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ANNUAL SPRING LUNCHEON OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM

“MAY YOU GO FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH”



ELI ZBOROWSKI, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem

It is difficult to believe that 30 years have passed since a few of us came together to begin what is now the American Society for Yad Vashem. From the modest parlor meetings held in the homes of survivors in New York and New Jersey, we have grown to almost 150,000 supporters all across the country.

I would like for a moment to reflect on those early days. There is a Yiddish expression that says *yeder onhoib is shver* – every beginning is difficult. While that is true, beginnings are also full of hope and expectation for the prospect of growth and fulfillment. At the same time, both the burden and excitement of any new venture are enhanced by the people with whom you undertake the endeavor.

One of the people who joined us early on was Isak Levenstein z”l, Rella Feldman’s father and

the elder statesman of the Pantirer family. Over the years, we would frequently see the Levensteins at simchas and at Grossinger’s, where survivors often gathered to mark the Jewish holidays. There was a commonality of spirit between myself and Isak. We not only liked each other, but shared similar views in terms of our communal interests and responsibilities. It was through Isak Levenstein’s efforts that the Pantirer family became involved in the American Society for Yad Vashem.

Murray Pantirer z”l was an enthusiastic member of our Board. He regularly attended meetings and made a significant contribution to the Society. Together with his wife, Louise, he was a Trustee of the Valley of Communities — a project which is unique among Holocaust memorials. Two decades later, the Valley stands today, as the only comprehensive commemoration to the more than 5,000 destroyed Jewish communities.

This afternoon, in honoring the Pantirer family, we are paying tribute to three generations of committed and successful leadership in perpetuating the legacy of the Holocaust and the noble cause of remembrance. Louise and Murray Pantirer were ever present at our early parlor meetings and could always be counted on for support of our annual tribute dinners and, in more recent years, our spring luncheons. It is not surprising that their daughter, Elisa Pantirer Pines, has followed in her parents’ footsteps and has made Holocaust remembrance a priority in her life.

Honoring family history and the lessons of the past are as essential to Nicole Pines Lieberman, Elisa’s daughter and Louise’s granddaughter, as they are to the two previous generations. For Nicole, Holocaust education and transmitting the message of “Never Again” are historical imperatives. Her dedicated and effective work with the American Society’s Young Leadership Associates is truly exemplary.

I am pleased to extend a heartfelt “Mazel tov” to these three outstanding women. As future generations continue to endeavor to understand their parents’ and grandparents’ world, their heritage, the Holocaust, and their rebirth to life, I have every confidence that the light that is slowly fading in our tent will be brightly rekindled anew by their heirs. To the incoming leadership, I say, “May you go *m’chail l’chayil* — from strength to strength.”

“COMMITMENT TO HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE BEGINS IN OUR HOMES”



NICOLE PINES LIEBERMAN, recipient of the American Society for Yad Vashem Achievement Award

Thank you Sharon, and Mr. Zborowski, for presenting us with this very special and meaningful award. Mr. Zborowski, your guidance and leadership throughout the years have been an invaluable example for the next generation. Your hard work continues to inspire us daily.

Lucy Pantirer was born in *Rozwadow*, Poland, on February 6, 1928, to Ethel and Leon Lorber. *Rozwadow* was a small *shtetl* with a population of about 2,000 Jews in 1939. She remembers the *shtetl* as mostly Jewish and recalls attending the Orthodox synagogue with her family.

In September of 1939, the Nazis captured *Rozwadow* and kicked her family out of their town. She was eleven years old when World War II began. Her family was sent to the Russian side of Poland, to a city named *Kolonia* where her paternal grandparents lived. Eventually *Kolonia* was invaded, and the Russians shipped her family via train towards Siberia in June 1940. Thankfully, most of her extended family was shipped off together to Siberia, where they lived in rooms next to each other. Sadly, Lucy’s father died during their time in Siberia while at a labor camp.

Lucy spent the war years moving from one city to the next, working in various labor camps, attending numerous “schools” and learning many languages. By the end of the war, Baba Lucy spoke five languages – Russian, Polish, Hebrew, Yiddish, and Uzbek. Even after the war, the three women continued to be wanderers. First, they went to Moscow; from there they planned to go back to *Rozwadow*, to return home, but it wasn’t safe due to pogroms. They instead traveled to *Krakow*, Poland. From there, the Bricha sent them to *Linz*, Austria, to the *Bindermichel* displaced persons camp in the American Zone. In August 1946, she met a young man in the DP camp who gave her some chocolate, a luxury then and still Baba’s favorite treat. The young man, Murray Pantirer, z”l, a Holocaust survivor on Schindler’s List who had lost his parents and all of his siblings, would become her beloved husband of 61 years. They were married in January 1947 and stayed in the DP camp until January 1949, at which time they emigrated to the United States. Her mother and sister followed seven months later.

In a Jewish household, the wife and mother is called in Hebrew *akeret habayit*. This literally means the “mainstay” of the home. It is she who largely determines the character and atmosphere of the entire home. Baba Lucy is not only an *akeret habayit*, but also a true *eshet chayil*, a woman of valor. She dedicated her life to building a home for her family. By choosing to host family events at her home, she set an example early on for her children and other members of the community. Lucy recognized her obligation to instill into her children Jewish traditions, her love of family, and the joy of performing *mitzvot*, by way of her actions. Along with Murray, she raised three children, who were married, and each had three children of their own, and the family, thank God, continues to grow.

Like so many of you here today, my grandmother survived and overcame the painful atrocities of the Holocaust, and then dedicated her life to transplanting and rebuilding her family and her home. Her story, and your story, is in many ways the story of the Jewish people. It is stories like Baba’s that bring home the importance of Yad Vashem. Among many things, Yad Vashem stands as a testament to our past and where we came from, the life and values our loved ones and lost ones carried through the *Shoah*, our nomadic experience as a people, and our struggle to build a home in Israel infused with these values and traditions.

On a personal level, Baba Lucy has also taught me and my mother, Elisa, about the relationships among grandmothers and mothers and daughters. Her example inspires my mother to host family gatherings to celebrate the High Holidays and the *Pesach Seders*. I have learned from Baba and from my mother that instilling values that are passed on to future generations begins in the home. I understand the importance of one day, God willing, instilling these values in my home.

As we join together today to honor three generations of women, and as we continue to stress the importance of Yad Vashem to our children and to our children’s children, let us always remember that a true and lasting commitment to Holocaust remembrance and education, as well as the State of Israel, begins in our homes. Thank you and *Am Yisrael Chai*.

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YOM HASHOAH: REMEMBERING VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST

Israel – The world has not learned the lessons of the Holocaust but Israel has, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said at the beginning of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day.



Holocaust survivor Simha Applebaum lights one of the six torches at the ceremony at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

Speaking at the official state ceremony held at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem honoring the six million Jews murdered by Nazis and their allies, the prime minister said the Jewish state was capable of defending itself against any potential threat.

"We must not bury our heads in the sand and dismiss the threat with cheap words," he said. "Has the world learned the lesson of all this? I doubt it. Have we learned it? I believe so. May the whole world know that when Israel and the Israel Defense Forces say 'Never again,' we mean every word." At the same time, Netanyahu, who referred to Iran time and again throughout his speech, called on the world not to be indifferent to the perils posed by Tehran and hostile Islamist factions in the Middle East.

"It seems the world finds it easier to talk about the lessons of the past than identify them in the present and future," he said. "But we, the Jewish people, cannot ignore the lessons of the Holocaust during these days. Because there are new tyrants who are upon us, and as they deny the Holocaust and call for the destruction of our people, Iran and its satellites – Hezbollah and Hamas – call and openly act to destroy the Jewish state."



Relatives of Holocaust victims lay flowers next to the names of concentration camps, during a ceremony marking the annual Holocaust Remembrance day in the Hall of Remembrance at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, May 2, 2011.

Addressing the international community, the prime minister said, "Civilized people around the world – all those who say they learned the lessons of the Holocaust – they must unequivocally denounce those who call for the destruction of the Jewish state. Iran is even arming itself with nuclear weapons to obtain that goal, and as of this moment the world has not stopped it. The threat to our existence, our future, is not theoretical, cannot be brushed aside, cannot be minimized.

"It stands right in front of us and humankind, and we must stop it."

Iran also featured prominently during the speech delivered at the event by President Shimon Peres. He called the Islamic Republic's leadership a "danger to the entire world."

"Even after the Holocaust, a regime still exists whose leaders publicly deny the Holocaust," Peres said. "This should make every person sick and shake their conscience. The fanatical leadership of Iran is a danger to the entire world, not just Israel, but to every household; a real danger to the future of humankind. The nations of the world will not accept Iran having nuclear arms. They are now being tested."

Holocaust survivor Michael Goldman spoke at the ceremony at Yad Vashem on behalf of the more than 200,000 others who lived through the Nazi genocide and now reside in Israel.

Goldman described how yearning to live in a Jewish state helped him survive his ordeal.

"We never stopped believing in returning to Zion," he said.

"In the hells of Auschwitz at night I quietly sang the song of Avigdor Hameiri: 'On the top of Mount Scopus, shalom to thee Jerusalem.' I never stopped believing our enemies will succumb."

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USA – President Obama marked Holocaust Remembrance Day with a statement "honoring the memory of all those who suffered, died and lost loved ones in one of the most barbaric acts in human history" during the period around World War II.

"More than six decades after the Holocaust, and at a time when Holocaust denial and genocidal ideologies persist, our grief and our outrage over the



President Obama delivers his address on Holocaust Remembrance Day, May 2, 2011.

Nazis' murder of six million Jews and so many others have not diminished," Obama said.

"From this tragedy we see the cost of allowing hatred go unanswered in the world, but from this justice we also see the power of holding the perpetrators of genocide accountable. Remembering these events only reinforces our solemn commitment to confront those who tell lies about our history and to stop the spread of hate in our own time."

The US president added that "We must heed the urgency to listen to and care for the last living survivors, camp liberators and the witnesses to the Shoah."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cautioned that "the lessons of the Holocaust have not been learned," and warned that hatred of Jews "still sweeps across the world... (and) is now directed against their state and its right to exist."

Synagogues throughout Queens observed Yom HaShoah.

At Young Israel of Forest Hills, where Yom HaShoah first started in 1964 and then spread throughout the world, Rep. Anthony Weiner, State Sen. Toby Stavisky, and City Councilwoman Karen Koslowitz gathered with survivors and more than 200 people to remember the

six million Jewish people killed by the Nazi regime during World War II. Weiner said, "There is a tendency to ask, as we get further and further from the Holocaust, why do we need these commemorations? Do a simple search on the Internet. 'Did the Holocaust ever happen?' You will get



From left to right: Michael Gluck, Eli Chomsky, Felice Sendik, Jill Solomon, Dina Spierer, Eugene Gluck, Jean Gluck, Rose Mermelstein.

tens of thousands of articles, books, blogs written denying the Holocaust."

Abe Zeker, a survivor of Auschwitz, Mauthausen and Dachau, who attended the memorial, was 17 and weighed 70 pounds when Gen. George Patton's army liberated Dachau on January 18, 1945. "They came too late," said Zeker, who was accompanied by daughters Susie and Libu.

Eugen Gluck was also 17 while working in pajama uniforms on underground oil tunnels in Austria in conditions as cold as 35 degrees below zero. Of the 2,500 people from his town of Satmar, Romania, only 38 survived.

Louis Katz was working with a Christian woman in Pressburg, Slovakia, delivering food to Jews in bunkers when he was caught by the Nazis in January 1945. He was beaten so badly he was in a coma for two months. He was rescued while an inmate at the Theresienstadt concentration camp on the Czech side of the dismantled country.

An exhibit, "The Auschwitz Album," sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Eli Zborowski on behalf of the American Society for Yad Vashem and co-sponsored by Eugen and Jean Gluck, Alter and Marianne Goldstein, and Allen and Judy Hymowitz, was available to attendees.

"Germans, as a rule, did not take photographs and worked very hard to keep the 'Final Solution' a secret," said Dina Spierer, chairwoman of the evening's event.

She asked those in attendance to "educate the next generation to love your neighbor as yourself," saying it would make it harder for acts of genocide to occur. "Let's teach love and responsibility and make sure this will never happen again."

Several survivors of the Holocaust, who were children at the time of Nazi power, opened a week of Yom HaShoah commemoration by lighting six white candles at the Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie.

The crowd of some 200 was told that while each candle represented one million Jews who were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators, the program focused especially on the 1.5 million Jewish children who did not survive. The Music of the Children of the Holocaust was presented by the Reform Cantors of Chicago, the North Shore Havura of Rabbis, and the Chicago Milwaukee Association of Synagogue Musicians.

Cantor Michael Davis, from the Lakeside Congregation for Reform Judaism,

directed this year's program. He said the childhood theme was chosen because most of the survivors today were children during the devastation. Among the liturgy, several of the songs were lullabies. "Lullabies in many cultures can have a dark meaning too. The mother sings a sweet song to the baby but unburdens herself at the same time," Davis said. "The song I sang, 'Dona, Dona,' is a good example of that. In the context of the Holocaust it is a statement of horror framed as a lullaby."

Lillian Polus Gerstner, Director of Special Projects at the museum, said the commemoration is meant to honor the memories of those who were lost as a reminder for the future.

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Poland – About 7,000 Jews marched to the former German Nazi death camp of Auschwitz on May 2 in memory of the 6 million Holocaust victims.

Participants in the 20th annual March of the Living were carrying Israeli flags. They started from the former camp's gate with the infamous "Arbeit Macht Frei" ("Work Sets You Free") sign.

The crowd walked about 3 kilometers (2 miles) from the red brick buildings of Auschwitz I to the wooden barracks and gas chambers of Birkenau, or Auschwitz II, where a memorial ceremony was held at a monument to the camp's victims.

The march, which is traditionally held on Holocaust Memorial Day, also included some Holocaust survivors.

Between 1942 and 1945, Jews from across Europe were brought to Birkenau by rail and killed in its gas chambers. At least 1.1 million people — mostly Jews, Poles, and Gypsies — died that way or from starvation, disease and forced labor at the camp that German Nazis built in occupied Poland during World War II.

The Auschwitz camp was liberated January 27, 1945 by Soviet troops.

Meanwhile, in Lithuania, dozens of people paid tribute to the nearly 200,000 Jews who died 70 years ago when the Nazis invaded the country.

Waving Israeli and Lithuanian flags, about 100 demonstrators paid tribute to the dead by marching to the Holocaust survivor memorial outside the capital, Vilnius.

Visiting Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon said it was important to remember the 6 million Jews murdered in Europe by the Nazis because "anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and racism ... are still threatening all of us."

Some 90 percent of the country's pre-war Jewish population of 220,000 were murdered by the Nazis and local collaborators — the country's largest loss of life in such a short time. Most of the 70,000 Jews in the capital were killed within a few months in 1941.

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Yom HaShoah commemoration also took place in many Jewish communities around the globe.

In the US commemorating events among other places were held in Bet Shalom Congregation in Minnesota, at East End Temple in Lower Manhattan, at Temple Emanu-El of Newton, MA.

Survivors and witnesses to Shoah and their families were invited to light a candle of remembrance in St. Louis, MO.

A community-wide remembrance of the victims, survivors, and heroes of the Holocaust including memorial candle lighting, Kaddish, music, and poetry took place in Maryland.

