Over the course of one week’s time at the end of January, the American Society for Yad Vashem (ASYV) had the privilege of presenting original programming to three different corporate groups. EY (Ernst & Young), Ralph Lauren and Spotify all invited ASYV to participate in programs to help them commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which fell on Friday, January 27.

On Monday, January 23, over 1,000 worldwide EY employees gathered in person in New York, Los Angeles and the UK as well as online, to hear from ASYV Board of Directors member and Education Committee chair Caroline Massel. As a granddaughter of survivors, Caroline was able to share the personal story of her grandparents’ survival as well as the importance of Holocaust education and commemoration today. Caroline also articulated the uniqueness of Yad Vashem’s mission to give back the names and stories to those Jews who were murdered, ensuring that future generations don’t forget. This opportunity with EY was made possible by ASYV Tristate Committee member, Young Leadership Associates (YLA) board member and EY employee Alan Scharf, who is also a grandson of a survivor.

Friday, January 27, found ASYV partnering with Ralph Lauren, thanks to Jordana Urman, director of global brand marketing at Ralph Lauren, incoming co-chair of YLA and granddaughter of survivors. Jordana arranged for ASYV to conduct a program with over 200 Ralph Lauren employees (Continued on page 2)
THE YLA CORNER:

Q: Share something about your family story.

A: My grandfather Lothar “Larry” Orbach (to me, my “Opapa”) passed away in 2008 when I was only nine years old, and while there are a myriad of questions I wish to ask him, he left behind his legacy in his autobiography Young Lothar, which details my grandfather and his mother’s miraculous survival in the secret, ragtag network of the Berlin Underground. While his mother was hidden by courageous resisters, 18-year-old Lothar survived in plain sight under the Aryan identity of “Gerhard Peters” in a Judenrein (free of Jews) Berlin. From losing his father at the hands of the Gestapo to participating in the notorious death march from Auschwitz to Buchenwald, my grandfather never allowed the darkness to extinguish his youthful light, surviving against all odds to share his death-defying tale.

Q: Why you are personally involved in ASYV/YLA?

A: Today, with the drumbeats of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism escalating worldwide, modern times have left me stuck between an anti-Semitic rock and an anti-Israel hard place. In these increasingly intolerant times, “Never Forget” has become an unfortunate platitude. As Holocaust ignorance — and denial — has become more rampant, I joined Yad Vashem’s YLA to discover other like-minded Jewish young professionals dedicated to the mission of acting as a microphone for our ancestors. As the number of living Holocaust survivors subsides over time, it’s ever so clear that it is up to us youngsters to share their stories and ensure that “Never Forget” remains a reality.

Q: Why Holocaust remembrance is important?

A: In Young Lothar, one quote from my grandfather’s memoir remains engraved in my memory: he “wanted to become that man, balding, gray-haired, pot-bellied, perhaps, and maybe the father of a family. But how could I get there from here?” While my grandfather’s wish became a reality, it’s difficult not to consider the six million individuals who too wanted to live until they were balding, gray-haired and pot-bellied with families of their own, yet never had the opportunity to see this wish come to fruition. Holocaust remembrance is on the behalf of these six million individuals, and by commemorating them, we’re working to prevent such horrors from happening to any other six million people anywhere.

CORPORATE GROUPS MARK INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY WITH ASYV

(Continued from page 1)

and executives participating virtually as well as in person at their New York City headquarters. Jordana moderated the event and introduced Toby Levy, a Holocaust survivor who shared her personal story of survival. Toby delivered a poignant message that just one person choosing to act against hate and injustice can save a life and that we must never lose hope. Of special note is that this is the third year in a row that ASYV has partnered with Ralph Lauren, and it looks forward to a meaningful continued relationship.

It is also thanks to Jordana Urman that on Monday, January 30, ASYV had a chance to partner with Spotify to commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day. A cohort of over 100 employees participated virtually in the program hosted by YLA member and Spotify Product Manager Natalie Karafiol. Natalie spoke about the importance of remembrance and commemoration and introduced Jordana to speak about the dangers of hate going unchecked. Jordana then introduced Holocaust survivor and former National Director of the Anti-Defamation League Abe Foxman as the keynote speaker. Abe delivered the critical message that every individual has the power to save a human life and explained the reason why he chooses to focus on humanity, courage and decency when sharing his story of survival.

