BY JILL GOLTZER

The American Society for Yad Vashem Annual Spring Luncheon took place on Thursday, May 30, at the Pierre Hotel in New York City. We are extremely grateful for our wonderful co-chairs (Michele Lee Fine, Goldie Hertz, Mireille Manocherian, Mary Feldman, Shirley Podolsky, Sara Rausnitz, Lili Stawski, Elissa Tauber and Barbara Weichselbaum), honorary co-chairs (Danielle Karten, Abby Kaufthal, Jaci Paradis and Michelle Targarin) and esteemed honorees (Gabriela Shnay and her daughters Deborah, Vanessa and Rachel). Over 350 people were in attendance, including survivors, their children, grandchildren and friends.

Luncheon attendees explored the Yad Vashem exhibit “Stars Without a Heaven: Children in the Holocaust” before gathering in the ballroom for a meaningful program. The exhibit presents a collection of anecdotes, narratives and memories of Jewish children caught up in the crucible of the Holocaust. Despite their appalling situations and living conditions, children still engaged in imaginative play, sketching and writing, expressing their hopes, dreams and fears. In this exhibition, a selection of drawings, poems, letters and toys offers a moving and fascinating window into the lives of Jewish children during the Holocaust.

The program began with rousing renditions of “The Star Spangled Banner” and “Hatikvah” performed by YLA member Lizzy Savetsky and Banner” and “Hatikvah” performed by renditions of “The Star Spangled

Rifkin welcomed our guests and introduced ASYV Chairman Leonard Wilf, who discussed the challenges we face in “an era where, paradoxically, both Holocaust denial and interest in the lessons and legacy of the Holocaust are at an all-time high.” It is because of individuals who are so deeply committed to Yad Vashem, like the members of the Shnay family, that we can be confident in the future of Holocaust remembrance. Our dedicated members recognize the unique power of Yad Vashem. Recounting her experience on the 2016 Yad Vashem Mission, luncheon co-chair Michele Fine stated that we “came together to explore the darkest hour for the Jewish people, interwoven and redeemed with lessons of humanity and hope — through a lens that only Yad Vashem could provide.”

Following a video with greetings from Avner Shalev, chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate, Ron Meyer shared some heartfelt thoughts with the room. He explained how privileged he feels to have worked with passionate individuals, such as the Shnay women, this year’s honorees. Luncheon co-chair Elissa Tauber introduced our beloved honorees, who are Elissa’s cousins and dear friends. She was continuously inspired by the way Gabriela and Jack raised their daughters “in a home filled with love, warmth, and Yiddishkeit and Zionism.” Attendees were able to learn more about the Shnay and Horowitz families in a moving video produced by Yeeshai Gross. Gabriela and Jack, both children of Holocaust survivors, made sure their daughters were educated about the Holocaust and raised them to be proud of their Jewish heritage.

In the video, Gabriela lovingly talks about her father, Symcha Horowitz, who attended the luncheon with his family. Gabriela says her father is “a true survivor in every sense of the word. A fighter.” Born in Lodz, Poland, Symcha survived Auschwitz and joined the Haganah following the war. He was a founder of the first elite squadron of airplanes in the Israeli Air Force and was later honored by the State of Israel with the Distinguished Service Award. Symcha clearly passed on his leadership, Jewish values and love for Israel to his daughters and grandchildren.

Rachel Shnay, luncheon honoree and YLA co-chair, gave a powerful and impactful speech that left everyone in the room energized and recommitted to the cause of Holocaust remembrance and education. Looking out into the crowd, Rachel asked that we not allow history to be rewritten: that we give our children a voice and the tools to fight anti-Semitism. Reflecting on today’s society, Rachel strongly stated, “We have the wave of hate rising up so high against us. Don’t wait for it to smack you down for you to wake up.” She encouraged everyone to visit Yad Vashem, even if they have been before. You learn something new every time you visit.

Luncheon co-chairs Lili Stawski and Barbara Weichselbaum introduced our keynote speaker, Mr. William Bernheim, a Holocaust survivor, author and artist. Mr. Bernheim was born in Lodz, Poland, in 1922, but considers April 11, 1945 — the day he was liberated from Buchenwald — to be his second birthday. Speaking about that very day, Mr. Bernheim explained how he pinched himself and realized he was still alive. It was then that the words of his parents came to him — that “a person can be as weak as a fly, yet stronger than steel.” These words kept him going. After the war, he met his beloved wife Lucille, also a survivor, and together they have two children and four grandchildren. All four grandchildren attended the luncheon and proudly stood by their grandparents’ side. In her closing remarks, luncheon co-chair Shirley Podolsky shared with everyone the vest her mother, Paula Reinfeld, z’l, was forced to wear in the camps. On it you can see the upside-down red triangle, her mother’s prisoner number and the faded yellow star that was meant to be worn as a badge of shame. It is personal stories and artifacts such as these that Yad Vashem works so hard to safeguard for future generations. As luncheon honoree Rachel Shnay so beautifully expressed, “It is because of Yad Vashem that their neshamas remain alive.”
Jews have long been known as the people of the book, but fresh evidence has emerged that they’re also the people of the letter.

Of the millions of Jews who were taken to their deaths during the Holocaust on cattle cars, we will never know how many of them scribbled last words to loved ones, addressed them and tossed them out the train window, hoping against hope that someone would find them and send them on.

It’s safe to assume that very few of these desperate attempts to communicate were ever found, and even fewer of them made it to their intended recipients. The miracle is the ones that were discovered alongside the train tracks and, against all odds, reached their destination.

“Last Letters from the Holocaust: 1944,” an online exhibit from Yad Vashem, has arrived on its website just reached their destination.

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BY YAAKOV SCHWARTZ, THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Ninety-one-year-old Mordechai Allouche smiles broadly as he stands next to four colorful, hand-painted postcards of British and German soldiers absorbed in 1940s daily life in his Nazi-occupied hometown of Sfax, Tunisia.

The illustrations, which hang alongside a photo and biography of Allouche, are part of the "New on Display" exhibit, a collection of 46 pieces by 13 artists unveiled at Yad Vashem's Museum of Holocaust Art. Between 1942 and 1943, those postcards were a key source of income for Allouche. Then just 15, the boy was the sole supporter of his family after his father, a Jewish anti-Nazi dissident, was arrested and sent to a forced labor camp immediately following Germany's invasion of Tunisia in November 1942. Between working odd jobs and peddling the postcards, Allouche was able to scrape up enough for the family to live on.

Though the artist was a victim of some of the soldiers he painted, he didn't make them out to be villains. The figures Allouche portrayed are handsome and strapping, captured enjoying wonderfully human moments. This was to his benefit — these same soldiers were Allouche's best customers.

"We did what we could in order to eat," the energetic Allouche tells The Times of Israel, gesturing to the postcards, which he donated to Yad Vashem two years ago. He is the only surviving artist to make it to the exhibition special, says the museum's director of Yad Vashem's museum division, Eliad Moreh-Rosenberg.

"We decided not just to wait. In the past we were receiving wonderful artworks, but people would come to us with them. Here, we decided to be active, and we took the initiative, and we contacted people, and we received sometimes whole collections," she says. "People are not necessarily aware of what they have, because for them it might be a very precious, sentimental piece, but they don't understand the impact it can have as a national treasure."

