort to open this critically important collection. Working with the U.S. State Department, the



International Red Cross, and ten other nations, we pressed this urgent case in multiple ways. The urgency, of course, was for the survivors, many of whom appealed to us to help them receive information about the fate of their loved ones.

The ITS archive is controlled by an 11-nation treaty signed in 1955, and a number of signatories insisted on amending the treaty before the archive could be made public. As a result of our efforts in the past year, the U.S., Israel, Netherlands, Poland, the UK, Germany and Belgium have approved amendments to the treaty. France, Greece, and Luxembourg are in the process of doing so. There is a complicated legal process that could not be circumvented. The treaty and its amendments can be easily accessed on the ITS website www.ITS-arolsen.org.

Because of the time-consuming process of national approvals by 11 countries, the Museum pushed for a two-track process—working on digitizing, hardware,

cont'd on p. 8

MK VOWS TO BLOCK BUDGET

By Zvi Zrahiya, *Ha'aretz*

Knesset Speaker Dalia Itzik (Kadima) has threatened to thwart the passing of the 2008 budget in the Knesset if the government doesn't advance legislation meant to provide assistance to Holocaust survivors in Israel.

"I have no intention of issuing an ultimatum on this matter, but I am warning that the entire state budget will not pass if appropriate solutions for this problem are not found," Itzik said during a special Knesset hearing on the subject.

Knesset sources stated that Itzik has tired of waiting for government initiatives to provide assistance to Holocaust survivors, and if the government continues to drag its feet, she will start her own initiatives to deal with the matter.

During the hearing, Itzik appointed Knesset Legal Counsel Nurit Altstein and Knesset Secretary Ayal Yanoun to examine legislation currently under debate in the Knesset, and to formulate a consolidated bill that would provide government assistance to Holocaust survivors.

Itzik also requested an examination of ways to remove the obstacles hindering the payment of assistance.

The delays in paying assistance to Holocaust survivors are according to Itzik, "a reality that is simply impossible to live with. We have a moral and ethical necessity to solve this problem." ■

FIRST 6,000 OF 60,000 ASSETS FROM ISRAELI BANKS ARE LISTED ON THE NET

SEE WWW.AMERICANGATHERING.COM FOR NAMES IN ENGLISH

from Combined Services

The Company for Locating and Restitution of Holocaust Victims' Assets, an organization established in Israel by virtue of the Holocaust Victims Property Law (5766-2006), has published the first list of property and assets owned by Jews in Europe prior to World War II. The list can be viewed on the organization's website <http://www.hashava.org.il> or in alphabetized English on www.americangathering.com. Applications for the return of the assets are in the centerfold of this issue of *Together*. This list does not deal with living persons or properties and accounts outside of Israel. The list was cross checked with the list of dead victims at Yad Vashem, and only their heirs and assigns can apply. The committee's charge will last 15 years, and they will assist in searching for heirs and assigns.

Any person who thinks they may be entitled to make a claim as an heir of those who were killed by the Germans and their collaborators, regardless of whether or not the assets in question are listed, should contact the organization via its website, <http://www.hashava.org.il>.

Israel is one of the last countries to begin the restitution process for Holocaust victims. More than 60,000 assets from Holocaust victims who had property and bank accounts in Israel were confiscated by the State of Israel after its founding and its banks have been reluctant to return any assets at all. Bank Leumi, which handed over 20 million shekel to survivors' organizations recently, owes as much

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BANK LEUMI HOLDING HOLOCAUST VICTIMS' MONEY

(JTA) One percent of the shares of Bank Leumi, some \$57 million, are in the names of Jews killed in the Holocaust. The figure appeared in a report issued last week by Israel's Custodian General, according to *Ha'aretz*. The money has its origins in an 1899 initiative by Theodor Herzl to raise money for the Jewish Colonial Trust, the financial arm of the World Zionist Organization. Many Eastern European Jews bought shares, and in 1902 the Jewish Colonial Trust established the Anglo-Palestine Bank, which later became Bank Leumi.

In recent years Israel has been shaken by revelations that state institutions concealed hundreds of millions of dollars worth of assets belonging to Holocaust victims. By law, the Bank Leumi shares are supposed to be transferred to the state-run Organization for the Restitution of Assets of Holocaust Victims. The organization then must decide what to do with the shares. Some argue for selling the shares and splitting the money among needy Holocaust survivors in Israel for immediate aid and setting aside a reserve for any heirs to the shares that can be found.

Information about this money and other unclaimed Holocaust-era assets in Israel is available at www.hashava.org.il.

The debate in Israel about unclaimed Holocaust-era assets mirrors that surrounding the Claims Conference, which allocates some \$90 million annually from unclaimed Holocaust-era assets to Jewish groups and projects worldwide that benefit Holocaust victims. ■

Germany agrees to a cost-of-living pension hike for at least 50,000 Holocaust survivors in Europe

The decision was announced after annual negotiations with Germany led by the Conference for Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

According to an announcement by the Claims Conference, negotiators also secured an additional 1,500 pensions for survivors who are or were citizens of certain Western European countries.

"These are very important breakthroughs, which will benefit Holocaust survivors in many countries," said Claims Conference Executive Vice President Gideon Taylor. "We are continuing to negotiate with the German government over a range of other critical issues."

The cost-of-living increase will take effect Oct. 1, 2007. Under the new plan, the German Ministry of Finance will increase monthly payments from \$235 to \$268 for eligible Holocaust survivors living in the European Union. About 14,500 survivors in non-E.U. former Eastern bloc countries, including Ukraine, Moldova

ICHEIC: The Last Word

The National Association of Insurance Commissioners has released a report on the activities of the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims (ICHEIC).

Authored by ICHEIC Chairman Lawrence S. Eagleburger and Vice Chairman Diane Koken, former Pennsylvania insurance commissioner, the report details ICHEIC's history, from the commission's inception in 1998 to the conclusion of its work in March 2007.

ICHEIC has distributed \$306 million in awards to more than 48,000 Holocaust survivors and their heirs, according to the report.

Established in 1998, ICHEIC was charged with addressing, at no cost to claimants, the issue of unpaid insurance policies issued to victims of the Holocaust. It conducted a worldwide outreach campaign to encourage claimants to file, and more than 70 European insurance companies and partner entities participated in the process.

"Finding claimants and getting them paid was our mission," Eagleburger said. "This report describes the process through the individual stories of claimants, whom the commission was designed to serve. I believe that ICHEIC has brought some measure of justice to those who have been denied it for so long, though I fully recognize that no amount of compensation can redress the suffering inflicted during the Holocaust."

Koken noted that ICHEIC created an "unprecedented opportunity" for claimants to have their claims matched against information compiled from insurance companies, insurance associations, and public archives.

"I am particularly gratified by the results of ICHEIC's archival investigations and matching processes," Koken said. "This work has led to awards on thousands of Holocaust era insurance policies, which never would have been identified without

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and Belarus, will see their payments increase from \$168 to \$221.

The Claims Conference delegation was co-chaired by Taylor and the treasurer of the conference, Roman Kent. It was the first annual negotiation session in several years to take place without Israel Singer, who announced recently that he would not seek reelection as the organization's president. ■

ICHEIC's efforts. A significant number of ICHEIC's offers and awards were made to claimants who would have had no other recourse to compensation."

ICHEIC was established in 1998 by the National NAIC in conjunction with several European insurance companies, European governments, representatives of several Jewish and Holocaust survivor organizations, and the State of Israel. Through close cooperation with European insurance companies and partner entities, the Commission resolved more than 90,000 claims. In March 2007, Chairman Eagleburger announced the conclusion of ICHEIC's claims and appeals processes.

To view a copy of the report, entitled "Finding Claimants and Paying Them: The Creation and Workings of the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims," visit www.naic.org or www.icheic.org. ■

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AMERICAN GATHERING OF JEWISH HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS AND THEIR DESCENDANTS

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Last Shoah restitution office in Canada closes

By Sheldon Kirshner, *Canadian Jewish News*

Canadian Holocaust survivors have expressed concern that the closing of the United Restitution Organization office in Toronto last month – the last one in Canada – will have harmful consequences, but Jewish community spokespeople are assuring them that they have nothing to fear.

Founded in the late 1940s as a legal aid society to help survivors claim restitution and compensation from Germany, the URO established a presence in Canada in 1953 under the aegis of the Canadian Jewish Congress.

Offices were opened in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver to assist the estimated 13,000 survivors who settled in Canada after World War II.

As some of the survivors passed on, URO branches in Winnipeg and Vancouver were closed in the 1970s.

In 2002, the Montreal branch was also closed, leaving the Toronto office as the sole remaining one in the country.

The Toronto office, with its two employees, was officially closed on April 1, but UJA Federation of Greater Toronto has tried to ease the pain by hiring a Toronto URO employee, Dora Elzbet, to continue helping survivors.

“We consider this a crucial service for survivors, who deserve all the assistance that we can provide,” said federation spokesperson Howard English.

“All I can say is that survivors are of great concern to us, and we will do everything in our power to see that they are well taken care of,” said Lorraine Sandler, the chair of UJA’s Holocaust Centre. “I will

be very, very watchful and concerned about their well-being.”

She added, “I can’t throw up my hands and shout *gevalt*, but there is something in place to deal with the situation.”

Survivors were not as sanguine.

“It’s a bad thing,” said Michael Rosenberg, the former president of the Jewish Holocaust Survivors of Canada. “Survivors need an office where they can pour out their hearts and receive assistance. There are a lot of impoverished survivors, and they are not being looked after.”

He praised Elzbet as a dedicated case worker, but he said she will no longer be able to provide sufficient and timely services, since her assistant was let go.

“The workload can’t be handled by one person,” said Rosenberg, an 81-year old survivor who immigrated to Canada from Poland in 1948 and made a career as a printer.

Eli Pfefferkorn, a 78-year-old survivor born in Germany, was blunter.

“Suppose Toronto closed all the emergency rooms in hospitals due to a lack of funds? This is tantamount to the closing of Toronto’s URO office.”

Elzbet, a child of survivors, voiced confidence that she will have no problem delivering services to survivors on the same level as before.

“I basically carried the whole load myself,” said Elzbet, who began working for URO in 1982. “I saw thousands of survivors every year.”

English said the decision to close the Toronto office was taken by URO International, based in Israel.

Efforts to reach URO International in Israel failed, but Nathan Leipziger—a 79-year-old, Toronto-based member of its board and a survivor

of the Auschwitz concentration camp—said that the dwindling number of claims filed by local survivors made it economically imperative to close the Toronto office.

Leipziger said that all of URO’s worldwide offices, with the exception of the one in New York City, have been closed, including those in Israel.

He added that survivors in Toronto should not worry, since the federation office staffed by Elzbet will tend to their needs.

Bernie Farber, chief executive officer of Canadian Jewish Congress, echoed Leipziger’s comments.

“As time marches on, the number of claimants become fewer and fewer, and the URO found it economically unviable to keep open an office. We’ll do whatever we can to assist survivors.”

According to English, the URO in Toronto assisted about 2,000 survivors a year and was instrumental in helping them acquire more than \$5 million in reparation payments.

The first URO offices sprung up in what was then known as West Germany. In the intervening years, offices were opened in Israel, the United States, Canada, Europe and South America.

During the first few years, operations in Canada were financed by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany and administered by the Canadian Jewish Congress.

Claims Conference spokesperson Hillary Kessler-Godin, in an interview from New York City, said, “In the mid-1950s, we provided a loan to the URO to help it establish a global network of offices to assist survivors in filing claims under the German Federal Indemnification Law, which the Claims Conference negotiated. The URO repaid the entire loan.” ■

NEW FORMULA COULD CUT PAYMENTS TO HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS, HEIRS

By Amiram Barkat, *Ha’aretz*

In a decision that might cut payments to Holocaust survivors, a panel of experts has determined that the estimated value of bank accounts in Israel of victims of the Holocaust has been revised to only about NIS 400 million, rather than nearly NIS 1 billion.

The figures have been submitted to Justice Minister Daniel Friedmann.

The panel of experts was established in June of last year by then justice minister Haim Ramon, in accordance with the law passed in early 2006 mandating the restitution of the properties of Holocaust victims. For decades, the state has been holding on to money that was deposited in Israeli bank accounts by European Jews who later died in the Holocaust. Under the new law, the state is supposed to transfer these funds to a government company tasked with locating and restoring property belonging Holocaust victims.

The mandate of the panel of experts was to determine how the real value of the bank deposits should be calculated as well as the manner in which the payments should be divided between the state and the banks, which were required to pay for the years the money lay in the dormant accounts.

Two years ago, the Knesset Inquiry Committee

on the Location and Restitution of the Assets (in Israel) of Holocaust Victims estimated the real value of the same accounts at about NIS 1 billion, one-third of which is the banks’ responsibility. Although the panel of experts was supposed to be independent, one of its members, Prof. Yair Orgler, was appointed to the board of directors of Bank Hapoalim while the committee was still carrying out its mandate. Orgler denies any conflict of interest between his activity on the committee and on the board.

The new estimate of the real value of the deposits is based on a formula chosen by the panel of experts. Had the committee adopted the formula proposed by committee member Yehuda Barlev, an accountant, the estimated value of the dormant accounts would have reached the NIS 1 billion mark.

The committee’s decision to adopt the formula it chose theoretically saved the state and the banks hundreds of millions of shekels in payments to heirs of the original account-holders, needy Holocaust survivors and Holocaust memorial institutions. Committee Chairman Prof. Yakir Plessner told Haaretz that the formula was chosen with professional considerations only in mind, and denied that any vested interests affected the decision.

An examination by Haaretz raised several questions with regard to the committee’s conduct. In addition to Orgler’s appointment to Hapoalim’s board, it turns out that Plessner was giving confidential protocols from the panel’s sessions to attorney Ram Caspi, who represents Bank Leumi, without the knowledge of the other panel members. Plessner said Monday that he did so because he believed in

good faith that the forum’s sessions came under the Freedom of Information Law. In another questionable move, Plessner appointed an aide to the director general of the Finance Ministry to the sensitive position of committee secretary, in violation of laws regulating conflict of interest.

According to a statement released by the government company, “This is additional proof that the State of Israel is violating the rights of Holocaust victims and the families of the victims.”

In December, it was reported in the news media that Orgler would be appointed to the board of Bank Hapoalim. Yesterday, however, Orgler claimed he saw no conflict of interest and said that the committee made its most recent important decisions in December, one month before he formally joined the bank’s directorate. ■

\$1 MILLION DONATED TO HOLOCAUST MUSEUM

Norman and Irma Braman of Miami, Florida, recently became members of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Founders Society with a \$1 million gift to the Museum through the Braman Family Foundation. The Bramans’ gift will support the Museum’s efforts to open and copy the International Tracing Service (ITS) archive from Bad Arolsen, Germany, and make it available to Holocaust survivors and scholars. The Museum’s Founders Society is comprised of 133 individuals, foundations and organizations who have donated \$1 million or more. ■

HOLOCAUST EDUCATION
IN BRITAIN

Over the past weeks [months] there have been a number of rumours circulating via email regarding Holocaust education here in the UK. The emails suggest that the UK Government are removing Holocaust education from the National Curriculum and that in general British schools steer away from teaching what they might consider a controversial subject.

We want to make it clear that our understanding is [that] the Holocaust is, and will continue to be, on the National Curriculum and therefore [will] continue to be taught in all UK schools.

Background

These rumours stemmed from a piece that [sic] featured in a number of newspapers including the *Daily Mail*, *Guardian* and *The Telegraph* at the beginning of April.

See the following links:

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=445979&in_page_id=1770&ito=newsnow

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/04/02/nschools02.xml>

<http://education.guardian.co.uk/schools/story/0,,2048161,00.html>

The news stories came about as a result of a report commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and undertaken by the Historical Association. The report, *Challenges and Opportunities for Teaching Emotive and Controversial History 13-19 (TEACH)*, addresses both the challenges teachers face, as well as the good practise that is occurring when teaching all emotive and controversial historical issues such as: Slavery, the Crusades and the Holocaust. The full TEACH report is available on the HA website: <http://www.haevents.org.uk/PastEvents/Others/Teach%20report.pdf>

In light of this story the Holocaust Educational Trust would like to clarify what to our knowledge is the situation in the UK.

Holocaust Education in the UK

- The Holocaust became part of the National Curriculum for History in 1991. It is statutory for all students in England and Wales to learn about the Holocaust at Key Stage 3 usually in Year 9 History (aged 13 -14).

- Many students will study the Holocaust in Religious Studies, English and Citizenship lessons.

- The UK holds a national Holocaust Memorial Day on January 27th (marking the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau), and this is marked widely in primary and secondary schools across the country.

- The UK has a permanent Holocaust exhibition at the Imperial War Museum in London, visited by 1000s of people each year.

- The British Government sponsors two students (16 – 18 year olds) per secondary school/further education college to visit Auschwitz-Birkenau through the Holocaust Educational Trusts Lessons from Auschwitz Programme (This is due to a £1.5 million grant from the Government every year from 2006-2008)

- School groups and private individuals visit the permanent Holocaust exhibition at the Imperial



War Museum, the Jewish Museum, London, and The Holocaust Centre, Beth Shalom in Newark and educational establishments work with resources and educational programmes provided by other important organisations such as the Anne Frank Trust (UK), London Jewish Cultural Centre, and the Wiener Library.

- Teacher training ensures that 100s of newly qualified teachers are provided with skills and materials to ensure effective Holocaust education for their students.

- Existing teachers participate in training around the UK, and specialist programmes run by Holocaust education organisations including the Holocaust

Educational Trust, Imperial War Museum and Beth Shalom.

Within the TEACH report from the Historical Association, there is one particular line relating to Holocaust education which has been the focus of the press and various alarmed emails. It features in the section addressing why teachers avoid teaching certain subjects and states: ‘.. a history department in a northern city recently avoided selecting the Holocaust as a topic for GCSE coursework for fear of confronting anti-Semitic (sic) sentiment and Holocaust denial among some Muslim pupils’. (p 15)

The key points regarding this statement are:

- This does not refer to Holocaust education on the National Curriculum. It is a post-14 History GCSE course (publicly examined course)

- History at GCSE is not compulsory (only a 1/3 of pupils opt for history post-14)

- This is an anecdotal response from one teacher in one school out of 4500 secondary schools in the UK. While we cannot say what happens in every single school, our understanding is that this is highly unusual and not general practise of teachers around the country.

- All schools can choose which history topics they wish to study for coursework at GCSE level.