Programs like the ones conducted at EY, Ralph Lauren and Spotify, and those scheduled in the coming months with Palantir, Tapestry and Columbia Business School, afford ASYV with a unique opportunity to reach new cohorts of people, many of whom have never heard from a survivor or contemplated the history of the Holocaust. At the core of its mission, ASYV is committed to helping people learn about the Holocaust and keep its memory and lessons alive. By increasing knowledge and awareness, it can help ensure that the history of the Holocaust remains relevant and that remembering the past helps us all shape a brighter future.

If you or someone you know might be interested in bringing a similar ASYV program to your place of work, please reach out to Amy Cooper at acooper@yadvashemusa.org or 646-970-4959.
Stepping with the incoming co-chairs of ASYV’s Young Leadership Associates reveals the deep sense of passion and purpose that’s inherent in their accepting the responsibility of leading this dynamic group of young professionals. Jordana Urman and Sophie Krakowski both lay claim to being grandchildren of survivors, and to hear each of them speak about the awesome responsibility they feel to promote Holocaust education and remembrance is to understand just how well each is suited for the job.

The similarities only continue from there, as both women hail from the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area; Jordana is originally from Englewood, New Jersey and currently lives in Manhattan, while Sophie has been a New Yorker all her life. Both are marketing executives in the fashion industry; Jordana is the global marketing director of Ralph Lauren’s Home Business, and Sophie is the director of marketing at Vivrelle, a handbag and jewelry membership club. And interestingly, both are granddaughters of survivors on one side of their respective families, and for both, it’s the paternal side.

Jordana’s grandfather was in Auschwitz and was ultimately liberated from Mauthausen. Her grandmother was hidden in the beginning of the war but ultimately had to turn herself in, spending the remainder of the war in Grunberg concentration camp (a subdivision of Gross-Rosen). Jordana explains that she herself is named for her grandfather’s two sisters who were murdered in the Holocaust, and perhaps that is one reason why she feels such an innate connection.

Sophie’s grandfather spent the war years in the Petrikov ghetto and later three different camps, while her grandmother spent time in hiding before emigrating to Israel. Sophie describes having always felt a strong connection to Holocaust education and appreciative of its importance in the story of the continuity of our people. Sophie could even say she was born for this role, as she grew up knowing that the American Society for Yad Vashem was founded in her grandfather’s living room. She proudly shares that every generation of her family has eagerly gotten involved in helping to keep the memory and lessons of the Holocaust alive.

Both Jordana and Sophie express a clear passion for Holocaust education. Jordana’s commitment to fighting anti-Semitism through education is what drew her to Yad Vashem and ASYV. She believes that education is the only sustainable way we can impact our world and ensure that the events of the past never repeat themselves. Jordana hopes to help ASYV scale the impactful programming it’s been conducting at corporations across the US and worldwide, featuring survivors and educating about the dangers of unchecked hatred.

Sophie is equally enthusiastic about education and believes that our greatest teachers are the precious survivors who remain and can provide first-person testimony to this awful chapter in human history. She not only hopes that ASYV can convene interested community members for salon events to hear these testimonies, but wants to expand YLA’s reach to bring these testimonial accounts to younger and unaffiliated communities. Sophie believes that using eye-witnesses to educate the next generation is an opportunity that is not to be missed.

ASYV’s Young Leadership Associates was inaugurated in 1997, and since that time has been a natural way for young people to get involved in promoting Holocaust education and remembrance. Jordana and Sophie want to ensure that young professionals continue to enter through this portal, and that they find meaningful programs and projects with which to engage both during their active YLA years and beyond.

Jordana and Sophie will be stepping into big shoes, as Rachel Shnay and Josh Gelnick prepare to pass the reins of leadership to them this coming September. And while expectations will be high when that transition takes place, there is no doubt that the incoming YLA co-chairs will be stepping into their new role with a commitment and passion that will most certainly set them on the path for great success.
O
n February 1, 2023, mem-
ers of the Young Leadership
Associates and the general
ASYV community were privi-
leged to attend a remarkable book club
program. The book selected, Determined,
was written by Holocaust survivor Avraham
Perlmutter, z”l, over many years and pub-
lished in 2014. A documentary film based
on the book was later written, directed, pro-
duced and edited by Dr. Perlmutter’s
daughter Dr. Keren Perlmutter and re-
leased in 2020 to critical acclaim. Sadly,
Avraham died in 2022, just 1½ weeks shy
of his 95th birthday. And so, we were joined
by Keren, who is carrying on her father’s
legacy by speaking to audiences around
the world and telling his story in such an in-
spiring way.