This underestimation of the value of his art was once true for Allouche. "I've got lots of these things," Allouche beams. "Different poses, different locations. I never thought that this stuff would ever interest anybody. But when they came to me to collect it, I saw the awareness that these are the last moments when we can still find works from the time of the Holocaust when there are still the last survivors among us," Moreh-Rosenberg tells The Times of Israel. She adds that properly preserving the art is also a top priority.

"The paintings and box were created by Deutsch as a gift for his three-year-old daughter while the family was in hiding from the Nazis in Belgium.

He created the pieces as a gift to his three-year-old daughter Ingrid while the family was in hiding after the Nazis implemented the Final Solution in Belgium.

"Obviously it's not a standard three-year-old's birthday gift," says Deutsch-Berman. "He's basically saying through these paintings, 'This is my legacy, this is what I want to leave you with.' And I think the fact that this is what he's doing, that this is his final testament, he's saying, 'I may not survive this, but the lessons, the images that illustrate the roots that we come from, will survive the Holocaust.'"

Deutsch and his wife were eventually informed upon by a neighbor and sent to Auschwitz. Deutsch was sent on a forced death march in December 1944 to Buchenwald, where he died on arrival. His wife, Fela, was sent to Birkenau's medical experimentation block, after which her fate is unknown.

Ingrid and her grandmother survived the war in hiding with a Catholic family, and found the box containing the paintings intact when they returned home after the war's conclusion.

"The Nazis tried to dehumanize their victims — to erase their humanity in every way they could. In Auschwitz, they even went so far as to strip people of their names, and branded them with numbers," says Uria.

"These works are evidence that in times of suffering, the artists went to great lengths, often even endangering their lives, in order to express themselves. And this shows the strength of the human spirit, how it's impossible to completely extinguish someone's humanity," says Uria.
Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust: Language, Rhetoric and the Traditions of Hatred

By Beth A. Griech-Polelle


Reviewed by Dr. Diane Cypkin

“The threatening imagery of the Jew . . . was built up over the course of centuries. Destructive legends, myths, and stereotypes all contributed to a type of acceptable language about Jews which enabled Hitler to play upon well-established tropes. The above is the argument the author, Beth A. Griech-Polelle, poses in her book, entitled Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust: Language, Rhetoric and the Traditions of Hatred. Does it prove valid? Unfortunately, yes. In her close, conscientious and absorbing examination of Jewish life from the time of Jesus onward, Griech-Polelle makes it easy for us to see this development. Over the years, “language and rhetoric influenced the construction of the Jew as eternal enemy” . . . and Hitler utilized this “given,” building on it and encouraging the “violence and annihilation of European Jewry in the Holocaust.”

For example, we learn that the deadliest epithet ever directed at Jews, “long-lasting” and fundamental to religiously based anti-Semitism, dates from the crucifixion. From then on, all Jews were seen as sharing in the guilt of Jesus’s death and would therefore be referred to as “Christ-killers.” Interestingly, St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo in the fourth century, would say that Jews shouldn’t be killed — but “that good Christians could humble, debase, and persecute [them] in order to reaffirm the triumph of Christianity over Judaism.” Indeed, this “became the official position of the Roman Catholic Church for hundreds of years” — till the Crusades in 1096. At that point, Christians, “whipped” up by the Pope into traveling to the far-off Holy Land to kill Muslim “infidels” who had taken control of it, suddenly realized that they had “infidels” right in their midst, “infidels” that also, according to them, deserved death — the Jews. “Christ-killers” all! Thus, many Jewish communities, especially “along the Rhine River were attacked mercilessly” by the Crusader hordes. We read how the medieval world introduced what would become “popular anti-Semitic myths and legends.” Jews were rumored to be poisoning wells, causing all kinds of natural disasters, murdering Christian children in order to use their blood for rituals (blood libel), and “desecrating the sacred Host.” And when Jews turned to money-lending because of being “locked out of the medieval Christian economic structure,” they were labeled “shytrists.” Moreover, if rumor wasn’t enough, the written literature of the day helped spread this calumny, “churning out stories of Jewish perfidy.” The final results included “Jews being required to wear special clothing and markers” identifying them as Jews, attacks on them, expulsions, and, in the midst of all this, the first Jewish ghetto, created in 1516. Meanwhile, though, expulsions from various Western European countries saw an increasing number of Jews moving to Poland. In fact, they were invited by King Kasimir to build up the country economically through “leasing land, taxation farming, [building up] trade, and manufacture.” Ironically, however, it appears they did it too well. In 1648 the Ukrainian Cossack leader Bogdan Chrishenicks and his followers felt “the Jews had acquired too much power in Poland” — hence the murderous attacks on them remembered to this day. In the nineteenth century, however, things got much more dangerous.

On May 2, during Israel’s Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yad Vashem broke ground for its new Shoah Heritage Campus. The emotional ceremony was attended by former head of the Jewish Agency Natan Sharansky, The ambassadors of Germany, Austria and Austria to Israel, donors, representatives of Yad Vashem Societies worldwide and Holocaust survivors. The new campus, to be built at Yad Vashem on Jerusalem’s Mount of Remembrance, will include the Joseph Wilf Curatorial Center, the Heritage Gallery for display of artifacts from its collections; and an auditorium, including a main hall and a Family and Children’s Exhibition Gallery.

The central component of the new Campus is the Shoah Heritage Collections Center. The artistic installation, conservation and storage facilities for Yad Vashem’s unrivaled collections of Holocaust-era artworks, artworks and archival materials. Situated in a strategically prominent, highly visible location — opposite the Hall of Remembrance, one of the most frequently visited sites of Yad Vashem — the Shoah Heritage Collections Center will comprise four subterranean levels covering a total area of 5,880 square meters (63,300 square feet).

During the ceremony, Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev called the items in Yad Vashem’s collections — including 210 million pages of documentation, 34,000 personal artifacts and close to 12,000 original artworks and “refusenik” Natan Sharansky cited Viktor Frankl’s seminal work Man’s Search for Meaning, and the importance of giving significance to one’s life even as one faces certain death. The experiences of people under such regimes as Nazi Europe and the Communist Soviet Union, as he himself recalled, are vital not only for those living their lives at the time, but also for those living in the future, in order to learn how best to advance humanity. “The State of Israel, Yad Vashem and Yad Vashem’s friends guarantee that the memory of the Shoah will live on for generations to come,” he said.

Speaking on behalf of the Wilf family and other donors of the Shoah Heritage Campus, Jane Wilf said “Yad Vashem is the epicenter for Holocaust remembrance for the Jewish people, Israel and all of humanity. The Shoah Heritage Campus and all of its components, including the Joseph Wilf Curatorial Center, the renovated Auditorium and the Family and Children’s Exhibition Gallery, constitute an integral thread in the fabric of Yad Vashem’s vital work. Through these very components, we are faced with the profound challenge of ensuring the preservation of Yad Vashem’s collections for posterity, their accessibility to the public, and the transmission of the memory of the victims and survivors of the Shoah to future generations.”

Following the moving ceremony — which included a performance by the Ethiopian children’s choir Sheba — stakeholders signed two copies of a Scroll of Dedication. One was presented to Chairman Shalev by donors, and another was then buried in the ground under the spot where the Shoah Heritage Campus will be built.

Groundbreaking Ceremony at Yad Vashem

Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev being presented with the Shoah Heritage Campus Scroll of Dedication by donors.
BY LUKE TRESS, THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

A 93, artist Eva Deutsch Costabel still has one friend from her hometown, Zagreb. The Italian military imprisoned them in the same concentration camp in World War II. They survived, parted ways, and found each other seven years ago in New York City, where they both live today.