- There is no suggestion that this or any other school is failing to cover the National

Curriculum in teaching about the Holocaust at Key Stage 3, Year 9 (age 13 – 14).

At no point does the report from the Historical Association suggest that the Holocaust be removed from the National Curriculum for England and Wales.

Obviously we and all Holocaust related organisations in the UK take this very seriously, however on this occasion we want to allay all fears and impress upon everyone that the Holocaust is not being removed from the National Curriculum. This particular incident does of course merit further investigation but in no way represents all the good work in our schools across the country.

Please do circulate this far and wide to all who have shown an interest in this particular issue and Holocaust education in general here in the UK.

Should you require further information please do contact us at the Holocaust Educational Trust by emailing info@het.org.uk

Karen Pollock

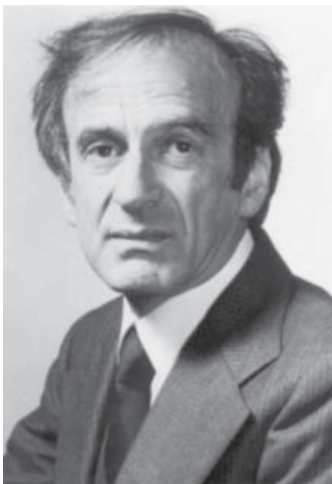
Chief Executive, Holocaust Educational Trust

Elie Wiesel Urges U.S. Holocaust Museum to Acknowledge Bergson Group Activists

NEW YORK- Elie Wiesel, who is a leading member—and was first chairman—of the council that oversees the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, has called on the museum to include in its exhibits an acknowledgment of the Holocaust rescue efforts of the activist Bergson Group.

Wiesel issued his call in his keynote address to the Fifth National Conference of The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies, which was held at the Fordham University School of Law, in New York City, on June 17. Prof. Wiesel said he was “disappointed that the Bergson Group is not included in the museum’s exhibits, and I will do whatever I can to change that.”

The Bergson Group, which organized rallies and sponsored hundreds of newspaper ads urging rescue from the Holocaust, played a key role in bringing about the creation of the U.S. government’s



War Refugee Board, which helped rescue 200,000 Jews from the Nazis. Yet the Bergson Group is not included in any of the museum’s exhibits. It is mentioned only briefly in a filmstrip in a small resource center in the museum building, and in an article on the museum’s web site.

Wiesel’s call was seconded by Seymour Reich, past president of B’nai B’rith International, the American Zionist Movement and the Conference of Presidents of

Major American Jewish Organizations. Reich said he “agrees completely that it is wrong for the Museum to leave the Bergson Group out of its exhibits.”

Reich said, “I have come here today, as a veteran of the Jewish establishment, to say unequivocally: The Jewish leaders in the 1940s were wrong. They should not have spent their time and energy attacking Bergson, when they should have been focusing completely on how to bring about the rescue of Europe’s Jews ... We cannot change what happened between leaders and dissidents sixty years ago, but we can help the Jewish community learn the lessons of the past in order to foster greater tolerance today.”

Wiesel, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, called the group’s leader, Peter Bergson, a “just and

cont’d on page 19

as 307 million shekel to the survivors.

Avraham Roet, chairman of the board at the Company for Locating and Retrieving Assets of People who were Killed in the Holocaust, told a Czech newspaper recently that, "It's certainly not an honor for the state of Israel that it took 70 years to start to work, if we require [restitution] from other countries, the Jewish state should do the same."

The company, created by the Israeli government in August 2006, launched a Web site June 20 that opens the door for Holocaust survivors and heirs to claim assets held by Israel. The site, www.hashava.org.il, allows anyone to search accounts and apply to have assets returned to them. "We got more than 1,000 applications within a week," Roet says.

"They [Jews in Europe during the Holocaust] had to produce proof they had some means of support, so typically they deposited money in a Palestinian bank," explains Antonín Hradílek, deputy chief of mission at the Czech Embassy in Tel Aviv. "Legally, the money belongs to Israel, because it was legally

taken by the British and was transferred to the State of Israel," Hradílek says. "So it's not a legal problem. It's a moral problem."

The Knesset Inquiry Committee on the Location and Restitution of Assets (in Israel) of Victims of the Holocaust, created in 2000 and chaired by Member of Knesset (MK) Colette Avital is in constant battle over funds for Holocaust survivors living in Israel. The committee fought with the five non-cooperating Israeli banks and forced through the legislation regarding confiscated assets and made searches of some bank accounts available to the survivors, resulting in the establishment of Hashara, or "The Company."

"The Company" also deals with real estate and works of art. But the process can be painful and as difficult as restitution processes with Germany and other European countries—namely, the burden of proof will fall on the victim's heirs and assigns.

According to The Prague Post, the Czechs have been caught up in the Israeli restitution process since 1991. Tomáš Kraus, executive director of the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic warns that people will be forced to confront

long-buried memories or emotions, but must put themselves through the process if they want their family's assets returned. Kraus also admits that since the process can take decades and the survivors are so old, it is ultimately an unjust system.

That's partly why Roet is striving to simplify the claims process. "It's a problem to find all the [legal] heirs of one Holocaust victim," he told The Prague Post. As an example of obstruction by bankers, he cited their demands for death certificates from the heirs.

Because most of the heirs are themselves so old, at "The Company," Roet wants to make things happen quickly, but if they don't move and not all assets are returned within the 15 years, the money will go into a fund to care for Holocaust survivors—if there are any left.

Roet makes a point: "[This is] for the general good and not for the good of governments, and not for private people," he says. "It's a moral obligation."

SEE PAGE 10 FOR INFORMATION AND APPLICATION

New Kupferberg Holocaust Center at Queensborough

Bayside, NY - More than 350 friends and supporters came to Queensborough Community College on June 3rd to help launch the new Harriet and Kenneth Kupferberg Holocaust Resource Center and Archives building at the College.

"We are thrilled by the outpouring of commitment to the mission of the Kupferberg Center that was shown today," says Queensborough President, Dr. Eduardo J. Marti.

Along with Dr. Marti, Harriet Kupferberg, chair of the Harriet and Kenneth Kupferberg Holocaust Resource Center and Archives Fundraising Committee and Dr. Arthur Flug, Executive Director of the Kupferberg Center, guest speakers included Allan Dobrin, Executive Vice Chancellor of the City University of New York, Jeffrey Wiesenfeld, CUNY Trustee and Dr. Sandra Delson, chair of the Kupferberg Holocaust Center Advisory Board.

For almost a quarter of a century, the Harriet and Kenneth Kupferberg Center has been a vital source of Holocaust programs for both the students and residents in greater New York. The creation of the new 7,000 square foot Kupferberg Center will allow the college to expand its mission to educate current and future generations about the ramifications of unbridled prejudice, racism and stereotyping. The Center will continue to provide customized exhibits as well as research and teaching support, and serve as a comprehensive learning laboratory for the entire community. Scheduled to open in the fall of 2008, the building will be a unique architectural statement featuring a dramatic interplay of light and glass to symbolize awareness, hope and the lasting memory of those who were victims of the Holocaust.

Call the Kupferberg Center at 718-281-5770, or e-mail hrc@qcc.cuny.edu for more information on programs and to learn how to become a member of the Kupferberg Center at Queensborough Community College. Visit the Center's website at www.qcc.cuny.edu/HRCA.

Survivors get tiny slice of Holocaust compensation

By Amiram Barkat, *Ha'aretz*

Poriya Hospital near Tiberias will soon be getting a state-of-the-art underground hospitalization ward at a cost of \$7.8 million. Some \$1.2 million of the costs will be paid for by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, the umbrella group that represents the Jewish people in negotiations for Holocaust compensation. The Claims Conference will provide funding for the project at Poriya and the other hospitals in the north of the country out of monies earmarked for the benefit of Holocaust survivors in Israel. Group officials say 31% of patients at Poriya Hospital are survivors, and that their proportionate share in the project is even lower.

Nearly \$200 million intended for improving the lives of Holocaust survivors in Israel have gone in recent years to building hospital departments, old-age homes and nursing facilities. These investments alleviate the plight of hospitalization and serve the general Israeli public, including Holocaust survivors. But survivor advocacy groups say it is preposterous for the Claims Conference to do the Israeli government's job while tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors are in need of help.

The Claim Conference's board of directors yesterday approved allocations for many dozens of organizations and institutions throughout the world that deal with the Holocaust and survivors. Every year this body distributes some \$100 million, about half of which goes to Israeli entities.

To date, the Claims Conference has given out over \$1.5 billion. The source of the funding is proceeds from the sale of real estate in East Germany. The Claims Conference received the properties under a clause in German law that recognizes it as the owner of all assets belonging to Holocaust victims without heirs. The board of directors decided to divide the money as follows: 80 percent to organizations that deal with the welfare of remaining survivors, and 20 percent to organizations that deal with documenting the Holocaust, research and education.

However, Haaretz has discovered that in practice,

less than half the money goes directly to helping survivors. The reason for this is that in Israel, unlike the rest of the world, the Claims Conference invests in constructing permanent buildings. In recent years, the Claims Conference funded the building of new departments at all major hospitals in Israel, was a partner in building more than 100 daycare centers for the elderly and in building hundreds of rooms at old-age homes run by the Jewish Agency's Amigur network.

Survivor groups estimate that 30 percent of Israel's elderly citizens are Holocaust survivors. At some of the projects funded by the Claims Conference, the rate is even lower. Journalist Raul Teitelbaum says that a random check in 2005 at an assisted living building in Ashdod, built with the help of the Claims Conference, revealed that 97 percent of the tenants are not Holocaust survivors. In his book, "The Biological Solution," Teitelbaum explains that the Jewish organizations that are in charge of the Claims Conference were opposed throughout the years to allocating monies to survivors and preferred to distribute them for other needs.

In May, a committee headed by Social Affairs Minister Isaac Herzog determined that Holocaust survivors in Israel urgently need aid totaling NIS 1.2 billion annually. The committee found that there are 170,000 survivors in Israel who do not receive any aid, of which 60,000 are in need of immediate help. The main body that assists survivors is the Holocaust Survivors Welfare Fund, which gets \$40 million a year from the Claims Conference.

Reuven Merhav, chairman of the Claims Conference's executive committee, said in response that it has been allocating funding to enhance the infrastructure for Israel's elderly survivors for over half a century. These allocations are limited to the one-time costs, but they serve to "leverage large amounts of additional funding for both the remaining one-time costs as well as the maintenance costs over many years."

Merhav added that the proportion of survivors using these facilities is far greater than the percentage of funding by the Claims Conference.

THE INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE ARCHIVE

Frequently Asked Questions

A. BACKGROUND

What is the International Tracing Service?

The International Tracing Service archive (ITS), located in Bad Arolsen, Germany, is the largest closed Holocaust-era archive in the world. The archive was established by the Allied powers after World War II to help reunite non-German families separated during the war and to trace missing family members. The Allies placed in the ITS millions of pages of documentation that they captured during the liberation of concentration camps that they administered following the war. Since then, the archive has continued to grow as new records, both originals and copies, have been deposited there.

Who runs the International Tracing Service?

The archive is controlled by an 11-nation treaty signed in 1955 and governed by an International Commission consisting of representatives from those countries. The treaty can be viewed at www.ushmm.org/its. The archive is administered by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Its operations and staff of more than 300 employees are funded by the German government.

How much information is in the archive?

The archive contains approximately 30-50 million pages of documentation on 17.5 million victims of Nazism—people arrested, deported, killed, put to forced labor and slave labor, or displaced from their homes and unable to return at the end of the war. Sixteen miles of shelving are required to hold all the files.

What information does the archive contain?

The archive consists primarily of three major sections:

- 1) Camps, transports, ghettos, and arrest records;
- 2) Forced and slave labor records;
- 3) Displaced person records.

Approximately one quarter of the records deal with Holocaust victims. The remaining material covers non-Jewish forced laborers and displaced persons, political opponents and other persons arrested, detained or persecuted by Nazi authorities.

In addition, ITS staff created a Central Name Index which consists of some 17.5 million names, on approximately 40 million index cards. (Some names appear on multiple documents and on multiple cards.) Of the approximately 40 million cards, only an estimated 3 million have had names and birth dates entered into a database that is searchable. Therefore, the remaining 37 million cards are not searchable at this time.

Why is the archive being opened now?

For decades survivors have expressed frustration with the unresponsiveness of ITS to inquiries about the fates of their loved ones. At one point, there was a backlog of more than 425,000 unfulfilled requests for information from survivors. Many survivors appealed to the Museum to help them receive this information.

The Museum has been pressing for the opening

of the archive for many years, but faced strong resistance from the governments of the International Commission, the International Red Cross and ITS.

After strongly pressuring the various entities, the Museum thought it had a commitment from the ITS. But in 2005, when ITS failed to fulfill its promise to open the archive, the Museum decided that the situation was intolerable and initiated an even more aggressive approach. In order to facilitate access by survivors and others and to ensure permanent accessibility, the Museum pushed to have copies of the archive made available to each of the member countries of the International Tracing Service Commission.

The Red Cross and a number of countries on the 11-nation International Commission insisted on amending the 1955 treaty before the archive could be made public. Following an intense effort by the Museum, the initial breakthrough came in 2006 when Germany dropped its opposition to opening the archive in a speech delivered by German Justice Minister Brigitte Zypries at the Museum. Then, working with the U.S. State Department and the German government, the Museum began pressing the case with the other countries in a complex diplomatic undertaking that has taken an extraordinary amount of time as each country goes through its ratification process.

Which institutions will receive a copy of the archive?

The International Commission decided that each of the 11 nations could receive a single copy of the archive and designate an archival repository with the appropriate technological, archival and scholarly expertise to serve survivors and their families as well as historians. The United States has designated the Museum to hold the U.S. copy. Israel has designated Yad Vashem to hold its copy.

Where do negotiations stand now?

As a result of the Museum's efforts in the past year, the U.S., Israel, Netherlands, Poland, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Belgium have ratified amendments to the treaty. France, Greece, Italy, and Luxembourg are in the process of doing so. The Museum expects this to happen in the coming months and continues to press the urgency of these four countries completing their ratification process.

While countries were engaged in the time-consuming process of ratifications, the Museum successfully advocated a two-track process — working to accelerate the digitizing of the records, upgrading hardware, software, and finding aids, while simultaneously advancing the political process so that no more precious time is lost.

At its May 2007 meeting in Amsterdam, the International Commission approved the Museum's proposal to permit advance distribution of the material, as each major section is digitized, to the designated repository institutions before the treaty ratification process officially opening the material is completed. This will allow the host institutions to begin preparations to make the material accessible while waiting for the remaining countries to ratify the agreement.

B. ITS AND THE U.S. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

Why is the Museum going to house the United States' copy of the archive?

The International Commission decided that each of the 11 nations would designate one repository with the technological, archival, and historical expertise to receive a copy of the material and serve survivors and their families as well as historians. The Museum, America's national memorial to the Holocaust, will hold the U.S. copy and Yad Vashem will hold Israel's. These two institutions have the capacity—in terms of historical, archival, and technological expertise—to manage a collection of this size and complexity.

The Museum already maintains an archive of approximately 40 million pages of documentation in many languages, and regularly responds to thousands of requests every year for information from survivors, scholars and the public.

When will the Museum receive the records?

All the records need to be digitized (scanned electronically) before they can be transferred. The Museum expects to receive the records in three batches.

The first batch of digitized raw data, which includes approximately 13.5 million frames of material in the “camps, transport, ghettos, and arrest records” section, should arrive in early fall. Somewhat later in the fall, the Museum expects to receive copies of the almost 40 million index cards (containing the 17.5 million names). The amount of data in this first batch alone is equivalent to approximately 8,000 CDs.

The accelerated digitization schedule at the ITS calls for the second batch of materials—the forced and slave labor records—to be ready for transfer by early 2008.

The final batch includes the displaced persons camp records and should be completed in late 2008 or 2009.

C. ITS AND ACCESSIBILITY

What steps must be completed for the Museum to be able to respond to survivor requests?

Four things are necessary:

1. All 11 countries must have ratified the new agreement.
2. The data must be digitized
3. The digitized data must be transferred to the Museum
4. The digitized raw data must be made accessible through the creation of new software that will make it searchable.

We hope that these four steps will be completed for the first batch of material by the end of the year.

The technical hurdles are immense. The ITS systems were never set up to be used by anyone other than the ITS staff on site in Bad Arolsen, where the paper records could be consulted while using the search software. Computer experts and archivists from nine of the 11 countries on the International Commission met at ITS in February 2007. For a number of reasons, they unanimously rejected the

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ITS search system as a viable system for searching the documents off site. Therefore, after the documents are digitized and transferred, the Museum, which has already invested in new hardware to substantially expand the storage capacity of its network servers to receive the digitized documentation, will create a software system to make the records more easily accessible than they have been at the ITS. Once this is in place, the Museum will be able to make the collection more easily accessible and respond to survivor inquiries.

Why is the Museum not using the computer software system in place at the ITS?

The ITS system was developed more than 10 years ago. It was never intended to be used by anyone other than the archivists working at ITS, where the millions of pages of paper documents were consulted directly during a search. Using this software resulted in a backlog at one point of hundreds of thousands of unanswered requests accumulated at the ITS.

Technical experts from nine countries examined the system and unanimously agreed that exporting the ITS software system to the other countries housing the archive would result in further delays in accessing the information.

Are the records going to be available on the Internet?

Regrettably, the collection was neither organized nor digitized to be directly searchable online.

Therefore, the Museum's top priority is to develop software and a database that will efficiently search the records so we can quickly respond to survivor requests for information.

Substantially less than 10 percent of the records are machine readable. In order to be searched by Google or Yahoo! search engines, all of the data must be machine readable.

Searching the material will be an arduous task in any event. The ITS records are in some 25 different languages and contain millions of names, many with multiple spellings. Many of the records are entirely handwritten. In cases where forms were used, the forms are written in German and the entries are often handwritten in another language.

Once the material is officially open, the best way to ensure that survivors receive accurate information quickly and easily will be by submitting requests to the Museum by email, regular mail or fax. The Museum will provide copies of all relevant original documents to survivors who wish to receive them via email or regular mail.

D. PROVIDING INFORMATION TO SURVIVORS

How will survivors know when they can make a request for information?

After the remaining four countries ratify the changes, the Museum will announce through the media, Holocaust organizations, email newsletters, and on the homepage of its Web site that the archive is ready to be searched. The announcement will specify how inquiries can be made. Updated information will be posted on the Museum's Web site, www.ushmm.org/its, as it becomes available. Survivors will soon be able to sign up on the Museum's Web site to receive regular email updates. Additionally, the Museum will set up a special toll-free phone number.