Avraham was born in Vienna, Austria, in
1927 and lived with his parents and older
sister, Thea. As a young child, he had an
adventurous and fearless spirit that would
serve him well in his adolescence. In
March of 1938, he witnessed Hitler as he
entered Vienna just two days after the An-
schluss. In November 1938, he personally
experienced the devastation of Kristall-
nacht.

Avraham’s parents had been trying to
find a way out of Vienna for some time, but
after that fateful November night, they re-
doubled their efforts. They were finally suc-
cessful at placing Thea and Avraham on a
Kindertransport train to relatives in the
Netherlands. In January 1939, the train left
the station, and as he waved good-bye,
Avraham had no way of knowing that
would be the last time he would see his
mother.

Over the course of the next six years,
from age 11 to 17, Avraham — eventually
separated from Thea — spent time in over
dozens different places, from refugee
camps to families to a variety of hiding
places. The book chronicles these experi-
ences in detail. Always in danger and often
dependent on the kindness of strangers,
Avraham finally arrived in Venlo and en-
 countered a priest by the name of Pastor
Henricus Vullings. Avraham would come
to know the man as a brave and righteous
person. Pastor Vullings saved the lives of
so many people, Jews and gentiles alike,
and tragically lost his life at Bergen-Belsen.

The church of Pastor Vullings was in
the tiny village of Grubbenvorst, close to
the border with Germany. There were ap-
proximately 240 families in the village, and
42 of them were hiding Jews. Avraham
was fortunate to be placed with a family
named Beijers. They were a religious
Catholic family of parents (Peter and
Gertrude) and six grown children (which in-
cluded Mientje, Sraar, and Harri, who also
lived in the house at the time), and though
they had never met a Jew before, they will-
ingly took in Avraham. They treated him as
a son, and he enjoyed helping them on
their farm.

Avraham was fortunate to find such a
wonderful family. They showed unbeliev-
able bravery in the face of extreme danger,
providing him with a hiding place to protect
him from discovery, bringing him food and
water, and assuring his safety. Several
times during Avraham’s time with the Bei-
jers, Nazis would appear and demand the
whereabouts of Jews, but they never told.
As the war neared its end, German soldiers
came and stayed in the village, making it
even more dangerous for both Avraham
and the Beijers. Finally, in November of
1944, 17-year-old Avraham embarked on
a perilous journey to freedom, avoiding
mines, artillery shells and bullets, to reach
a nearby village that had been liberated by
the Allies.

The book is aptly named Determined
because throughout Avraham’s life, he
showed remarkable grit and determination.
After liberation, Avraham stayed with the
Beijers family until January 1945, when
British soldiers from the Jewish Palestine
Brigade offered to bring Avraham to his
parents, who had made it to Palestine.
Though sad to leave the Beijers, Avraham
was eager to be reunited with his family,
and so he bade them good-bye. Sadly,
Avraham’s mother died in Palestine just
two weeks before his letter arrived an-
nouncing his survival, so she did not get to
see him or his sister, Thea, who had en-
dured Auschwitz and a death march during
the war. It was a devastating blow to Avra-
ham, but miraculous that he was reunited
with the rest of his family.

Avraham thrived after the war, first work-
ing in the family business, and then as a
director during the Israeli War of Indepen-
dence. Eventually his spirit of determination
led to a desire to further his education. De-
spite not having gone to school for most of
his childhood, he moved to the United
States, attending Georgia Institute of Tech-
nology and Princeton University (where he
met Albert Einstein), and ultimately earning
a Ph.D. in aeronautical engineering from
the University of Pennsylvania. The book
tells the rest of his story — his professional
success, his marriage and his beautiful
family — all testaments to Avraham’s forti-
tude.

One of the most remarkable
aspects of the book and this
presentation was that Avra-
ham never forgot the kind-
ness and bravery of the Dutch people
who took him in and saved his life.
In 1994, Avraham made certain that Pastor Henri-
cus Vullings as well as Peter and
Gertrude Beijers all received the well-de-
served designation of Righteous Among
the Nations bestowed by Yad Vashem and
the government of Israel. The families re-
main close to this day, and subsequent
generations have traveled back and forth
and stayed at each other’s homes through
the years.