Eva Deutsch Costabel.

Her friend, also named Eva, was seven years old when she arrived at the camp, and remembers 17-year-old Costabel being famous among the children for his camp on the picturesque island of Rab in the Adriatic Sea. The children would gather to watch Costabel at work, her friend said.

“You couldn’t buy anything, so I became very popular because I designed all the greeting cards for everybody,” Costabel said.

“Everybody knew me in the camp, because when they needed a card for the holiday, they came to me. “People from the camp, the Jews, they always said, ‘I’ll never forget your greeting cards,’” Costabel said.

Today, Costabel’s Manhattan apartment is crammed with colorful abstract paintings, self-portraits depicting her struggle with PTSD, children’s books she wrote and illustrated, and textiles she patterned during her design career in New York.

Her art skills helped her survive in mountain villages controlled by Yugoslav partisans and as a young immigrant alone in the US. She studied in the classical art world of Rome and with abstract expressionists in Manhattan. Today, the nonagenarian still paints and hopes to find a home for her work before she passes on.

Costabel grew up in Zagreb, then part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, now the capital of Croatia. Her father worked in the chemical industry and her mother ran a fashion boutique. Her mother groomed her to design clothes, her sister to become an artist, and Costabel to repair them, which is how she began to draw.

The Nazis invaded Yugoslavia and occupied Zagreb in April 1941. Much of the population welcomed the Germans as liberators. The Nazis set up a puppet state, called the Independent State of Croatia, run by the Ustaše, a Fascist, racist and violent Croatian nationalist group.

Yugoslavia was ethnically diverse, largely split between the Croatian and Serbian ethnic groups, but also including Albanians, Macedonians, Slovenes, Muslims and Jews. The Serbs and Croats harbored long-standing animosity towards each other, and when the Croatian Ustaše came to power, they began persecuting Serbs, Jews and Roma, in an attempt to create an ethnically pure Croatian state. The Nazis and their collaborators controlled the region’s roads and urban centers, but resistance groups sprang up in more remote mountain areas.

Saboteurs blew up a Nazi train in Costabel’s area, and her father was accused of involvement because of his ties to the chemical industry.

“I never saw him again. I was 16 years old. He was murdered in the Treblinka gas chamber. The Ustaše, they were never punished for it,” Costabel said.

The notoriously violent Ustaše slaughtered Jews, Serbs and other minorities throughout the war. Historian Davide Rodogno, author of a book on the Italian occupation of Yugoslavia’s surviving Jews were caught between the Italians, Nazis, Croats, partisans and Allies in the power struggle for control of the Balkans.

ITALIAN DETAINMENT CAMPS: FOR REPRESSION, OR PROTECTION?

The Italian military set up detention camps during the war both for repression and for protection, according to historian James Walston. The repres- sive camps were intended to quell partisan resistance to Italian rule by removing potentially dangerous civilians and their supporters from the population. The inmates could also be used as hostages and executed in retaliation for partisan attacks. In addition to the repressive camps, the Italians set up “protective” camps for Jews inside Italy and in areas occupied by their military. In Italian-occupied parts of Croatia, the camps included Jews, also known by its Italian name, Arbe, which kept the Jews out of the hands of the Nazis and Croats. The military knew what was happening to Jews in Eastern Europe, and wanted to keep Yugoslav Jews alive for both political and humanitarian reasons, Walston wrote.

Historian Davide Rodogno, author of a book on the Italian occupation of the Mediterranean in the war, told The Times of Israel that the military’s motives were purely political, however. The Italians in Yugoslavia, who were staunch believers in Fascist ide- ology, were struggling for power with their German and Croatian allies in the region.

“The Jews were a small, peaceful group, and the Italians did not want to waste resources going after them. The Ustaše, whom the Italians saw as ‘maniacs and idiots,’ Rodogno said, were disrupting law and order by hunting Jews and ignoring legitimate threats, so the Italians wanted to remove them from the Ustaše’s sights.

Keeping the Jews from the Nazis was an act of defiance against the Germans, meant to show Italy was not a satellite state of the Germans, Rodogno said.

“They didn’t have a military, and all they did was to set up safe havens. If they decided to have concentration camps, it was to make sure the people were under their control,” Rodogno said.

The Italians saw the Jews as a commodity that belonged to them, ”and nobody, even not the Nazis, had any right to decide what to do with them. That was the point they were trying to make. This has nothing to do with humanity. The unintended conse- quence was a rescue,” Rodogno said.

“Regardless of the Italian military’s motives, Costabel is grateful to her Italian captors to this day.

“Everybody was starving, nobody had anything to eat, so they didn’t have the right to decide what to do with them,” Rodogno said. “So they kept them alive and under their control until the end of the war.

MASTERS OF THEIR OWN FATES

Italy capitulated on September 8, 1943.

“It was utter chaos. Everyone was on his own. Italian soldiers wanted to just go back home,” Rodogno said.

“They just didn’t care” what happened to the Jews, he said.

Liberation meant danger for the Jews in the Rabb camp. When Italy fell, Yugoslav Jews feared the Italians and Germans and Croats, who both wanted to kill the Jews there.

That was the point they were trying to make. The Italian internes in the Arbe [Rabb] camp, the day of liberation was one of great danger. It was, how- ever, the day on which, for the first time since the beginning of the war, they were given an opportunity to be free, unharmed and to become the masters of their own fate. For the first time, they were free to organize, to make their way to the areas which had already been liberated by the partisans, and to participate in the struggle,” Walston wrote.

When Italy capitulated, of the 2,661 Jews in the Rabb camp, 204 decided to remain in the camp, mostly elderly or infirm. They were captured by the Germans and deported to Auschwitz, where none survived. Of the “liberated” Jews who joined the partisans, 277 were killed in the war, Walston wrote.

Some of the Jews in Rabb had connec- tions to Yugoslavia’s Communist party before their confinement, and formed a small cell in the camp, wrote Rodigno.