Will survivor requests be given priority?

Yes. Requests from or on behalf of survivors will

receive priority over all other inquiries.

The Museum's trained staff in our Benjamin and Vladka Meed Survivors Registry have extensive experience in helping survivors do research, and they are in the process of familiarizing themselves with the ITS archive so that they will be able respond to inquiries in a timely manner.

Will survivors have to come to Washington to find their records?

No. No survivor will have to travel to Washington to receive information from the archive. Requests can be submitted via email, fax, and regular mail. All others – scholars, authors and other researchers – will have to visit the archive in person to access the information. The ITS records, like all of the Museum's archival material, will be free and open to the public.

Does the ITS contain information on all survivors?

No. The files do not contain information on every survivor or every person who was victimized or killed. They only contain information on individuals whose names appeared on lists related to certain ghettos and concentration camps, forced or slave labor camps, or displaced persons camps. ITS does not contain all records from all ghettos, concentration, slave labor or displaced persons camps. Nor does it contain all "name lists" from the Holocaust.

For example, if someone fled the Nazis or was hidden, it is unlikely their name would appear in these records unless they registered at a displaced persons camp following the war. Or, if someone was killed on arrival at a camp and not registered at the camp, it is unlikely his/her name would appear on the camp records. It might, however, appear on a deportation list to that camp, if such a list is in ITS' holdings.

What can survivors expect to receive from the Museum?

Anyone can come to the Museum and have access to the records at the Museum. Any survivor whether they come to the Museum or not can expect:

1. To find out whether a name(s) appears in the card index, i.e., whether there is any information on that individual any where in the ITS records;
2. The information on any name(s) that does appear in the records, once those records have been transferred from the ITS to the Museum;
3. Copies (sent by email or regular mail) of any original documents that include the name(s), once those records have been transferred from ITS to the Museum.

Will survivors have to pay to access these archival records?

No. All of the Museum's archives are available for research at no cost. In addition, survivors will be provided copies of any available documentation relevant to their inquiries at no cost.

What if the archive contains information on a survivor, but is in part of the collection that has not yet been transferred to the Museum?

If a Museum search reveals that information resides in a portion of the collection that has yet to be transferred from the ITS, the Museum will provide all available reference information that will facilitate a search by ITS so that requests for these

specific documents can be made directly to the ITS in Bad Arolsen. The Museum is pressing ITS to change its policy of generally not providing copies of documents to survivors.

If the Museum cannot find information about a person in the ITS archive, where else can I look?

It is possible that there might be information about that person in the Museum's other records – about 40 million pages of archival documentation. Our trained staff, which already responds to approximately 8,000 requests per year, will help you search for that information. In addition, other institutions such as the American Red Cross, the Holocaust and War Victims Tracing Service and Yad Vashem may have access to other documentation that may be useful.

What kinds of information will the Museum need in order to do a search?

The Museum will need the person's full name, place of birth and date of birth. Also any additional information regarding camps, ghettos and dates of incarceration will help ensure they receive accurate information as quickly as possible.

How long will it take the Museum to provide an answer?

While the Museum cannot anticipate how many requests will be submitted, it is dedicating the technical and personnel resources required to provide accurate information to Holocaust survivors in a timely manner. We hope to be able to quickly determine whether or not information on an individual name is in the archive. More complex research to find exactly which documents include the name of that individual will take longer. Once the archive is open and the Museum begins responding to requests, we will have a better sense of the demand and how long the research will take.

Does the ITS contain information on life insurance policies?

There do not appear to be any collections that consist specifically of information about life insurance policies, although there may be some information within some individual records. The ITS staff have not encountered any significant number of such mentions, but they have also not systematically looked in individual files for such references.

Can the Museum help survivors find information for compensation claims?

If there is specific information on where survivors were imprisoned during the war that could help survivors with their claims, the Museum will make copies of the records and send them to survivors. While the Museum cannot file claims, survivors can use the copies as documentation for this purpose.

Can the Museum conduct genealogical research?

The Museum cannot conduct genealogical searches. Organizations such as Jewishgen.org (www.jewishgen.org) and the International Association of Jewish Genealogy Society (www.iajgs.org) can help with these requests.

For more information, visit the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's regularly updated Web site, www.ushmm.org/its.

A toll-free hotline will be available soon.

The American Gathering Seeks Immediate Ratification of Bad Arolsen Treaties

In an effort to convince leaders of four European countries to ratify the amendments to Bonn Accords of 1955, the treaty that concerns the International Tracing Service (ITS) archives located in Bad Arolsen, Germany, administered by the International Committee of the Red Cross, the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and their Descendants have written to the heads of the four countries that have not signed the treaty so far. Those countries are France, Greece, Luxembourg and Italy. These countries have initialed the documents but have not ratified them. Belgium, Germany, Israel, the Netherlands, Poland, Great Britain and the United States have all signed the treaty.

The letters were sent to President Nicholas Sarkozy of France, Prime Minister Jean Claude Junker of Luxembourg, Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis of Greece and Prime Minister Romano Prodi of Italy. The letter, signed by President Sam E. Bloch, Chairman Roman R. Kent and Senior Vice President Max Liebmann, stated in part:

“As you are aware, the final ratification of the treaty by all the signatories will allow all Holocaust survivors and their families, researchers and others to access the files. Please understand that this matter is of URGENT importance to our constituents. They are elderly people who are coming to the end of their difficult lives and seek closure in these documents. Public access is of vital importance to them and to their families. It cannot happen unless the treaty is signed, soon, by your government. We lose tens of our people each day, and their families suffer great anxiety at not being able to see the documents that can tell them where their parents and siblings died.

We respectfully request that you urge your colleagues in the Greek government to approve and fully sign this treaty so as to expedite matters to assist the aging Holocaust survivors in their quest for information and closure.

We thank you in advance for your kind consideration of this matter, and look forward to hearing from your offices in this regard at your earliest convenience. We are hoping that your government will resolve this issue quickly.”

As we went to press, Greece and Luxembourg have ratified the treaty, Italy and France have yet to act.

An Open Letter to President Nicolas Sarkozy

May 29, 2007

M. Le. President Nicolas Sarkozy
Palais de l'Élysée
55 rue du Faubourg Saint Honoré
Paris, 75008 France

To The Honorable President Sarkozy:

As representatives of the 175,000 American Jewish Holocaust survivors, we congratulate you on your election as president of France and wish you the greatest success in facing the serious challenges confronting your people. We are extremely grateful that you have taken a strong position against the surge of antisemitism sweeping across Europe. It has not escaped our notice that you have consistently maintained your position against haters and demagogues and that you have worked hard to protect the Jews of France and others. We can only hope that other European leaders facing similar challenges will follow your lead and will not countenance religious or racial hatreds from any quarter.

We would like to call your attention to the matter of the International Tracing Services files from Bad Arolsen, and hope that the matter is brought forward during that short session, and that it is not pushed off until the fall.

We understand your predecessor's government initialed the treaty that will allow all Holocaust survivors and their families, researchers and others to access the files. Please understand that this matter is of URGENT importance to our constituents. They are elderly people who are coming to the end of their difficult lives and seek closure in these documents. Public access is of vital importance to them and to their families. It cannot happen unless the treaty is signed, soon, by your government. We lose tens of our constituents each day, and their families suffer great anxiety at not being able to see the documents that can tell them where their parents and siblings died.

We respectfully request that you urge your colleagues in the French government to approve this treaty so as to expedite matters to assist the aging Holocaust survivors in their quest for information and closure.

We thank you in advance for your kind consideration of this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Sam E. Bloch, President
Roman R. Kent, Chairman of the Board
Max Liebmann, Senior Vice President
The American Gathering of Jewish
Holocaust Survivors

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the ITS Archive

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software, and finding aids, while *simultaneously* advancing the political process so that no more precious time is lost.

A critical part of the breakthrough in opening the archive was the agreement that each country designate one repository with the technological, archival, and historical expertise to handle the material and serve the survivors and their families as well as historians.

Along with Yad Vashem, the Museum is the world's leading center of Holocaust documentation, research and education. No other institution in the world comes remotely close to these two institutions in their capacity to manage this material. And, indeed Yad Vashem will hold the material for Israel.

The archive is enormous. The first batch of digitized material, expected to arrive at the Museum this fall, includes 13.5 million documents related to incarcerations, including many concentration camp records. We will also receive copies of the 40 million index cards (of the 17.5 million names) created by ITS over the years. The amount of data in this first batch alone is equivalent to approximately 8,000 CDs! (We expect the second batch, which includes slave labor records, to arrive in 2008 and the third and final batch, which includes DP records, to arrive at some point after that.)

The ITS was never set up to be used by anyone other than its own staff. The Museum must therefore take several steps to make the material usable. First, we must invest in new hardware to substantially expand the storage capacity of our network servers.



Second, contrary to some assertions that grossly oversimplify accessibility, the Museum must create a special software system to make the records more easily accessible than they have been at the ITS. Third, we must train many members of our staff to use the new software so that they can respond to survivors quickly.

Naturally, we will be reaching out to the survivor community with instructions on how to contact the Museum to seek information on their families. We have teams of people already working hard on this massive, historic and expensive undertaking.

The Museum wishes to serve survivors and their families not only in the US but the world over. No survivor will be required to come to Washington. First, no survivor should be required to learn the complexities of doing research in an archive. Second, requiring survivors to come to Washington would defeat the whole purpose for which we opened this archive. It was so that our Museum could do this research for survivors and their families – and do it much faster than the ITS which often kept people waiting years for a response. It is outrageous that survivors were treated like this.

Survivors deserve a great deal. They deserve accurate information about the ITS and about the Museum. Most crucially, survivors deserve accurate and timely information about their families. In spite of what some people would have them believe, the Museum will help those survivors whose family records are in the ITS archive get that information – at long last. ■

PLEASE SEND US YOUR STORIES,
ARTICLES, POEMS, AND LETTERS
FOR INCLUSION IN TOGETHER
AND OUR WEB SITE.
AMGATHTOGETHER@AOL.COM



PLEASE SEND YOUR
E-MAIL ADDRESS AND THOSE OF YOUR
FAMILY MEMBERS TO
AMGATHTOGETHER@AOL.COM
YOU CAN ALSO SEND MATERIAL
FOR CONSIDERATION FOR PUBLICATION

Going Home from Auschwitz

By Ed Heisler (with his wife Trudy)
Goodyear, AZ

Three days before the Russian army arrived to Auschwitz, the German SS troops left. They took with them people from the hospital whom they felt could walk. My brother Jack, myself, and approximately twelve hundred sick prisoners were left behind. For three days there were no Germans around and no food was brought in. At that point I went out to see what was going on. The liberation was bittersweet since that was the day that I found out that both my parents were killed on the day that we had arrived in Birkenau.

I noticed one Russian soldier walking around. He asked me if there were any Germans in the camp. I told him that they had left three days before that. The Russian soldier sent up a flare and soon after that many Russian soldiers arrived at the camp. The Russians did not bring any food or doctors, even though everyone in the camp needed medical care. We went looking in the camp's warehouses and found food and clothing. For the first time in almost a year we had food instead of a slice of bread and a bowl of soup every day. Many of the people who ate the food became sick, since they were not used to eating regularly, including my brother Jack.

In the middle of February 1945, we finally received papers that allowed us to go home. We left immediately and stayed in the city outside the camp for three days. We left on the third day early in the morning because we heard that the Russians were looking for everyone who had left the camp.

We were walking in the direction of Krakow, Poland. We walked as far as we could that day and presented our papers to the mayor of a small town who told us that we could stay in the barn. The mayor then remarked to us that Hitler obviously didn't keep his word to kill all the Jews before the war ended. The next morning we were in no shape to continue walking. We bartered most of the clothing that we had in order to secure a horse and sleigh to continue our trek to Krakow.

We arrived in the city the same day without a penny in our pockets. We wondered what to do next. We walked the streets looking for anything that might help us. We found a small office of H.I.A.S. who found us a room to stay in and served lunch daily. We could also take any leftovers with us. We were stuck in the city since there was no transportation available. After two weeks we found a train going to the Czech border. The train stopped at the Karpeten mountains but couldn't proceed since the tunnel was bombed out. Now we were really stuck in the middle of nowhere. It was very cold in the foothills of the mountains.

We started walking around and discovered a small Czech military unit. They took us in and this was

the first real welcome since we left Auschwitz. They gave us proper winter clothing and we ate three full meals a day which hadn't happened in a very long time. Life was good with these decent people. They were getting ready to go back to Czechoslovakia. The snow was roughly thirty feet deep. It took three days to cross the Mountains when it normally would have taken three hours.

We landed in an army camp in Slovakia. That's when we found out that our brother, Mendy, died in a Russian work camp after spending five and half years in German work camps. After a few days we decided to go home. When we arrived home, it was very strange seeing no older Jewish people and I was the only 15-year-old in town. All of my classmates from Hebrew school perished in Auschwitz.

It was so cold and all the doors and windows had been stripped from the house. The only thing that kept us from the cold is that the fireplace was still intact.

We covered the windows and the door with wood from the barn. We also used the remaining wood to fuel the fireplace. We also had help from one neighbor



with food. We still had no money at this point for food or anything else. Looking back now, I'm not quite sure how we survived. Jack was picked up on the street by the Russian army who insisted that he either volunteer for the army or go to a work camp. Considering the choices, he joined the army. This turned out to be a good break for Jack since he had frozen fingers and toes and the Army put him into an Army Hospital where he finally received medical care.

Sometime late in March the Russians picked up all the Jews in town, which numbered about 15 and took us to jail. I was charged with poisoning a well. The others in the group were not given any reason for their arrests. They kept us two weeks, but did feed us during this time. They released everyone but one person who they considered the leader, who was never heard from again. At this point I was really alone. We discovered the real reason that we were taken to jail was to be able to confiscate all the Jewish properties, including our farm.

Late in May, Jack was released from duty in the Russian Army. The beginning of June, My brother David and sister Miriam came home from concentration camp in Germany. David had spent

nearly five and half years in Hungarian work camps and German concentration camps.

The Russians annexed the part of Czechoslovakia where we lived. We made plans to go to Romania before the borders were closed. David decided to go to Budapest to scout out where we might all be able to go safely.

At this point, I would like to say that in spite of the fact that I had lost my mother, father, all my uncles, aunts, and most cousins that had lived in Europe, my family had fared better than most families—as some families in town had been totally wiped out. Two uncles, three sisters, and one brother were in the United States before the war.

My brother Bernie spent the whole war in Africa and ended up in Marseilles, France. He took a furlough and came looking for us. He stopped in Budapest and found David on the sidewalk. David and Bernie came to Romania since that was where Jack, Miriam, and I were going to stay with our cousins. Bernie arranged for us to travel to Hungary via horse-drawn carriages by bribing Hungarian border guards. We took a train to the American occupied part of Czechoslovakia. At that point Bernie's seven day furlough had stretched to six weeks. He checked in with the army and they approved his being late as transportation was still not readily available.

Bernie wanted to take us all to France but the army could not approve of fifteen civilians traveling with a troop transport. They did, however, give me a pass to travel because of my age. Jack used my pass, and I was smuggled onto the truck in a box. From Germany, Bernie bribed some officer to hide Jack and me in the baggage car. Crossing the French border was a bit more complicated, but we made it through. We went to Marseilles with Bernie. When Bernie was shipped home, we went to Paris and registered with the United States Embassy. My Uncle Jack sent papers promising to sponsor us, which was necessary in order for us to be able to travel to the U.S. Sometime in the late summer, David arrived in Paris, but Miriam stayed in Germany since it was too difficult to cross the border into Paris.

In 1945, the journey from Auschwitz to Czechoslovakia to Paris was a very difficult journey. We eventually got all of our papers in order and arrived in New York on June 23, 1946. I went to Buffalo where I met my wife to be, Trudy. In 1948 I enlisted in the Army for two years, but stayed an additional year because the Korean War broke out. I was honorably discharged in July of 1951 and got married September 2, 1951. David arrived in 1947. Miriam however, died in Germany at the age of 23, due in large part to the lack of medical care.

Today, Trudy and I have four children and four grandchildren. I am the last survivor of 10 siblings. I was speaking at a high school in Surprise, Arizona on January 24, 2007 when I got the news that Jack passed away earlier that day. Our story haunts me to this day.



SPECIAL RESTITUTION SUPPLEMENT

**Application
for
restitution
of assets
located
in Israel
belonging to a Holocaust
victim
(Special location procedure)
Introduction and general
guidelines for submitting an
application**

-In 2006, the **Holocaust Victims Assets Law (Restitution to Heirs and Endowment for the purposes of Assistance and Commemoration) 5766 – 2006** (“the law”) came into effect. The main purpose of the law, as stated therein, is **“to act for the enhancement of the activities for the location of assets located in Israel, whose owners are reasonably assumed to have perished in the Holocaust, and for the location of the heirs and other right holders of said assets, which are being managed or held by the Administrator General or by another party, and to return these assets to the heirs and right holders that have been located”** [Section 1(1) of the law].

-Based on the law, the **Company for Location and Restitution of Holocaust Victims Assets, Ltd.** (“the company”) was established. The company acts to implement the purposes of the law while striving to simplify the restitution process and make it easier for members of the public applying from Israel and other countries. As part of this effort, the company enables the public to submit **electronic applications via the company’s website, without needing to send any paperwork** at the stage of submitting the application. Applications submitted through the website will enable the company to streamline the processing of the information received and to improve the handling of applications.

-A list of assets in Israel that have been transferred by various organizations to the company, based on the assumption that the assets were purchased by Holocaust victims, appears on the company’s website. This list details the types of assets, names of rights holders for the assets, and, if known to the company, details on the place of last residence of the asset’s rights holder or the place of purchase of rights to the asset. Furthermore, alongside each asset, the date of publication is shown. In due time, the company will publish similar information regarding additional assets, as those will come into its possession.

-You can submit an application to receive an asset published by the company, based on rights to which you are entitled due to a family relation, a will or in any other manner. Your application will be sent to the asset restitution department of the company and will be handled by it.

-Even if the rights you hold relate to an asset of a Holocaust victim that was **not published by the company**, and which is known to you on the basis of other information you have received, you may submit an application for the restitution of the asset via this form, **provided that the asset is located in Israel**. Nevertheless, since these assets have not yet been investigated, catalogued and published officially by the company, your application will first be handled by the asset location department of the company, for clarification of the matter.