JOHN DEMJANJUK FOUND GUILTY OF WAR CRIMES

A Munich court has found John Demjanjuk guilty of war crimes, and sentenced the 91-year-old former autoworker to five years in prison.

Verdict came after 93 court days, including deeply affecting testimony from Dutch survivors and their kin, and monologues by Demjanjuk's chief attorney, Ulrich Busch, who claimed his client was just as much a victim of Germany as any Jew.

Reacting to the early news, Jewish leaders expressed gratitude to the court.

"The most important thing is that he was tried and judged and for the last days of his life is confirmed as a perpetrator," Stefan Kramer, general secretary of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, told JTA in a telephone interview. "How long he is going to serve is secondary."

"Even if there is going to be another appeal, as his attorney has warned, this court ruling now is a very important step in the direction of justice after more than 65 years of injustice," he added.

Demjanjuk, born in Ukraine, was charged with being an accessory to the murder of 27,900 Jews in *Sobibor*. He was present at nearly every court date, always in a wheelchair or hospital bed. He wore sunglasses, and said virtually nothing for the duration of the trial. In April 2010, Busch read aloud a statement in which Demjanjuk called the trial "torture," relieved only by his care attendants.

Survivor Thomas Blatt, one of the rare escapees from *Sobibor*, told JTA during the trial that "All the guards [at *Sobibor*] were murderers... it is enough to prove he was there."

Demjanjuk immigrated to the United States after World War II. He lived in suburban Cleveland from 1952. His later years were spent fighting accusations of involvement in wartime crimes against humanity: he was accused in the early 1980s

of being a guard at the *Treblinka* death camp, but was released from jail in Israel after seven years when another Ukrainian was identified as the guard in question.

The U.S. Justice Department later reported that Demjanjuk was suspected of



John Demjanjuk in the courtroom.

having been a guard at *Sobibor* and was liable for deportation because his U.S. citizenship had been granted based on false information. His citizenship was revoked in 2002 and deportation was approved in 2005. He was deported in March 2009.

Efraim Zuroff, who heads the Jerusalem office of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, told JTA he was pleased with the verdict against Demjanjuk, but disappointed that a German court in *Ingolstadt* decided not to extradite another accused war criminal to Holland.

A spokesperson for the court said that 88-year-old Klaas Carel Faber, convicted more than 60 years ago by a Dutch court of complicity in 22 wartime murders, would not be extradited because Faber's consent as a German citizen was required, and he refused, according to AP.

"This decision is absolutely outrageous," Zuroff said in an interview from Jerusalem. "It makes my blood boil."

Kramer noted that, of 150,000 war crimes investigations in post-war West Germany, only 6,500 resulted in trials.

the Elie Wiesel Institute, Alexandru Florian, told AFP.

The exact number of victims, including women and children, has not been determined, but Cioflanca told AFP, "We found the skulls of at least 35 people, but there were other body parts, so we can talk about at least 40 people."

The victims were buried just a few yards away from thousands more Jews killed during the pogroms.

"I ask the forgiveness of the deceased for the suffering that has been brought to their holy bones," rabbi Meir Schlesinger said, referring to the belief that the remains should have been left where they were originally found.

But Abraham Ghiltman, the president of the *Iasi* Jewish community, said it was a "relief" to see "those whose memory was forgotten" to be lying next to their fellow citizens in the Jewish cemetery.

"We hope that the events we witnessed during the Holocaust will never happen again, neither in Romania nor in the rest of the world," he added.

According to an international commission of historians led by Nobel Peace laureate Elie Wiesel, himself a Romanian-born Jew, between 280,000 and 380,000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews were killed in territories run by the pro-Nazi Romanian regime during 1940-1944.

The *Popricani* mass grave is the first to be discovered since 1945, when 311 corpses were exhumed from three locations in *Stanca Roznovanu*, close to *Iasi*, according to the Wiesel Institute.

YAD VASHEM TORCH LIGHTER TELLS AMAZING TALE OF SURVIVAL

BY GIL SHEFLER,
THE JERUSALEM POST

Smuggled out of a Nazi labor camp as a baby, Dina Buchler-Chen ended up with a gentile family but was found, returned to the Jewish people.

Seventy-one is almost too young for a person to be a Holocaust survivor, which is why Dina Buchler-Chen's unlikely story stands out among those of the six people chosen to light a torch at the official memorial ceremony at Jerusalem's Yad Vashem on the eve of Holocaust Remembrance Day.

"I don't remember the hardest part of being with my mother and grandmother in a concentration camp," she said over the phone, as she made her way to the rehearsal for the ceremony at the Holocaust memorial museum. "But I have an emotional recollection: I can't stand the dark and hate loud noises, and that's from there."

In 1941, aged one, Buchler-Chen was deported with her mother and grandmother to *Loborgrad* labor camp outside her hometown of Zagreb, Croatia, which was then part of Yugoslavia. Knowing her child's chances of surviving what lay ahead were nil, Blanka Buchler smuggled her daughter out of the camp in a cotton-padded box with nothing but a note stating her name, her date of birth and the name of a cousin who she hoped would take care of her.

"Somehow my mom managed to smuggle me out – don't ask me how," she said.

The box containing Dina was taken to the Jewish community center in Zagreb, where it was left just outside the entrance. "The staff initially feared it was a bomb," she said. "Through the note they knew who my cousin was. The note is still kept at Yad Vashem."

Blanka Ziczer-First, her mother's cousin, whose name was on the fate-determining note, was a nonmarried opera singer with no experience rearing children.

Fearing her own life might be in danger if she kept the baby, she sought out the help of a neighbor with ties to the resistance. Through her, Dina was placed in the care of a woman in the countryside who was paid for her services.

"But that didn't work well," Buchler-Chen said. "After a while they checked up on me and saw how neglected I was. She kept me locked up in the attic and hungry. People ask me what my first memory is and it's of the ceiling of that house. I have no better memories."

Luckily, she was relocated, otherwise she might not have survived. This time Buchler-Chen was placed with Djina-Gertruda Beritic, a Catholic woman, who raised her alongside her two sons as her own.

"They were so beautiful, they looked like Hollywood movie stars," said Dina, who was christened Maia, or Maria, at the local church. "They took me in and baptized me. On my birth certificate I have a Star of David and the signature of a priest and

bishop of my baptism. These good gentiles cared for me."

She lived a low-key and happy life until the war ended, she recalls, staying away from danger and adopting her surrogate family's traditions.

"I was a Catholic, I admit it," she said. "Later I would sometimes cross myself in secret, but that ended pretty fast."

Tragically, Blanka Buchler's fears were justified. She didn't survive the war nor did her husband or anyone from Dina's immediate family. But cousin Blanka Ziczer-First, the opera singer, did, and came back to claim Dina after the war ended.

"My cousin came and snatched me away," she said. "I wasn't Maia or Maria. I was Dina and a Jew. It was very hard to get used to."



Dina Buchler-Chen.

In 1948 Dina was taken to Israel, and she went on to build her life in the young country. She studied biochemistry and microbiology, got married and raised a family of her own. Now retired, Buchler-Chen devotes a large part of her time to Hadasah, the women's Zionist group, and helped open a shelter for women in Jerusalem. She has two children and six grandchildren.

"I love being a grandmother," she said.

She has never forgotten the kindness of the Beritics, who took her in all those years ago. Before they passed away she visited them several times in Zagreb, taking her grandchild with her on one occasion. In 1994 the Beritics were recognized as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem, at a grand ceremony held in Croatia.

Buchler-Chen said she doesn't think much of the what-ifs, the endless number of alternate scenarios which just as easily might have played out and led to a reality very different from the one she is familiar with.

In response to a question, she said that if her mother's cousin had not picked her up after the war she probably would have stayed with the Beritics, like an unknown number of orphaned Jews who were placed with gentiles by desperate parents, and been brought up as part of the family.

"I'd have stayed there and become a Catholic," she said. "Perhaps later in life they would have told me who I was. When I went back they reminded me that they put up a photo of my mother by my bed so that I remember her. But these were honest, good people, and such a thing truly exists." concentration camp," she said over the phone, as she made her way to the rehearsal for the ceremony at the Holocaust memorial museum. "But I have an emotional recollection: I can't stand the dark and hate loud noises and that's from there."

GERMANY INCREASES ALLOCATIONS TO SURVIVORS

The new deal reached between Germany and the Claims Conference means that the German government's contribution to homecare funding for Holocaust survivors around the world will rise from \$156 million in 2011 to about \$180 million in 2012. The allocations will rise to nearly \$200 million by 2014.

The Claims Conference will allocate the German government money to agencies around the world that provide in-home nursing and vital help with basic activities of daily living such as eating, dressing and, bathing, and other services that greatly ease the lives of elderly Holocaust victims and enable them to remain living in their own homes.

HOLOCAUST VICTIMS LAID TO REST IN ROMANIA

The remains of about 40 Jews killed during the Holocaust and found in a mass grave were laid to rest on April 4 in an emotion-filled ceremony in northeastern Romania.

Five rabbis from Britain and the United States performed the funeral service under a grey and cloudy sky.

Dressed in black, they carried the remains, unidentified and contained in paper bags and cardboard boxes, and put them into a single grave in the Jewish cemetery of *Iasi*, overlooking the city.

"We have come here to help these people rest in peace. We believe it is God's will," British rabbi Meir Twersky, whose grandparents are buried in *Iasi* cemetery, told AFP.

"We are gathered here today to remember these men, women, and children who were brutally murdered in a forest in 1941 (...) only because they were Jews," Israel's ambassador to Romania, Dan Ben-Eliezer, said during the official ceremony.

According to the Elie Wiesel National Institute, the victims were killed in the summer of 1941 at *Popricani*, close to *Iasi*, by the Romanian army, an ally of the Nazis during World War II.

They were among more than 15,000 Jews killed in *Iasi* during pogroms in 1941.

A Romanian historian, Adrian Cioflanca, found the site thanks to the testimonies of Romanians who had witnessed the killings.

"We will continue the historical research in order to try to determine where the victims came from, whether it was from *Iasi* or the surrounding villages," the director of



BOOK REVIEWS

NAZI PROPAGANDA FOR THE ARAB WORLD

Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World.

By Jeffrey Herf. Yale University Press: New Haven, 2009. 335 pp. \$30.00 hardcover.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN

The VFA (Voice of Free Arabism) broadcast July 7, 1942:

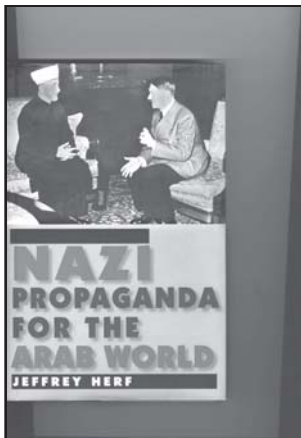
"You must kill the Jews before they open fire on you . . . The Jews are planning to violate your women, to kill your children and destroy you . . . This is your best opportunity to get rid of the dirty race, which has usurped your rights and brought misfortune and destruction on your countries . . . Your sole hope of salvation lies in annihilating the Jews before they annihilate you."

Originally presented in Arabic, this is but a small sampling of the radio material broadcast into the heart of the Muslim Middle East and North Africa by the Nazis during World War II. It is all quite horrifying. It makes one think of what might have happened to the Jews living in those countries — of the 700,000 of them — of the bloodbath that might have been . . . And it makes Jeffrey Herf's book *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* very important. Why? Sadly, few know about this side of the war . . . nor the conquest and subsequent Holocaust Hitler planned there.

Thus, Herf's research in "underutilized and unused archival sources" brings to

light just how many Germans were involved in this push to Nazify the Arab world. We are made aware of the substantial support the Muslims themselves gave this campaign — most especially Haj Amin el-Husseini, the "lifetime" Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. And we see clearly that the failure of the Nazis in this direction was surely not due to lack of trying. From the "Fall of 1939 to March 1945, the Nazi regime broadcast shortwave Arabic programs" to the area "seven days and nights a week." Moreover, this material spread over the airwaves was supplemented by printed propaganda in the form of "Arabic-language leaflets and brochures."

Nor, in fact, was it particularly difficult for the Nazis to attract the Muslims to them and make them their allies. For, cleverly, Hitler's men made it a point of first emphasizing all that the two groups had in common, their "affinities." Once that was done, the Nazis could inject their own brand of poison in this "point of entry" — poison advantageous to them. For example, both the Muslims and the Nazis hated the Jews. The Koran encouraged Muslim hatred by stating that "You will meet no greater enemy of the believers than the Jews." The Nazis here added



that it was the Jews that had actually caused the war because of their Zionist goals — Muslim land in the Middle East, and the more land the better! Furthermore, the Nazis spread the idea that Jews were creating an "army of 50,000" for "eventual use against the Arabs." Hence, they would finally "destroy Islam just as their ancestors had been attempting to do for thirteen centuries." Obviously the truth mattered not at all here.

And speaking of supposed Jewish power, the Nazis continuously told the Muslims, by way of radio and print media, that America was run by the Jews. For that matter they referred to the President as "The Grand Rabbi Roosevelt." In short, America, according to the Nazis, was an enemy to the Muslim world and should be treated as such.

When it came to the British, hated by the Muslims because they were their overlords, the Nazis, who also hated them, told the Muslims that the British were "firm supporter[s]" of future "Jewish exploitation" in their region. Needless to say, this proclamation is particularly thought-provoking when one recalls everything the British did to prevent Jews from getting to

Palestine — all to please the Muslims and keep oil flowing to Britain. Additionally, as the war wore on, Hitler would promise the Muslims their long-awaited freedom from the British. In sum, an Axis victory would bring them their independence. What the Nazis forgot to mention was that they would be the new rulers . . .

Meanwhile, in the midst of all this, the Nazis couldn't stop admiring, or at least appeared to be unable to stop admiring, the Muslim dedication to their religion. The piety. The purity. All this, so unlike the Godless Communists, the Russians, who Hitler's men erroneously claimed had "killed four million Muslims."

In sum, Hitler and his supporters did all they could in the region to spread their kind of hate. And it all might have worked if not for the Axis defeat, first in Stalingrad, and then, more immediately, in 1943 in Tunisia.

Interestingly, Herf claims that "the ideas" spread by "Nazism and fascism ceased to play a major role in European politics after 1945, but traces" of them can still be found among the Muslim countries of the Middle East and North Africa. Listening to some of what comes out of that part of the world today surely validates the author's claim.

Dr. Diane Cypkin is a Professor of Media, Communication, and Visual Arts at Pace University.

THE SONDERBERG CASE

The Sonderberg Case.

By Elie Wiesel. Translated from the French by Catherine Temerson. Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 2010. 178 pp. \$25.00.

REVIEWED BY RABBI ISRAEL ZOBERMAN

With over 50 books to his illustrious credit, Elie Wiesel, who prefers to write in French and have his work translated, continues to bless us at age 82 with his multiple pursuits, including recently as a musician of his childhood songs and melodies. Indeed, if anyone deserves to be known as "Our Teacher and Rabbi" in these unsettling times of post-Holocaust perplexities for Jew and Gentile, it is this humble yet honored survivor. He emerged from the "kingdom of the night" resolved to help save humanity, struggling with his shaken faith in his early classic *Night*, and contending with his brethren's fate in Soviet captivity in *Jews of Silence*, ever faithful to his Jewish moorings and their universality.