(Continued on page 7)
The handful of Jews who survived the Nazis' final onslaught on Warsaw, which began in October 1939, the Jewish community did its best to celebrate Passover. Even after being forced into a ghetto measuring just 2.5% of the city, subject to terrible starvation and disease, the Jews smuggled additional nonleavened foods into the ghetto in the weeks before Passover. Several matzah factories were set up, ensuring that the community, at its height numbering almost half a million, could eat the bread of freedom on Seder night. Despite the hunger, typhus and dysentery, Jewish life amid the hardships; it was already unrecognizable. Almost a year earlier Adam Czieniakowski, the head of the Judenrat, the Jewish council appointed by the Nazis, had committed suicide after hearing of the Nazis' plans, leaving a note to his wife that he "would not be the hangman of Israel's children." The Nazis had since begun a terrifying program of "liquidation," deporting between 5,000 and 6,000 Jews daily to the Treblinka death camp, where they were murdered within an hour of their arrival. On January 16, 1943, the Nazis attempted to take another 8,000 Jews but this time members of a newly formed Jewish resistance fired shots at the SS guards, and the Nazis rethought their plans. They bolstered their military presence, delaying the final liquidation of the ghetto to Passover, which would fall in three months' time. "THAT'S WHAT WE FELT IN OUR HEARTS" On the 18th of April 1943, when news arrived that the Germans had stationed an army in Warsaw ready to empty the ghetto, members of the underground resistance movements went into high alert. While the rooftops were stationed with Jews keeping track of the enemy's every move, below the ghetto, Jews were busy embracing the story of the exodus from Egypt as a symbol of their own fight for dignity, pride and hope. Rome Frey was 24 that Passover. She recalls how she and her family tried their best to make the basement as nice as possible for the holiday. "We tried to put the candles on the table, and a white tablecloth." She adds, "The table was made of a wooden board resting on a few things underneath." She survived the Holocaust and moved to Melbourne, Australia, after the war. She adds, "We acknowledged to ourselves and to God and to ourselves that we want to keep the traditions. That's what we felt in our hearts, we remembered our grandfathers, the rabbis and our family, and here we have hardly a hope to survive even just one day or night." SEDER NIGHT WITH RABBI MEISEL With families decimated by the deportations, the remnant Jews came together, relying on those who knew the Haggadah by heart to lead them. Many flocked to the home of the 60-year-old venerated Rabbi Eliezer Itzhak Meisel, who had left his hometown of Lodz along with his followers years earlier when the Nazis invaded. In Warsaw he had become immediately involved in maintaining religious life amid the hardships; it was in his basement that many of the Jews active in the resistance joined for the Passover Seder. Tuvia Borzykowski was 29 at the time. "No one slept that night," he recalled. "The moon was full and the night was unusually bright." Along with the other fighters, he joined Rabbi Meisel for the Seder. "Amidst this destruction, the table in the center of the room looked incongruous, with glasses filled with wine, with the family seated around, the rabbi reading the Haggadah." Throughout the night, despite the increasing sounds of enemy fire, Tuvia and the other fighters held fast, engrossed in the retelling of the Jewish people's redemption from Egypt. He recalled, "The rabbi's reading was punctuated by explosions and the rattling of machine guns; the faces of the family around the table were lit by the red light from the burning buildings nearby." "Now is a good time to die," Rabbi Meisel said, buoyed by the feeling of pride, courage and faith, as he blessed one of the fighters who came to deliver a report. He died later that night in the flames of the ghetto. Tuvia Borzykowski survived the war and helped establish the Kibbutz of the Ghetto Fighters near Akko. He is one of several fighters who testified about the Passover Seder they took part in as the uprising began. "I HAD NEVER MISSED A SEDER" Born in Warsaw, Itzhak Milberg was the leader of a group of Jewish boys posing as non-Jews and selling cigarettes on the black market to survive. On the eve of Passover in 1943, he was just 12 years old but wise beyond his years. He had seen his father shot before his eyes, his mother and two sisters had already been deported, and the only family he had left was an uncle named Feivel who was still in the ghetto. When rumors spread that the Nazis were planning their final deportations, he returned to the ghetto to be with his uncle for Passover. "I had never missed a Seder," he said. "It was in my blood." With the sound of shooting around him, he entered his uncle's candlelit bunker, where 60 people were crowded. "The building was shaking," he said, "People were crying." His uncle Feivel embraced him in Yiddish, "Ir vet fin di seder mit mir — You'll perform the Seder with me." However, some were too distressed to think about running a Seder. He recalls people crying, "God led us out of Egypt. Nobody killed us. Here, they are murdering us." Pulling him close, whispering into his ear, Feivel told his nephew, "You may die, but if you die, you'll die as a Jew. If we live, we live as Jews." He added, "If you live, you'll tell your children and grandchildren about this." The Seder began, Feivel Milberg had managed to organize matzah, "I don't know how he got it," Itzhak recalls, although he remembers there were no bitter herbs. "There was plenty of bitterness already," he says. Together with his uncle, he read the Haggadah from memory, and soon most of the bunker joined in. "We did most of the prayers by heart," he says. "The Seder went very, very late." He left the ghetto in the early hours of the morning through the sewer system, risking his life as he had done to be there in the first place. In the days that followed he worked as a runner, smuggling arms through the sewers to the Jewish fighters until he was caught on the sixth day of the uprising. He would later jump from a train taking him to Treblinka and survive the Holocaust thanks to a Catholic family in Warsaw. After the war, he moved to Canada, raised a family of his own and made good on his promise to his uncle to tell his children and grandchildren about that Seder night he had led with his uncle in 1943.
(Continued from page 5) Emil Kerenji, a historian from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. They had some contact with Communists outside the camp, including in the town of Rab itself.

Prior to Italy’s capitulation, the Jewish Communists in the camp had prepared to join the partisans, and smuggled a report to the mainland late in the summer of 1943, Kerenji wrote. When Italy yielded to the Nazis, this cell, along with Slovenian prisoners in the camp, disarmed the Italian guards and took weapons from the camp’s caches.

Partisan representatives arrived from the mainland and invited the Jews to join their ranks. They began organizing their resistance against areas in the forests and mountains of Yugoslavia under partisan control. The complex rescue operation included some 30,000 Jews, according to Yad Vashem.

The liberation of Rab’s Jews was one of the largest single rescue operations of the Holocaust. For context, Oskar Schindler is credited with saving 1,200 Jews, while the partisans saved over 2,000 from Rab alone.

Most of the Jews who left the camp who could not fight with the partisans found refuge with civilians, including most of the 500 liberated children. Some managed to stay in the camp or in the mainland on boats, sometimes under German aerial bombardment, transporting the sick and elderly in trucks, and providing supplies to the hundreds joining their ranks.

EQUALS AMONG VICTIMS

The ideologically driven Communist partisans, led by Josip Broz Tito, were a multi-ethnic force that included Jews, Serbs and Muslims. Their Socialist, inclusive ethos proved to be an advantage in the struggle against the Germans, as they attracted fighters from different segments of the population.

Tito proclaimed the group’s goals as “brotherhood and unity of the peoples” in Yugoslavia “in the struggle for national liberation.” The rescue of the Jews in Rab fit into this framework.

The region was rife with sectarian violence. Partisans tried to emphasize the formal act of joining the resistance movement and then endow it with ideological meaning: the brotherly peoples of Yugoslavia joining, of their own free will, the struggle for national liberation led by Tito and the partisans,” Kerenji wrote.

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THE PARTISAN PROPAGANDA UNIT

The partisans stationed Costabel in a small mountain village populated by Serbian peasants. She began working as a nurse.

“There were all these pleasant houses. We used to sleep 30 people on the floor. They were all very primitive,” Costabel said. “We never took off our clothes, never, because of the Nazis: you had to always run.”

She began sketching the people around her in the village — children orphaned by war and death, her landlord and his wife, a Jewish army officer named Baruch — on whatever pieces of paper she could find, using pencils, ink and watercolors.

“It was during the war, so I had to draw on the back of some old letters. There was no paper, and I always carried a krasnolph, that was my whole possession, but I always had paint and ink or whatever I needed,” she said. “I’m very proud of them because otherwise they’re very anti-Semitic, so I didn’t want to join. So my friend said, ‘You better join, they’ll kill you,’” Costabel said.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Costabel fled for the coast. She met a group of Austrian and Hungarian Jews who had made contact with Winston Churchill’s son, Randolph, who was in the Adriatic as part of the British military’s effort to assist the partisans with medical supplies and military equipment. The group appealed to Churchill, as foreign civilians, for his help in fleeing war-torn Yugoslavia.

“We are the reminders of the persecuted foreign Jewish refugees. The other fell in Hands of the enemy and it is sure that they are not more alive,” the group wrote, in broken English, in their appeal to Churchill in a letter dated September 1, 1944. “Therefore we beg to realise our demand as soon as possible and to transfer us to Italy,” the refugees wrote.