-The final date for submitting the application is 12 months from the date of publication of the asset by the company. After this date, it will still be possible to submit applications to the company regarding published assets, but these will not be handled in the context of the special location process.

-Applications for the restitution of a number of assets should not be submitted on one form. **A separate application must be submitted for each asset published.**

-The name of the Holocaust victim should be written in English letters, as you think it was used by that person around the time of purchasing the rights to the asset or its deposit.

-Should you know of additional heirs/ people who are entitled (other than yourself) to the rights of the Holocaust victim to the asset, it is important that you indicate this in the appropriate place on the application form.

-It is preferable to fill out and submit the applications electronically via the company’s website at: www.hashava.org.il.

-Those interested in filling out and submitting the application in non-electronic form, can print out the application form from the company’s website. Applications filled out manually should be sent to the company by mail, to the address that appears below.

-The company has established a special call center for public inquiries. The center is intended to provide general information about the company, to provide assistance in filling out application forms, and to send application forms by mail to those interested. The special call center’s phone number is 972- 3-516-4117.

-Applications not submitted electronically should be typed or filled out in clear handwriting.

-It is not mandatory to fill in all the sections of the form.

-Once the application is received by the company, you will be sent a notice including a **reference number**. Please indicate this reference number in any future contact with the company. Official requests and applications to the company should be sent to the following address:

The Company for Restitution of Holocaust Victims Assets, Ltd., POB 927, Bnei Brak 51108, Israel.

-For your information: The application form is designed to receive the basic and brief information required by the company for **initial** processing of your request. Later on, if necessary, the company will approach you in order to receive additional information and to verify the facts stated in the application by deposition. At the request of the company, you will be required to provide any additional information, explanation, evidence, and documents in your possession, which are required by the company for the fulfillment of its duties and/or a decision regarding your application.

-The company will make every effort to handle your request rapidly and efficiently. Nevertheless, you must take into account that every application is handled individually and therefore the process requires time. We would appreciate it if you could submit the application electronically, through the company’s website. This will enable us to streamline the handling of the applications and to provide better service to those who apply to us.

-The lists of assets published by the company were prepared and transferred to it by various organizations which held the assets. Although the company has been making every effort to verify the information provided to it by those organizations, the company is unable to make sure that the lists transferred to it do not contain any mistakes or errors, including the inclusion of assets that **are not** those of Holocaust victims.

-In addition, the above lists contain data regarding bank accounts that have been derived from the findings of the Parliamentary Inquiry Committee. These data are not published under Section 19(a)(1) of the law since they have not yet been transferred to the company by the organizations holding those accounts. Therefore, even though it is possible to submit to the company applications for restitution based on these data, it will **not** be possible to handle the requests until the information and the moneys are received from the above mentioned organizations.

Application for Restitution of an Asset Located in Israel belonging to a Holocaust Victim

(Special location procedure)

Before filling out the form, please read the attached guidelines carefully.

Please note: It is not mandatory to fill in all the sections of the form.

A. Preliminary Information

1. Does the requested asset appear on the list of Holocaust victims' assets published by the Company?

Yes. The number of the asset in the Company's publication is _____; The name of the holder of rights to the asset _____.
 No.

1.1 If you indicated **NO** – Is the requested asset located in Israel?

Yes. No.

Note: If you indicated NO in Section 1.1 above, do not continue filling out the form!

2. Have you previously applied, or do you know of an application by another heir, to any institution, regarding the restitution of the asset?

No. Yes.

B. Details of the Applicant

3. Personal Details:

Given Names _____

Surname _____

Previous Surname _____

Maiden name (for a woman) _____

ID number _____

Type of identifying document: Identity card (for Israeli citizens); Passport; Driver's license; Other _____

Gender: M F;

Date of birth _____; Place of birth _____;

Father's name _____; Mother's name _____;

4. Contact Details: Address

Country _____; State _____;

Region _____; City/Town _____;

Street _____; House number _____; Zip code _____;

Telephone: _____; Mobile phone: _____; Fax: _____;

E-mail: _____

C. Details Regarding the Holocaust Victim / Holder of rights to the asset

In this section, please fill in additional information known to you about the holder of rights to the requested asset:

5. To the best of your knowledge, was the last holder of rights to the asset a Holocaust victim?

Yes. No.

6. Please fill in the details known to you about the Holocaust victim / holder of rights to the asset (if the rights to the asset were purchased by a legal entity, such as a company, partnership, trusteeship, etc., please indicate the holder of rights in said entity, when filling in the details in this section):

Title _____;

Given names _____

Surname _____

Previous Surname _____

Maiden name (for a woman) _____

Nicknames or additional names (including Hebrew names) _____

Gender: M F; Last known marital status: S M D W;

Last permanent residential address:

Country _____; State _____;

Region _____; City/ Town _____;

Street _____; House number _____; Zip code _____;

Occupation _____;

Gregorian date of birth _____ Hebrew date of birth _____; Place of birth _____

Approximate date of death _____; Approximate place of death _____

7. What information do you have that establishes the right of the Holocaust victim to the requested asset?

- I hold documents attesting to the right.
- I have seen documents or witnessed an event indicative of the right.
- I hold other supporting evidence attesting to the right.
- I was told of the above mentioned right.
- The application is submitted based on general information or reasonable assumption regarding the existence of the right.

8. To the best of your knowledge, did the Holocaust victim have any partners in the asset?

- Yes. No.

D. Right of the Applicant to the Asset

In this section you are required to provide information that establishes your right to receive the asset, or part of it:

9. Are you related to the holder of rights to the asset?

- Yes. I am the spouse/son/daughter/grandson/granddaughter/great grandson/ great granddaughter/brother/sister/nephew/niece/other relative of the holder of rights to the asset.
- No.

10. Documents or evidence in my possession that support my right to receive the asset (you may indicate more than one option):

- Official certificates (such as Death/Birth/Marriage Certificate, etc.).
- Probate Order.
- Will Execution Order.
- Will.
- Other documents or evidence. Specify: _____

11. To the best of your knowledge, are there any other persons entitled to the asset, or any other heirs (including relatives of the holder of rights to the asset, or beneficiaries of a will)?

- No. Yes.

E. Information on the Requested Asset

12. Type of asset requested:

- Vacant land (lot) Building / Apartment Money Securities Works of Art
- Contents of safebox Other. Specify: _____.

13. The asset was purchased/deposited:

- Directly by the holder of rights / Holocaust victim.
- Via a representative (person or organization dealing with this matter at that time).

14. Do you know any specific details regarding the location/identification of the asset?

- No. Yes. Specify: _____

15. Do you know the year of purchase/deposit of the asset?

- No. Yes. Specify: _____

16. Do you know the sum the asset was purchased for, or the sum deposited in the account?

- No. Yes. Specify: _____

17. Do you know which organization/person the asset was purchased from in the Land of Israel (Palestine)?

- No. Yes. Specify: _____

18. If necessary, please specify additional relevant and significant information that you think may assist in the handling of the application:

Please read the application carefully and make sure all the details in it are accurate and complete.

Finally, please check [“] the following box and sign below:

Pets of Holocaust Victims

I believe in the Sun,
Even when it is not shining.
I believe in love,
Even when I am alone.
I believe in God,
Even when He is silent.

(Author unknown—inscription found on a wall in Auschwitz)

The Holocaust has yet one untold chapter—the stories about pets owned by the Holocaust victims. Today we understand the depth of the human/animal bond, but no one has told the stories about what the pets of Holocaust victims meant to them. When researching this topic, survivors said that they were glad someone cared enough to ask about their pets. The fact that they needed to share their stories is testimony to how much their pets meant to them.

The account below is one as told to the author.

Bogar in Hungary

By K. R. with Sue Bulanda

It was around 1939 when my father brought a small, furry puppy home. His eyes were like liquid chocolate and he would give us little kisses. All five of us, my parents, older brother, sister and me, loved to hold him and bury our face in his soft, shiny fur. Bogar, a 20 pound, all black mixed breed dog made us laugh and followed us everywhere. He was a constant source of joy, amusement and companionship to us. I felt very close to Bogar and told him all of my secrets.



Our family managed to survive the first five years of the war. But the war had affects on us all; even Bogar hated the sound of planes and shooting. Before we could hear it, Bogar would growl and raise the hair on his back when an airplane approached.

In June of 1944 we were marched to the Ghetto. We left Bogar free at home, hoping that he would survive, but he followed us to the Ghetto. Since dogs were not allowed in the Ghetto, we had no idea where he was or what happened to him. Even though we were afraid and uncertain about our own fate, we all worried about Bogar. Who would take care of him? How would he survive?

After three weeks we were herded out of the Ghetto and forced to walk to the train station in Hajduhadhaz. To our surprise, when we left the Ghetto, Bogar was right there beside us. He had waited outside of the Ghetto for us. I was thrilled to see that he was alive, but he followed us all the way to the train station where we had to leave him again. What would happen to our precious Bogar?

For an entire year, through all of our trials and tribulations, we wondered and prayed for Bogar. Then on one glorious June day in 1945, we were free!!! We went back to our home and looked for Bogar, but he was no where to be found. Though we were glad to be alive, we mourned the loss of one family member, Bogar.

A month later, I was walking down the road about a mile from home when I saw a dog that looked like Bogar. My heart skipped a beat and I held my breath as I called his name. The dog stopped and looked, frozen in place. Then like a shooting star, he ran to me, jumping and licking my hands and face. It was Bogar, my sweet, wonderful Bogar!

The two of us ran home and I burst through the door shouting to the family, “Bogar’s home! Bogar’s Home!” We hugged and kissed him, then gave him some of our precious little food, water and a soft, warm place to sleep. After we got over our excitement we saw that Bogar had had a rough life while we were gone. He was thin, his coat did not shine and it seemed that there was a haunting look in his eyes.

We found out from people in our neighborhood that he had lived on the street, stealing food when he could. Bogar lived for a year or so and then at a little over seven years of age, got sick and died. We all mourned, but for one glorious year our family was complete and that meant a lot to us.

Note: If any reader knows about a Holocaust pet, please contact the author at susanb21@juno.com or write to her at 15 Hemlock Dr., Jim Thorpe, PA 18229.

I WON THE LOTTERY- A TRUE TALE OF A MODERN DAY MIRACLE

by Deborah Donnelly, a 2G in New Jersey

Those who share my life in a variety of settings know I consistently play the lottery in at least two states. I am by no means a gambler, but I always have the optimistic attitude that I will win. Someone has to, and why can’t it be me? In my conversations, I have great plans to spend my winnings, and dream of how altruistic I could be by volunteering my time in my chosen field.

Those closet to me know that throughout my life, I wondered why miracles as detailed in the Bible are no longer evident. That doesn’t mean miracles don’t happen. As my father once wryly noted, “It’s a miracle that with all the countries that have nuclear capability, human life still exists.”

This is a pretty optimistic view from a man who survived to tell his story of life in German-occupied Poland. My father was one of three children and had five half siblings. He was aware that all were murdered during the Holocaust with the exception of his brother, who was drafted into the Russian Army. When my father was finally liberated from the last of several concentration camps, shortly after the war, he was only able to find some distant relatives—none of whom he knew before. However he developed relationships with them, though they lived a great distance away from us.

My father also tried to find his brother and his maternal niece as well as relatives whose final destinations and outcomes were unknown. Family possessions were never found. Many survivors did not even have photographs to tell the stories of love and family that would give the survivors a sense of belonging and would help give meaning to memory of lives once lived and shared. These material losses were a further assault that topped the horrific experiences of those who survived.

Like most children of Holocaust survivors, I fantasized about alleviating my father’s pain. Instinctively we feel our parents’ profound losses and bear witness to either constricted affects or bothersome Cluster C symptoms associated with severe trauma. We imagine finding lost relatives. We tread lightly in our questions for fear of causing more harm and distress.

I remember Elie Wiesel saying that when we talk to survivors about their experiences in the Holocaust “we are treading on hallowed ground.” Despite all that, I am determined to help my father. Together, the two of us continued to hunt for any possible trace of his brother and niece. At times, he would say, “They are probably dead, because otherwise they would have looked and found me.”

At some point in the 1980s, the Red Cross offered to help survivors to locate information regarding their families. We took them up on the offer and wrote to Poland and the Russian Military to no avail. When the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC opened, I spent a full day during Police Week in their research facilities. Once again we found nothing.

With the development of the Internet, for many the dead silence of the past was broken when somehow the wonderful website, JewishGen.org was created. I immediately posted my surname, reaching out to the world. But there were still no signs of my father’s family.

Despite his pain, my father wants the world never to forget or to remain silent. He does so by sharing his story with the youth of today, and for the last two years, has participated in the March of the Living. In the words of William Shakespeare, he is in the evolving process of “giving sorrow words.”

So what has all this to do with lotteries and miracles?

Recently I won the lottery: I received a letter of inquiry from JewishGen.org.

What did I win? A miracle. The miracle of my paternal uncle’s survival and the fact he had a family. The inquiry on JewishGen came from my father’s great nephew—who told us that unfortunately, my father’s brother had died in 1986, but that he has a sister-in-law, nephews, their wives and three great-nephews. We were unable to find them when they lived behind the Iron Curtain—but they had made *Aliyah* in the 1990s and now live in Israel.

When the facts were confirmed, I walked on a cloud for one week, repeating endlessly that I had won the lottery. This reaffirmed what I have known all along—that riches are not measured in money, but by the feeling of belonging to a family. That need to belong is one that is so basic, and yet, at times, is taken for granted.

Despite the happiness, there are still issues to work through. It is painful to discover that your brother was alive for forty years after the war and that there was no contact. This results in old familiar feelings of intense loss and grief. There is a sense of confusion. We are all getting to know one another with a great geographical distance between us.

What can I say? When you win money, there are things that need to be worked out and addressed. When you win the family lottery, you begin to trace family history, something I have never had before.

I look forward to bridging the gap and forging strong relationships with the paternal side of my family. It truly is a miracle and blessing that we all have been given this win!!

The friendly fires of hell

By Robert J. White-Harvey

On May 3, 1945 - in the worst friendly-fire incident in history—Britain's Royal Air Force killed more than 7,000 survivors of Nazi concentration camps who were crowded onto ships in Lubeck harbor, Germany. The ragged masses that had survived the Holocaust stood no chance against the guns of their liberators.

This tragic mistake occurred one day before the British accepted the surrender of all German forces in the region. Reports of the incident were quickly hushed up—as a jubilant world prepared to celebrate the Allied victory in Europe.

Despite the bitter irony of dying in hellish fires on sinking ships just hours before liberation, the tragedy was quickly forgotten or resolutely ignored. The anniversary of this dark day will soon pass by again—largely unnoticed or unmentioned.

By early May 1945, the rumors of Hitler's suicide had rekindled hope for beleaguered prisoners in Nazi concentration camps. The Red Army had just conquered Berlin, the British held Hamburg and Americans were in Munich and Vienna. After surviving unspeakable horrors and deprivations for years, the battered prisoners could finally dare to hope that their day of deliverance was at hand.

In the closing weeks of World War II, thousands of prisoners from the Neuengamme concentration camp near Hamburg, the Mittelbau-Dora camp at Nordhausen and the Stutthof camp near Danzig were marched to the German Baltic coast. Most of the inmates were Jews and Russian POWs, but they also included communist sympathizers, pacifists, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, prostitutes, Gypsies and other perceived enemies of the Third Reich.

At the port of Lubeck almost 10,000 camp survivors were crowded onto three ships: *Cap Arcona*, *Thielbeck* and *Athen*. No one knew what the Nazis were planning to do, or what plans the Allies had already set into motion.

Although the final surrender was imminent, British Operational Order No. 73 for May 3 was to “destroy the concentration of enemy shipping in Lubeck Bay.” While thousands of camp prisoners were being ferried out to the once-elegant Hamburg-Sud Amerika liner *Cap Arcona*, the RAF's 263rd, 197th, 198th and 184th squadrons were arming their Hawker Typhoon fighter-bombers with ammunition, bombs and rockets.

At 2:30 p.m. on May 3, at least 4,500 prisoners were aboard the *Cap Arcona* as the first attack began. Sixty-four rockets and 15 bombs hit the liner in two separate attacks. As the British strafed the stricken ship from the air, Nazi guards on shore fired on those who made it into the water. Only 350 prisoners survived.

The *Thielbeck*—which had been flying a white flag—and the poorly marked hospital ship *Deutschland* were attacked next. Although *Thielbeck* was just a freighter in need of repairs, it was packed with 2,800 prisoners. The overcrowded freighter sank in just 20 minutes, killing all but 50 of the prisoners.

In less than two hours, more than 7,000 concentration camp refugees were dead from the friendly fire. Two thousand more would have died if the captain of the *Athen* had not refused to take on additional prisoners in the morning before the attack.

Most who were familiar with the *Cap Arcona* disaster believed that the Nazis intended to sink the ships at sea to kill everyone on board. Hundreds of prisoners had already been killed on the forced marches from the camps. In this case, however, RAF Fighter Command did their killing for them.

In the *Cap Arcona/Thielbeck/Athen* disaster, the tragic deaths of so many who had suffered so much for so long were quickly forgotten. After years of unprecedented bloodletting and destruction, the nations involved were in shambles, their populations numbed by suffering and death. The unfortunate victims who perished at the close of history's worst conflagration were quickly lost in the fleeting euphoria of peace.

In 1945, at the close of the war in Europe, the victorious British and their American allies did not want a media disaster overshadowing their V-E Day celebrations. When the extent of the friendly-fire incident became known at Westminster, the British government and Allied Command effectively prevented most news of the disaster from spreading from Germany.

Beyond war-weariness and postwar jubilation, other factors conspired to ensure that the valiant prisoners who died at the threshold of freedom would not be given much attention in the world press. In a war in which the British had paid so high a price to defeat the Nazis, to even criticize their forces was tantamount to siding with the devil. Then postwar Germany quickly became one of the “good guys” as an important frontline ally in the Cold War against communism. As such, most Germans preferred not to draw attention to their own war atrocities.

Millions of Jews, Russians, Serbs, Poles and others had already been killed by the Nazis. Tens of millions more were homeless refugees, with many near starvation. The memory of 7,000 or 8,000 concentration camp survivors killed by mistake would soon wash away in the tide of history in a violent age. Britain has never officially apologized for its tragic mistake at Lubeck Bay, nor has it honored the innocent victims with a proper memorial.