Wiesel, a 1986 Nobel Peace Laureate — he should receive one for literature too — is on the very short list of those who serve as humanity's conscience. He courageously speaks for human rights in addition to his Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity, and his academic work as the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities at Boston University. Wiesel is a recipient of the United States Congressional Gold Medal along with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and is the founding chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Museum Council, among

other prestigious honors. He is a humanitarian ambassador par excellence.

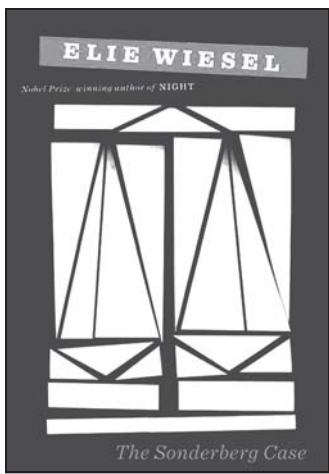
Wiesel's latest literary "home-run," *The Sonderberg Case*, is a suspenseful Holocaust-related novel, testimony to his being uniquely at home both in the vineyard of Jewish knowledge and in more general philosophy and literature and possessing the traditional Jewish penchant for responding to questions with questions, while spreading nuggets of humanizing wisdom. He converses with Talmud and Kabbalah sages and is equally at ease with the likes of Voltaire, Camus and Gogol, masterfully utilizing the literary construction of tales within tales.

The book's protagonist, New Yorker Yedidyah ("God's friend"), gives up at his professor's urging a career on stage for one as a theater critic, teaching us that words count more than theatrical acts in a Jewish context, for "man is a book" (p. 16). Wiesel himself was a journalist in Paris following World War II.

Assigned by his editor to cover the trial of 24-year-old Werner Sonderberg, a German student at New York University who is charged with murdering his uncle Hans Dunkelmann, Yedidyah ponders Werner's seemingly contradictory response of "Guilty...and not guilty" (p. 74).

Hans, who is really Werner's grandpa, is an unrepentant ex-Nazi officer of the notorious *Einsatzgruppen*, boasting to Werner of his murderous record and only regretting that Hitler lost the war with hope of yet a future victory. My own mom's sister with

(Continued on page 14)



WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING

COMMEMORATED IN EVOCATIVE BOOK

Brave and Desperate: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

By Danny Dor, Ilan Kfir and Chava Biran. Ghetto Fighters' House, 2003. 208 pp. \$195.

REVIEWED BY SHELDON KIRSHNER

When Germany conquered Warsaw in September 1939, the city's 360,000 Jewish residents were effectively doomed.

With the Polish capital in their hands, the Germans set up bread and soup distribution centers for its starving population. In a portend of the horrors that awaited Jews, who comprised one-third of Warsaw's population, they were not permitted to join the food lines.

"*Nicht fur Juden*" — Not for Jews — the Germans proclaimed.

In October of that fateful year, the German administrators issued the first of what would be numerous anti-Semitic decrees, all intended to demoralize, weaken, and isolate Jews.

The Germans also humiliated Jews — cutting off the beards of the observant and beating and forcing passersby to dance and sing at gunpoint.

On November 15, 1940, the ghetto was sealed. Shortly afterward, 100,000 Jews from neighboring towns were pushed into what would be the biggest ghetto in Nazi-occupied Europe. Many died of disease and starvation.

In the next three years, the German occupiers methodically deported tens of

thousands of Jews. Further deportations were shelved when the ghetto uprising broke out on April 19, 1943.

On May 16, Jurgen Stroop, the SS general in charge of crushing the revolt and liquidating the ghetto, informed his superiors he had successfully carried out his orders.

These tragic events are recalled in *Brave and Desperate*, published in Israel by Beit Lohamei Haghettaot, the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum.

The original edition, released in Hebrew, came out in 2003 to coincide with the 60th anniversary of the rebellion.

Skillfully edited by Danny Dor and expertly designed by Tzipi Birak-Bizanski, the book is a useful addition to Holocaust historiography.

The text, supplemented by personal accounts, is sharp and precise. The photographs, some apparently never seen before in print, are stark and graphic.

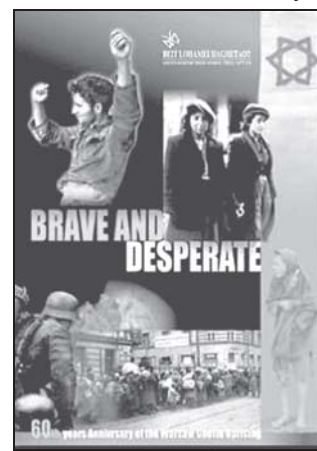
Brave and Desperate, whose title pretty well sums up the emotions that accompanied the uprising,

charts major developments in the ghetto.

On October 3, 1939, four days after the fall of Warsaw, Adam Czerniakow — an industrial engineer who had studied in Germany and who had represented the Jewish community in Poland's Senate — was summoned to *Gestapo* headquarters to head up the new Council of Elders.

The *Judenrat*, in conjunction with a Jewish police force, administered the ghetto for

(Continued on page 14)



HOLOCAUST-ERA SOAP FIND RAISES NEW QUESTIONS

BY STEWART AIN, THE JEWISH WEEK

After Holocaust survivor Joseph Weinberger entered a nursing home, his nephew began cleaning out his Borough Park apartment and discovered an old suitcase containing his naturalization papers, German currency, and a book about the Nazi doctor, Josef Mengele — all relatively standard-issue belongings.

Then Yitzchok Mermelstein reached into a bag and pulled out a mundane artifact, but one with the power to drive home the reality of the Holocaust with the force of a sledgehammer. It was a bar of soap bearing the initials "RIF."

"When I opened the bag and saw 'RIF,' I remembered hearing that the Nazis made Jews into soap, and I thought that maybe this was one of the bars," recalled Mermelstein, 52, of Flatbush.

"I believe I heard about it at the Holocaust Museum in Washington and that Yad Vashem has a couple of bars," he added. "I wrapped it in a towel. Seeing the Mengele pictures and realizing that my uncle used the suitcase when he came to America, I put two and two together."

Mermelstein said he went home and looked on the Internet for information about such soap and saw a picture of a bar purported to have been produced by the Nazis from the bodies of concentration camp inmates. A picture of one of those bars of soap "looked the same as I had, only it had a different number" below the initials RIF. (The initials are believed to be those of a German soap manufacturer.)

Mermelstein said he then visited his uncle in the nursing home but that his uncle, who has dementia, was unable to remember where he got the soap or anything about it.

Mermelstein said that "since I know that human remains have to be buried," he contacted people he knew at Misaskim, an Orthodox Brooklyn-based group that pro-

vides support to families in mourning and other services.

"They asked if it was real," Mermelstein said. "I said I wish it wasn't, but it is. ... My mother was in a concentration camp, perhaps he got the soap from her. ... It's a one in a billion chance you find something like this."

At first there was talk of burying the soap in a dignified ceremony. But as more and more people heard of it, questions were raised about whether the Nazis ever really did use human fat to make soap. The soap, which is brownish in color and measures about two inches by one inch, was then locked up in Misaskim's offices for safekeeping.

A staff member at Misaskim researched the matter and posted a story about it on the group's website. In it, she recounted how Joseph Weinberger had spent the war hiding from the Nazis in cellars and bunkers; the Nazis killed his parents and nine of his 13 siblings.

The staff member, Suri Roth, found that judges in the Nuremberg Trials accepted the testimony from someone who said he had worked at a laboratory that was involved in the production of soap that contained human fat. A bar of such soap was actually introduced as evidence in the trials. Five years ago, that soap was tested by Poland's National Remembrance Institute, which announced that it did indeed contain human fat.

But Roth said Holocaust experts today believe that only a small amount of soap containing human fat was ever produced.

Holocaust historian Deborah Lipstadt told *The Jewish Week* that "there is no proof that the Nazis made Jews into soap in a mass fashion. ... There were attempts, but it was never practical."

She noted, however, that one museum, the Chamber of the Holocaust on Mt. Zion in Israel, actually displays a bar of soap purportedly made by the Nazis from human fat. The museum, maintained by the Diaspora Yeshiva, is located in a cellar and built in 1949. Lipstadt said she knows of no other museum with such a display.

The Virginia Holocaust Museum in Richmond shows footage of a Russian film that was played at the Nuremberg Trials. It shows Russian soldiers coming upon a skeleton in a vat at the Gdansk



Some of the belongings found in a suitcase of Holocaust survivor Joseph Weinberger.

Anatomical Institute, from which it was deduced that the Nazis used human fat to make soap.

Jay Ipson, the museum's founder, said he knows questions have been raised about the veracity of the soap story and that all he is doing is showing visitors what was presented at the Nuremberg trial.

A survivor, Ipson said that after the war many survivors had bars of this soap that they believed contained human remains. He said one survivor who spoke at his synagogue a few years ago recalled seeing survivors burying a number of bars of soap in a cemetery in Munich.

But Peter Black, senior historian at the United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum in Washington, D.C., said questions about the soap are frequently asked

by visitors and that his answer is, "It didn't happen."

"There is nothing we can hold our hats on that would indicate the Nazis tried this even experimentally," he said.

Asked about the Nuremberg Trials, Black said the evidence presented there "gave the rumor some legs." In addition to the Russian film, two British prisoners of war testified that they worked at the anatomical institute, but Black said their testimony was "inconsistent." One of them gave the court the "recipe" that was in the institute for making the soap — and there was no mention of using human remains.

Black said he read the report of the tests conducted five years ago in Warsaw, but he noted, "The forensic work was never released."

Regarding the initials "RIF" on the soap bars, Black said it is widely believed this stood for, "Jews rest in peace." In fact, he said, it was the initials of the soap manufacturer, Reich Center for Industrial Fat Provisioning.

"The Nazis did a lot of things that were very ghoulish, but for some reason the shock value of the soap, of leather goods and lampshades made of human products capture the imagination," Black said.

(Mark Jacobsen's recent book *The Lampshade* is an account of the author's attempt to authenticate whether a lampshade made from human skin could be traced back to the Nazis.)

Black said there is no proof that such objects contain human product "and if it does, we don't know it is from Jews. ... And the difficulty is tying it back to the Nazis. There is nobody who was close enough to have seen the process. There were stories in Romania, Auschwitz and Danzig. But if you follow them to their source, there is nothing."

Mermelstein said he would like to have the bar of soap from his uncle's suitcase tested to see if it contains human fat. If it does, he said, it would be buried with proper respect.

GERMANY STILL KEEPING SECRETS ON NAZI EICHMANN

BY SIMON STURDEE, EJP

Fifty years after Adolf Eichmann went on trial in Israel, Germany is still keeping mum on how much it knew before Mossad agents kidnapped the Nazi war criminal in Argentina in 1960.

Organizers of a Berlin exhibition, "Facing Justice – Adolf Eichmann on Trial," say Germany's *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (BND) foreign intelligence agency refused access to the relevant files.

"We made a request to the BND around a year ago to be able to look at these files. The response was negative," Lisa Hauff, curator at the exhibition at the Topography of Terror museum, told AFP.

This is "absurd" and "outrageous," said Norbert Kampe, head of the Wannsee Conference memorial, which helped on the exhibition at the museum on the site of the Gestapo and SS's former Berlin headquarters.

Eichmann was a key organizer in the deportation and murder of millions of Jews and others during World War II. He escaped from captivity and ended up, like many other war criminals, in Argentina in 1950.

After his capture by Israeli agents, he stood trial in Jerusalem and was executed in 1962.

Freelance journalist Gaby Weber last year won a legal victory forcing the BND to

make available some of its files, which it is now doing, but only step by step.

According to *Spiegel* magazine, they show that the BND, or rather its forerunner Organisation Gehlen, was aware as early as 1952 that Eichmann was in Argentina — eight years before his capture.



A video screen shows Adolf Eichmann during his trial in the exhibition "Facing Justice – Adolf Eichmann on Trial" (*Der Prozess – Adolf Eichmann vor Gericht*) at the Topography of Terror documentation center in Berlin.

This is not that spectacular, observers say, but the BND's reluctance to release these files, and the fact that it is still blocking access to others, has raised suspicions that it may be hiding more explosive secrets.

"I have seen some of the (released) files, and a great deal is blacked out. They are basically just trial documents with very few

interesting things," Weber told Deutschlandfunk radio this week.

The suspicion is that the government of chancellor Konrad Adenauer wanted to prevent Eichmann being captured in case he revealed highly embarrassing details about the pasts of high-ranking figures in the West German elite.

Eichmann's kidnap came at a frosty time in relations with communist East Germany (GDR), which had long accused West Germany of rehabilitating old Nazis in high positions, and at a particularly tense period in the Cold War.

In 1961 the GDR erected the Berlin Wall and the CIA sponsored the doomed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. The following year was the Cuban missile crisis.

"Bonn is on trial with Eichmann," ran the headline of GDR newspaper Neues Deutschland, reporting on what it said was "panic" in Adenauer's government.

The most prominent example was Adenauer's chief of staff, Hans Globke, who had been involved drawing up anti-Jewish legislation under the Nazis. *Spiegel* quoted CIA files as saying Bonn was "on the brink of hysteria."

"Eichmann was like a walking bomb because he knew so much ... and if he had spilled the beans he would have sent quite

a few people into a spin," Weber believes.

The fact that Eichmann in the event kept quiet on this aspect, and on other Nazis in Argentina, raises the suspicion that there was a "deal behind the scenes" between West Germany and Israel, Weber said.

Adding fuel to the fire are accusations that the West German embassy in Buenos Aires appeared to be well aware that Eichmann was in Argentina, despite its claims to the contrary after his capture.

"Nazi diplomats got top jobs in South America (after 1945), particularly in countries run by dictators," said Kampe.

"Every Nazi criminal on the run got their identity papers issued at the embassies, from (Josef) Mengele, the concentration camp doctor, to Eichmann. It cannot possibly be that ... Bonn didn't know about it."

Eichmann's sons applied for passports at the Buenos Aires embassy in 1954, using their real surnames and even putting as their father *SS-Obersturmbannführer* ("SS Lieutenant Colonel") Eichmann, reports said.

"There should be another ruling in the coming weeks that we hope will release most of the remaining files, if not all of them," Weber's lawyer Reiner Geulen told AFP.

A spokesman for the BND, Dieter Arndt, declined to comment while Weber's legal action was ongoing.

SURVIVORS' CORNER

FAMILY GETS FIRST AWARD FOR SAVING OTHER JEWS IN SHOAH

BY NIR HASSON, HAARETZ

Old black-and-white footage on YouTube shows children celebrating at a Purim party in post-World War II Amsterdam. In the silent, four-minute clip posted by Yad Vashem, the kids are dressed up as kings, queens, princesses, and Arab sheikhs, marching in pairs and laughing. Nothing about them indicates they are orphans who survived the Holocaust, which had ended only a year earlier.

The video was recorded in 1946 at the Children's Home of Yehoshua and Hennie Birenbaum, whose children received the Citation of Jewish Rescue, the first award of its kind, on Holocaust Memorial Day. The ceremony was held in the Forest of the Martyrs outside Jerusalem.

The newly created citation, recognizing the heroism of Jews who rescued Jews, is being awarded by the B'nai B'rith organization and the Jewish National Fund.