We were very fortunate to have two
members of the Beijers family, Henk and
Jerome (the grandson and great-grandson
of Peter and Gertrude, respectively), join
us via Zoom from the Netherlands for the
book club presentation. Henk shared how
he grew up hearing the story of his grand-
parents’ kindness and bravery, and it was
an inspiration to him. He has passed this
on to his son Jerome, and they spoke
about how special it is to be able to share
the story together. Jerome spoke of how he

(Continued on page 7)
STREET MURAL PROJECT HONORS UNKNOWN “RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS” IN THEIR HOMELANDS

In the year ahead, buildings around the world will be festooned with elaborate murals that celebrate “Righteous Among the Nations” who rescued Jews during the Holocaust.

In the initiative launched by the group Artists 4 Israel, the first two murals were installed earlier this year on buildings in Portugal and Greece. Fund-raising pending, the group’s vision is to celebrate hundreds of additional heroic “upstanders” with murals around the world.

“The purpose of the project is to force people to interact with the Holocaust, to learn and to find pride in fighting against anti-Semitism,” said Artists 4 Israel’s CEO Craig Dershowitz. “The beautiful murals are a psychological trigger,” he said.

In addition to people who see the murals in person, millions are reached through social media platforms curated by famous street artists enlisted for the initiative, said Dershowitz.

“With the ‘Righteous’ mural project, we have the opportunity to educate via positivity, by celebrating the heroes of a nation and giving citizens the chance to emulate their actions,” said Dershowitz.

Until this new “Righteous” project, in its more than a decade of operation Artists 4 Israel has concentrated on bringing hundreds of artists to Israel, where they have painted bomb shelters in the south and created tattoo art on the bodies of wounded veterans and terrorism survivors.

“It is always important to look past the art and at what message the art is communicating,” said Dershowitz.

When German forces landed on the Greek island of Zakynthos in 1941, the local mayor was ordered to supply a list of the Jewish population for deportation.

Mayor Loukas Karrer, in coordination with church leader Archbishop Dimitrios Chrysostomos, instead devised a scheme to rescue nearly all of the island’s 275 Jews.

While Chrysostomos went to negotiate with the Germans, Karrer burned the list of Jews living on Zakynthos and wrote his and the archbishop’s names on a piece of paper. Karrer then joined the meeting with the Germans and handed the paper to the archbishop, who in turn passed it to the Nazi administrator.

“Here are your Jews. If you choose to deport the Jews of Zakynthos, you must also take me, and I will share their fate,” said Chrysostomos, who was under gunpoint for much of the encounter.

After the confrontation, the mayor and the archbishop immediately warned the island’s Jews. Most of them went into hiding in villages and were able to survive the Holocaust with assistance from neighbors.

To celebrate the rescue of the Jews of Zakynthos, Artists 4 Israel commissioned artist Kleomenis Kostopoulos (KLE) to honor the rescuer duo on the side of a building in Patras, Greece.

“Murals are one of the most important forms of contemporary expression and communication in public spaces,” said Kostopoulos of the project, completed in March. “Today, more than ever, we must revisit our history in Greece by bringing it to the streets and putting it in their faces,” said the artist.

Called “Memory for Blessing,” the Patras mural blends portraits of Mayor Karrer and Archbishop Chrysostomos alongside images of the island’s Jews.

In Greece, at least 80% of the Jewish community — some 70,000 people — were murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau and other killing sites. The wartime story of Zakynthos contrasts starkly with — for example — the Greek island of Rhodes, where only 151 Jews survived the Holocaust from a community of 2,000.

Also earlier last year, Artists 4 Israel worked with artist Mr. Dheo to commemorate diplomat Aristides de Sousa Mendes with a mural near Porto, Portugal.

“A New Memory Across the Portuguese Skyline” depicts Sousa Mendes, Portugal’s consul-general in France during the war. In that role, he defied his government’s orders by issuing Portuguese visas for up to 30,000 Nazi refugees, including 10,000 Jews.

“I remember as soon as I spoke with my father about this project, straightaway he mentioned Sousa Mendes as a hero and he told me that everybody here — it’s going to be unanimous — everybody will like the project, will like the wall, especially the older generations,” said Mr. Dheo. “They know what he did.”