Again, Costabel’s Austrian passport allowed her to leave as a foreign citizen. A British warship ferried the refugees across the Adriatic Sea to southern Italy, which was controlled by the Allies. Costabel spent the remainder of the war in a refugee camp in Bari. After the war ended, Costabel moved to Rome with her mother and sister. She wanted to pursue her interest in art, but had lost five years of education because of the war. Rome was a city in disarray, without accu-

(Continued on page 11)
PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE AMERICAN SOCIETY

Honorees Deborah Shnay Rifkin, Rachel Shnay and Gabriela Shnay and luncheon co-chair Sarita Raussnitz with family patriarch Symcha Horowitz.

Judi Burnstein, Dara Rubenstein, Merry Cohen, Leslie Adler, Marilyn Rubenstein, Helene Dorfman, Rebecca Altman and Judy Bloom.

Honorees Deborah Shnay Rifkin, Rachel Shnay and Gabriela Shnay and luncheon co-chair Sarita Raussnitz with family patriarch Symcha Horowitz.

Ron Meier, executive director of ASYV; Jack Shnay; Rachel Shnay; and ASVY Chairman Leonard Wilf.

Standing: Barry Levine and Abbi Halpern, board members; Sharon Halpern; Jaci Paradis, honorary co-chair; seated: Gladys Halpern.

Tova Friedman and Felice Z. Stokes, longtime friends and survivors.

Susan Lerner, Rose Koren, Sally Pomeranc and Deborah Pomeranc.
TY FOR YAD VASHEM ANNUAL SPRING LUNCHEON
I

by Nazi authorities and distributed in currencies — from the notes printed one day it was quoted at one and a some days “the prize-coupon was which he and other prisoners would to what he calls “prize-coupons,” fiftieth pfennigs each and could be prisoner. The coupons cost the firm to which we were practically a gift of so-called ‘premium coupons.’

Christmas 1944, I was presented with not go unrewarded; just before tunnel, without help, for a water main

Auschwitz the camp, where he and others were subjected to forced physical labor, including the digging of trenches and tunnels: “At one time, my job was to dig a tunnel, without help, for a water main under a road,” he writes. “This feat did not go unrewarded; just before Christmas 1944, I was presented with a gift of so-called ‘premium coupons.’

These were issued by the construction firm to which we were practically sold as slaves: the firm paid the camp authorities a fixed price per day, per prisoner. The coupons cost the firm fifty pfennigs each and could be exchanged for six cigarettes, often weeks later, although they sometimes lost their validity.”

In his 1947 memoir, Survival in Auschwitz, Italian Jewish chemist Primo Levi makes a similar reference to what he calls “prize-coupons,” which he and other prisoners would exchange for cheap tobacco or bread. Levi describes how the coupons, distributed by Nazi camp officials, “circulated on the market in the form of money, and their value changes in strict obedience to the laws of classical economics.” Levi goes on to relate how the value of these coupons would fluctuate at random, and how some days “the prize-coupon was worth one ration of bread, then one and a quarter, even one and a third; one day it was quoted at one and a half rations.

The very existence of Holocaust currencies — from the notes printed by Nazi authorities and distributed in Jewish ghettos as the “camp money” used by prisoners in concentration camps — has seldom been investigated in studies of the era. It is a history blotted out of the public conversation. In fact, for some seventy years after the defeat of the Third Reich, the specifics of Holocaust currency were known mostly to a small community of collectors, scholars, survivors, and curators at Holocaust museums such as those in Houston and Washington, DC, and at Yad Vashem in Israel. Then, in the spring of 2015, a collection of bills and coins found their way to the Strasserler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, having been donated by Robert Messing, a Clark alumnus and an amateur numismatist — one who studies coins and currencies. By making this material available to students, Messing and the Strasserler Center have helped to ensure that future generations can continue to analyze this largely overlooked piece of world history.

In his 1925 autobiography, Mein Kampf, as well as during his rise to power in the early 1930s, Adolf Hitler endorsed the ancient stereotype of the miserly Jew, exploiting the growing conviction among Germans that Jews had obtained their wealth by stealing from Aryans. With the passage of the Nuremberg Race Laws in September of 1935, the regime formally stripped German Jews of their rights, disenfranchising them from their citizenship in the Reich, and criminalizing marriage or sexual relations between Jews and non-Jewish Germans. On April 26, 1938, the Decree for Reporting of Jewish-Owned Property required all German and Austrian Jews to disclose and surrender assets valued at more than 5,000 reichsmarks.

The Third Reich’s confiscation of property and seizure of assets and other goods not only served to help fund the Nazi war effort but created economic marginalization, leaving Jewish communities increasingly isolated and vulnerable and thus more easily controlled. When the large-scale deportation of Jews from German-occupied territories to Nazi ghettos commenced at the beginning of the 1940s, Jewish families left their homes arrived empty-handed, with nothing but the clothes on their backs. When Jews entered the ghettos — walled or otherwise confined areas separating them from the larger local population — Nazi commanders would often issue coupons, or tokens, which were a fraction of the value of the country’s circulating currency and only redeemable within the ghettos in which they were issued, precluding the Jewish population from participating in the German economy. Jews could be assigned various jobs inside the ghetto, but wages were pitiable and workers were compensated almost exclusively in ghetto coupons, which could be traded for food, clothing, cigarettes and other goods, marked up at exorbitant rates.

By stripping only certain citizens of a country of their national currency and replacing it with a virtually worthless one, the Nazis gripped the reins of control tighter and tighter, until an entire population was both destabi- lized and dependent — exiles in their own country. Money — what Jews were for hundreds of years accused of devaluing — was now being used as a means to manipulate and control them.

Lodz, in occupied Poland, was the first ghetto where Nazis designed, printed and distributed money to be used exclusively by the occupants. The pfennig notes that circulated among Lodz’s 160,000 predominantly Austrian Jews in 1940 and the shuttering of the ghetto in 1944 depicted a seven-branched menorah atop a chain of Stars of David, linked so as to resemble barbed wire.

The Third Reich was soon printing and distribut- ing unique currencies throughout most of the ghettos in its occupied territories. These coins and coupons included the name of the ghetto, a monetary value and, usually, the Star of David. The Nazis who controlled each ghetto were responsible for choosing an artist — often this was an occu- pant of the ghetto — and approving the final design.

The Theresienstadt ghetto crowns (ghetto crowns) were designed by an artist, playwright and ghetto occupant named Peter Klein, original- ly from the Czech border town of Vsetín, educated in Brno and at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague as well as the graphic-design school Officina Pragensis. Ordered by Reinhard Heydrich, the high-ranking Nazi official Hitler had placed in charge of the ghettos, to include an illustration of Moses and the Ten Commandments in his design, Klein had his original effort rejected; he felt that the notes were too Aryan in appearance. Under Heydrich’s command, Klein redesigned the notes, giving Moses stereotypically exaggerated Semitic features like a hooked nose, curly hair, and excessively long and slen- der fingers. (Heydrich also ordered that Moses’s fingers be positioned on the tablet so as to obscure the phrase “Thou shall not kill.”) The design was approved, and the notes were distributed throughout Theresienstadt.