The ceremony marks the culmination of a decade-long effort to raise awareness about Jews who saved other Jews.

"In terms of research, [study of] Jewish heroism pales in comparison to the Jews' suffering and the Nazis' murderousness," says Alan Schneider, director of the B'nai B'rith World Center in Jerusalem.

Jews cannot be named Righteous Gentiles, he adds.

"Gentiles risked their lives and the Jews were all in danger. But some of them took risks beyond the call of duty and we thought it was necessary to honor them," Schneider says.

The Birenbaums saved not only themselves and their six children, but dozens of orphans.

Before the war, Yehoshua and Hennie Birenbaum, who married in 1927, lived in Berlin. After *Kristallnacht* in 1938, they fled to the Netherlands. When the Nazis occupied Holland, they were sent to the *Westerbork* concentration camp.

The couple set up an orphanage there that was recognized by the camp authorities and by Jewish aid organizations.

Some 300 children lived in the orphanage, where the Birenbaums did everything they could to keep them from being transported to the death camps.



Yehoshua and Hennie Birenbaum with five of their own children.

"My parents used to sneak up to the camp headquarters, see which children were listed on the next transport and try to stop them from being taken," says Sonja Birenbaum, the couple's daughter.

In a report submitted to the Dutch government after the war, Yehoshua Birenbaum wrote: "We'd already succeeded, more than once, to put off children's trans-

ports, even when it seemed like a lost cause. We knew how to find ... people who could help us. Once it was a notary who designed a rescue plan, once it was a doctor who forbade sending the children due to a contagious disease in our hut...."

In one case, Hennie Birenbaum persuaded the camp commander that 50 of the children were actually Christians, born to German soldiers and Jewish women. Equipped with forged documents, she managed to save all of them but one.

The orphanage operated until February 1944, when the Birenbaums and the remaining children were sent to the *Bergen-Belsen* concentration camp.

The Birenbaums set up an orphanage there for 40 children, almost all of whom survived. They reestablished their Children's Home in Amsterdam after the war and in 1950 immigrated to Israel with 15 orphans.

"It was a heartwarming sight, after I returned to Amsterdam, when a child strolling with his mother recognized me and hugged me, beaming with happiness," Birenbaum wrote.

HOLOCAUST REFUGEES REMEMBER "GOLDEN GATE TO FREEDOM"

His father roused Harry Gluckman awake from a deep sleep, urging the 11-year-old to get out of his cabin bed and climb to the deck of the steamship *Heiyo Maru*.

The boy rushed outside to see the Golden Gate Bridge soaring above him. In the pre-dawn darkness of Oct. 21, 1940, he gaped at its beams and towers as the Japanese liner sailed beneath the famous gateway that had opened just three years earlier.

"My father always referred to it after that as 'My Golden Gate of Freedom' whenever we crossed the bridge or came near it," Gluckman said.

The family was among up to 600 Jewish refugees who sailed into San Francisco Bay between 1939 and 1941, fleeing Nazi persecution in Germany, Austria, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, and Poland.

They were part of a largely forgotten Pacific exodus that was much smaller than the stream of thousands of refugees who reached the East Coast.

Gluckman, 82, is one of a handful of surviving refugees in the Bay Area who vividly remembers the transoceanic voyage to San Francisco. The Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation has spent months trying to track down others, hoping to share the little-known stories while there are still people who can tell them.

After the outbreak of war in Europe made escape across the Atlantic Ocean difficult, hundreds of European Jews took advantage of a small window of time when the Pacific Ocean was open to passenger travel.

"In 1940 and 1941, right up to Pearl Harbor, the Pacific was still open," said Eddie Wong, director of the Angel Island foundation.

The Gluckmans crossed most of the world to get to California, fleeing Nazi Germany by way of the Trans-Siberian railroad, then boarding ships in Korea and Japan.

Speaking at his Alameda home on the 70th anniversary of his arrival, Gluckman called the day his "re-birthday."

He clutched a newspaper clipping that showed him wearing knee-high socks, smiling as he stood in a crowd that posed after walking onto a San Francisco pier.

The immigration station opened in 1910. It was a processing point for most of the Jewish refugees who arrived to San Francisco before it burned down and was closed forever in early October 1940, just weeks before the Gluckmans arrived. Many of the Jewish families did not have



Heiyo Maru ship that brought Gluckman family to San Francisco.

the American sponsors they needed in order to get a U.S. visa, but found them by calling or sending letters to American Jews who shared their surname. The Gluckmans' sponsor was a man in New York they had never met, but who shared their last name and agreed to vouch for them if they promised never to contact him for financial help, or even to express gratitude, once they reached America.

"In those early days of the concentration camps, the Germans would let them go if they had a place to go, on the condition they leave all their assets behind," Wong said. "Everything they owned was handed over to the regime."

One family, before leaving Europe, spent their savings on two expensive fur coats, Wong said. The mother and daughter wore the coats on the trip to the United States so they could sell them upon arrival.

The Gluckmans arrived with just \$3.36 and a few suitcases with clothes and paperwork. The boy arrived as Heinz Glucksmann, but immigration officials recommended the family change the name to something easier for Americans to pronounce.

Growing up in the southern German city of *Stuttgart*, Gluckman was expelled from German public schools by the anti-Semitic Nuremberg laws of 1935.

His family enrolled him in a Jewish school attached to the *Stuttgart* synagogue, but on November 9, 1938, the boy watched townspeople pull books and chairs from the school, beat up a rabbi, and burn the buildings down. It was *Kristallnacht*, or the Night of Shattered Glass, when Nazis ransacked Jewish homes, shops, and places of worship across Germany and Austria.

It was also the night when the Gluckmans became determined to flee, or at least to get their two children out of Germany.

A British rescue organization called the *Kindertransport* adopted Gluckman's 3-year-old sister in 1939, taking her to England where she would be kept safe. His parents signed their son up for the same program, but Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, launching World War II just before he was set to leave.

The Gluckmans applied for exit visas and kept looking for other ways to get out, eventually finding the Pacific route. "(My grandfather) read that if you could pay for the entire trip in German marks in Berlin, they were willing to take you," Gluckman said.

They stopped first in *Breslau*, now known as the Polish city of *Wroclaw*, where they paid a final visit to the boy's paternal grandparents. The grandparents had been unable to get an exit visa, but expressed confidence to family members that they would survive, Gluckman said.

The grandfather was a German veteran of World War I.

"He said, 'I've served my country. Nothing will happen to us.' He even had his old sword over the fireplace, and the Iron Cross," Gluckman said.

The boy and his parents left Germany for Poland, then crossed through Lithuania to Moscow, where they boarded the Trans-Siberian Express for a long journey across the continent. They sailed from Korea to Japan, and left Japan on October 4, Gluckman's 11th birthday, arriving in San Francisco nearly three weeks later.

The family of three settled on Sutter Street. Gluckman's father found work at the I. Magnin department store. His mother became a housemaid for a wealthy family in Pacific Heights.

Their last contact with Gluckman's grandparents came years later in a postcard believed to have been sent from the Auschwitz concentration camp. The vague message expressed that they were doing fine.

"My father spent every waking moment searching for ways to bring his parents out," Gluckman said.

The grandparents were murdered at Auschwitz in late 1943 or early 1944, Gluckman said. He lost 58 family members in the Holocaust.

Wiping tears as he talked, Gluckman said his name in German means "lucky man."

He went to his office closet, pulling out a piece of cardboard where his father had drawn a family tree that stretches back to the 19th century. Gluckman keeps it updated, he said, as he used a finger to trace a line to his grandchildren.

"Hitler did not wipe out all of the Jews," Gluckman said. "There were enough of us here to restart the family."

First published in the *San Jose Mercury News*

SHAMEFUL SECRETS IN THE FIELDS OF THE HOLOCAUST

A new book has outraged hard-line Polish nationalists by exposing the widespread plundering of Jewish graves by their countrymen.

BY JEROME TAYLOR, THE INDEPENDENT

At first glance it looks like an ordinary rural scene from the middle of the last century. Squinting in the bright sunlight, a group of Polish farmhands pose for a portrait after a successful day of toiling in the fields.

Only on closer inspection is it possible to make out what the scene truly depicts — a mass grave-robbing exercise that shines an uncomfortable spotlight on a little-known chapter of Polish history during the Second World War.

Resting on the ground in front of the first row of farmers is a gruesome stack of skulls, the last vestiges of thousands of Jews who were killed at a Nazi-run death camp outside the village of *Treblinka*. Far from harvesting their own crops, these Polish farmers were treasure hunting in the killing fields of the Holocaust, looking for gold teeth and trinkets that their Nazi murderers may have missed.

The photograph is the starting point of *Golden Harvest*, a controversial new book

by the Princeton historian Jan Gross and his former wife which details how some Poles profited from Jewish suffering during the Holocaust. The revelations have touched a raw nerve in a country still



Polish villagers hunt for trinkets in a Jewish grave near *Treblinka*.

deeply scarred by the Second World War and proud of its record of opposing the Nazi occupation against horrendous odds.

The Polish version, produced by the pioneering publishing house *Znak*, is already causing a stir thanks to a small number of copies that were obtained and then condemned by hard-line Polish nationalists.

They have been incensed by Gross's suggestion, not only that the plundering of Jewish property and corpses occurred during the Nazi occupation and beyond, but that it was far more widespread than previously admitted.

Znak's offices in *Krakow* have received hate mail and been scrawled with graffiti since excerpts of the book were published in the Polish media, forcing Henryk Wozniakowski, the CEO of the publishing house, to publicly defend the novel before its release.

"It's a sensitive and controversial subject but it is a chapter of history that needs to be told," he said. "This book concentrates on the black moments between Poles and Jews. While a majority of Poles were passive observers of the Holocaust, and a minority were active helpers, a significant minority were engaged in criminal activities against the Jews."

Gross's books have often caused a storm in Poland, a country he left in the 1960s for the United States. Ten years ago he examined the 1941 massacre of 1,600 Jewish villagers by their Polish neighbors,

causing outrage followed by soul-searching and a government investigation which found that Poles, and not the Nazis, were indeed responsible for that atrocity.

Poland was home to approximately 2.5 million Jews before the Second World War, but the vast majority perished at Nazi hands after 1939. Holocaust researchers have estimated that about 250,000 Polish Jews managed to avoid the death camps while remaining in Poland, but that only 40,000 of them survived the war.

Gross's book says that Poles killed tens of thousands of the remaining 210,000 or denounced them to the Nazi occupiers. Speaking from New York, Professor Gross said he believed debate in Poland over attitudes towards the country's Jews during the Second World War had matured to a level where most could accept that some atrocities were carried out against Jews, largely for material gain.

"There will be a reaction, but I think it will be calmer and more restrained than [after] some of my previous works," he said. "There is a group of Polish historians who for the past eight years or so have engaged in the study of Polish-Jewish relations. They have shown that bravery and cruelty coexisted. It is part of human nature."

THE MEMORY OF HOLOCAUST, FORTIFIED

BY EDWARD ROTHSTEIN, THE NEW YORK TIMES

Before the \$45 million Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center opened in Skokie, two years ago, there was some urgency in completing its 65,000-square-foot building, which now stands so incongruously monumental in the midst of Chicago's suburban landscape. At one time, 7,000 Jews bearing the scars of the Holocaust had lived in Skokie with their families, and they were aging. Many had contributed artifacts to the museum; some participated when it was just a storefront on Main Street; some had their oral histories recorded for its exhibition and their lives chronicled in the institution's imposing companion book, *Memory and Legacy*.

And though they had survived one of history's greatest scourges, many, as we are reminded by the closing years of their biographies, did not live to see this project completed.

That is a shame, because although the museum has its flaws — some of which are shared by others of the 16 major Holocaust museums in the United States — it is an impressive achievement, its permanent historical exhibition surveying Germany's descent from high civilization to Nazi inferno, as it obsessively dragged Europe's Jews to their deaths in ditches and crematoriums.

Like the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, which opened last fall, it will also most likely be among the last such institutions created by survivors of the cataclysm, bearing witness and offering lessons. That participation is one of the sources of strength of such museums, but strangely, too, it is also a source of weakness.

In its history, in fact, this museum encapsulates one aspect of the evolution of such institutions. Refugees from horrors have always tended to congregate in particular communities, not to keep their memories alive, but, paradoxically, to allow them to be forgotten; the past would become an aspect of shared experiences that did not need mentioning and would not spur curiosity. And judging from some of the video-

taped recollections at the museum in Skokie, where in the mid-1970s almost half the population was Jewish, and a good portion of that was made up of survivors, that is what happened — at least until 1976, when the National Socialist Party of America first sought permission to parade through the town's streets.

Historical consultants, Michael Berenbaum and Yitzchak Mais — the survivors' artifacts, biographies and interviews amplify the historical archive. There are sketchbooks and scrapbooks, uniforms and relics. Two Yiddish diaries here were written by Aron Derman while he fought as a partisan in the Polish forests. There is a

ditional details. Some atmospheric galleries are surprisingly effective, and it ultimately seems appropriate that Nazi memorabilia is shown through transparent floor panels over which we walk as we reach the postwar period.

But the survivors' perspectives can also be a weakness. The concluding gallery gives too much emphasis to the effects of the planned National Socialist Party march in Skokie — effects that will be of little importance in future decades.

And because the survivors' experiences are necessarily personal, the message of these museums also takes on a particular shape. Survivors knew their neighbors in the pre-Holocaust world. Often they were part of a wider community, leading ordinary and sometimes prosperous lives. As their world was dismantled, they had to ask, again and again, how friends and neighbors allowed this to happen. They imagined what it might have been like, had there been rebellion or resistance. And in drawing lessons from their experiences, some began to see the Holocaust as an extreme manifestation of a refusal to care about injustice or the fate of one's neighbor.

Their approach was amplified by others who wished to avoid making the Holocaust seem too particular, emphasizing instead more general humanitarian issues. The lesson, most broadly, and most blandly, is that those who learn from the Holocaust must learn the importance of empathy and take a stand against injustice.

Become an "upstander," the museum urges, not a "bystander." A concluding 10-minute film, narrated by Barbra Streisand, is a call for social action. "Now it's up to you" is its repeated moral. We are reminded of the prevalence of genocides, which, despite the cry of "Never Again!," show how much still needs to be done.

The museum also presents a special exhibition for children, which, its literature explains, "provides a safe space where they can brainstorm strategies on how to speak up for those experiencing hatred, prejudice, and discrimination through bullying and acts of intolerance within their local and global communities."

(Continued on page 14)



Ultimately, after court challenges and demonstrations, the plans of this Nazi-inspired group were changed, and scarcely two dozen acolytes gathered to demonstrate in Chicago. But as a concluding gallery in this museum shows, the controversy galvanized the community of survivors and reawakened old vulnerabilities. Artifacts and memories were contributed for the creation of a small museum, which opened in 1984. A speakers' bureau of survivors was established to share experiences. And lobbying began, to include the Holocaust in Illinois public school curricula (a requirement eventually established by the state legislature in 1990). This museum (which contains a permanent exhibition, along with art shows, an auditorium, and a children's display) is the climax of that community's efforts, where 150,000 visitors a year are welcomed.

And all through the main exhibition — designed by David Layman, with two his-

bra scavenged from stolen thread and cloth by Hannah Messinger in a German labor camp, and a leather belt that Samuel Harris — the museum's president, who was imprisoned in Nazi camps from ages 4 through 12 — had kept with him as his sole comfort.