After rumors of Sousa Mendes’s actions made their way to Lisbon, he was dismissed by the Portuguese government and left destitute with a large family to support.

“If thousands of Jews are suffering because of one Christian [Hitler], surely one Christian may suffer for so many Jews,” said Sousa Mendes after his dismissal.

In 1966, Sousa Mendes was the first diplomat recognized as “Righteous” by Yad Vashem. But not until 1988 — 34 years after his death — was he granted total rehabilitation by the Portuguese government.

Dershowitz said Artists 4 Israel has two murals lined up for United States locations in 2023, pending funding. The first will commemorate Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds of Knoxville, Tennessee, who refused a Nazi order at gunpoint to identify his unit’s Jewish soldiers in a German POW camp.

(Continued on page 7)
YAD VASHEM UNVEILS “THE BOOK OF NAMES” AT THE UNITED NATIONS

It’s a book filled with the names of 4.8 million murder victims. The blank pages at the end, though, are especially haunting.

In recognition of this year’s International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yad Vashem unveiled an installation at the United Nations headquarters in New York City.

This massive exhibition, called “The Book of Names”, includes the alphabetically arranged names of 4.8 million Holocaust victims whose identities are known to Yad Vashem. “The Book of Names” is 26.45 feet in length, 6.56 feet high and 3.3 feet wide. It concludes with empty pages in commemoration of 1.2 million Jewish victims who remain unidentified.

“Whenever possible, The Book of Names in City Hall this year, and the exhibit is in demand elsewhere, but Guterres requested last year that the event be held at the U.N.

“We think it’s significant that it will be inaugurated in the place that was intended to be a place of peace and of preventing another genocide. Even if the United Nations does not always fulfill that mission, we thought it’s important to do it in that specific place,” Dayan said.

Last year, Erdan shepherded through the U.N. General Assembly a resolution aiming to combat Holocaust denial and distortion, though several member states dabble in Holocaust denial, and anti-Semitism at the global body still runs rampant.

“The United Nations was established to ensure that the Holocaust — humanity’s darkest hour — would never be repeated,” Erdan said. “Nevertheless, rampant anti-Semitism is once again on the rise, and Holocaust denial is increasing in volume and intensity. Even at the U.N., a member state [Iran] openly calls to wipe the Jewish state off the map, while openly denying the horrors of the Holocaust.”

Dayan said that Yad Vashem works with dozens of member states, along with governments at federal, provincial and city levels.

“But in my last meeting with Secretary-General Guterres, I offered to train U.N. personnel, both in the headquarters and under different agencies. I even made the point in suggesting that the first such agency should be UNRWA,” said Dayan, referencing the U.N. agency which works closely with Palestinians and in which the school textbooks are anti-Semitic and Holocaust denial and praise of the Nazis are voiced by some employees.

Dayan said his general offer received a positive response “in principle, but they are still yet to convert it to something substantial and concrete.”

Outside of the U.N., there are two other international events sponsored by Yad Vashem. An exhibition in the German Bundestag is to include 16 objects and artifacts from Yad Vashem’s collection, linked to each of the 16 states that make up the Federal Republic of Germany. Additionally, Israeli President Isaac Herzog visited the European Parliament in Brussels for the opening of an exhibition there.

The Book of Names was on display in the U.N. headquarters through February 17 before being installed permanently in Yad Vashem’s Museum Complex on the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem. It will be open to the public there in time for Israel’s Holocaust Remembrance Day, starting on the evening of April 17.

Dayan said that work will continue to try to fill those remaining pages of the book, with Yad Vashem scholars assessing that in the next few years, there will likely be some 400,000 additional identifications of Holocaust victims.

“But also those that were murdered in the shooting pits, and in the gas chambers, by collaborators in hiding places, deserve to be remembered,” Dayan said. “And leaving the empty pages is a remembrance that they also existed, that they also were Jews, they also were human beings.”

BY MIKE WAGENHEIM, JNS
STREET MURAL PROJECT HONORS UNKNOWN “RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS”....

(Continued from page 5) "We are all Jews here," Edmonds told the Nazi commandant, after which he threatened to have the Germans prosecute for war crimes. By rallying his soldiers against German orders, Edmonds is credited with saving up to 300 American Jewish soldiers in the POW camp.