The RAF records of the disaster are sealed until 2045, one century after the attack. No British government document has referred to the estimated 7,500 victims of its mistake.

In May 1990, Germany opened a two-room museum dedicated to the memory of the victims of the *Cap Arcona* tragedy in the small port city of Neustadt-in-Holstein. A memorial monument was erected on the beach nearby at Pelzerhaken, where many of the bodies washed ashore and were buried. Other monuments were erected along Lubeck Bay and at the Neuengamme Camp Memorial southeast of Hamburg.

Much has been written in German about the tragedy, but surprisingly little about the *Cap Arcona* has made it to the English press.

On a recent visit to the memorial, a helpful resident of Neustadt said to me: “So your family is German?” I said, “No.” “Oh, then you are Jewish?” Again

I said, “No.”

My new acquaintance looked puzzled. Eventually he asked: “Well how could you possibly know about this?” I asked myself: “Why did it take me a half century to find out?”

A Jewish dental student, Benjamin Jacobs, gives a firsthand account of the friendly fire attack in *The Dentist of Auschwitz* (University of Kentucky Press, 1995). Along with Eugene Pool, the Boston dentist also wrote *The 100 Year Secret: Britain's Hidden World War II Massacre* (Lyons Press, 2004). Documentaries on the subject, such as Lawrence Bond's *Typhoons' Last Storm*, have had only limited publicity.

According to legend, Pheidippides was an Athenian herald who ran from the battlefield at Marathon to Athens 2,500 years ago. After announcing the Greek victory over the Persians, he allegedly died on the spot. The tale has been widely propagated by organizers of modern athletic events.

Surviving the horrors of concentration camps—one day at a time—is in many respects like a marathon run. Mere survival under such brutal conditions surely tested the endurance of both body and spirit. And like the mythical runner, thousands of inmates made it all the way to the end of their agonizing journeys only to perish at the finish line. A half-century after the ill-fated air raid, we still know very little about the Jews, the Russians and other prisoners who survived so much before dying on the finish line in May 1945.

By the time British records are unsealed in 2045, all children and most grandchildren of the victims will be gone. Historians will pore over the tragic details of the *Cap Arcona* disaster with the same level of detachment that we now feel for events such as the Franco-Prussian War or the siege of Sevastopol.

There is no question that the friendly-fire fiasco was a tragic error made during a routine military operation. Despite the terrible consequences, few reasonable people would condemn the British for their ill-fated raid. Some Hitler apologists have even attempted to use such mistakes to blame the Allies for monstrous crimes committed by the Nazis. Yet the continued avoidance of criticizing friends does not justify shunning all mention of the innocent victims of the attack. Whether embarrassing or not, the 7,500 *Cap Arcona* victims deserve to be remembered.

Robert J. White-Harvey is a cartographer, lawyer and writer. This article appeared in the Jerusalem Post (www.jpost.com) April 18, 2007.



Rededication of cemetery in Chrzanow, Poland

by Bette Cyzner

Today, much evidence of the rich European history has been obliterated. Magnificent shuls have been expropriated for mundane usage, or totally destroyed. Most mikvehs and yeshivas no longer exist. The majority of cemeteries have been decimated.

Before World War II, Chrzanow was home to a bustling, pious community which, according to Yad Vashem statistics, numbered over ten thousand Jews. Chrzanow is located in southwestern Poland, eighteen kilometers from Auschwitz.

Tragically, the Shoah forever altered the composition of the town. Its former Jewish citizens emigrated to such diverse locales as Israel, Australia, Canada, France, and the United States. Yet, no matter where in the world their new addresses were, the Jews of Chrzanow always remembered their first home with nostalgia, but the disrepair of their ancestors' final resting place was a source of sadness and pain.

Rabbi Baruch D. Halberstam, Roman and Samuel Mandelbaum, and Chrzanower from all around the globe sought to remedy this disturbing situation through generous contributions to rehabilitate the town's Jewish cemetery. A new gate and secure high wall were constructed and 3,700 tombstones were restored. The invaluable expertise of Asher Scharf expedited the process.

On August 7, the rededication of the restored cemetery will take place, followed by a visit to the town's Jewish Museum. Among the dignitaries expected to attend are the American Ambassador to Poland Victor Ashe, the Israeli Ambassador to Poland David Peleg, and Cantor Ben Zion Miller.

Anyone interested in attending should contact Reichberg Travel @ 718 436-1044. (Contact info. Bette Cyzner Tel. 718 897-3788. Email -acyzn@aol.com)

EUGENE JOHN WOOLRICH

Eulogy delivered by Dr. Andrew Woolrich.

In the beginning there was a small town in Transylvania called Szilagy Shomlyo. In the end there was New York and West Palm Beach.

I mention this for two reasons: first, in the 60 or so years he raised his children we can honestly count on one hand the number of times we pronounced it correctly to his satisfaction. Second, it provides a broad timeline that encompasses one of the most remarkable and admirable lives of most people given life, and especially for one who survived the concentration camps of Europe.

Being born into the Satmar sect of ultra-Orthodox Judaism did not stop him from rebelling against authority as a child. His tales of misadventure with the rabbis and getting kicked out of school are numerous. Although he would boast with a sense of pride when he referred to his fourth grade diploma, he would go on to become one of the most knowledgeable and self-educated individuals I have ever known.

When WWII came to eastern Europe his mischievous talents fit well with the activities of the Romanian resistance movement. Sabotaging and blowing things up became his occupation.

He was caught a few times and spent time in and out of slave labor camps, passing himself off as whatever was necessary to survive and help others survive. He survived Sarvar, Auschwitz, Mauthausen, Melk, and was liberated from Ebensee by the American Army on May 7, 1945.

Our childhood was inundated with mesmerizing tales of heroism and survival, but he would always make it clear to us that beyond being fit to work, every day survival depended on one and only one thing—luck—not any great talent of his.

After liberation he wandered through Europe working with U.S. Intelligence, interrogating captured war criminals.

He pursued his dream of going to Palestine or America. After stowing away and bribing the right people he arrived in Baltimore on June 10, 1946, one of the first survivors to arrive in the U.S. To further symbolize his liberation he always led our Passover Seders wearing his concentration camp jacket and cap.

He made his way to New York, married my mother, Rachel, z"l, and raised a family on Long Island. He worked endless hours building his construction business, Weiss and Woolrich Contracting Co. Inc.

After my parents' divorce, he learned to cook in order to feed his son and youngest daughter. My father lived a can do life. There were never problems, only solutions.

Similarly to his son, he was a great athlete, an outdoorsman; soccer player, bowler, handball player, and eventually, like all Americans, he loved baseball. He ingrained in all of us a strong love of country and patriotism (never forgetting the Americans who liberated him).

He was the decisive one, the one we all went to for answers. If ever there was a backbone to a family, he was it.

As he aged and we nagged him to take his medicine and eat right, he would always answer with the refrain, "If Hitler couldn't kill me, then nothing can"...except time. Well, time was on his side; he lived a remarkable 82 years of life, never complaining, never asking for help, never mourning what could have been . . . no regrets.

His greatest source of pleasure in his later years was his second wife, Ann, who unfortunately only got to know him in later life.

Perhaps his memories of what happened to the old and sick in the concentration camps, perhaps his disdain for having to be constantly cared for allowed him to make another decision, one of sound mind. He had finally had enough. What would have or should have killed others many times before was catching up to him and he knew it.

The last conversation I had with him the day before he died confirmed everything. Though I cried, it is a happy memory for me because this is what he wanted. He is pain free and unencumbered by the limits of our physicality.

He was an amazing man and wonderful father who helped so many people. He will be missed. ■

books

SESCIL

By Leon W. Wells, Survivor, NJ

While attending one of my rabbi's inspirational Saturday morning talks, (his name is Jack Bemporad, and he serves on the American Gathering's National Council, as do I) I asked, "Is the Bible an example of positive human behavior? When Noah was told to build the ark, why didn't he see other people's children and try to take them in, too? Was it only his wife and three daughters, and pairs of each animal species that he cared about? Isn't such blind obedience to God—without regard to the moral implications of Noah's "selfishness"—a crime against humanity?"

I think about the Kalwinskis when I read this Biblical tale. I don't believe God spoke to Josef Kalwinski or his wife and daughter, or his son, Kaziek, when they embarked on their mission.

In 1943, during the Holocaust, I was 18 years old when, after almost two years, I escaped from the

Death Brigade. The Brigade exhumed the murdered bodies of the Nazi victims and burned them to erase any trace of the atrocities. At the time, I was the only survivor of my entire family, 70 members in all. Thinking I had hidden away a cache of gold, a fellow inmate, Korn, took me along with him to the farm of Josef Kalwinski. Korn assumed that I had gold because it was my job to keep count of the gold sieved from the ashes and to turn it over to the Nazis. It never occurred to me to take any of this loot for myself and I used some of it only to bribe the SS guards to treat our group with leniency. This is what made it possible for us to escape, because as we approached the gate on the day we decided to escape, the guard assumed I was bringing him gold and opened the gate. We struck him down and ran away.

I had no idea where I was, but Korn, who worked with the locals before the war, did know. When we met Mr. Kalwinski, Korn asked him to hide both of us, and assumed I had gold to pay for it. When he realized that I had nothing, he told Josef Kalwinski he could lose me, because I was a stranger and did not know where I was.

Mr. Kalwinski gave me a long look and asked, "How can I leave him to get lost? He's only a baby.

Baby was the only English word he knew, and that became my nickname. I joined 22 other Jews hidden on his property. They were not overjoyed to have me, because of the extremely cramped quarters.

The Kalwinskis were risking their lives, since any Pole found hiding Jews was hanged, together with his entire family. The Kalwinskis fed us, cleaned our living space, carried out our slops and did it without raising the suspicion of their neighbors. With kindness and care, his wife, helped by her young daughter and son—a boy my age—worked night and day. Their youngest son had been sent away to distant family, lest he forget and mention our presence to the neighbors.

Why did the Kalwinskis make this great sacrifice for a boy they did not know and for the other twenty-three Jews they hid? Was because of their sense of righteousness and a feeling of humanity for their fellow man? They did not think only of themselves and their safety. Should their tale be added to our Bible, to the literature that describes this as ultimate way to conduct one's life?

You can read this story and others in *Janowska Road* by Leon W. Wells, published by the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.. ■

Search led to family, diary and a cause

By David Casstevens (*JewishWorldReview.com*)

COLLEGE STATION, Texas—The treasure is stored inside a bank vault, locked in a safe-deposit box.

He brought it home for one day to show to a visitor.

“It gets more fragile every year,” the man reminded himself, and gently lifted the object from its carrying case.

Robert Scott Kellner, 66, is a small, mannerly man with soft brown eyes and full head of graying hair. He talks in a whispery voice, as if careful not to wake a baby.

One might assume this soft-spoken figure has tiptoed through life, trying to blend in, hoping not to be overheard or noticed. In truth, he has devoted his adult life to telling everyone who will listen about the significance and value of the heirloom he possesses. Sharing the message is his vocation, his calling.

Kellner believes with all his heart that the entries meticulously penned in old German script on page after page of accounting ledgers are historically illuminating and relevant today and belong not only to him — and the Kellner family — but to the world, to every one of us.

In his hands he held a sacred trust: the secret diary of Friedrich Kellner.

From 1939-45, his German grandfather risked imprisonment — and possibly execution—by writing about the political atmosphere in his beloved homeland during the reign of Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich.

A midlevel government official and member of the Social Democratic Party, which Hitler banned after coming to power in 1933, Friedrich Kellner denounced the Führer as a “peddler and fanatical rabble rouser” in his diary. He passionately challenged the falsehoods of Nazi propaganda and related eye-witness accounts of atrocities committed against Jews.

In the 860 pages, Kellner called for America and other democracies to stand together and fight against terrorist regimes. Fearing a repeat of history, he urged future generations to combat the resurgence of mindless prejudice and totalitarianism.

A former Texas A&M English professor, Scott Kellner has spent more than 35 years translating Friedrich Kellner’s legacy and fulfilling a promise.

The 10-volume diary, filled with hundreds of newspaper clippings, was displayed last year at the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum in College Station. A Toronto television company recently produced an hourlong documentary about Friedrich Kellner’s journal and life.

The grandson is so committed to his mission that he wrote to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad last year after the Iranian president publicly stated that the Holocaust was a “myth” and called for Israel to be “wiped off the map.” In his letter, Scott Kellner asked to meet the Middle East leader so he could hand him a copy of the diary. “I’m not foolish. I’m not an idealist,” he said, as if to answer those who might label him as such. “I don’t expect anything I say to Ahmadinejad would change his mind. But any ideology, such as Islamic fundamentalism, that doesn’t have as its first value human life, and personal liberty for human beings, is an evil ideology.

“It sounds corny, I know. But the reality is we must confront him. I can do so with the diary. With the truth.”

Gazing at its brittle pages, Kellner faintly smiled in private thought.

The handwritten words of his grandfather call up fond memories of the white-haired author, a man who was 75 when they first met. Kellner also thought of his own father, a flawed and tragic figure. And in his mind’s eye he glimpsed the image of himself — an orphan who never knew the gift of family love until, by a stroke of fortune, he found his grandparents, in a tiny German village. And so began a story of discovery that is as remarkable as the diary itself.

Fred Kellner deserted his family when son Scott was 10 months old. At age 4, Scott and his older brother and sister went to live at a Jewish children’s home in New Haven, Conn. They were left to that cheerless existence by their mother, who went off and became a carnival dancer. He quit school after the ninth grade, and he joined the Navy at age 17.

Two years later, in 1960, the young sailor found himself in Frankfurt, Germany, en route to duty in Saudi Arabia. During a 48-hour layover, Kellner asked and was denied permission to leave the base so he could look for his German grandparents, on his father’s side. Impetuous and strong-willed, he ignored orders and went AWOL.

Kellner didn’t speak German. He began his search with only one clue: a scrap of paper on which was written “Laubach,” the name of several German towns. Traveling by bus, he went to three villages, stopping strangers to ask whether they knew of a Friedrich and Paulina Kellner. In German, the family name means “waiter,” so some mistook the American’s inquiry and directed him to the nearest cafe. Kellner departed each town in frustration, wondering whether he might be leaving his relatives behind.

On the third day, Kellner sat in a train depot in Hungen. When a teenage girl greeted the U.S. serviceman with a flirtatious smile, Kellner introduced himself and asked for help. Ursula Cronburger spoke English. She lived in a small town 10 miles away called Laubach. Not only that, she told Scott that an elderly couple named Kellner lived in her neighborhood, and so they took a bus to the town. Uncertain that Scott Kellner and the couple were related, Cronburger and her parents went to the home of a reclusive man and his wife and told them that a young sailor from the U.S. was looking for his grandparents and wanted to meet them.

Dressed in his Navy whites, Kellner felt excited and apprehensive as he walked up a dirt road toward the cottage on that October day, with winter in the air. He assumed that Friedrich Kellner, a former justice inspector, had been a Nazi during World War II.

That’s what Scott’s mother had called Fred Kellner — her husband, the man who walked out on her and their three kids. “That Nazi (expletive).”

Fred Kellner grew up in Germany and became enamored with the Nazi ideology as a teen. In 1935, Friedrich and Paulina sent their wayward 19-year-old to America to save him from being drafted into Hitler’s army. Fred became involved with the German-American Bund, a pre-war American Nazi movement, and was reported to the FBI for making anti-American statements. To demonstrate his allegiance to the U.S., he joined the Army and late in the war served in France as a guard and interpreter at a camp for German prisoners.

Scott’s father never returned to America. After the war, he became involved in the European black market. In 1953, having failed as a parent and feeling like a man without a country, he turned on a gas stove and killed himself. He was 37.

Friedrich and Paulina grew despondent. They felt as if their own lives had ended with their son’s suicide. Now, amazingly, the child of Friedrich Kellner’s only child stood at his door. His presence was like sunlight filling the grief-darkened home of the elderly man and wife.

Any doubt that Scott had come to the wrong place vanished when he produced a photo of his young father. The tears came for all three when Friedrich Kellner opened an album and showed his grandson the identical picture.

“I knew I had found them,” Scott Kellner recalled, eyes shining as he retold the story.

His visit lasted four days. Within the first 30 minutes together, his grandfather went into the dining room and knelt before an ornate antique hutch. With the turn of a small key, he opened a compartment door. Reaching inside a secret place, he withdrew a thick sheaf of papers—ledgers—meticulously written in the old man’s hand. Even in 1960, he kept the document hidden. Friedrich had penned two words on its cover: “Mein Widerstand.” It means “My Opposition.”

In a moment of dawning, the young American understood. This was a journal, his grandfather’s diary, written at great peril during one of the most dangerous periods in history. Friedrich Kellner fixed his grandson with his gaze. He desperately wanted the young man to know that he had resisted and rejected the madness of Hitler’s dictatorship. “Ich war kein Nazi!” the grandfather said, his voice rising. “I was no Nazi!” He emphasized “no” by making a slashing gesture with his flattened palm.

In the 1930s, Friedrich had spoken out in opposition to the rise of Nazi power. He defiantly held up a copy of *Mein Kampf* at rallies and ridiculed Hitler’s autobiography and political ideology.

Friedrich would tell his son’s son, “I could not fight the Nazis in the present, as they had the power to still my voice. So I decided to fight them in the future.” The wartime diary, he explained, was his gift to future generations, to be used as a weapon “against any resurgence of such evil.”

For hours, the old man and his grandson sat at a table. Using dictionaries, they patiently conversed, translating word by word. Scott learned that after the war his grandfather was appointed deputy mayor in Laubach, where he helped to restore the Social Democratic Party. Friedrich told his grandson that one day he wanted him to take the diary to America, but first—the grandfather was emphatic—the young man needed to return to school. He must get all the education he could. He simply must.

When Kellner returned to the military base in Frankfurt after a week’s absence, he was placed under guard but not severely punished for his insubordination.

“I would have willingly spent a year in jail,” he said. “It was something I just had to do.”

Eight years passed before Scott would see his grandparents again.