The museum is also displaying a German rail car, refurbished in 1943, the type used to transport Jews east to the camps. The exhibition's historical films were created by Northern Light Productions.

The building, designed by the architect Stanley Tigerman, leaves its industrial skeleton exposed, so that nothing is made artificially pretty. And as the visitor weaves through the jagged, twisting galleries, the particularity of the personal objects becomes powerful. It would be helpful to get a better sense of how specific survivors' lives unfolded — their stories emerge only in fragments along the way — but the companion book incorporates ad-

ANNUAL SPRING LUNCHEON OF THE A



Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem; Sharon Halpern; Nicole Pines Lieberman, recipient of the 2011 American Society for Yad Vashem Achievement Award; Louise Pantirer, recipient of the 2011 American Society for Yad Vashem Achievement Award; Elisa Pantirer Pines, recipient of the 2011 American Society for Yad Vashem Achievement Award; Rella Feldman, Chairwoman of the 2011 Annual Spring Luncheon; and Alan Pines.

The American and International Societies for Yad Vashem held their 30th Annual Spring Luncheon in New York City.

It was the largest attended Luncheon and celebrated the Societies' 30th Anniversary. The event was a Holocaust remembrance.

The late Mr. Murray Pantirer and Mrs. Louise Pantirer were among the recipients of the 2011 American Society for Yad Vashem Achievement Award. The Societies were founded in 1981 by Mr. Eli Zborowski together with a hand



Elisa Pantirer Pines, recipient of the 2011 American Society for Yad Vashem Achievement Award; Nicole Pines Lieberman, recipient of the 2011 American Society for Yad Vashem Achievement Award; and Louise Pantirer, recipient of the 2011 American Society for Yad Vashem Achievement Award.



Marilyn Rubenstein; Dr. Joanna Michlich, 2011 Annual Spring Luncheon Guest Speaker; and Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem.



Seated: Lili Goldberg, Jeanne Jemal, Gabriela Shnay, Jill Finestone; standing: Nancy Chetrit, Rose Goldberg, Elyse Goldberg, Debbie Cooper, Dale Goldberg, Elisa Pines, Nancy Waldenberg, and Deborah Berg.



Stella Skura, Cheryl Skura Lifshitz, and Iris Lifshitz Lindenbaum.



Guests at the American Society for Yad Vashem 2011 Annual Spring Luncheon.

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM

Annual Spring Luncheon on Tuesday, May 24, 2011 at the Pierre Hotel in New York City. In marking this occasion it honored Mrs. Louise Pantirer, nee Lieberman, three generations of leadership and dedication to the cause of Holocaust education. Mrs. Lieberman was the first to hold a parlor meeting during the Societies' formative years. The presence of dedicated Holocaust survivors.



Joseph and Elizabeth Wilf.



Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem, accompanied by Jean Gluck, Rebetzin Lau, and her daughter.



Miriam Field, Selma Gruder Horowitz, and Pearl Field.



Alan Pines; Elisa Pantirer Pines, recipient of the 2011 American Society for Yad Vashem Achievement Award; Nicole Pines Lieberman, recipient of the 2011 American Society for Yad Vashem Achievement Award; and Avi Lieberman.



Caroline Massel, Chair of the Young Leadership Associates; and Nicole Pines Lieberman, recipient of the 2011 American Society for Yad Vashem Achievement Award.



Sheila Erlich Pruzansky; Anna Erlich; Eli Zborowski, Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem; and Susan Erlich.



Nicole Pines Lieberman, Sharona Loeffler, Tamara Loeffler, Elana Loeffler, Daniella Schwebel, and Ilisa Klapper.



REPORT FROM YAD VASHEM

YAD VASHEM RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS AWARD PRESENTED IN NEW YORK

BY MADELYN COHEN

On April 27, 2011, the American Society for Yad Vashem and the Consulate General of Israel in New York presented the prestigious Righteous Among the Nations award to Mrs. Maria



Maria Rabb with the Righteous Among the Nations award.

Rabb in honor of her late mother, Mrs. Jozsef Lukacsi (Lukacsi Jozsefné), nee Ilona Klimes, and late aunt, Mrs. Laszlo Lukacsi (Lukacsi Laszloné), nee Jolan Klimes, for saving Jewish lives during the Holocaust.

Mrs. Ilona Lukacsi lived in *Rakoscsaba* (now part of Budapest), Hungary, where she, her husband Jozsef, a shoemaker, and her sister Jolan took responsibility for saving the family of Ede Hajos, a Jewish worker in Jozsef's shoe-making workshop. Jozsef made the brave decision to help the Hajos family, and brought the family to his home in *Rakoscsaba*. He was required to serve in the Hungarian military as a conscript and was gone for long stretches of time, leaving the day-to-day care and protection of the Hajos family to his wife and sister-in-law.

While Ede Hajos was taken by the Nazis to the forced labor camps in 1942 or 1943, his family was saved thanks to the heroic actions of Jozsef, Ilona and Jolan, which included hiding and caring for Hajos' wife Mrs. Ede Hajos (Hajos Edene), nee Margit Grunwald, and his daughters Eva and Erika and her sisters Klara and Erzsebet Grunwald during the war. Their care and concern for the Hajos family enabled them to survive unharmed. Ede wasn't as fortunate. He died in the concentration camp.

This honor is bestowed posthumously to the Lukacsi sisters, as Ilona passed away in 1976 and Jolan in 1995.

The honor of Righteous Among the Nations recognizes those people who upheld

morality and human values in the midst of a moral vacuum. This tribute attempts to convey the gratitude of the State of Israel and the Jewish people to those who stood by their side during a time of persecution and great tragedy. Those recognized receive a medal and a certificate of honor, and their names are inscribed on the Wall



Esther Fox, friend of Maria Rabb, and Maria's daughter, Maria, at the ceremony in New York.

of Honor in the Garden of the Righteous Among the Nations at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem. To date, more than 22,000 people have been honored as the Righteous Among the Nations. They come from more than 40 countries and include Muslims and Christians from all denominations; the only trait common to all is their courage to stand up for their moral principles.

ISRAELI COUSINS UNITED BY HOLOCAUST DATABASE

BY ARON HELLER, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ever since she became an orphaned 12-year-old in Russia, Liora Tamir thought she was alone in the world – having lost every single member of her family either in the Nazi Holocaust or Soviet prison camps.

That changed because of a recent search of a database of names of Holocaust victims. She discovered that her murdered grandparents were commemorated there by an uncle she never knew, who had moved to Israel.

This April, she was united with his son – her cousin – at an emotional ceremony at Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem.

"My mother didn't tell me anything about the family, I thought they were all gone," said Tamir, 65, shortly after embracing 73-year-old Aryeh Shikler. "Now I have a cousin. I still can't believe it. It's surreal."

Tamir's daughter, Ilana, made the reunion possible. For years she scoured archives for any information about her maternal grandmother, Yona Shapira.

Initially, she learned that her grandmother traveled from Poland to pre-state Israel in the 1920s and spent six years there before she was arrested and deported by the British because of her Com-

(Continued on page 13)

GATHERING THE FRAGMENTS

Since its inception, Yad Vashem has strived to collect every relevant source of information, each of which enlightens us in its own unique way about the six million Jews murdered and the millions more persecuted and victimized during the Holocaust. Yet some shards remain locked in the memories of those who were there, still waiting to be expressed in word or art. Others languish in desk or dresser drawers, in old suitcases, or in shoeboxes. And some are precious, kept close to the heart and seldom shown to others. The fragments we collect have universal meaning for us as human beings, national meaning for us as Jews, and often very personal meaning as well.

As a child I always knew that my grandmother Irma, my father's mother, had been in Auschwitz. My grandmother died in 1970, when I was still quite young, and all I knew of what she had endured were the disjointed bits and pieces she had told me. Among other diffuse facts, I remember her telling me she had engaged in some sort of factory work, and that she was together the entire time from her deportation to her liberation with her daughter-in-law. At the end of the 1970s, when I first read Raul Hilberg's monumental book *The Destruction of the European Jews*, in which he discusses labor in Auschwitz, it seemed to me I had learned that she had probably worked for the giant IG Farben concern.

Quite a few years later, when I was already director of the Yad Vashem Library, I saw a fragment that told me a bit more about her travails. It was a deposition my grandmother had written for a lawyer to obtain compensation from the German gov-

ernment. When the lawyer passed away, his family sent his entire archive to Yad Vashem. From that document I learned that my grandmother at some point had been transported from Auschwitz to *Trautenuau*. It would be a long time before other fragments would come to light.



Among the millions of documents recently made available to Yad Vashem by the International Tracing Service (ITS) in *Bad Arolsen*, Germany, I found several references to my grandmother, with the help of my colleagues. She appears on a list of women prisoners in *Parschnitz*, which is also known as *Parschnitz-Trautenuau*, dated October 1944. Directly following her on the list is her daughter-in-law. So they were definitely together in the camp in autumn 1944. At the head of that list, it says the women were working for AEG. So now it is much more plausible that the factory work my grandmother engaged in was in *Parschnitz*, not Auschwitz, and for AEG and not IG Farben. Lastly, on her daughter-in-law's ITS registration card, the date she (and most probably my grandmother) reached *Parschnitz* is listed as August 1,

1944. According to the card, the two were in the camp until it was liberated on May 9, 1945 – the last day of the war in Europe. So uncovering one thread, following others, and weaving them together has yielded at least a tiny part of the greater tapestry. Yet even from such a small illustration there are things we can learn. This story illustrates that Hungarian Jewish women sent to Auschwitz, later reached other camps, where they worked and suffered. It shows that companies besides the infamous IG Farben concern, some still thriving today, were complicit in their suffering.

So, especially now, as the generation of survivors dwindles, it is of paramount importance that we dedicate ourselves to continuing the process of gathering fragments

and putting them into context. The tools of the 21st century – the Internet, social networks, digitization, and international cooperation – offer much hope that we will enrich and expand our portrait of events. Seventy years after the advent of the systematic mass murder of the Jews and the coalescence of the Final Solution, it is vital that the enriched tapestry – and the insights we draw from it – remain in constant view. The more we further our knowledge of the Holocaust and keep it in our consciousness, the better chance we have of molding a world free from prejudice, hatred, and crimes against humanity.

The writer is director of the Yad Vashem Libraries, author of *Approaching the Holocaust: Texts and Contexts*, and a soon-to-be published study on Hungarian Jewish forced laborers on the Eastern Front.

BY ROBERT ROZETT,
THE JERUSALEM POST

As the generation of survivors dwindles, it's of paramount importance that we dedicate ourselves to continuing the process of gathering fragments.

During the Shoah, an entire world was shattered. The remaining scattered fragments vary infinitely in size, shape and texture – from documents to diaries, testimonies to artifacts, photographs to



works of art. Despite their wide dispersion, they can still be found in many places – government and private archives, libraries, and even in the homes of people who went through the vortex of the *Shoah*, and members of their families left behind. Each fragment tells its own tale and, like a thread, has a beginning and an end. These threads of information, intersecting and combining, are then woven together into a broad and deep tapestry that depicts a multifaceted story stretching over time and space. In this way we can reconstruct as much of the shattered Jewish world as possible, the events that led to its destruction, and the lives that continued to be lived while the devastation unfolded.

TROVE OF HISTORIC RECORDS OF HOLOCAUST GOES ONLINE

BY CRISTIAN SALAZAR and
RANDY HERSCHAFT, AP

A trove of papers and photographs documenting the lives of Holocaust victims and survivors includes notable names like Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel and former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. But Benzion Baumrind's name might have stayed forgotten to his descendants without the records kept by a humanitarian aid agency.



This photo provided by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee shows a group of French Jewish refugee children who arrived from Marseilles via Spain at the Rossio train station in Lisbon in 1943.

A genealogist discovered Baumrind, one of 6 million Jews killed during the Holocaust, was in her family with one stray document buried in a database of historic papers and photos kept by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

With over 500,000 names and more than 1,000 photographs, the searchable collection documents the relief organization's vast efforts during World War II and the postwar era in 24 countries, from China

and Japan to the Dominican Republic and Bolivia. The records, being made available online for the first time, open a singular view into the lives of survivors that the JDC aided during that cataclysmic period.

"We can get broader pictures of the actual everyday social life in the aftermath of war," Kenneth Waltzer, director of the Jewish Studies Department at Michigan State University, said of the collection.

Until now, the organization's archive has been largely inaccessible to the public, kept at a private storage warehouse located a short subway ride out of Manhattan.

Volunteers entered names in a database for over a year; rare, fragile documents were scanned into the computer system. Users of the site can submit names to identify people they recognize in the photographs, which may be later added to captions.

"A website like this is where history meets technology," said Gideon Taylor, an executive with the New York-based committee. "It's taking history out of the dusty files... and bringing it out into the community."

The committee plans to put even more documents from its archive online later this summer.

The project is one of a growing number around the world aimed at making available on the Internet primary records about the Holocaust.

"It is a world phenomenon that's launched by the technology," said David M. Kleiman, president of Heritage Muse Inc., a New York-based genealogy technology firm.

The collection offers glimpses of the lives of children who survived the Holocaust to

become moral and spiritual leaders, politicians, and artists.

There was the 16-year-old teenager who would become an author and one of the world's most esteemed humanitarians — Wiesel — listed on a document naming

426 orphaned boys from the *Buchenwald* concentration camp who were taken to Paris by the committee in 1945. Also on the list: a future Chief Rabbi of Israel and one of the youngest surviving prisoners of *Buchenwald*, Israel Meir Lau, who was 7 years old when he was liberated.

Begin, the future Israeli prime minister, is named on a list of 9,000 Polish Jewish refugees receiving the agency's aid in Vilna, Lithuania, in 1940.

Another person named in the files is Peter Max, the famed New York artist whose cosmic-colored works became a signature style of the hippie 1960s.

"Looking back, it's amazing that people had the will to organize, to create organizations to help people who fled other countries and were in dire need," said Max, who was 6 months old when his family, the Finkelsteins, fled Berlin and found safe haven in Shanghai, where the JDC also had a relief operation.

For Linda Cantor, the past president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of New York and a volunteer who helped put the names online, the collection helped her find a relative she never knew about.

A researcher with 30 years of experience in genealogy, even she was surprised when she came across a document that connected her to Baum-



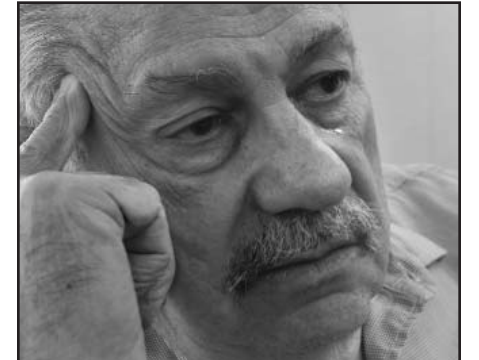
This photo provided by American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee shows Claus Hirsch standing on a street corner in Shanghai, where his family lived after fleeing Nazi persecution during World War II.

rind, who lived in the Polish town where her family was from.

That document, a list of Polish Jews expelled by the Nazi German government and living in the border town of *Zbaszyn*, Poland, between 1938 and 1939, showed that her great-aunt was named as Baumrind's contact in the United States. It was a tantalizing clue that would help her document him as a cousin.