Heydrich had established the Theresienstadt ghetto in November 1941 in a walled fortress town thirty miles north of Prague. With a peak population of 150,000 Jews, of thirty-five different nationalities, including locals from Bohemia and Moravia, it was the largest ghetto outside of Poland and functioned both as a holding area for elderly and “promi- nent” Jews and as a transit camp, or way station, for those who would later be sent to extermination camps. Theresienstadt also served as a deceptive display of life in the ghettos, hosting Jewish cultural events like concerts and plays. By March 1943, Nazi officials in Theresienstadt had already begun circulating the ghetto’s own currency, to aid in presenting an illusion of normalcy to both Jews and outside observers. (On June 23, 1944, drawn by concerns about sus- pected genocide and humanitarian offenses against European Jews, two delegates from the International Committee of the Red Cross and one
DOCUMENTARY CHARTS THE PERSECUTION OF ITALIAN JEWS

BY SHELDON KIRSHNER,
THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Giorgio Treves’ sobering documentary, "A Survivor’s Story in Living Color," which was screened at the Toronto Jewish Film Festival in May, lays bare the devastating impact of Fascism on the Jewish community in Italy.

In 1938, Benito Mussolini’s Fascist regime enacted anti-Semitic laws that rendered 45,000 Italian Jews second-class citizens. The German invasion of Italy, four years into World War II brought a new and far more terrible dimension of anti-Semitism into the mix. On Germany’s initiative, thou-

sands of Italian Jews were deported to Nazi extermination camps in Poland. As Treves’ film opens, the Italian Jewish actor Roberto Herlitza, a sur-
vivor of the Holocaust, muses, “I had a world, a family, a companion and a city that were taken away by the vile Fascist and greedy German.”

Herlitza’s bitter comment is indica-
tive of the shock and disappointment that still linger in the hearts of Italian Jews who went through the trauma of being demonized, marginalized and persecuted by a nation that had emancipated its Jewish population a century before.

Herlitza is just one of the inter-
viewees who appears in Treves’ movie. He talks to historians and Jewish survivors, and they have plen-
ty to say. In the main, they discuss the events that culminated with the pas-
sage of the anti-Semitic laws.

Mussolini sought to create a “new Italian” on the basis of race. This objective loomed large in the 1930s because he was obsessed by the “purity” of the Italian race. Italy passed its first racial law in 1936, aimed at mixed-

race Italians of par-

tial African descent. It would be only a matter of time before Mussolini’s ethno-

centric regime tar-
eged Jews.

During medieval times, Italian Jews were subjected to a myriad of restric-
tions. Free to leave the ghettos after their emancipation in the 19th century, they integrated themselves into society at large, gaining widespread acceptance.

Mussolini did not stop off as an anti-

Semite. Two hundred Jewish mem-

bers of the Fascist party participated in the iconic 1922 March on Rome, and the so-called Jewish question was not a factor in Italian politics until Nazi Party leader Adolf Hitler was appointed Germany’s chancellor in 1933.

A round 1936, Mussolini began to toy with the idea of remov-
ing Jews from their positions in cul-
ture and politics. Mussolini, por-
trayed by an actor, clearly disliked Jews. Reading from his diary, he says, “These dis-
gusting Jews. I must destroy them.”

In the following year, he launched a media campaign against Jews and instructed Guido Landra, a scientist, to produce a manifesto proving that Jews did not belong to the Italian Aryans race and should be excluded from it.

Calling for “strict racial con-

sciousness,” Mussolini announced in 1938 that anti-

Semitic legislation was immi-
nent. In November of that fateful year, the first anti-

Jewish laws were passed by a com-

plaint parliament. The edicts were signed by King Victor Emmanuel III, a descendant of King Carlo Alberto, who had rescinded anti-Semitic restrictions 90 years earlier.

Interestingly enough, the Vatican condemned the racially based laws.

In short order, Jews were summar-

ily expelled from the Fascist party, the army and the civil service. Jewish students were thrown out of schools and universities.

“They despised us,” says a Jewish woman, looking back with disgust at that horrible era. “We were deeply disheartened.”

Italian Jews were shocked and appealed by the new order. One dis-

taught Jewish man committed sui-
cide, jumping from the leaning tower in Pisa.

It would appear that Italian Christians were generally indifferent to the plight of Jews. Some took advantage of the situation by buying Aryanized Jewish property cheaply.

Jews who had the means emigrat-
ed. Those who could not afford to leave suffered the consequences fol-

lowing Italy’s entry into the war in the summer of 1940 and Germany’s invasion of Italy a few years later. Jews were ghettoized, physically assaulted, declared enemies of the state and sent to forced labor camps.

Deportations, resulting in the mur-
der of almost 8,000 Jews, followed.

In documenting the concerted assault on Jews by Mussolini and Germany, Treves cites facts and fig-
ures to make his case against the tyranny of Fascism in Italy.

A SURVIVOR’S STORY IN LIVING COLOR

(Continued from page 7)

time, many of New York’s galleries were located in midtown, so Costabel would explore during her lunch breaks.

“I didn’t speak English. I had no friends. I just bought a book and I saw my first museum in New York the first year, and I still do that. I love New York,” Costabel said. “I don’t like to be bored, and you cannot be bored in New York.”

It was a hard time for her, though. Most survivors she met preferred spending time with other survivors from their own country, she said, and she did not know many Jews from Yugoslavia. She was also grappling with PTSD from the war, which she eventually recovered from, through art and therapy.

“Every survivor should have gone to a psychiatrist. You cannot live with this. This is something you cannot deal with if you don’t get it out of your system,” she said.

Costabel began studying painting at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn under the renowned abstract expressionist Franz Kline. The post–World War II movement, based in New York and

made famous by Jackson Pollock, William de Kooning and Mark Rothko, focused on action, emotion and spon-
taneous creation. It would help Costabel deal with the turmoil in her life.

“What helps me tremendously is that I’m an artist. People think my paintings are very cheerful, but actu-

ally what I did is I put all my emotion, all my frustration in my paintings, so even though they look happy, they came from unhappiness, from pain.”

Outside of her design career, she has taught workshops on abstract art to those suffering from chronic diseases, and written and illustrat-
ed children’s books on Jewish and American history, including The Jews of New Amsterdam, on the first Jews to move to the Dutch colony which would become New York City.

She refuses to return to Croatia, despite invitations. Streets in her hometown are named after war crimi-

nals, she said, and the country never tried to remember war crimes of the Ustaše and other Nazi collaborators.

The Italian Jewish actor and Holocaust survivor Roberto Herlitza in 1938 — Different.

“I have a very good life, consider-

ing everything. I’m not a greedy per-

son. People make themselves un-

happy because they want a car, they want this, they want that, and I’m not that way,” said Costabel. “I’m not greedy, so I’m satisfied with what I have. That’s all.”
BY JONATHAN BLAUSTEIN, THE NEW YORK TIMES

In 1986, Rabbi Harold Schulweis recruited Malka Drucker, a children’s book author, and Gay Block, a fine art portrait photographer, to embark on a project documenting rescuers, non-Jewish Europeans who risked torture and death to save Jews during the Holocaust. There were ceremonies for these brave souls at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, where they were honored and trees were planted. But their accomplishments were little known.

The writer and photographer began interviewing some of the rescuers who had relocated to southern California, but they eventually traveled to Canada and Europe for 100 interviews. They worked on the project from 1986 to 1988, and in 1992 Ms. Block had a solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. A separate traveling show was produced by Curatorial Assistance, and traveled to 50 venues over 11 years. Ms. Drucker wrote the original text. Ms. Block made the portraits and edited the interviews, and Cynthia Ozick contributed an introduction to the resulting book, Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust.