During the interim, he earned his GED and put himself through school at the University of Massachusetts, majoring in English and European history. He also studied the German language and later earned a Ph.D. He returned to Germany in 1968 and brought the diary home. Two years later, as promised, he took the first painstaking steps of transcribing his grandfather’s old German handwriting into a more readable form and then translating that manuscript into English. Needing help, he wrote to every major publishing company in the U.S. but received form-

cont’d on page 19

DIE ALTE REBBETZIN (THE OLD RABBI'S WIFE)

By Henry Langsam

(This story was sent to the American Gathering after The Memorial Candle by Peska Friedman was published in Together. A few weeks later, a letter arrived in the office with a request to locate Mrs. Friedman. The letter writer and author of this story was very familiar with the Alte Rebbetzin—and the rebbitzen was Mrs. Friedman's grandmother—and the great-grandmother of our Director of Communications Jeanette Friedman. Mrs. Friedman and Mr. Langsam were reunited in Los Angeles a few days later. They hadn't seen each other in more than 75 years.)

The Alte Rebetzin (the old rabbi's wife) was the wife of Rabbi Moshe Leib Shapiro, the Strzyzower Rebbe, a controversial personality. He wasn't getting along with his congregation in our shtetl, despite the fact that he was a very pious and godly person. He was a Talmudic scholar and well versed in holy books, scriptures of earlier and later centuries. The reason for the controversy was that he was upset about the Haskalah (enlightenment) movement that was spreading throughout the Galician *shtetlach* like an epidemic. He was troubled with the modernization that had intruded into the Orthodox, Hasidic world especially among the Hasidic youth, and he felt powerless to stop it.

Rabbi Moshe Leib [for whom the Wonder Rabbi of Munkacs in Borough Park is named] kept a keen eye on his congregation and tried very hard to persuade the young people not to stray from the Orthodox-Hasidic way of life. When he saw young people reading secular books or even a Yiddish newspaper, he considered it a breach of faith. The younger synagogue goers habitually kept an open secular book under the table while sitting in front of an open Talmudic tractate and pretended to study the old-fashioned rules and strictures. From the secular books they read they thirstily drew their knowledge about a different world.

Chana Shapiro, the rabbi's wife, endearingly called "The Alte Rebetzin," was the granddaughter of the famous Sandzer Rebbe, the founder of the Sandz rabbinical dynasty. Her personality was entirely different than her husband's. She was a soft spoken, motherly-type who looked at things from a different perspective.

Don't get me wrong. She also opposed any deviation from basic religious behavior, but her approach was more realistic, more understanding, and also more forgiving. Her motherly character prevented her from becoming angry at the entire world. She realized that the younger generation was thirsty for secular knowledge, and no one could stop their curiosity about the rest of the world, especially with threats.

When World War I began and the army of Czarist Russia broke through the Galician front-line, many residents from our shtetl were forced to evacuate. They were afraid of the unfriendly Russian Cossacks, the would-be occupiers of the area. Many of the evacuees from our shtetl, including the rebbe, wound up as refugees in Vienna, the capitol of the Austro-Hungarian empire.

During the fourth year of the war, Rabbi Moshe Leib became mortally ill and passed away. Because of his sudden death, the authorities wanted to perform an autopsy which is against Jewish religion. Thanks to Baron Rothchild's intervention, the Austrian authorities relented and released the body for immediate burial.

After the war ended, the Alte Rebitzen returned to Poland and took up residency in the big house her husband built before the war. Her son, Reb Nechemiah, remained in Vienna.

The three-story brick building was one of the nicest buildings in town. The front of the building faced the market-square, and had two stores that she rented out. The Rebetzin's apartment was adjacent to the big sanctuary. She also rented out the two upper flats and the income helped subsidize the upkeep of her household.

After her return from Vienna, the rebitzen brought in a special team of painters from another city to refurbish the sanctuary, and natives of Strzyzow who had immigrated to the United States paid for it. The sanctuary, called the Kloyz (in Yiddish) had a rich collection of many ancient books, scriptures, and Talmudic tractates that occupied an entire wall. The Holy Ark was a masterwork in wood by an unknown artist.

There was a gallery for women on the upper floor, where the rebitzen worshipped, but in the later years, when women began wearing hats instead wigs, the rebitzen had a little cabin built in a corner. In her will she requested to that her casket be built from the boards of the cabin.

Despite the Rebetzin's old age, there were no wrinkles on her gentle, finely chiseled facial features. She was a heavy set woman, and her face expressed love and reverence for everyone she met. For her household help she hired orphan girls only. She personally saved their earnings for their dowries. When there was enough money she married them off and another orphan would move in.

As children who have lost a father cling to their mother, the same thing happened to the bereaved Hasidim of Rabbi Moshe Leib. After his departure they clung to the old widowed rebetzin and considered her the rightful inheritor of the rabbi's wisdom and piusness. Although, customarily, women are not versed in the holy books, the Hasidim continued to conduct their Torah discourses in her presence. Every Friday night, on the Sabbath and holidays, as soon as they finished their meals at home, they came to the apartment and gathered around the rebetzin's table. They discussed the chapter of the week, sang Hasidic songs and told tales about ancient rabbinical sages.

The Rebetzin always prepared a tasty, *tzimmes* with carrots and raisins, or a special chicken liver concoction that they ate with a lusty appetite, and smacked their lips loudly. They showered her with compliments, telling her each time that she had outdone herself. The lavish compliments addressed to the rebetzin were a part of the ritual during each gathering. The rebetzin's face shone with radiance like a mother hen listening to her chicks as she listened to the Hasidim's remarks, watching the happy faces of her admirers. Following the treat, the Hasidim's spirit rose and they began singing traditional Hasidic melodies.

The rebetzin occupied a wide armchair at the head of the table. There was always a heavy prayer book and a Psalter in front of the dear lady. From these books she beseeched the Almighty and supplicated Him for the well being of the community. On weekdays there was a cup of small change on the table for alms for the poor. The Hasidim revered the rebetzin and considered her their leader, believing that the Rabbi's spirit hovered over her body.

She was in her seventies during my boyhood, and I spent many of my childhood days in the aura

of her spiritual being. She spoke softly, with a smile on her gentle face to the delight of her admirers. My father and I spent many evenings in the rebetzin's house because we did not have a regular family. I was motherless. There was only my father and I, therefore, the rebetzin's house was a second home to us, especially in wintertime where we felt warm and cozy.

My father of blessed memory, besides being a distant relative, was her confidant and her official representative. He paid her taxes to the authorities when they were due, and he collected the weekly contributions for the upkeep the sanctuary. After the rebetzin's departure to a better world, my father told me that she had a premonition about the timing of her death. My father was privy to her will. In it, she expressed her wish that local women should not participate in the preparation of her body for the burial, because she considered them not pious enough.

Seventeen kilometers from our shtetl, there was an extremely Hasidic little town, and that's where she had joined the Burial Society. She requested that upon her death that the women from that shtetl be immediately notified to come and prepare her body according the Jewish custom. One time during a routine visit by my father, on a cold wintry day, when the days were very short, he noticed some sadness on her face.

"Why such a sad face?" My father asked. "Don't you feel well?"

In response, the Rebetzin spilled her worry to my father.

"You know, Reb Yankel," she said. "It worries me that I might die on a Friday, during the shortest days of the year and the women from the nearby town would not be able to come, and do what they are supposed to do with my body. In the event they do come, I'm afraid that they will not be able to return home in time for the Shabbos candle lighting."

"Rebetzin! Why are you talking about death and funerals?" my father reprimanded her.

Shortly after this conversation took place, on a wintry Friday, the Rebetzin fell ill and lapsed into a coma. She was in a coma for a whole week until the following Friday, when she expired. It seemed that she prolonged her comatose state to provide a chance for all her children to be summoned to her deathbed. Once they arrived, each and every one, she returned her noble soul to the Creator.

It was a Friday, on Rosh Chodesh Shevat, one of the shortest days, of the year when the women from the nearby town were summoned. They washed and purified the body according to the Jewish custom, while a pair of horses hitched to a carriage was standing by. As soon as the women finished their holy task they left and arrived home just in time to light the Sabbath candles.

Every one believed that the worrisome problem that the rebetzin shared with my father was a prophecy. She foresaw that her end was near, and that it would be on a short Friday. She was buried near another rebetzin, her cousin from Lancut. Our town was proud that two great rebetzins were interned in our cemetery. Unfortunately, the cemetery was wiped off the face of the earth during the Holocaust.

There is no sign of the cemetery left, except that the memories of the Alte Rebetzin linger in the remembrances of the few who survived. ■

3GNY in 2007

by Daniel Brook

2007 has gotten off to an inspiring start for 3GNY. In the first three months of the year, we have put on diverse and original events, started a weekly discussion group, created a survivor-visitor program, marked our two year anniversary and added fifty new members.

Our screening of “America and the Holocaust” on January 25th marked our first get together at the JCC in Manhattan. The PBS documentary addresses America’s response to the Holocaust – from Kristallnacht to liberation. After the film, we remarked how the inaction of the government and press on the fate of European Jewry – from innocent disbelief to willful suppression of information – is mostly unknown by many with a general awareness of the Holocaust. We felt that when most people think of America’s role in the Holocaust, it’s overwhelmingly positive, as the enemies of Nazi Germany, as liberators. We also discussed how some of these same issues are relevant in stopping genocide today in Darfur, and whether genocide prevention should be one of America’s global responsibilities.

3GNY started as a monthly discussion group, so it was fitting that we marked our two year anniversary by kicking off a new weekly discussion group, “Wednesday Night Coffee.” In the eight weeks we have met, we have addressed issues previously untouched by many young Jews today: Since we’re primarily the last generation to know survivors, do we have a legacy to pass on? What is that legacy? Do we have a responsibility to speak out on genocide and

human rights crises today? What about on the Arab-Israeli conflict? How do we address Holocaust denial around the world? What does it mean to be part of the third generation since the Holocaust? Though these are serious issues, our discussions have been lighthearted, and at times funny.

For the past year, I have volunteered on Sundays at New York’s Holocaust museum – the Museum of Jewish Heritage, giving tours to students, seniors and groups of every kind. On Sunday, February 25, 3GNY met at the museum for its monthly event, “Teaching the Holocaust and Telling our Family Stories”. Lori Kass, a child of survivors and fellow tour guide, and I led fellow group members through the main gallery. We all had a chance to share our family stories, and afterward, over bagels and juice, discuss our impressions of the exhibit and our views of Holocaust education in general. This was a get-together that cuts to the heart of our group’s mission as we addressed, among other topics: what do we do with our unique family history? Why is it relevant to tell our family’s story? How does learning the details of the Holocaust enhance our ability to tell others our grandparents’ story and the lessons that go with it? There was consensus that educating ourselves first about the Holocaust and understanding its context in Jewish history, is vital to our understanding our family legacy and passing it on.

Also in February, 3GNY, together with the Workmen’s Circle, launched a Friendly Visitor program in an effort to reach out to and form

meaningful relationships with this city’s Holocaust survivors who are affiliated with Workmen’s Circle. In February alone, we have held two training sessions and have matched scores of 3Gs with the program’s survivors, many of whom are homebound. Aside from giving survivors enormous satisfaction from knowing their Jewish legacy lives on in the younger generations, this program also benefits us. We are given a chance to deepen our roots in the Jewish community by connecting directly with survivors whose experiences are some of the most particular and meaningful in the history of our people.

Our group’s two previous Shabbat Dinners were very successful, drawing close to a hundred members on each occasion. Our dinner on March 16 was no different. What was inspiring about this dinner was the large number of guests new to our group. As usual, old friends caught up, new friends were made and our group’s sense of community was strengthened even more.

So far in 2007, 3GNY has provided its members a much-needed discussion group, two educational events, outreach to survivors and a traditional Shabbat dinner. And this is in the first three months alone. In the next few months, we will get together to enjoy some Yiddish cabaret, commemorate the Holocaust at the Annual Gathering, as well as other Yom Ha’Shoah events, and come together for our first intergenerational event: a brunch at the JCC in May. While progress has been made, there is still plenty to do to ensure we all shape and pass on the legacies of our grandparents. ■

A MILLION TOMORROWS

By Lauren Lebowitz

I have always been very passionate about the Holocaust. I have read every book that I can get my hands on, seen every movie and documentary and spent countless hours on the computer researching my Holocaust survivor grandparents’ families. Not a day goes by that I don’t think about the Holocaust and how it has affected my life.

I am also an actress, so you can imagine my excitement when I was asked to perform in a staged reading of A MILLION TOMORROWS, a new Broadway bound musical based on Raoul Wallenberg’s heroic efforts to save Hungary’s remaining Jews during the final 6 months of World War II.

To my surprise, however, my cast mates and I actually did not know much about Raoul Wallenberg. I had read about Sugihara and Oscar Schindler, other heroic righteous gentiles, and vaguely remembered a statue of Raoul Wallenberg at the University of Michigan where coincidentally we both had attended college, he a graduate in 1934 and I, in 1998, but it wasn’t until I began rehearsals for A MILLION TOMORROWS that I was able to grasp who this man really was and what I was about to be part of.

Armed only with courage and determination, Raoul Wallenberg arrived in war torn Budapest in July 1944 with a mission to rescue as many Jews as possible. He quickly hired a staff of over 100 Jews to assist at the Swedish legation and then created and distributed Swedish protective passports called *schutzpässe* to at least 20,000 Budapest Jews. He established hospitals and nurseries, and set up more than 30 safe houses. Using bribery and charm, he did the unthinkable by fearlessly standing up to the Nazis to protect the Jews. During deportations, he would

climb on top of the cattle cars bound for Auschwitz to distract the Nazi guards while his coworkers shoved bunches of protective passes to the people trapped inside. Leaving the Nazis stunned by his actions, he would then jump down and demand that the Jews with passes be released from the trains. During the



death marches, he would hand out food and medicine, and would threaten and bribe the Nazis until he managed to rescue as many Jews as possible. Finally in 1945, after discovering Eichmann’s plan to bomb the Budapest ghetto, he managed to persuade the Germans to call off the attack, thus saving thousands of lives. When the Soviets arrived at the end of the war, he met with them in an effort to begin relief work for Budapest’s Jews, but for reasons still unknown to this day, he was taken into Soviet custody and never heard from again.

In a cast of 36 extremely talented actors, with shivers down our spines, we told this fascinating story. There wasn’t one rehearsal or performance that I didn’t cry. The music was so moving and the story so captivating that the audience left the performances with their jaws dropped, amazed at what they had never known and what they had learned, and now what they would never forget. Day after day, calls came into the writers and the actors. People could not stop talking about Wallenberg and A MILLION TOMORROWS.

While I connected to the subject on a very personal level, I also realized how relevant it was in today’s world. Raoul Wallenberg was a selfless and exceptionally brave hero who went above and beyond the call of duty to protect and save as many Jews as he possibly could. Risking his own life, he saved approximately 100,000 Jews from Nazi persecution, more than were rescued by any other individual, organization or government during the entire Holocaust. In a world where genocide still exists as in Darfur, where 400,000 innocent men, women and children have been killed and over 1 million displaced into refugee camps, we are in desperate need for heroes like Raoul Wallenberg. If we haven’t learned from him then his sacrifices were in vain, and to the over 100,000 Jews he rescued and their descendants, that would be, as my mother calls it, a *shanda*.

As A MILLION TOMORROWS makes its way toward the Broadway stage, I encourage the readers of TOGETHER, their families and their communities to support the effort. The world needs to know about this man to whom we are so indebted.

For more information on becoming involved with A MILLION TOMORROWS visit www.wallenbergthemusical.com ■

To the Editor:

It is quite unfortunate that the *Jewish Journal* chose to reprint the JTA

article by Edwin Black seeming to bring forth the survivors' outrage at the handling of the International Tracing Service Archives by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Black's article is inaccurate and incorrect. In fact, it maligns one employee of the Museum whose work should be celebrated.

Permit me to enumerate.

It is only because the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has pursued the ITS records for almost two decades that they are now on the verge of being made available to the public.

Their availability was contingent on the negotiation of an international treaty among 11 participating countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, United Kingdom, United States) and each affixing their signature to that treaty. To date France, and Italy have not signed but they have pledged to complete their process by autumn. Only an institution with the stature of the USHMM and with the support of the US Congress and the State Department could have achieved this result. Israel alone could never have prevailed, and the Jewish people, operating without the international reputation and intellectual

record of the Museum could not have brought this successfully to a conclusion.

Paul Shapiro, who is the director of the Center of Advanced Holocaust Studies, has devoted heart and soul to these efforts and deserves the collective tribute from survivors and non-survivor alike for his Herculean efforts. He is the hero, not the villain of this process.

Mr. Black has been on a one man crusade for reasons known to him alone to deprive the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum of these archives. He enlisted the support of some survivors and approached several institutions—including the American Jewish University—to become a repository instead of the Museum.

The public should know that the governing of the Archives of the Museum is overseen by an Academic Committee comprised of some of the nation's most distinguished Holocaust scholars. It has copied records from archives throughout the world and made them available to scholars with the most open policy of accessibility and a most advanced technological retrieval system. To suggest that these men and women of distinction would tolerate the sequestering of records is outrageous. The Museum now has a track record of more than two decades of record gathering and fifteen years as an open archive to guarantee otherwise.

Mr. Black has repeated time and again the accusation that the Museum is reticent to put forward the record of major corporations of

cooperation and/or collaboration with Nazi Germany in perpetrating the Holocaust because it might hamper fundraising efforts. Yet he credits the exhibit of the Hollerith Machine on the 4th floor of the permanent exhibition with first informing me of the cooperation between IBM and the Nazis, which triggered his interest in writing on IBM and the Holocaust. He clearly has not seen references to Henry Ford, General Motors and also to many major German corporations within the Museum's exhibition.

His accusation does not comport with my personal experience. In my more than twenty years of association with the Museum—more than a decade on staff, five years on the Council and two years on the President's Commission on the Holocaust—I was never told not to pursue an avenue of research or of exhibition because of fear of offending Corporate Donors. This is at best a fanciful accusation and I know the men and women who work at the Museum would never tolerate such interference in the accessibility to records.

As to the availability of the records, once the treaty is signed by all parties, the records will be available at the USHMM and at Yad Vashem and they will be made available to the non-visiting public as soon as technologically feasible. We should expect no less and we will receive no less.

Michael Berenbaum
Los Angeles, California

Search led to family, diary and a cause

cont'd from page 16

"This is not like the Anne Frank diary," Kellner said. "My grandfather deliberately chose not to write about himself or his daily events — what he had for breakfast that morning."

As Kellner read the entries, he longed for—hungered for—just that: some personal information about his grandfather. Yet the more he read, the more his respect and admiration grew for the man's wisdom and foresight and for his abiding love of country.

Kellner continues trying to use the journal for good. He still hopes to get the document published in English and widely distributed before offering it to a prominent museum, possibly the soon-to-be-built Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg.

Passing along the gift that was given to him will be the last chapter in what is at its core a love story.