"My discovery allowed him to have a place in somebody's memory," she said.

The committee, commonly known as the Joint, was founded in 1914 to help Jews in need in war-ravaged Europe and



In this April 21, 2011, photo, Claus Hirsch reacts as he is interviewed at the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee offices in New York. Hirsch is one of the volunteers entering data for JDC.

Palestine. During World War II, it provided assistance to refugees from Lithuania to Japan and helped Jews escape Europe, including by booking them on ships headed for the Americas.

Claus Hirsch, 76, of New York, fled Berlin with his parents and brother and found asylum in Shanghai and had to rely on the Joint for hot meals. As a volunteer, going over lists of names and keying them into the database, it has been an emotional experience.

"It's nice to see a name on a list," he said, before he began to weep. "I saw names of people I had known years ago. And I hadn't thought about them in 30 or 40 years."

HAND-DRAWN MONOPOLY RECALLS LIFE IN GHETTO

BY KEVIN FLOWER, CNN

Micha and Dan Glass are not your ordinary Monopoly players.

In 1938 the two young brothers were happy school children. They lived with their parents in the Czech city of *Brno*.

Their mother was a photographer who liked to document the family's life in photos, and their father an electrical engineer who enjoyed taking his boys skiing. The idyllic life of the Glass family was to be shattered a year later with the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia.

"Before (the) war it was normal living. And then the war came and a completely different world. You can't understand it. Everything changed," Dan recalls.

Both of the boys' parents were arrested. Their father was sent to a forced labor camp, and their mother detained and tortured for six months.

In 1942, the boys and their mother were sent to the city of *Theresienstadt*, an area of northwestern Czechoslovakia where the Nazis established a ghetto for the Jews of Bohemia and Moravia.

At ages eight and 10, Micha and Dan became intimately familiar with death. Over 35,000 people perished in *Theresienstadt* while another 84,000 were sent on to be murdered in the Nazi death camps further east.

Disease, famine, and sub-human conditions aside, the camp's prisoners did everything they could to maintain a semblance of normality. For one prisoner, an artist named Oswald Poeck, this meant designing and drawing a makeshift version of a famed board game. An unofficial version of the popular board game Monopoly was born.



Hand-drawn Monopoly from *Theresienstadt*.

Fashioned from cardboard and drawn by hand, "Ghetto" Monopoly was created as a distraction for *Theresienstadt's* thousands of children and used as a tool to teach them about life (and death) in the ghetto.

Properties in the game were not popular city streets and landmarks, but rather buildings and locations from the ghetto itself — all named after German cities and a grim reflection of the reality faced by the camp's prisoners.

"It's strange to understand how can people make games for children in this special place — in the ghetto," says Sima Shacher, a researcher at Beit Theresienstadt, a center dedicated to documenting life in *Theresienstadt*.

One of the reasons the games were created, Shacher says, is because the children were separated from their parents and the adult prisoners looking after them did what they could to make life more tolerable. It was an important way for them to maintain a sense of humanity and purpose in a hellish environment, says Shacher.

His memories of playing the game are foggy, but Micha Glass recalls hiding the board and its pieces under his mattress so they would not be discovered.

In 1945, Soviet troops liberated *Theresienstadt*, and miraculously the Glass boys and their mother survived. It was not until their release that they learned that their father had been killed in Auschwitz, and that most of their extended family was also dead.

The family eventually made their way to Israel to begin a new life, and with them they brought their ghetto Monopoly set. Over the course of years the boys would occasionally play the game and continued to hold on to it in adulthood to serve as a reminder of what they lived through.

Fifteen years ago, the brothers decided to donate the game to Israel's Holocaust remembrance museum, Yad Vashem, where it now sits on permanent display. The reasons were simple, according to Micha.

"Because there are many, many people who think that there was not a Holocaust — we had a very happy family before the war and after the war there was nothing," he says.

Micha's younger brother Dan says the passage of time has made him reflect more about the past and the importance of memory. The game, he said, is an important symbol.

"It is something very, very unique. We wanted it to be shown to the public — to show there exists such a thing — there was a *Theresienstadt*, there were kids, there were children, there were survivors."

For both brothers the game brings up difficult and painful memories, but through it all they are able to see the silver lining. Combined, the brothers Glass have six children and 15 grandchildren. This, they say, is what has made surviving the horrors of the Holocaust bearable.

"What is good," says Dan, pointing to his older brother, "is that I am standing here with my brother and that I have a big loving family. This is the main good thing. This is what I have."

LESSONS FROM THE SHOAH

BY LIAT COLLINS,
THE JERUSALEM POST

Three statements come to mind whenever I write about the Holocaust. The first I can attribute to Elie Wiesel: "The Shoah wasn't a crime against humanity, but a crime against the Jews." The second was told to me by writer Haim Guri: "Israel was created not because of the Shoah but in spite of it." I don't remember who told me the third, but it is no less valuable: Had there been a Jewish state in the 1930s, the Holocaust might not have happened at all, or would have been on a much-reduced scale.

Do I get tired of emphasizing these three points? Of course. But I can't bring myself to stop.

As history becomes replaced by narratives and universalism sets the tone, these lessons seem set to disappear. They are being transplanted by more fashionable inclusive versions: The Holocaust does not belong to the Jews, but to anyone who has been the victim of violence; and Israel grew out of the Nazi atrocities and not because of any intrinsic right of the Jewish people to their own land. Sadly, it is often Jews in the Diaspora who fail to internalize the last message: Israel isn't the cause of anti-Semitism around the globe, it is the answer.

Twice a year the world marks Holocaust Remembrance Day. To be more precise, the world marks it once – on January 27, the day Auschwitz was liberated. For the past few years it has become a set feature on the United Nations calendar. Unfortunately, for the rest of the year the world body raises motion after motion turning Israel into the source of all evil. Its protection of global peace and well-being is so advanced that having finally suspended Libya from the UN's Human Rights Coun-

cil, it seems set to replace it with Bashar Assad's Syria.

Israel commemorates Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day – or *Yom Hashoah* as we call it – in the spring, fittingly between Passover and Independence Day.

Here it is marked with an eerie two-minute siren for which the traffic draws to a halt and people stand frozen. Fewer and fewer have their own dreadful memories, but this is not about the survivors. They don't need a special day to remember how they've been through hell. This is about the people who didn't survive but nonetheless live on in every generation.

Children in Israel learn about the Holocaust from an early age. Even toddlers in day-care centers are taught to stand for the siren, and schoolchildren hold ceremonies. But it's hard to explain the horror or take in the meaning of the number of those killed. That's why it's so important to learn the personal stories.

It's easier to relate to the individual experience than to try to comprehend how six million lives ended, whole family trees cut down at the roots.

This year, under the title "Gathering the Fragments," Yad Vashem launched a national campaign to rescue personal items from the Holocaust period, calling for ordinary citizens to provide documents, diaries, photos, artifacts, and works of art from those terrible years.

Future generations will find it ever harder to relate to the Holocaust, not just because the firsthand witnesses are dying out, but because they are being brought up in a different world.

It is an ever-changing world dominated by the "now" and the "me."

When President Barack Obama hosted a *Seder* at the White House he coolly compared the uprising in the Arab world to the story of the Exodus from Egypt. It's a perfect

message for the Twitter generation. With the perspective of barely three months – during which he changed his mind more than once – Obama takes the most epic event in more than four millennia of Jewish history and reduces it to its lowest possible common denominator, and then distorts it some more.

The world is marking 50 years since the trial of Adolf Eichmann, a trial which gave us terms like "the banality of evil."

Have we learned its lessons? It doesn't seem so when, under the same principle of universal justice, Israeli leaders cannot travel to places like Britain for fear of being arrested for "war crimes."

As the Shoah becomes more universalized it is being dumbed down – the greater the attempts to apply it to all, the less relevant it becomes. The Holocaust, as Wiesel noted, was about the systematic attempt to eradicate the Jews, their religion, and their culture.

That was it. We can and should learn from it but we can't change it.

The Shoah was not about the Palestinians, but you wouldn't know it from the imagery that floats around on "human rights flotillas" and among their land-based supporters.

As the Palestinians draw closer to the likely unilateral declaration of independence, they seem to grow further from acknowledging Israel's right to exist. The Jewish state, as Guri noted, would have grown faster and stronger had there been no Holocaust; the Holocaust would have been smaller and shorter had there been a Jewish state to offer sanctuary. Recently, the topic of teaching the Holocaust in Arab schools has been the focus of heated debates.

According to Palestinian Media Watch, the union of UNRWA workers in Palestinian schools said, "We emphasize our adamant opposition to confusing the thinking of our students by means of Holocaust studies in the human rights study curricu-

lum, and emphasize study of the history of Palestine and the acts of massacre which have been carried out against Palestinians, the most recent of which was the war against Gaza."

Confusing indeed.

By the "war against Gaza" I assume they mean Operation Cast Lead, a war against Hamas missile attacks from Gaza on Israel. Missile attacks that are still taking place, for that matter. The Palestinians are not the new Jews, and Gaza is not a ghetto.

If their version of human rights permits targeting an Israeli school bus and indiscriminately launching rockets on any civilian population within reach, then you can understand their reluctance to add the Shoah to study programs.

Several people have e-mailed me recently telling me they feel like this is a repeat of the 1930s. Those who live abroad cite attacks on Jews, but above all a pervasive feeling that permits and even fosters such incidents.

The tiny Jewish community of Corfu might have been surprised by the burning of Torah scrolls in the local synagogue this month, but Jews elsewhere in Greece are no strangers to anti-Semitic sentiment. Ditto the Jews of Spain, France, Denmark, and Holland. A Canadian student told me she no longer wears a Star of David on campus, and some British Jews have removed the mezuzot from outside their doors, placing them inside where they cannot be seen.

My answer is that this is different from those terrible years partly because there is an Israel, albeit threatened by Iran with nuclear genocide and constantly assaulted by terror attacks and missiles, but a success story nonetheless. Indeed, a Gallup poll released recently declared Israel to be the world's seventh most "thriving" country. There can be no better way to avenge the Shoah.

THE BEST OF PEOPLE

BY AL BIENENFELD

My parents are Holocaust survivors. For most of us living in America today, the Holocaust is something seen in television documentaries or something we read about. To many younger people today, it probably means *Schindler's List*, a well-made movie, but off point in terms of truly expressing the horror of history's defining moment in human depravity. The Holocaust is the ultimate expression of evil.

From this moment in history came my parents, Henry and Helen Bienenfeld, two Polish Jews. They met in America a few years after the end of the war. Their paths and experiences were different in coming to America. My knowledge of my father is limited because he spoke little of the war and, frankly, I failed to ask enough questions. I did not know until I was almost fifty that he had a sister who perished along with his father and brother. Only he and his mother survived, partially because of luck, but mostly I believe because of strength of will. From what I now understand, his father and sister separated from his mother and the two sons. He spent time in a forced labor camp before escaping to an underground bunker with his mother, brother, and others for between one and two years. His brother went out one night to look for food (they all took turns), but he did not come back. They subsequently found his body and buried it in the woods, just weeks before the liberation. After the

liberation they removed the body (what was left of it) to a Jewish cemetery.

My mother's father never seemed special to me. Max Pechter was, as I remember, a mid-sized man. His wife Sarah was a petite woman whom I recall as very gentle. My mother told me how this "not so special" man once stood at the center of his village arguing with the "elders" and "leaders" about the impending dangers. He



Helen and Henry Bienenfeld.

warned that the Germans would kill all the Jews. They said he was crazy, and that he could leave, but to keep quiet lest he start a panic. He and his wife gathered their four children and headed eastward. At one point they were on a train headed toward Siberia. The Russian soldiers were going through the train removing the "unhealthy." Two of my mother's siblings were ill and some woman sitting nearby had threatened to turn them in. Then the "small and gentle" Sarah drew a knife and threatened to cut this woman's throat.

In Siberia conditions were harsh, living in a wood structure with a dirt floor, drawing water from a well. Nonetheless the family survived and ultimately made it to America whole and intact.

My parents met in Baltimore and married. Previously, my father had worked in the garment industry in New York, while my mother worked in a factory during the day and afterward in a bakery her parents had started with her sister and brother-in-law. They subsequently moved to South Jersey, to a rural area called Vineland, about an hour from Atlantic City. They opened a small grocery store that did not do well. They then migrated to Philadelphia, where my father obtained a loan from relatives who had come over much earlier and were very prosperous. He opened another larger grocery store and this time did very well, but he was not happy. He wanted more out of life, and he began a new career in what would become his life's calling, real estate development, in particular building and owning rental apartments.

My father and mother worked hours that were not to be believed, first just to survive, and then to prosper. They understood intuitively without being told that success was an endurance contest, a marathon, not some "sissy" 5K run. My mother was my father's unwavering supporter, through thick and thin. Over the years he made millions of dollars in fine investments. I tend to believe his best one paid dividends for over fifty years and was acquired at a very

young age. The investment had a name, and the name was Helen.

Over the years, my father became very skilled at trading bonds. How he learned this I do not know. I suspect, that given a high school education, he might have become a billionaire.

I often thought that my father's mother was a cold woman. Recently I discovered from my mother that this "cold woman" somehow managed to bring a small suit of clothes with her from Poland to America that belonged to the son who died in the woods. As I understand it, she held on to it until the day she died.

Today I believe that the "real Jews" are the survivors and those in Israel. They know what it means to be a Jew, to live with the constant threat of death, just for being a Jew. Those Jews like myself, who were born here in America and have never feared for their lives due to a Nazi or Arab terrorist threat, are only partial Jews.

Because of my parents, my two brothers and I never had to do without. We were provided with life's necessities and more. We had the luxury of being able to spend time reading books and going to the theater, as well as going to work. Grandchildren have gone to Duke and Harvard. As a result of their lives I know what it means to be a Jew. It just took me a long time to figure it out.

I believe I come from the best of people. Many may think this, but the difference is that I am right.

NEW BNEI BRAK CENTER TO FOCUS ON HAREDI-STYLE SHOAH COMMEMORATION

BY YAIR ETTINGER, HAARETZ

A few months ago, bulldozers demolished a private home in the middle of *Bnei Brak*. The now-vacant lot, situated between two homes and closed off by a fence, bears a colorful sign: "A holy archive is to be built here, with God's help." The six-floor building to be constructed at the site, which is only at the planning stage today, is slated to become a first-of-its-kind facility, and what some say will be the symbol of a transformation in the ultra-Orthodox community's attitude toward the Holocaust.



Shmuel Garnestein among the records that will be housed in the future Holocaust center.

In fact, the Kiddush Hashem Archive is a long-standing Haredi enterprise dedicated to commemorating the Holocaust. It was established by the late Rabbi Moshe Prager and is run today by Rabbi David Skulsky. However, it is actually located in a series of places scattered around *Bnei Brak*. The planned facility is thus a breakthrough, to be located in one place in the center of the Haredi city.

With an investment of NIS 7 million to NIS 8 million, the building is slated to serve as a museum for the public at large and a facility for the study of the Holocaust, replete with a new archive, a library, and a memorial wing. Since 1964, the Kiddush Hashem has mainly collected thousands of documents and objects related to the Holocaust,

particularly from Orthodox communities. These items will be stored in the new facility.