Maria, Countess von Maltzan, was a veterinarian living in East Berlin at the time of her interview. She told of being raised on an 18,000-acre estate in the Silesia region of Germany, to fabulous wealth from a father and a cruel and unforgiving mother.

Familial rebelliousness first drove her to become a member of the underground in Berlin during the war. “It was easy for me to resist Nazi authority because I had always resisted my mother’s authority,” she said.

The countess hid Jews in a secret perch in Bonn, Germany, he knew he had made a difference.

“I think in all I was able to save at least 50 people, and maybe 80 or a hundred,” he said. “I’m happy about the times I was able to rescue children who were now married and with children of their own, who’ve not have such a life without my help.”

Jan Karski was a Polish spy who eventually became a professor at Georgetown University in Washington. Like a real-life James Bond, he once skied across Slovakia into Hungary on a mission, and he was eventually caught by the Gestapo and held in a concentration camp. Shortly thereafter, he was recruited by the Jewish underground to take news of the Warsaw ghetto, and the extermination of the Jews, directly to Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt. But first, he had to visit the ghetto to see for himself. “The ghetto was macabre,” he said in his interview. “It was not a world. It was not a part of humanity. I did not belong there. I vomited blood that night. I saw horrible, horrible things I will never forget. So I agreed to do what they asked of me.”

Mr. Karski managed to meet with both leaders, but was disappointed to hear they were unwilling to put resources directly to stopping the Holocaust, as their focus was on the war. (“Helping Jews was no advantage to the Allied war strategy,” he said.)

When he asked the president what message he should take back to Poland, Roosevelt replied: “You will tell them we shall win the war and the enemy will never forget. So I agreed to do what they asked of me.”

Zofia Baniecka, from Warsaw, was visiting her friend Ruth in Staten Island when she was interviewed for the “Rescuers” project. She and her mother had been integral to the Polish resistance after her father was killed by a Russian bomb in 1941. Unlike some other rescuers, she and her mother evaded detection the entire time they fought the Nazis. “I was never interrogated or nearly caught, though I don’t know why,” she said. “I was just lucky. Luck, it was only luck, because I kept people and guns in my house from the winter of 1941 until the Polish uprising in August 1944.”

She was consistent with many of her fellow rescuers, however, in stating her desire that these stories be shared well into the future. “There are many people who have saved my belief in humanity, and that is why it is important for people to know about this time, of Poland during the war, and that there were those of us who did try to save Jews,” she said. “It is necessary for the children to know that there were such people.”

Art and Johtje Vos lived in an artist colony called Laren, near Amsterdam, and their home became a reliable stop on the underground. “More and more people came to hide in our house,” Johtje said. “We had mattresses all over the floor, and they had to be camouflaged in case the Germans came.”

The couple’s bravery ruffled feathers within the home, with one of their own children questioning the risks they were taking. It was never a question for them, though, as they couldn’t stand idly by while the Germans picked off their fellow countrymen.

“Holland was like a family and part of that family was in danger,” Aart said. “In this case, the Jewish part. The Germans were threatening our family. We weren’t thinking, ‘What shall we do?’ We just did.”

Helene Jacobs, who was born in Berlin, worked with a group called Confessing Church to provide false papers and identification to German Jews. Eventually, her counterfeiter ring was tracked down by the Gestapo, and she was arrested in 1943.

(Continued on page 15)
A young Gerber idealls with a variety of topics: from the culture of rumor-mongering and fears of being abducted into forced labor to songs written in the ghetto. He was clearly an aficionado of poetry, music, and literature. Thanks to his command of the German language, he also incorporated into his diary German press bulletins, mainly regarding events at the front. A review of the diary indicates that Gerber was a critical reader who realized the true meaning of the rhetoric of various German leaders. His analysis shows, for example, that despite Hitler’s con-voluted speeches, his words embod-ied his racist and murderous ideology aimed at the total annihilation of the Jewish people. The pages of Gerber’s diary also illuminate the more subservive and lesser-known aspects of life in the Kovno ghetto, as well as the feelings and reactions of the inmates. The diary introduces its readers to the daily-life atmosphere of the ghetto and presents its Jewish leadership from a contemporary perspective. As a young man, Gerber did not suc-cumb to the fear of death in the ghet-to. He maintained social ties and met with his friends on a daily basis. Despite the enormity of the catastro-phe in the ghetto, he laughed, danced and rejoiced at every opportunity, especially during celebrations of their birthdays, although the fear that they could be next always lingered. “Each one of them mourns his tragedy and is not interested in the disaster of others. As long as the trou-ble does not know me, and I do not know him [the victim]… and if I identi-fy with him, what does it help him… Would it make it easier — no, the opposite — it could also hurt me…”

From the diary, Gerber’s education and its currency is more common to find among collectors today than that from concentration camps, because thousands more of these notes were printed and distributed. Steve Feller, a professor of physics at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is a longtime amateur numismatist and co-author of the 2007 book Silent Witnesses: Civilian Camp Money of World War II. In general, Nazi-issued money twists, in Feller’s words, “farical” — it provided little of actual worth to its holder. Indeed, some forms appear to have been used far less often, in par-ticular currencies from concentration camps like Auschwitz, since prisoners were commonly sent there only as a last stop before they were executed. Such notes were so scarce that Feller says he’s spoken with many survivors who were unaware of their existence. At least twenty concentration camps across Europe, including Auschwitz, Dachau, Westerbork and Buchenwald, were responsible for creating their own monetary systems. As it did in the ghettos, currency here served to create an illusion of normal-ity. When prisoners arrived, they often had no remaining goods, assets or possessions, and the promise of earning any money at all, even if illu-sory, could provide the prisoners enough incentive to work. While tens of thousands of young Germans were off fighting, the Reich became increasingly dependent on forced labor to support its war effort. Concentration camp commandants would contract out their prisoners to state-owned corporations and com-pensate them with meaningless scrip, which they could trade inside the camp for clothes, food or cigarettes. Of the 144,000 Jews held in Theresienstadt between 1941 and 1945, 88,000 were eventually deported to extermination camps, while 33,000 died inside the ghetto, typically of famine or disease. Between the first arrival of prisoners to Auschwitz in 1940 and the end of the war in 1945, the Nazis sent at least 1.3 million people to the camp. If all those who were gassed or killed in the camp didn’t count, there were probably between 1.5 and 2 million people who died or were killed there, almost 90% of whom were Jews. What remains of the currency from ghettos and concentration camps serves as material proof that these people had once lived, and had maintained their daily routines even in the face of madness. And even when the last survivor has passed on, these notes will remain. During a speech at an event in the Great Synagogue of Turin on May 31, 1987, Primo Levi offered his support and endorsement for the still-young state of Israel, peopleed by fellow sur-vivors of the Holocaust, but he warned against confusing land for freedom with the passion of a great cause. “If we fought for freedom — for the Jewish people — for freedom we can waste rivers of it, as is the case elsewhere, but one cannot build anything good if goodwill is missing.”
Claire said. But her parents, fearing they had any idea of what was going on, could not live much longer. Lambert Sabaux was shot. I remember the day that Nina sat to doorstep seeking shelter. Knowing they couldn't care for three children, the Sabauxes took them in anyway. That's when the Gestapo came knocking. Lea Sabaux made a show of rumbling with her keys. She knew the cost of collaborating with Jews — they risked being shot or shipped to Auschwitz to join the rest of Claire's family. "I can't open the door," she called. The officers moved on to the next house with a warning. "We'll be back." They never returned. In Auschwitz, the Sabauxes found Claire's cousins a new safe house. Both girls survived the war. Some of the Sabauxes' neighbors were not so lucky. "There were times I actually did see the Gestapo going from house to house and pulling people out of their homes and forcing them into trucks," Claire said. "And if they did not do as they were told, they were shot. I remember that vividly." Claire's story shares notable similarities with that of Anne Frank, with one addition: Claire survived. But the Allies eradicated Nazi forces from Belgium in early 1945, but Belgian towns continued to be a target for Vengeance missiles.