Kellner's grandfather was 83 and his grandmother 81 when he returned to Germany in 1968.

Two years before their death, they took their grandson to a singing festival in a majestic castle on the Rhine River. A German choir performed, as did singers from America. That evening, as the joyous music filled the ancient fortress in the town of Mainz, where the couple had lived before the war, Friedrich Kellner felt so moved that he began to sing along.

Some seated nearby shot him disapprovingly looks.

The man who was wounded as a soldier during World War I, this poet and artist who once scuffled with Nazi brownshirts, this eloquent, freedom-loving patriot blithely ignored those who told him to hush. ■

Elie Wiesel Urges U.S. Holocaust Museum to Acknowledge Bergson Group Activists

cont'd from page 4

righteous Jew who worked day and night and did everything he could to save the Jews of Europe, even though some Jewish leaders fought against him." He recalled a postwar conversation he once had with Nahum Goldmann, who along with Wise was co-chairman of the World Jewish Congress. When Wiesel asked Goldmann why he had not more actively pressed the Roosevelt administration for rescue, Goldmann replied, "When you are in the Oval Office, you cannot say 'no' to the president."

Wiesel took issue with Goldmann's statement, recalling that during the 1985 Bitburg controversy, he (Wiesel) had directly challenged President Reagan's plan to visit that German cemetery, where Nazi SS men are buried.

Prof. David S. Wyman, in his remarks, said the Museum is treating Bergson as "persona-non-mentionable." He said the Museum's "curtains of silence" over the Bergson story "must be lifted, not only for the sake of historical accuracy, but because without historical recognition of the Bergson Group's achievements, an important lesson will be lost—the lesson that change is possible in a free society like ours, if dedicated people will work and sacrifice for it."

Two other important Jewish leaders who spoke at the conference and took issue with the actions of the 1940s Jewish leadership:

*Michael Miller, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York City. He described how his father, Rabbi Israel Miller, took part in the Bergson-organized march by four hundred rabbis to the White House in 1943. (Rabbi Israel Miller later served as chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations

and held other important Jewish leadership positions.) Mr. Miller criticized President Roosevelt's Jewish advisers, Samuel Rosenman and Rabbi Stephen Wise, for fighting against the Bergson Group and urging FDR to refuse to meet the rabbis.

Miller contrasted the record of American Jewish leaders in the 1940s with the later generation of Jewish leaders, who took a much more active stance on behalf of Soviet Jewry. He also urged that more be done to study the rabbis' march and its implications, and praised the Wyman Institute for researching the march and using it to teach young people today about how to respond in times of crisis.

*Rabbi Haskel Lookstein, leader of Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun and principal of the Ramaz Day School, who was one of the first historians to write about the rabbis' march (in his 1984 book *Were We Our Brothers' Keepers?*). In his remarks, Rabbi Lookstein said it was "simply wrong" for Rosenman and Wise to persuade the president to snub the rabbis. He also said that his own research on the rabbis' march had influenced him to take a more active role in the Soviet Jewry protest movement in the 1980s. He recalled that in 1986, he initially hesitated to travel to Washington to meet with Secretary of State George Shultz regarding Soviet Jewry because the meeting was scheduled to take place three days before Yom Kippur. "And then it suddenly hit me—these four hundred rabbis had dropped everything, just three days before Yom Kippur in 1943, to go to Washington to plead for rescue of their fellow-Jews—how could I do any less?" ■

The following letters are responses to an article in the *New York Times* and *International Herald Tribune*, "Losing Count" by Thane Rosenbaum, concerning the Claims Conference, Holocaust survivors and their needs. The article is available at www.americangathering.com and links to the *New York Times* website.

To the editor:

While technically true, the essay "Losing Count," by Thane Rosenbaum (Views, June 18) contains serious distortions. The effect of the essay will traumatize Holocaust survivors who will believe they are being victimized again - not by the Nazis but by American courts and Jewish organizations.

To cite just two misrepresentations: The Swiss banks case was a restitution case, not a discretionary fund for all Nazi victims. Of the 1998 settlement of \$1.25 billion, some \$800 million was set aside for those individuals and heirs who had Nazi-era bank accounts in Switzerland; there also were funds for Jews and non-Jews who performed slave labor.

Yes, "a federal judge in Brooklyn distributed 75 percent of the looted assets to survivors in the former Soviet Union, leaving only 4 percent for destitute survivors in the United States, even though roughly 20 percent of the world's Holocaust survivors live in America." However, the looted assets piece was 10 percent of the settlement, and it was distributed on the basis of survivors' poverty, not their residence.

Rosenbaum also distorts the work and assets of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, which successfully secured more than 100 billion Deutsche marks for individual Holocaust survivors since it was established in the 1950s. Yes, it has additional funds at its disposal, which are allocated each year for needy Nazi victims. The distribution is fully documented on its Web site (www.claimscon.org).

Rosenbaum is correct that there are unmet needs. But these are not the exclusive responsibility of the Claims Conference, but of Jewish organizations and social service agencies worldwide.

Marilyn Henry, Teaneck, New Jersey, Author of *Confronting the Perpetrators: A History of the Claims Conference*.

To the Editor:

Thane Rosenbaum is a distinguished writer, a sensitive thinker and a friend. I respect him and his work. I have no doubt that Ira Sheskin is a fine demographer. Yet the quote in June 14th op-ed is manifestly false or absurdly misleading. Rosenbaum writes:

MASS GRAVES UNEARTHED IN UKRAINE

By Vladimir Matveyev

KIEV (JTA) — With the discovery of a mass grave believed to contain the remains of thousands of Jews killed by the Nazis, angry Ukrainian Jewish leaders are demanding their country come clean on the Holocaust.

"During the Soviet era, Ukrainian authorities did not tell the truth about the real number of Holocaust victims" in Ukraine, said Mikhail Frenkel, head of

"After 60 years, Holocaust survivors are inching toward extinction.. According to Ira Sheskin, director of the Jewish Demography Project at the University of Miami, fewer than 900,000 remain, residing primarily in the United States, Israel and the former Soviet Union."

It is generally accepted that before the war there were 9 million Jews living in Germany, the countries invaded by Germany or allied with Germany where the "Final Solution to the Jewish Problem" was imposed.

The figures of Jewish dead advanced by well respected Holocaust historians vary from a low of 5.1 million in Raul Hilberg's work to the commonly used figure of six million. Thus, at the end of World War II there were between 3 million to 3.9 million Jews living somewhere in the world who had lived in Germany, countries occupied by Germany or allied with Nazi Germany.

To presume a survival ratio of 25%-30%, 62 years after the conclusion of the war or 74 years after the rise of Hitler to power in Germany is preposterous. Something is not right with the quote.

It would be unimportant to correct the record, but Holocaust deniers and their allies will exploit this unless it is corrected.

Michael Berenbaum
Los Angeles, California

Dear Editor:

I was pleased to see that the voice of needy Holocaust survivors is being heard by your readers through Thane Rosenbaum's insightful editorial "Losing Count" (June 14, 2007). Holocaust survivors, some of whom have to decide between buying food and buying medicine on a daily basis, are outraged when they hear about a billion dollars here and a billion dollars there, ostensibly allocated for them.

Mistreatment of the Holocaust survivors is not a new story. At first, the German government, which was forced into giving reparations to those whom they persecuted, set up a system whereby the Germans continued to torture the survivors. Many who applied for reparations were subjected to psychological and physical examinations by the very German doctors who maltreated them during the years of German-occupied Europe. Many survivors' claims were rejected on one bogus ground after another. And those who were children were outright denied any reparations. The excuse was that since youngsters could not remember the dates they were incarcerated how could they possibly have been effected? The Germans were a great exemplar for the Swiss banks and the Italian Generali insurance

the Association of Jewish Media in Ukraine. "Today some local authorities are still trying to conceal the numbers."

Ukrainian officials say that isn't the case. "The situation is a rudiment of Soviet mentality and stereotypes," Vasily Gazhman of the Ukrainian State Committee on Religions and Nationalities told JTA.

Some Jewish leaders are insisting that the grisly discovery in the southern village of Gvozdavka be used to teach greater sensitivity regarding the massacre of Jews during the Holocaust and tolerance to younger Ukrainians.

company in "getting away with it."

Survivors who have sought refuge in America expect more justice from the democracy they adopted and strongly uphold and its governmental institutions.

The Germans are now getting the last laugh because Jewish institutions are repeating the numbers game as so eloquently unfolded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

Sincerely,
Dr. Eva Fogelman

Vice-President
American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors and Their Descendants

AN OPEN LETTER

As a Holocaust survivor and one who works intimately with the Jewish Claims Conference as its treasurer, I know that the Claims Conference is not perfect and some mistakes have been made.

On the other hand, there was and is no other organization more actively involved in correcting the injustices committed by the Nazis and their collaborators against the Jews.

The compensation the Claims Conference negotiated over the years with the German government, German industry and other entities resulted in substantial payments to Jewish Holocaust survivors. The efforts of the Claims Conference also resulted in large payments for non-Jewish slave and forced laborers.

Such payments can never compensate us for the atrocities we suffered, but they are a potent symbolic acknowledgment of history's greatest crime.

Today the Claims Conference helps tens of thousands of survivors in need who continue to be ignored by the community at large.

I am proud of the Claims Conference's record, as flawed as it may be.

Roman Kent
Chairman, American Gathering

Rabbi Who Aided Holocaust Survivors Dies

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — Abraham Klausner, a leading advocate for Holocaust survivors, has died. He was 92.

He was the first Jewish chaplain in the U.S. Army to enter the Dachau concentration camp after it was liberated in 1945, his wife, Judith Klausner, said. He collected and published lists of Holocaust survivors in volumes called *Shearit ha'Pleitah*, or Surviving Remnant. He filled the top floor of a Berlin museum with his work trying to reconnect children of the Holocaust to their families, she said. "He saved the lives of thousands of Jewish survivors and brought them together as much as he could with any families that would still be alive."

Abraham Klausner authored a book on the survivors of the Holocaust, including those from the camp at Dachau. He also was featured in an Academy Award-winning documentary, *The Long Way Home*.

Klausner and his wife retired in Santa Fe and held annual Hanukkah parties until 10 years ago, when the rabbi was diagnosed with Parkinson's.

Klausner was born in 1915 and attended the University of Denver and, later, Hebrew Union College.

He was the leader of Temple Emanu-El in Yonkers, N.Y., for about 25 years, until he retired in 1989.

MAX SILBERNIK
Max Silbern timer, born June 10, 1908, died May 27, 2007, two

weeks shy of his 99th birthday. The quintessential entrepreneur and gentleman, Max Silbern timer had one priority in his life and that centered around the care, love and responsibility he felt for his family. Prior to the war, Max owned a shoe factory and after the war he came to Chicago and started a chain of women's clothing stores together with his two best friends and partners, Sam and Seymour Weintraub. Together they invested in nursing homes and a variety of other endeavors.

Of greatest significance to Max was the role he played immediately following the war in the development of the Central Jewish Committee with Yosel Rosensaft and Sam Weintraub. The three men organized a section of the army barracks adjacent to Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp, where they were liberated, and created a life after the great tragedy of the Holocaust. Collectively, they arranged for food, clothing, shelter as well as developed documents and passports for the survivors to gain passage to America. Max's brother, Isiek, was also instrumental in organizing a Jewish Theatre that performed around Europe.

Max was a well educated, well respected, observant

Jewish man who was extremely committed to his family and to his friends. He left an indelible mark on the world.

LIVIU LIBRESCU

Among the 32 people killed by a lone gunman at Virginia Tech was 77-year-old engineering professor, Liviu Librescu, a citizen of Israel. According to eyewitness accounts, Librescu ran to the door of his classroom and blocked it with his body – preventing the gunman from entering but getting shot to death himself as a result.

Librescu is survived by his wife of 42 years, Marlena, who was with him in Virginia, and sons Aryeh and Joe who are in Israel. The Librescus are Rumanian Jews who came on aliyah (immigrated to Israel) in 1978 – after then-Prime Minister Begin interceded on their behalf with the Rumanian government. The couple went on a sabbatical to the United States in 1986 and had been living there ever since.



U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum grants \$18,000 scholarship in memoriam

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum will grant a onetime \$18,000 scholarship in memory of the survivor who died protecting students during the Virginia Tech massacre. The scholarship in memory of Liviu Librescu, a Romanian-born Israeli citizen who taught at Virginia Tech, was announced during the "Transfer of Testimony" ceremony, an annual event that allocates scholarships to ten high school students from across the United States based on their essays on the Holocaust. During the week-long event, survivors of genocide shared their testimony with the students. This year, students heard from Holocaust survivors as well as survivors of the Darfur genocide. Librescu's widow Marlina attended the ceremony granting the scholarship to one of the ten students, her last event in the United States before moving back to Israel.

MEMORIES OF MY PARENTS

By Halina Rosenkranz

Sylvia and Max Prypstein passed away last year, within four months of one another. They would have celebrated the 60th anniversary of their liberation and their marriage. Sylvia was 78 years old when she died February 25, 2005; and Max was 84 years of age when he died June 27, 2005.

Sylvia was eleven years old when the Germans invaded Poland and destroyed her home town, Janow. For the next three years, she ran and hid with her parents and three younger sisters. The family survived on the meager earnings of odd jobs which barely paid for the morsels of food they needed to get through each day. Sylvia, blond hair and blue eyed, often removed her arm band and mingled among the Poles in search of work to provide for her family.

In 1942, it became increasingly more difficult for the family to stay together. Sylvia's mother was frantic and urged all her children to run, "Go where your eyes take you." Those were the last words Sylvia heard spoken by her mother. While running blindly through a field of tall grass, the girls lost sight of each other. Suddenly, worn out and frightened, Sylvia found herself alone in the darkness as she cradled herself to sleep. By morning, she awoke to the familiar sounds of sheep grazing in the field.

The horror of the previous day seemed to disappear in the cool morning air. However, reality struck, when the young sheep herder said, "Did you see what they did to all the Jews yesterday? They killed them." Sylvia became despondent and hopeless. She was ready to turn herself over to the Germans and suffer the same fate as her family. And then, in the distance, she saw a little girl in a red sweater. As she slowly approached her, Sylvia realized that it was her younger sister, Libby. From that moment, with staunch determination, Sylvia

resolved to do everything in her power to assure their survival.

Sylvia, with her Aryan features and fluent German, registered herself and her sister for work detail in Germany. She knew that their only hope for staying alive was to leave Poland, so as to better conceal their Jewish identity. For almost one year Sylvia worked as a translator in an aluminum factory. However, in 1943, Sylvia and her younger sister were denounced as Jews by a fellow worker—for reasons unknown. After three days of brutal interrogation in a German prison the girls were sent to Auschwitz where they remained for nearly two years.

In January 1945, Auschwitz was evacuated, and the infamous death march, from Poland to Germany, began. Sylvia, with her younger sister by her side, both starved and frail, marched, through the snow and ice of winter to the rain and mud of spring, until liberation: May 8, 1945. Sylvia, age 17, and her sister, age 15, were now free but alone. Their parents, five siblings, aunts, uncles and cousins all perished.

Max was born in Baranovichi, Poland. In 1939, at 18, he was drafted into the Polish army. Max was taken prisoner, along with thousands of others. The Jewish soldiers were separated and Max spent the next five years in several concentration camps—Majdenak, Buchenvald, Budszen, and Auschwitz. He attributed his survival to his skill as a tailor—"The needle saved my life," he frequently said and would follow that comment with a short anecdote:

"I was sent to Majdenak Concentration Camp after three weeks of hard labor—out of 350 men only 18 survived. While being examined—to see if we were still fit to work—they asked us what skills we have. Knowing I could never survive another work detail outdoors, I immediately stepped forward and said I am a tailor. Now I had to prove myself. The commanding officer placed me in a room with needles, thread, material and a sewing machine. After

I took all the necessary measurements he said 'I will return in the morning and decide whether you will be my tailor or—and he gestured death.' Now my only thought was to put all my energy into making this suit. I worked through the night—no food, water or sleep. Totally exhausted I stood nervously at attention as the commandant tried on his suit and gazed at his reflection. It was hard for me to know what he was thinking. After what seemed like hours, he said, 'you are now my tailor.' So you see, the needle saved my life."

This story was just one of many where Max's life literally hung by a thread. He accredited having survived his traumatic ordeal to luck, faith in God, a strong will to live and, having had the good fortune, to have a skill deemed useful by the Germans.

In March, 1945 Max's harrowing, six-year journey through hell ended when he was liberated by the Russians. He emerged as the sole survivor of his entire family—eight siblings, parents, grandparents, and dozens of aunts, uncles and cousins—all victims of the Shoah.

Sylvia and Max met in Poland shortly after the war and married October 12, 1945. They had two daughters: Ella and Halina. Max supported his family as a self-employed tailor and Sylvia, right there by his side, spent time working in their shop, as well as maintaining the household.

Upon retirement, Max devoted his time to conducting daily religious services at the neighborhood temple. As the son and grandson of a rabbi, Max fulfilled his family legacy. Sylvia devoted her time participating in Holocaust Survivor groups and sharing her Holocaust story in schools speaking to students to honor those who were lost. Sylvia and Max leave behind their two daughters, and three grandchildren. They will always be remembered as the couple who loved to dance, appreciated life and emanated warmth and courage.

PLEASE SEND ALL RESPONSES TO allgenerations@aol.com.

From Melanie, a Survivor in Michigan:

I was born Melania Weinberger in Letinya Michalany, Slovakia in 1924. From the ghetto I was transported to Auschwitz (Lager C). I was liberated in Bergen-Belsen by the British. I am looking for anyone who may have known my family.

□

From Abe, a Survivor in California:

My name is ABE GOLDSTEIN. I am a Survivor, born in Chrzanow, Poland in 1928. I survived many KZ camps, and I presently reside in California, USA. I am continuing to search for information about my family who perished during the Holocaust. My father's name was IZAK GOLDSTEIN, my mother's name was ITKA GOLDSTEIN, and my sister's name was HANDLE GOLDSTEIN. I believe that my father had a brother, WOLF GOLDSTEN, whose wife was ESTER, and they had a daughter whose name I do not remember, but I believe it was Bella. I know that my cousin survived the Holocaust and was planning to migrate to Israel, but we lost contact. If you have any information about my missing relatives or if you have encountered any of my family anywhere I would appreciate hearing from you.