The second mural planned for the US will honor Irene Gut Opdyke, a Polish rescuer who hid Jewish families and later relocated to southern California. When 12 Jews she was hiding were discovered by a German officer, Opdyke agreed to become his mistress in exchange for not turning them in.

"You must understand that I did not become a resistance fighter, a smuggler of Jews, someone who defies the SS and the Nazis, all at once," wrote Opdyke in her memoir. "One’s first steps are always small: I had begun by hiding food under a fence."

Years after moving to California with her American husband, Opdyke wrote about her positive interactions with Jews as a child and how her daydreams became reality after Germany’s occupation of Poland.

"In my fantasies, I was always caught up in heroic struggles, and I saw myself saving lives, sacrificing myself for others. I had far loftier ambitions than mere romance," wrote Opdyke.

"Before Artists 4 Israel started the Righteous Among the Nations Global Mural Project, I was familiar with only a few of the more famous ones," said Dershowitz. "But as this program continues, I am learning of hundreds of heroes, each more brave than the next."

BY MATT LEROVIC, The Times of Israel

YLA BOOK CLUB: DETERMINED

(Continued from page 4) saw the medal from Yad Vashem throughout his childhood and how wonderful it is to know he has a family on the other side of the world. Henk spoke about how important it is to transmit the lessons to future generations and to understand that although people have many perspectives, it is so important to respect all people.

Henk also mentioned the recent survey of young people in the Netherlands that showed 25% either didn’t know about the Holocaust or felt that the numbers were distorted. He emphasized that telling and retelling the story of his family is important given the rise in anti-Semitism and changing political winds.

Keren finished the presentation by pointing out that an act of kindness can have an impact for many decades into the future and that through her sharing her father’s story, its important messages have the power to inspire and influence people for many generations to come.

In addition to Keren and the Beijers, we were fortunate to have Josh Perlmutter, Avraham’s grandson and Keren’s nephew, join us as a co-chair for this event, carrying the mantle of the next generation. Josh spoke about the tremendous example his grandfather was for him and how he has also lived his life committed to showing the same determination his grandfather did. He spoke about how the Beijers ignored the risk they were undertaking and how he learned from everyone not to focus on the bad, but that there are really good people in the world. He emphasized how we must focus on humanity, be kind to others, and seek out the goodness in people.

Additional thanks to Nicole Garay, our Young Leadership Associates co-chair for this book club program, who shared the story of her grandparents, Alex Garay and Sarlotte “Shari” Garay, who are also Holocaust survivors. Her participation in ASYV’s activities helps to keep their legacy alive, and she is helping to establish a YLA presence on the West Coast.

The final words belong to Avraham as he explained on camera why he continued to tell his story and why he encouraged his family and the Beijers family to do the same. “My hope is that humanity has learned that people in the final analysis were brought onto this earth not to kill each other but to live with each other together in peace. Regardless of religion or background or wherever they come from, people are still people, and instead of hating each other, they should love each other and do things for each other. And if humanity could only learn that from all the experiences that unfortunately our generation went through in the Holocaust, we finally will have learned something. That is my hope for the future.”

To become more involved in the Young Leadership Associates or participate in a future book club event, please contact Sylvia at smoskovitz@yadvashemusa.org.

For more information about Determined and to purchase the book, please visit https://www.determinedstory.com/.

BY SYLVIA MOSKOVITZ, ASYV Western Region Director
SIXTEEN OBJECTS FROM GERMANY TELL STORY OF HOLOCAUST IN NEW WAYS

Lore Mayerfeld was four years old when she escaped from the Nazis in 1941. Together with her mother, the little Jewish girl ran away from her German hometown of KasSEL with nothing but the clothes she wore and her beloved doll, Inge.

Mayerfeld found a safe haven in the United States and later emigrated to Israel. Her doll, a present from her grandparents who were killed in the Holocaust, was also with her. She donated it to Israel’s Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in 2007, her son donated it to Yad Vashem.

More than 80 years later, the doll has returned to Germany. It is in Berlin as part of an exhibition opened just days before the country marks the 78th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp on January 27, 1945.

The exhibition, “Sixteen Objects”, also marks the 70th anniversary of the Yad Vashem memorial, bringing back to Germany an array of items Jews took with them when they fled the Nazis. There are a black piano, a diary, a red-and-white-patterned towel, a stethoscope, a glitzy evening purse and a menorah among the exhibit’s objects.