The Allies ended the war. "I remember the trickle of Jews returning to town. "It always gave me hope that we would be my mom and dad," she said.

But when her cousin Nina was released from Auschwitz, she brought bad news. Claire's father had been tortured to death and her mother, aunt and uncle all were killed in the camp. "I remember the day that Nina sat down with me and only told me that my mom and dad were not coming back, but explained to me the fact that I am Jewish," Claire said. "That was the beginning of the change in my life.

Claire spent more than four years in Auschwitz, and by then was much closer to them than to her surviving family — but the law gave her the right of adult relatives. Claire had to move in with an aunt. "I was so upset," she said. "(Grandma and Grandpa) were so nice to me. They risked their lives to save mine.

She was permitted to visit them at first, but she would always come home crying. Her aunt stopped letting her see them. "She did not realize that (my tears were) love," Claire said.

Her aunt sent her away to summer camp to spend time with children her age, and then, at age 13, to the U.S. She didn't speak English and was several years behind in school. Those were some of her darkest days, she said.

Claire eventually married and had three children. She has six grandkids and two great-grandchildren.

Grandma's piano lessons paid off. Claire followed in her footsteps and became a piano teacher. She still has 14 students.

A year after Claire arrived in the U.S., she received correspondence from Lambert Sabaux. "My dearest Yvette, these few lines are to let you know that it's been terrible for us since you left. It's sad to say but Grandma has suddenly gotten very ill," the letter begins. Lambert Sabaux, hospitalized a few months after Claire's departure, did not live much longer. Lambert Sabaux passed away soon after that. "I could almost swear it's from a broken heart," Claire said. She still cries every time she reads the letter.

It continues: "You wrote in your letter that you care a great deal about me, and that you don't want me to stop crying."

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Helene Jacobs.

Ms. Jacobs spent 20 months in prison for her "crimes," and when she was released, discovered that her home had been burned. As a German who battled the Nazis, she felt it was her duty to fight.

"I always knew how dangerous it was, but I did it for humanity, and because I was a patriot," she said. "I was ashamed of what the German people were doing." ***

Agnieszka Budna-Widerschal was interviewed in Israel, where she lived with her second Jewish husband, Shimon. She sheltered her first Jewish husband, Motti, in Poland during the war and also saved his brothers.

She described her brazen plan to sneak her brothers-in-law through the ghetto to safety: "I pretended to be drunk while the two brothers walked on either side of me, each of them holding me under my arm. There were Nazis all over the street. I knew we would surely run into one of them, and when we did he just took one look at me and said with disgust, 'Ach, that's just like a Pole?' And he walked his way and we went ours!'"

Though her family came through World War II intact, Motti died soon after from diabetes. Worse yet, in 1954, during a period of rising anti-Semitism, Agnieszka's daughter Bella was murdered by a gang of Polish teenagers.

Agnieszka and Shimon moved to Israel a few years later. ***

Sanny Riekerk worked with her husband, Joop Woortman, to save Jews for the Dutch resistance. "My sister helped, too, but I didn't know it at the time," she said in her interview. "You never told anyone anything they didn't have to know. My husband used anyone he could trust."

Beginning in 1942, they organized efforts to steal and forge papers to help Jews escape, but later focused their energies on saving children. (Ms. Riekerk adopted a refugee during the war.)

When Joop Woortman was captured, and later killed in Bergen-Belsen in 1944, Ms. Riekerk took up his mantle and did the work herself. "I had to carry on his work until the end of the war," she said. "They gave me the book that listed 300 names and said: 'These are the people who are hiding children. You have to take them ration cards and money every month.' The banks provided money from the Dutch government-in-exile, and our organization provided the ration cards." ***

Johannes de Vries, a coal miner, and his wife, Janke, took two Jewish children — a brother and sister named Salomon and Eva Harlingman — into their home in southern Holland in 1942. They raised them alongside their own two children, and were also foster parents for other refugees, short term, as a part of an underground railroad.

Eventually, the Jewish children were reunited with their mother in Amsterdam after the war and then moved to Israel when she died in 1947.

By the time Gay Block and Malka Drucker interviewed Mr. de Vries, he was living in Ontario and going by the nickname Joe.

Recalling Mrs. Harlingman's original predicament, he said, "What it must have been like for that mother to give up her children to someone she didn't know." ***

Stefania Podgorska Burzminski, born in a small village in Poland, was interviewed above her husband Joe's dentist office in Massachusetts. She had saved him, and two of his brothers, by hiding a cohort of 13 Jews in a cottage she procured during the war. Joe's parents and two of his other brothers had been taken by the Nazis, but he escaped by jumping from a train and soon showed up at Stefania's house.

"Poor Joe, he was filthy and his clothes were rags," she recounted. "I gave him my nightgown to wear. Joe cried all night, and my sister laughed at him in my nightgown. I explained to my sister, 'Joe was, that he was a Jew, that Germans wanted to kill him, and that we had to help him.'"

Ultimately, they survived the war, and Joe converted to Catholicism in order to marry Stefania. It was very difficult for her to discuss the past, and Ms. Block returned a year later for a second interview to better understand the story.

"I work hard all day now, helping Joe in his dentist's practice," she told her. "Every time I have to do an interview like this, it brings back all the memories and I can't sleep for some nights." ***

Alex and Mela Roslan were living in Clearwater, Florida, when Rescue was shot. They were originally from Poland and lived near Bialystok during the war.

Alex had a textile business and noticed his Jewish clientele were disappearing, so he put on a star and entered the ghetto. "I saw so many children, hungry and starving," he said. "They were so skinny. The par-
ELI ZBOROWSKI LEGACY CIRCLE

The American Society for Yad Vashem was founded in 1981 by a group of Holocaust survivors and led by Eli Zborowski, z”l, for more than thirty years. Recently approved by the Board of Directors of the American Society for Yad Vashem, our Legacy Circle is being named in memory of Eli Zborowski, z”l, who was greatly respected for his work and accomplishments on behalf of Yad Vashem and is missed by all who knew him.

The Eli Zborowski Legacy Circle is open to and will recognize anyone who includes Yad Vashem in their estate plans. This can include a bequest by will, funding a Charitable Remainder Trust or Charitable Gift Annuity, donating a paid-up life insurance policy or contributing an interest in an IRA or retirement plan, or making ASYV the beneficiary of a Charitable Lead Trust. Individuals can make gifts of any size, through a broad range of programs and investment vehicles that can accommodate those of modest means, as well as those with substantial wealth.

By including Yad Vashem in your estate plans, you assure a future in which Holocaust remembrance and education will serve as a powerful antidote to denial, hate and indifference.

“I did not find the world desolate when I entered it. As my fathers planted for me before I was born, so do I plant for those who will come after me.”

The Talmud

For further information about the Eli Zborowski Legacy Circle, please contact

Robert Christopher Morton,
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