□

From Gittel, a Survivor in Illinois:

I have (had) an uncle and aunt living in Berlin, Germany. Several years ago before John Fink died, he called them for me to see if they are still alive. They were, but said, they are sick. I have lost touch with all my relatives (the few there are) over 10 years ago. Is there anyone that can check on this for me? I am one of the youngest survivors and lost my parents to Auschwitz when I was 3 months old.

□

From Judy, a Survivor in New York:

I am searching for a friend that I went to school with in 1948 in Stuttgart, Germany. The name of the school was Bialik run by the Sochnut for DP children. Rywka Weinberg was my classmate's name. She was slight, blond, and very smart. I heard that she and her father left for Israel, and as an adult she became a college professor. My name then was Irka (Yehudit) Hechtkopf. It's been along time since then, but Rywka, where are you?

□

From Suzanna, a 2G in California:

My mother was born in Warsaw, on April 16, 1917. Her name was Rajzla-Roma Talasiewicz. Her mother's name was Bluma Symehause Talasiewicz's. Her father's name was Pinkus Talasiewicz. She and her five siblings lived in a Jewish neighborhood in Warsaw, at 54 Nowolipki Street. On November 7, 1939 my mother, together with brother Sevek and sister Pola, made their way to the Russian side, leaving behind one brother and two sisters in Warsaw. Her brother, Adek Talasiewicz, had one five-year-old daughter, Bluma. Her sister, Sala Talasiewicz-Gasfelt, had two sons, five-year old Pinkus and four-year old Guntek. Her sister Andzia Talasiewicz-? had a four-year-old son Pinkus and a five-month-old baby daughter, Bluma. They all lived on Mylnej Street in Warsaw. As for my father, Abram Eibuszyc, all I know is that he was born in Lodz in 1911. His father's name was Icek Ejbuszyc and his mother's name was Ita Grinszpanhorf.

My mother and my father survived Uzbekistan; places like Guzary, Gitap and Karsi. They came there around January 1942. I am searching for one of my mother's brothers with whom she escaped to Russia. His name was Sevek Talasiewicz. While in Russia my mother's brother Sevek was arrested by the Soviet Secret Police in May of 1940 and sent to Archipelago Kotlas for five years (Siberia labor camps). He served 20 months in Kotlas and was released to fight the advancing German army in November 1941. My mother had contact with her brother for the last time before he left for the front. Around the beginning of December 1941, he wrote a letter to her before she left the city of Saratov (she left in December with the 5 Division of the Polish Army and traveled to Uzbekistan). He wrote to her from the city of Astrakhan. Is there any one out there who knew him? My mother also had seven cousins in Moscow she was last in touch with in the fall of 1941. She also had cousins who left for France in the mid thirties. I am looking for any relatives or any one who knew my mother's or my father's people.

□

From Suzanne, a 2G in Michigan:

My girlfriend's father recently passed away and right before he died he told his family that he always wondered what happened to his sister. Her name was Suri Jegergarn from Bilgoray, Poland. Her father was Chaim Jegergarn. If anyone has any information, please let us know.

□

From Meyer, a 2G in New York:

My father, Lazar, was from the Carpathian Munkacs area and lived in Ungvar. During the war he lost his first family. He was in a labor battalion and in Budapest.

My mother was also from the same area in Budapest. I recently became aware my father had another son, Hermann Tzvi Apfeldorfer, born 1931 in Ungvar/Uzhorod. He was a survivor of Auschwitz until the death marches where he was last seen; we don't know what happened next.

□

From Arnie, a 2G in Connecticut:

My father would enjoy being in contact with others who survived the war in Fergana and Andyzan. He spent time in other places but in these two the most. His name is Irwin Lehrer born Yisroal Bar, Alter was added when he was young and very ill. In Russia he was called Mishe. He is from Borislav, (then) Poland.

□

From Melissa, a 2G in New York:

Would anyone have any knowledge of my late uncle Paul Beckman? Paul and my father (Philip aka Rafal Beckman) grew up in Krakow. In 1942, Paul worked in the German hospital unloading patients. He escaped from the transport area when he was selected for transport from the Krakow Ghetto. Under the name of Jan Siwek (forged papers), Paul joined the Polish underground (AK). Paul (aka Jan) worked in the Warsaw ghetto rescuing people. He returned once to Krakow with an injury and then went back to Warsaw. Paul disappeared during the Warsaw uprising.

Any information would be appreciated by my father and me.

□

From Menachem, a 2G in Israel:

My mother was born in Saloniki, Greece in June 1936. She left Greece (with her parents and older brother) at the end of 1936. However, all of her mother's family—the RUBISA family—stayed in Saloniki, and were all taken by the Nazis to Auschwitz, where they were all killed, except for one brother who returned to Saloniki after the war. His name was Albert Rubisa (he died in Saloniki). I am searching for anyone who knew the RUBISA family there.

□

From Janice, a 2G in Florida:

After years of admiring everyone else's family search questions on Allgenerations, I finally have a BIG one of my own. I had the amazing discovery that an aunt of my father's (my father is Morris/Moshe Friebaum, also Freibaum and Frajbaum), is a survivor from Warsaw) may have actually survived the war. Previously we had believed only my father and one other aunt survived in his immediate and hugely extended family. He lost all parents, grandparents, aunts (except the aforementioned), uncles, cousins...everyone. In the Pages of Testimony on Yad Vashem's web site I found forms that were completed for some of my father's deceased family members. The woman who completed the forms appears to be my father's aunt, BLUMA OSTROVER. My father recalls his aunt Bluma (or Bleema) leaving Warsaw around 1939 for the Soviet Union with her husband and young son. He believes her married name, then, might have been Goldberg. He presumed she and her family died somehow. But if this Bluma Ostrover who completed these forms in 1957 in Israel was indeed my dad's aunt, apparently she survived and remarried (an Ostrover). While it is highly unlikely she is still alive (she'd be in her upper 90's, at least), she likely had children and grandchildren. My father and I would like so much to try to find these relatives. Does anyone out there know of an Ostrover in or from Israel? Finding and meeting this little branchlet of our ravaged family tree would be such a gift.

□

SEEKING FAMILY FROM KOSICE

Awhile ago, we sent out a SEARCH inquiry from someone looking for family from Kosice. Marianne Meyer, a 2G in Princeton, New Jersey, was kind enough to forward the e-mail to a friend of hers, Bernie Friedman, from Kosice. Bernie responded and said he would like to meet the person who had inquired about Kosice and to please contact him by e-mail and he will give him/her a little more information about his family background. He remembers going to school and *cheder* with some Friedman boys up until 1944. He said that they might have been Judith Friedman's relatives. The boys' father had a factory on Zsriny Street. If you were the person inquiring about Kosice, please let me know.

cont'd on p. 23



From Lev, a 2G in Michigan:
Does the name Frieda Zewin ring bells for anyone out there in the survivor or 2G community? She immigrated to Australia on February 21, 1951 from France on the SS Protea. She may be/have been a missing

relative. <http://www.levaphael.com>

From Sara, a 2G in Florida:

MY FATHER'S NAME WAS LEJB SOLC (SOLZ/SHULTZ/SOLTZ/ KAPCICK/ KAPCHICK). HE HAD A BROTHER WHO IS NOW DEAD NAMED ELIAS.

MY GRANDPARENTS' NAMES WERE WOLF AND CHAJA. HE USED TO LIVE IN WILNO. I KNOW HE WAS MARRIED BEFORE AND HAD TWO DAUGHTERS, THE LITTLE ONE WAS NAMED SARA. THAT IS THE ONLY THING I KNOW. MY MOTHER'S NAME IS BECIA (BACIA). SHE WAS BORN IN A TOWN CALLED BIENIAKONIC/BIENIAKONE (SP?). MY GRANDPARENTS' NAMES WERE JANKIEL AND LEA LEVINE (LEWINE) WHO HAD SISTERS AND A BROTHER WHO IS NOW DEAD, CALLED BORIS STULL (STUL), AND A LIVING SISTER NAMED SONIA MARKO. HER MOTHER USED TO HAVE A TEA SALOON OR CAFETERIA OR BAKERY, AND ONE OF MY UNCLES USED TO BE OR HAD A BUTCHER SHOP. I KNOW SHE HAD A FRIEND CALLED CHARLES MEKEL OR A RELATIVE - I AM NOT SURE. ANOTHER ONE, KASRYEL MEKEL. AND MAYBE ONE NAMED BECIA MEKEL. ALSO THEY BELONGED TO THE BIELSKY BROTHERS.

From Mary in New Hampshire:

The relatives from Chmielnik were Midla Chaya Mendrowsy (married name Herszenhorn) and her daughters, Surah, Shaindel, Chana and perhaps Chava. There is a Page of Testimony on her in Yad Vashem by Roza Tzekher, who I think was in Israel. My husband's great grandmother's name was Chaya Sure or Chaya Golda, married name Lichtenstein, who lived near Szczecin or Czerwinski, Poland, who is believed to have died at Auschwitz. Lastly, Ethel Henna Cynamon (married name Salzburg)—she lived in Lodz before the war with at least two boys. She and her husband, Szmul, owned a knitting factory there. He was out of the country when the Germans invaded and ended up in South America. I found Etlá's name on the list of Lodz ghetto residents on Yad Vashem's web site. Thank you for any assistance you are able to provide.

From Naidia Woolfe, a 3G in San Francisco, California:

Re: my "lost" KUJAWSKI ancestors from Lodz, Poland. Thanks to you and Allgenerations, I'm now hoping to hear from others who might be related to my family. I'm also trying to determine whether any of my maternal grandfather's family from Karczew, Poland survived the Holocaust. My grandfather was Israel Drozdiasz, who left Poland around the turn of the 20th century with wife and two children—long before the atrocities of the two world wars. Israel and wife Sarah Rachel (nee Safirstein) lived for many years in the north of England. My mother was born there. Grandfather's siblings were Mayer Shmuel (born 1869), Udel (or Adele), born 1870, Yankel (Yaakov/Jacob), born 1876, Blima (born 1879) That's all I know about them—don't know whether any of them (or their descendants) were still in Poland (or elsewhere in Europe) up to or during the WWII. The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names reveals several Jews of the same or similar surname (Drozdziarz) who perished in the Shoah. I have noticed that Shoah Victim Shalom Drozdziarz's daughter Bluma Bornshtein, who submitted the testimony to Yad Vahem, had the same name as my grandfather's sister—Bluma (or Blima).

From Agi Grossinger, a Survivor in San Jose, California:

I'm sending this search to you for my cousin, Emery (Imre) Grossinger, a young Hungarian survivor. He is searching for Jerome Rosenthal who liberated Mauthausen by accident (he sort of stumbled on it with a group of officers), one to two days before the 11th Armored Division officially came in. When the German guards disappeared, Emery was outside and he started a conversation in Yiddish and took a picture with him in front of a pile of bodies. Emery wasn't even 13 yet; his birthday was on May 9th, which should have been his bar mitzvah day. Emery started searching for him in the last few years. Recently they found a web site: http://www.gusen.org/kosiek_1x.htm which substantiates everything he remembers.

From Abraham Shain (formerly Szajnfuks), a survivor, in Oak Park, Michigan:

My name is Candice Pollock-Shain and I would like to submit this letter on behalf of my grandfather, ABRAM SHAIN (formerly Szajnfuks), so that he could possibly find his lost relatives: My name is Abram Jakob Szajnfuks. I was born in Warsaw, Poland on December 21, 1922. My address at the time was Browarna 20, apt. 10. My family members were my father, Berek, mother, Alta Moser, sisters, Chana Itah and Toba Sura, and brother, Mojsze Lajzer. I had to leave on November 8th, 1939, to run away from the Germans to the Soviet Union to save my life. I fled to the Russian border and went by train to Bialystok to find work. I then took a cattle train on the 29th of December, 1939 to Magnitogorsk, where I worked until 1945. The worst of my suffering was the homesickness that I felt for my family whom I left in Warsaw. I know that all of them didn't survive in the Warsaw Ghetto. I lived in Lvov from 1947 until 1957. After Poland and the Soviet Union agreed on the repatriation of Polish citizens, I moved to Wroclaw with my wife and two children, until 1964, when I emigrated to the USA and settled in Detroit. In 1970 we became US citizens and changed our last name from Szajnfuks to Shain. I am desperately looking for anyone from my family. Maybe someone knows about them and/or cousins. Their last names are: SZAJNFUKS, MOSTEK, CUKIERMAN, SEMIATYCKI and WALISZEVER. All of them were from Warsaw, Poland.

From Barbara Brandstatter Bass, a 2G in Jupiter, Florida:

1. Anyone know of anyone who arrived in New York on the S.S. *Ernie Pyle*?
2. The name BRANDSTATTER familiar to any survivor or survivor's children?
3. In Australia, anyone know of a Michel Milewski who had been Weissberg in Krakow?



From Gershon Lehrer, a 3G in Antwerp, Belgium:

Does anyone know the family PACKTER and the family GERSTNER who lived in Enschede? My mother, Ruth Packter, is his daughter.

From Naidia Woolfe, a 3G in San Francisco, California:

I'm trying to determine whether any of my KUJAWSKI ancestors survived the Shoah. My grandfather Simon (Yehoshuah) KUJAWSKI emigrated from Poland for England circa 1895. He left behind his parents Itko and Raca, brother Pinkus and two sisters. I just discovered that my father's cousin Jakob KUJAWSKI, who was born in Lodz in 1891, immigrated to the U.S. in 1920. There he stayed with an uncle (Jakob SUSSMAN) in Paterson, NJ. (I believe that Jakob may have changed his surname to WINTER after settling in the U.S.) Jakob's brother Wolf (known as Willie) KUJAWSKI and wife Ryfka (Regina) also immigrated to the US (after a year's stay in England in 1939-1940), arriving at the Port of New York in September 1940. Finding my father's two (paternal) cousins in the US was the first proof I've had that any of the KUJAWSKI family left Europe before WWII. I'm hoping that other members of my grandfather's family survived the Holocaust. Part of my problem is that I don't know the names of any other (possible) family members who were still in Poland (up to the time of the Nazi occupation). A few years ago I received a 5-page list from Rabbi Schachner at Yad Vashem but was unable to identify any of the Kujawskis on the camp deportation list as members of my family from Poland.

From Pola Zylber Bichman, a Survivor in Buenos Aires, Argentina:

SEARCHING FOR MY SISTER, SARA ZYLBER. I am Pola Zylber, a Holocaust survivor. I live in Argentina and am searching for my sister, who I believe is alive. We were born in Svolen, Poland, I in 1928. My parents were Abram Zylber and Rebeka Zalcman, my sisters Rosa, Sesha and Sara (born in 1931). I am sure Sara is still alive because at the Radom concentration camp she was looked after because she was so young by a policeman called Paul Grynwald, also known as Pavelek, in Block #2. This man went to live in Miami, Florida. I have been unable to locate him. He must know something about my sister.

From Herta Griffel Baitch, a Survivor in Baltimore, Maryland:

I came to the USA at age seven, with eight other children from Vienna, through the German Jewish Childrens' Aid Society. We arrived in NY in December 1940 on the SS *Excambion* after traveling from Vienna thru Berlin, Spain and Lisbon. On the list of nine names of the children in my group who left Vienna, including the Friedmann sisters, are also three other girls who I have not been able to locate: CAECILE POLLACK, MELANIE HOLDER, and SUSANNE STADLER. Susanne was 15, and Caecile and Melanie would have been about 13. I was the only one who was taken to a foster home in Baltimore, the other children were sent to other cities across the USA to relatives or to other foster homes.

Please Help Update the National Registry of Jewish Holocaust Survivors

The files of The National Registry, including the photos, have been transferred to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., where they will be preserved for generations to come. They are located on the 5th floor of the Museum. Visitors are welcome.

Now, more than ever, we are continuing our efforts to complete the information about the survivors and their families, to add photos and names not yet listed, as well as documentation.

It is our goal that every survivor should be included in the Registry. In this effort, we are fully cooperating with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

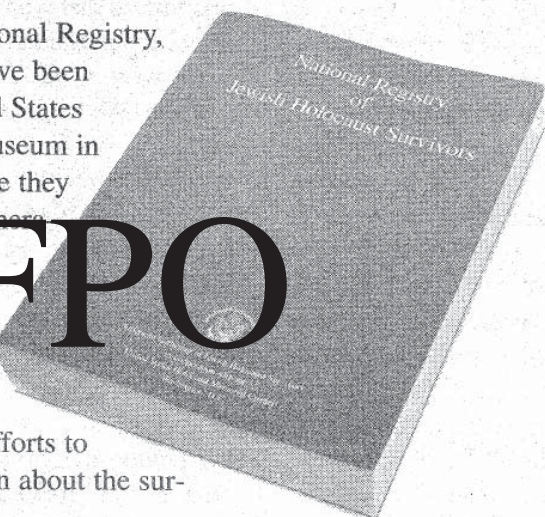
To obtain forms for entry into the Registry, and for further information please write to:

American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors
122 West 30th Street, Suite 205, New York, New York 10001

History will need this information – the testimony of eyewitnesses.

Your Children, Grandchildren and Future Generations will look for your records

FPO



Special “Matzevah Marker” Available for Survivors’ Graves

Survival has placed upon us the responsibility of making sure that the Holocaust is remembered forever. Each of us has the sacred obligation to share this task while we still can. However, with the passage of each year, we realize that time is against us, and we must make sure to utilize all means for future remembrance.

A permanent step toward achieving this important goal can be realized by placing a unique and visible marker on the gravestone of every survivor. The most meaningful symbol for this purpose is our Survivor logo, inscribed with the words HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR.

This simple, yet dramatic, marker will reaffirm our uniqueness and our place in history for future generations.

Our impressive MATZEVAH marker is now available for purchase. It is cast in solid bronze, measuring 5x7 inches, and can be attached to new or existing tombstones. The cost of each marker is \$100.00. Additional donations are gratefully appreciated.

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122 West 30th Street
New York, NY 10001
Please allow sixty (60) days for delivery.



An Appeal to Our Readers

Our records consist of 175,000 survivors, the only database of its kind worldwide.

For years we have been disseminating our publication, *Together*, free of charge to survivors, descendants, and the Jewish community at large. It has been our contribution to the clarion call to “never forget” and to offer our readers as much information as we can gather to reflect the current state of affairs of Holocaust-related issues. But as with all things, our resources dwindle. And so, we have come to ask for support from our readers to help defray the costs of production and mailing. Please make a meaningful, **tax deductible contribution** payable to the “American Gathering” and forward it to the address below. Thank you.

send to: American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors
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