They were chosen from more than 50,000 items at Yad Vashem that are connected to the Holocaust. The exhibit’s items represent Germany’s 16 states, with one coming from each region. Each tells a unique story, but they all share themes of love, attachment, pain and loss.

“These are all absolutely familiar German objects, and they would have stayed that way had the Holocaust not happened,” said Ruth Ur, the curator of the exhibition and Yad Vashem’s representative in Germany.

“The idea of this exhibition is to return these objects back to Germany for a short while, to bring a new energy to the objects themselves, and also to the gaps they have left behind.”

In one of the showcases, there’s a non-descript piece of cloth. It’s part of a flag that once belonged to Anneliese Borinski, who was part of a Jewish youth group in Ahrensdorf outside Berlin. She helped her group prepare for emigration and life in what would later become the state of Israel.

After the Nazis issued deportation orders, the 12 members decided to cut up their “Maccabi Hatzair” youth group flag into 12 pieces, and promised each other that after the war they would meet again in Israel to reassemble the flag.

Only three survived the Holocaust, and Borinski was the lone member who managed to take her piece of the flag to Israel. In 2007, her son donated it to Yad Vashem.

Another item is a brown leather suitcase. On one side, “Selma Sara Vellemann from Bremen” is written in bold white letters. This suitcase was found in Berlin several years after the war. Yad Vashem researchers were unable to determine how the suitcase got to the German capital, but they discovered that a woman with the same name from the northern city of Bremen had lived in a retirement home in Berlin. In 1942, at the age of 86, she was deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto, and two months later she was sent to her death in the Treblinka extermination camp.

Beside each of the exhibition objects, Ur and her team put up life-size photos of buildings and street corners where the items’ owners lived before the Nazis came to power. The images show modern-day scenes instead of historic ones, a stark contrast to the devastation the Third Reich caused decades ago.

Six million European Jews were killed by the Nazis and their henchmen during the Holocaust. Some survivors are still alive today, but their numbers are dwindling due to sickness and old age.

Mayerfeld, the little girl who fled with her doll Inge in 1941, is one of them. She returned to Germany this week to attend the opening of the exhibition.

Looking at her blond, blue-eyed doll, the now 85-year-old woman pointed out that the doll was wearing the pajamas she wore as a barely 2-year-old toddler on November 9, 1938. On that date, she was hiding with her mother during Kristallnacht, or the “Night of Broken Glass,” when Nazis — several ordinary Germans among them — terrorized Jews, vandalized their businesses and burned more than 1,400 synagogues.

“It’s not a doll that you play so easily with because she’s breakable. So my own children, I didn’t allow them to play with her,” Mayerfeld said. “She sat up on a shelf in my home and they would look at her and I explained, she’s going to break, you know, just look and enjoy her.”

Mayerfeld said it was important for her to come back to Germany and let the public know about her doll, her life and also what happened during the Holocaust.

“The world hasn’t learned anything from this past war,” she said. “There’s so many people who say it never even happened. They can’t tell me that. I was there, I lived it.”

BY KIRSTEN GRIESHABER, AP
THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM & YAD VASHEM

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Dedicated to Chiune Sugihara and all those who risked their lives to save others. Commissioned by Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Center and the American Society for Yad Vashem

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ABBI HAlPERN | MARK MLOTEK | PETER TILL | EVENT CO-CHAIRS
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OUR DUTY TO THE DEAD:
REMEMBER THEIR NAMES

“R

emember only that I was
innocent and that, like all
of you, mortals of this
day... I too had a face
marked by rage, by pity and by joy, an or-
dinary human face!”

Benjamin Fondane, a French Jew, wrote
these poignant words in one of his final
poems, Préface en Prose, before being
murdered, shortly after his deportation to
Auschwitz-Birkenau in May 1944. Fon-
dane’s plea for remembrance was fre-
quently voiced by Jewish people persecuted
by the Nazis and their collaborators during
World War II; an appeal for a solemn and
everlasting commitment by all humanity to
recall, in essence, every Holocaust victim.
Fondane insisted that we never forget their
humanity, their individuality.

Indeed, no two persons are identical.
We each possess our own distinctive fea-
tures, personality and traits, as well as the
name given to us at birth. That name
defines us. Even when we
leave this world, our names, and our sto-
ries, remain — for generations.