Esther Farbstein, a Holocaust educator who serves as the academic adviser to the planned center, explains: "This represents the next stage in the transformation of the Haredi community's attitude toward the *Shoah* — and it is a necessary step." She adds that even though the project can be conceptualized as an alternative to established Holocaust memorial and educational endeavors, including Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, "I know that Yad Vashem will not oppose this place; it will support it."

Dr. Mali Eizenberg of the Massuah Institute for the Study of the Holocaust, who formulates curricula for female Haredi educators and has been involved in the new project, says the facility's establishment will underscore what she calls "the Haredi narrative": the spiritual life of Orthodox communities at the time of the Holocaust.

Eizenberg explains that the concept of the Kiddush Hashem facility originated during the Eichmann trial. Some of the people involved in the trial, including Moshe Prager, who was an adviser to the prosecutors, felt "they [Haredim] had no place in Israeli discourse, that the Haredi narrative was not included in Holocaust memorials," according to Eizenberg, who devoted her dissertation at Bar-Ilan University to Prager. She recalls that he had reservations about the emphasis at Yad Vashem and other institutions on ghetto rebellions led by Zionist-affiliated organizations. He felt such a tendency distorted the role and activities of religious communities, and their connection to the Holocaust.

Farbstein believes that for the ultra-Orthodox community "a visit to the new facility will reduce ignorance. It will present historical information and offer resources. The museum there will inspire confidence and encourage visitors to deal with the subject of the Holocaust. They will ask questions and get answers."

ISRAELI COUSINS UNITED BY HOLOCAUST DATABASE

(Continued from page 10)

minist activities. These activities ultimately landed her in the Gulag town of *Vorkuta*, where Liora was born.

Then, KGB documents she obtained revealed the names of Shapira's parents. Finally, she searched Yad Vashem's Central Database of *Shoah* Victims Names and found a Page of Testimony under their names submitted in 1956 by a Simcha Shikler — Aryeh's father.

"It definitely feels like I cracked a mystery and now we have a better picture of our family," said Ilana Tamir, 33. "I feel like I gave my mother a gift, I gave her a family. We had a hole in our hearts, and we didn't have a family or blood relationships with anyone — and suddenly a family was born."

Cynthia Wroclawski, the manager of Yad Vashem's name recovery project, called the database "the repository for the Jewish people" that allowed people like Tamir to peel away crucial information about their own family histories.

"I think everyone at some point in their life becomes interested in where they came from to see where they're going, and the story of Liora Tamir is one such story," she said.

Yad Vashem's goal is to collect all 6 million names of the Holocaust's Jewish victims, encouraging survivors to come forth and fill out Pages of Testimony for those killed, before their names and stories are lost forever.

The project began in 1955 and had reached 3 million confirmed names by the time the online database was launched in 2004. More than a million more names have been added since. The information can be accessed online in English, Hebrew and Russian.

Efforts continue, primarily in Eastern Europe, where name collection is particularly

difficult because Jews there were often rounded up, shot, and dumped in mass graves without any documentation. The names of Jews killed at German death camps, on the other hand, often remain because of meticulous Nazi records.

Hugging his cousin for the first time, the gray-haired Shikler said the joy of the moment was mixed with sadness over those who couldn't witness it. He, too, knew little about his family history.

Of their grandparents' five children, two perished in the Holocaust, Shikler's father came to Israel, Tamir's mother died in Russia, and another sibling emigrated



Liora Tamir, right, holds the hand of her cousin Aryeh Shikler, as they meet for the first time at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem.

to the United States, never to be heard of again.

The two cousins live an hour away from each other — Tamir in Tel Aviv, Shikler in *Haifa*. They say they have much to share and much to learn.

"We are connected by blood," Shikler said, in a scratchy voice. "All you need to do is listen and it all starts flowing out."

Tamir's daughter said the situation would take some getting used to.

"All of a sudden we have a family tree. Until now it was just one branch," she said. "I don't know what you do with family because it is really strange and new for us."

HEALING BONDS OF THE SECOND GENERATION

BY ARLENE NISSON LASSIN

Imagine growing up in a vacuum of your parents and siblings as the only living blood-related family members.

Michael Klaiman, Alan Golombek, Bella Solender Forman and many others know intimately of that experience because they grew up in the '50s and '60s as children of Holocaust survivors.

For Klaiman and Golombek, their parents were the sole survivors of their immediate and extended families. That meant they didn't have an uncle, an aunt, a grandparent, or a cousin — not a single living relative other than their parents and siblings. In Klaiman's case, his parents built a tight-knit circle of other survivors who were treated as extended family.

"We called the adults 'aunt' and 'uncle,' and we called their friends' children our 'cousins' even though we weren't really related," Klaiman said.

"I knew why we didn't have any other family from an early age, and it didn't seem strange to me because our entire social group was in the same boat."

Forman recalls her parents inviting friends to holiday dinners because if they didn't, "there would be no one there." This strange but common bond has brought Jewish baby boomers — called the second generation — together.

Pepi Nichols is a longtime leader of a Houston group — called Second Generation, when it formed more than 30 years ago, and now called Generations After — for all descendants of Holocaust survivors.

There are more than 300 members on its mailing list.

"In Houston, survivors clung to each other because they didn't have family, but they were pushed to assimilate, forget the past and move forward," Nichols said.

"It was the same for the second generation. We didn't discuss what our parents went through and how it affected us. When our group first gathered, it was important for us to get together to talk about it ... for the first time — it was always the elephant in the room."

The group, which began with 30 to 40 people, met with therapists to facilitate discussion.

There is a wide body of research on the effects of growing up as the children of Holocaust survivors, said Simone Gorko, a Philadelphia psychologist who is the daughter of survivors and who specializes in trauma therapy. She leads group and individual therapy for children of survivors and published a paper in 2000 entitled *Myths and Realities About Offspring of Holocaust Survivors: An Overview of Research Findings*.

In her work she sees common behaviors among the second generation, illustrating

some of the impact. Most survivors did not seek out psychological help because of the stigma attached, and trauma from those events had a way of leaking into the next generation.

Some commonalities Gorko sees in children of survivors are feelings of being separate or "different" from the rest of the world; having an "escape plan" and security issues; having food or hoarding issues; and struggling with guilt and pain for the suffering of their parents. Both Forman and Golombek grew up feeling "different."

Though her father didn't speak about his trauma, Forman felt it on a daily basis.

"What I remember most about my father was his over-protectiveness, which I, of course, resented at the time," Forman said. "He was always worried about me coming home from being out with friends. I found out later that he briefly tried to escape Poland. When that didn't work out, he returned home to find his entire family was gone. So, he always worried that I wouldn't come back."

Part of that protectiveness was not sharing bad news of any kind with her. When he received a diagnosis of cancer, Forman didn't find out until two years later. Forman had friends who were constantly told of the horrors their parents experienced — the opposite of her experience. Either extreme scenario is common, Gorko said.

Golombek grew up being awakened in the middle of the night by his parents' screams from their nightmares and eventually sought treatment for his own trauma.

"It was very difficult and created a very dysfunctional family," Golombek said.

Gorko said many of these children grew up to be overly responsible and were overachievers. That was the case with Golombek, a "good Jewish son out of a tremendous sense of guilt."

"There wasn't enough I could do for them, and I put them above my own family after I married," he said.

Klaiman, too, felt it was his responsibility to make his parents happy, though he says he didn't feel that as a burden.

"My parents pushed for education, and good Jewish spouses, it was so important to them and I didn't want to disappoint them," Klaiman said. "Their greatest happiness was seeing their family expand with grandchildren and then great-grandchildren."

Though many said their parents did not lose faith in God, some, like Golombek, experienced their parents' feelings of "an angry and vengeful God."

As Holocaust survivors are now elderly, descendants are focused on education.

"My own concern is seeing that somehow, authentically, our parents' stories are not lost once they die," said Sandy Lessig, a co-leader of Generations After. "We also try to help our (Houston) survivors any way we are able."

THE MEMORY OF HOLOCAUST, FORTIFIED

(Continued from page 7)

Participatory videos urge children to “take a stand against intolerance and inequality.” One such video, which dramatizes schoolyard bullying, challenges the child to select a course of action: “Say something now to the bully,” “Show my support to the person,” “Go tell the adult nearby,” or “Something else.”

This approach is also used to justify the inclusion of the Holocaust in school curriculums. And it is strange. We wouldn't expect a museum about World War II to end with lessons about the evils of all wars. We wouldn't expect an examination of American slavery to end with platitudes about the many despicable ways people treat others as objects. Why then here? Why the reluctance to study history in its context instead of diluting it with generalities and vague analogies? This path also ends up encouraging those always ready to invoke wild comparisons to Nazism and the Holocaust.

None of this undermines the sheer force of the chronicle to which we have been exposed, but by making the overall perspectives so personal — and this institution is not alone — the museum may also prevent us from fully understanding other aspects of the history. If we want to find a lesson in the events, for example, is it that individuals should not be bystanders or that nations should not be appeasers? Is the lesson that everybody should have a social conscience, or that a different kind of political action is needed when such forces emerge? Was the Holocaust a product of intolerance or an expression of more specific archetypal hatreds?

One of the challenges faced by Holocaust museums as survivors die is to understand their experience by seeing it through more than their eyes, to examine the past without homogenizing it with platitudes, to offer history without homily.

THE SONDERBERG CASE

(Continued from page 4)

husband and three children were among the *Einsatzgruppen's* victims in *Sarnay*, the Ukraine, along with countless relatives between Minsk and *Pinsk*.

Werner confronts his grandpa prior to Hans' apparent suicide, for depriving him and all German youth of normalcy by condemning them to eternal guilt. “Because of you, all of you, though we were born after the atrocities, we feel guilty. Because of you, my joy will never be unmitigated. Because of you, the child I see in his mother's arms makes me think of the children you sent to their deaths” (p. 167). Werner's soulful anguish resonates in the sharing with Professor Wiesel of his German students at Boston University.

Yedidiah's intersecting drama concerns his liberating discovery that he was born in Poland to parents who gave him away for temporary safekeeping to their housekeeper Maria. His birth parents perished in the Holocaust and Maria, a loving and righteous gentile, returned him to the Jewish people. Not all Poles returned Jewish babies, gratefully recalling Pope John Paul II, who instructed a Catholic couple in post-war Poland to depart from “their” Jewish baby. Yedidiah's lingering pain of an incomplete past now resolved meets Werner's pain for which, however, there

PROPERTY LOST IN HOLOCAUST IS CATALOGED ONLINE

BY ISABEL KERSHNER,
THE NEW YORK TIMES

As millions of Israelis paused in reflection on May 2 at the sound of the siren marking Holocaust Remembrance Day, the Internet here was buzzing. The first online database of more than half a million pieces of property lost by Holocaust victims, many in Eastern Europe, had just been uploaded as a first step toward restitution.

After years of quiet diplomacy that accomplished little, organizers of the new project, financed by the Israeli government, said the idea was to harness technology in the struggle for restitution and to make as much noise as possible.

“This is an activist approach,” said Bobby Brown, executive director of the Holocaust Era Asset Restitution Taskforce, known by its acronym, Project Heart. “We believe there are no secrets anymore about the Holocaust.”

Pointing to the success of public drives in the past, like the campaign for Soviet Jewry and the settlement of claims of Holocaust victims by Swiss banks, Mr. Brown said the issue of property restitution had to be out there on Twitter and Facebook, although negotiations with countries where properties were located “do not have to be made public right away.”

The project, a nonprofit global campaign of the Jewish Agency for Israel, a quasi-governmental body, has set up offices in Milwaukee and Brussels.

This is the first worldwide list of property confiscated, looted or forcibly sold during the Holocaust era to be made available to survivors and their heirs. Compiled from hundreds of European archives, including tax records and voter registries, it includes real estate and land, movable property like art and jewelry, and intangible personal property like stocks, bonds, and savings accounts.

The project has already invited potential claimants to submit their details to the Web site, which is in 13 languages. Many of the properties in the database are listed with the names of the original owners, and sometimes their professions, information culled from the public records to help potential claimants find a match. Some 650,000 pieces of property were uploaded in a week, and Mr. Brown hopes that the list will grow to a million by the end of the year. About 3.3 million Jews lived in Poland alone, he noted.

Other Jewish organizations have dealt with restitution for decades. The Confer-

About a third of the 750,000 Israelis who are above retirement age are Holocaust survivors, and many live in poverty.

Once the information-gathering phase is completed, the project plans to move on to a more aggressive stage of legal and public action to try to get the cooperation of governments that have not cooperated so far. This will involve lobbying politicians and possibly helping with class-action lawsuits.

Lea Nass, the deputy minister for senior citizens, said the official stamp of the government on the project should help advance the cause.

Even if agreements are reached with countries, myriad questions will remain. Each country will have to establish criteria for verifying claims, evaluating the property and working out timelines for any payout.

At the news conference in Jerusalem, Natan Sharansky, the chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, said the Holocaust “was not only genocide, but it was also the greatest theft in history.”

Yet there were also moments of kindness and heroism, one of which has recently come to light. The granddaughter of a Polish woman who lived just outside the Auschwitz concentration camp during World War II presented Mr. Brown with his first piece of recovered property.

She said her grandmother used to leave food for the forced laborers outside the camp in pots hidden in the bushes. One night, when she came to collect the empty pots, she found a jeweled necklace that had been placed in one of them.

The granddaughter, Magdalena Wojciechowska, 40, of *Lodz*, Poland, returned the necklace to Mr. Brown, saying it was “Jewish property.” After taking the necklace to New York for the news conference, Mr. Brown said he would hand it over for safekeeping to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem.



A Holocaust survivor at a ceremony of remembrance at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem.

ence on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany has focused on Germany and Austria. The World Jewish Restitution Organization was established in 1993 to focus on Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Communist governments. There has been some progress in the issue of community-owned property, but none on personal property, according to Mr. Brown.

The subject of restitution has long been a delicate one between governments, and this is the first time that the Israeli government has become involved, providing Project Heart with an annual budget of more than \$2.5 million for three years.

WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING COMMEMORATED IN EVOCATIVE BOOK

(Continued from page 4)

the Germans. In 1942, Czerniakow committed suicide, no longer being able to fulfill German demands.

By then, the ghetto's population consisted of a small class of *Judenrat* employees, police, and smugglers, a much larger group of Jews struggling to survive on a bowl of soup and a slice of bread per day, and a slightly smaller mass of people just getting by.

The Jewish Fighting Force, which organized the uprising, was formed on July 28, 1942, just as the greatest deportation in the ghetto's history got under way. Its top leaders were Mordechai Anielewicz, Mordechai Tenenbaum, Joseph Kaplan, Yitzhak (Antek) Zuckerman, and Zivia Lubetkin. Only Zuckerman survived.

The odds against them were overwhelming, given the paucity of weapons and ammunition at their disposal. The Polish underground donated a small cache of 49 pistols and 50 grenades. Polish arms dealers filled in the gaps.

Much to SS chieftain Heinrich Himmler's disappointment, the fighters rolled back the first German assault on the ghetto. In anticipation of Hitler's birthday on April 20, Himmler had planned to convey the joyful

news that the ghetto had been cleared of Jews and rendered *Judenrein*.

Commanding far greater resources, the Nazis eventually prevailed. In what is probably an exaggeration, Strop claimed that 13,929 Jews had been killed and 7,000 shot while trying to escape from burning buildings.

The official German casualty rate was low: 16 killed and 86 injured. But historians believe the toll was considerably higher. Strop, who was hanged after the war, wanted to minimize the heroism of the Jewish fighters.

When the fighting ended, he was ordered to plow the entire area of the ghetto and replace it with a huge amusement park. The Germans leveled the remains of the ghetto, but it was left to Poland's post-war government to build a park.

Today, the only physical reminder of the ghetto is a 20-meter stretch of wall the Nazis forgot to destroy. The wall is hidden between drab housing blocks that converge on it from all sides.

More than sixty years after the Nazis tried to eradicate the Jews of Europe, the defiant spirit of the uprising lives on, with *Brave and Desperate* skillfully distilling its essence.

STEPPING STONES OF THE NAZI ERA

BY AMNON RUBINSTEIN,
THE JERUSALEM POST

Évian, Auschwitz, the Pinelli brothers all explain why, for Jews, the Nazi era is more significant than any other.

The painter Max Liebermann was a lucky man. He died in the third year of the Nazi era – in February 1935. The Nazi era began in January 1933, when Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany. Liebermann was a world-famous German Jewish painter, the father of German impressionism and of the Berliner secession school. He was a committed Berliner, born and bred in the capital. He lived with his wife Martha in the Pariser Platz, in an apartment overlooking the Brandenburg Gate (when asked for his address, he would say: “I live in Berlin,” first turning to the right). He was born in the same house his father and grandfather were born in. The Liebermanns also had a summer house in fashionable Wannsee district – not far from another Jewish-owned villa where the infamous Final Solution conference took place some years later. When he saw from his window the Nazi march of victory, he commented: “I cannot eat as much as I would like to vomit.”

In the first year of the Nazi era, he resigned from the presidency of the Prussian Arts Academy to protest the academy’s decision not to exhibit works by Jewish artists. None of the members of the Academy showed any interest or sympathy. He lived to see the first measures taken against Jews by the new regime, but passed away before it enacted the Nurem-

berg laws, and while many Germans still believed the Nazis were a passing phase.

Liebermann was indeed a lucky man. Before he died, he wrote the then-mayor of Tel Aviv, Meir Dizengof: “With much sorrow, I realize that I woke up from the dream of assimilation to a nightmare.”

His surviving wife was not that lucky. In the seventh year of the Nazi era, she was forced to sell the Wannsee villa to a German Aryan. In the twelfth year, at age 85 and incapacitated by a stroke, she was told



A portrait of Martha Liebermann by Anders Zorn. Through her suicide before she was taken, she escaped the Nazi era.

that the police would come and deport her to the *Terezinstat* concentration camp. They came in the afternoon with a stretcher to carry her out. Despite her weakness, she managed to commit suicide by swallowing barbiturates before they dumped her on the stretcher. Her last words were: “If I cannot live in Germany, at least I can die here.”

The Nazi era is certainly more relevant to mankind than any other. This was the

era in which the word “not” was struck off the commandment “thou shall not kill.” And, therefore, it divides human history into “before” and “after” more significantly than any other time. To Jews, this division is especially relevant: the Holocaust was not like a road accident, but a culmination of stages of hatred, persecution and brutality. To be a Jew after the Holocaust is different from the days preceding the Nazi era. True, Jews were not the only victims of the murderous Nazi offensive: millions of non-Jews – including Germans – were also killed. But all Jews were by definition sentenced to die because of their birth. And in this they were alone.

And there is another important distinction: for Jews, the stepping stones of the Nazi era were not confined to the horrific events of World War II, but extended to events which took place before and after the war.

From a Jewish point of view, *Évian* is a name as relevant as Auschwitz. In July 1938, President Roosevelt convened an international conference in *Évian-les-Bains* to deal with the plight of “refugees” – the word Jewish was not mentioned in the invitation. The conference ended with a flat refusal to give shelter to these refugees from Germany and Austria. These people belonged to the elite of Europe and would have enriched the arts, industry, and science of any host country. They were re-

fused shelter only because of their Jewishness.

Europe at the time was full of homeless refugees, but only the Jewish displaced persons had no home to go to. When they went back to their former home countries, they found them Jew-less and infested by the same old hatred, culminating in pogroms in a few cases. Great Britain closed the gates of Palestine to these refugees, thus preventing them from joining the Jewish *Yishuv* – the only community ready to give them shelter. And one cannot forget the circles in the pre-reconciliation Vatican, which encouraged Catholic monasteries not to return Jewish children – who were sheltered there during the war – to their families. There were many such cases, and we shall never know how many children were not claimed back because all their relatives had perished. The most notorious case was the refusal of a French monastery to hand over the two Pinelli brothers to their Jewish relatives. It took a long time for the relatives to get custody of the two orphans. Only in July 1953 – the 20th year of the Nazi era – were the brothers allowed to join their cousins in Israel.

These stepping stones – *Évian*, Auschwitz, the Pinelli brothers – explain why, for Jews, the Nazi era is more significant than any other.

The writer is a Professor of Law at the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya and, a former minister of education and Knesset member, as well as the recipient of the 2006 Israel Prize in Law.

KILLING JEWS IN THE BALKANS, SAVING JEWS IN THE BALKANS

BY EDWARD SEROTTA,
THE JERUSALEM POST

Seventy years ago in May, Hana Montijo had not quite reached her first birthday. Her parents, Menahem and Flora, lived in a mostly Muslim neighborhood on a steep hill overlooking Sarajevo. They were a poor family; Menahem worked as a tailor. Matilda and Breda Kalef were 10- and nine-year-old sisters, and lived in a large house in Belgrade’s Jewish quarter, *Dorcol*. Their family owned a textile store, and everyone – uncles, grandparents, parents – worked there.

And in the southern Yugoslav Macedonian town of *Bitola*, Roza Kamhi and Beno Ruso were a pair of 21-year-olds, deeply in love, and planning for their future. All of them were Jewish.

Then came Nazi Germany’s invasion of Yugoslavia in April 1941, and immediately after, its invasion of Greece. The *Wehrmacht* was accompanied, or followed by, the SS and foreign ministry diplomats. After the Royal Yugoslav Army collapsed in two weeks, regular soldiers, committed Nazis, and professional diplomats all began planning how to murder every living Jew in Yugoslavia, and then in Greece.

Who were these Jews? Albahari, Arditi, Farhi, Kanhi, Alvo, Amouli, Kalef, Salties, Molho, Behar, Montijo, Kabilo, Finci – these were Sephardic family names, descendants of those who had been expelled from Spain in 1492. Unwanted by most of Europe, they had sailed east and found a home in Balkan lands, then ruled by the Ottomans.

For the 450 years they had lived in the Balkans, the Sephardim kept their traditions, their recipes, their customs, even their Spanish dialect, Ladino, or Judeo-

Español, all while becoming part and parcel of Balkan city life.

In the north, their great city was Sarajevo, with a Jewish population of 10,000. But the greatest of all Sephardic communities was *Salonika*, or *Thessaloniki* as it was known after it became part of Greece in 1912. More than 53,000 Jews lived in this bustling port city on the Aegean.

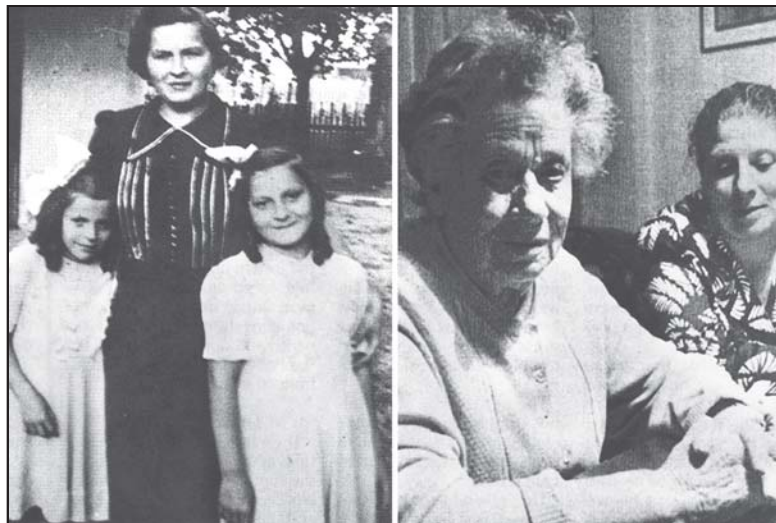
Through the centuries of the Ottoman empire’s expansion, Balkan Jewish communities flourished. During the empire’s long decline, as industrialized northern Europe sped past the Ottoman economies in the south, most Jews in the region became impoverished. But in these lands, there had never been a pogrom against them. They had never been forced to live in a ghetto.

What makes the story of Hana in Sarajevo, Breda and Matilda in Belgrade, and Roza and Beno in *Bitola* so different is that they survived the Holocaust, whereas more than 96 percent of their fellow Balkan Sephardic Jews did not.

The four women – all alive today and still living in the Balkans – owe their survival to Muslim and Christian neighbors who risked their own lives to protect them. Each of these women has a story to tell.

Breda and Matilda, for instance, will never forget that day in March, 1942. Their mother had gotten them false papers so they could pass as Catholics, and that morning was taking them to the Jewish hospital, where the girls’ crippled father

and his mother were imprisoned. Breda and Matilda had hoped to visit them, but something was happening. German soldiers had blocked off the street, and the girls and their mother hid behind a curtain in a nearby house. They watched as soldiers loaded the patients and doctors into a windowless van, and the girls saw it drive off. This was the first use of the carbon



Left: Dona Bat Kalef with her daughters Matilda and Breda in Belgrade. Right: Roza Kamhi in her *Skopje* apartment with granddaughter Jasmina Tajkovski.

monoxide gas vans in Serbia, and this would be the preferred method for murdering around 6,200 Serbian Jewish women, their children, and the handicapped. Beno Ruso, Roza’s boyfriend, didn’t thank anyone for hiding him during the war. That’s because he picked up a rifle, joined Tito’s communist partisans and fought back.

By the time the war ended in May 1945, Beno, all of 24 years old, had reached the rank of general. Then he raced home to Macedonia to look for Roza.

Where approximately 150,000 Jews lived between Sarajevo and *Thessaloniki* in 1940, today there are less than 7,000. Yet these remnant communities are a remarkable lot. One reason is they were re-established by former partisans. That meant they were – and still are – a feisty bunch. When war came to Sarajevo in the 1990s, for instance, a handful of Holocaust

survivors sent most of their family members to safety, then opened a nonsectarian humanitarian aid agency to help everyone – Muslims, Serbs, and Croats. In fact, all ethnic groups staffed their aid agency, *La Benevolencija*, and they doled out food, medicine, and jokes in equal measure.

No sooner had the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia become an independent country in 1991 than a small band of Jews – some of them aging partisans – made their way to the new government and asked for support to build a Holocaust museum so they could honor all those who had perished. It took a few years to

write all the legislation to return heirless property to the Jewish community, but the answer was yes.

Although General Beno Ruso did not live to see the new museum open its doors in April, his girlfriend, who had become his wife, Roza, did attend. Although she is 89 years old and blind, her grandchildren and children escorted her through the museum, and read to her the panels that told tales of Sephardic Balkan life, which had blossomed for 450 years.

Until 70 years ago.

FORGOTTEN STRINGS RECALL HOLOCAUST HORROR

BY DAN MORGAN, CNN

Hidden in a basement in central Tel Aviv, amidst the smell of sawdust and varnish, is a musical workshop whose owner and his son have spent the past 15 years tracking down violins played by Jewish Holocaust victims and bringing the instruments back to life.



Amnon spends much of his time on the phone with clients around the world, trying to track down the increasingly rare Holocaust violins.

"The Germans confiscated from the Jewish people every violin, viola, cello they could and we are talking about thousands, gone with the wind," said Amnon Weinstein, working amongst the dozens of violins and bows hanging from the walls and ceilings of his unique workspace.

Weinstein is a luthier, an artisan and craftsman of string instruments. He is a relic of a bygone era, whose moustache and spectacles do little to hide his eccentric streak. He says almost all of the survivors who played in the concentration camps owed their lives to their instruments.

"The Germans needed them, to cheat the Jewish people. In the camps, if somebody was playing the violin nobody would think the next door was a gas chamber. That was the plan of these horrible people," said Weinstein, who lost close to 200 members of his family during the Holocaust.

Weinstein's own journey began after hiring a German apprentice who convinced him to lecture the German association of luthiers in Dresden on the subject of how German and Austrian instruments found their way to Israel.

Bronislaw Huberman, a violin prodigy who was born in Poland in 1882, and Arturo Toscanini, the acclaimed Italian conductor, decided to form a philharmonic orchestra in Palestine in 1936, Weinstein explains.

"Of course they could never have fathomed what the Nazis had planned for the

Jewish people during the Holocaust, but they knew the situation was deteriorating," he said.

When the first rehearsals were held in 1936, most musicians coming to Palestine from Europe were still very fond of the German violin makers and bow makers, Weinstein said.

Weinstein's father, Moshe, emigrated in 1938 from Vilnius, then a part of Poland.

Also a luthier, Moshe began servicing the instruments of Huberman and Toscanini's orchestra.

As news of the Nazis' savage campaign against the Jews of Europe reached Palestine, these musicians refused to continue playing German instruments, said Weinstein.

"People who played on German instruments either broke them or burned them, and some came to my father telling him they would throw them away if he did not buy them," said Weinstein.

After Weinstein's initial lecture, he launched a radio appeal for people to come forward with more stories about "Holocaust violins."

Only then did he start receiving instruments that were played in camps, and the true search for survivors began.

Scouring warehouses, antiques markets, and violin shops, he found violins belonging to Jewish artisans in Poland and to Klezmer families in central Europe, from the ghettos in Warsaw and concentration camps such as Auschwitz.

Each of their violins, some of which bear the Star of David, tells another extraordinary story. The luthier claims he

can identify a violin's history from the scuffs and scars on it.

"Today I am like a policeman. I can identify which one suffered, which didn't. Those which were in the Holocaust came in horrible condition, so the workshop made the decision to make a concert instrument out of each one," said Weinstein, who now safeguards more than 26 of these instruments.

By his own estimation, he has volunteered the equivalent of almost \$200,000 in labor on this project, but the more time passes, the harder finding these instruments becomes.

Following the end of World War II in 1945, very few survivors came to Palestine. They could not fathom another war, and so a large percentage of them went to the United States, Weinstein said.

Upon arrival, the majority of them "put the violin in the attic and forgot about it," he said.

Violins, like memories, faded in the decades following the war as years passed and generations that followed knew little about the instruments left behind. Many of them were thrown away, but some found their way to antique dealers and violin makers, where Weinstein tracked them down.

"It is a very complicated period that is impossible to understand, impossible to explain, but the sound of the violin is taking us back to this time. Today it is difficult to convince people something like this happened. This is our mission, that everybody will understand a little bit the



Amnon's private collection contains dozens of violins – some of which, like the Holocaust violins he repairs and restores, bear the Star of David symbol on them.

friction. The violin is a friction, but you can hear a sound and it is making life a little bit more understandable," he said.

The "Violins of Hope" have been played in orchestras throughout the world, including Turkey, Switzerland, Israel, and the United States.

Weinstein says his search will continue so that their music and memories can continue to be shared.

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