Our names define us. Even when we
leave this world, our names, and our sto-
ries, remain — for generations.

During the Shoah, the German Nazis
and their collaborators sought not only to
annihilate the entire Jewish people through
an unprecedented and systematic cam-
paign of mass murder. They also aimed to
eradicate any trace of their culture and re-
ligion, of their very existence, down to the
very last Jew. Even before arriving at the
concentration and death camps, the Jews
were marked as mere numbers by the
Nazis and their collaborators. Once they
had reduced the Jews to nameless
masses, the perpetrators could more easily
erase them.

By our understanding how the names
and identities of the Holocaust victims were
brutally stolen from them, we can better ap-
preciate how important it is to remember
them. Like Fondane’s, the final hope of
many of the victims, aware that they were
on the verge of death, was to be remem-
bered. Thus, refusing to fade into oblivion,
cruelly and intentionally murdered simply
because they were Jewish.

Sadly, less than 80 years following the
murder of the Six Million, we encounter in-
creasing ignorance and apathy worldwide
regarding Holocaust awareness, especially
among youth. We face an alarming prolif-
eration of material in the physical and dig-
ital spheres which nefariously denies,
distorts, trivializes and whitewashes the
Holocaust. This disgusting phenomenon
has moved beyond the fringes into the so-
cial mainstream. We are witnessing a rise
in anti-Semitism cloaked in new disguises,
maliciously portraying the Jewish people
and its State of Israel as existential threats
to global well-being and peace. Thus, it is
incumbent upon us to buttress efforts to
foster Holocaust awareness, remem-
brance and education. The world must
be reminded where unchecked anti-
Semitism ultimately leads.

The fact that The Book of Names was displayed at
the U.N., which was insti-
tuted with the express pur-
pose of averting future crimes against
humanity, sends a clear message to all
those who deny history or turn a blind
eye to it. It fulfills the last testament of
another young Jewish victim of the
Holocaust, who at the age of 19 wrote
so succinctly in his last letter (in
Vilna, 1941): “I should like someone to
remember that there once lived a per-
son named David Berger.”

On this, the 78th anniversary of the
liberation by Soviet troops of
Auschwitz-Birkenau, where more than
one million “nameless” Jews were
slaughtered, we rekindle their identi-
ties by restoring their names. Our mis-
ion has never been more relevant,
and our responsibility to keep alive the
memory of the Holocaust and its vic-
tims will never abate. The Book of
Names of Holocaust victims will help us,
Jews and non-Jews, educators and
statespersons, historians and influencers,
citizens of the world, to convey the chron-
icles of this singular Jewish and human
event. The names and the people they
stand for serve as a beacon of light and
warning against the mortal dangers of un-
constrained anti-Semitism and racism, and
exhorts us to fulfill the vital 11th com-
mandment: Remember.

BY DANI DAYAN,
Chairman of the World Holocaust
Remembrance Center
LAST TRAIN TO AUSCHWITZ

Last Train to Auschwitz: The French National Railways and the Journey to Accountability


L ast Train to Auschwitz: The French National Railways and the Journey to Accountability by Sarah Federman is an exceptionally thought-provoking book. In short, it leaves the reader wondering if the SNCF was itself a victim of the Nazis, as perpetrator eagerly collaborating with them, or as stalwart hero. It also, sadly, leaves the reader wondering if justice can ever really be served when it comes to the role played by the SNCF in the transport of approximately seventy-six thousand Jewish deportees — among them thousands of children — “to death camps” (Continued on page 13).

WHY AN ARAB NATION HAS OPTED TO TEACH THE HOLOCAUST IN ITS SCHOOLS

T he United Arab Emirates will soon become the first Arab nation to teach the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust in its schools, a historic move that has been praised in some quarters — but also criticized in others.

The UAE plans to include Holocaust education in the curriculum for primary and secondary schools, the country’s embassy in the United States tweeted recently.

The UAE says it will work with the Tel Aviv- and London-based Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education, and Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial museum in Jerusalem, to help build a new curriculum, according to a report in the Times of Israel.

“Now we have the opportunity to reach new audiences, and Yad Vashem is working on paving the way to bring Holocaust awareness to the Arab-speaking world,” the organization’s spokesperson Simmy Allen told CNN. “Across most of the Arab-speaking world, until recently, there was little to no dialogue with Yad Vashem about the events and atrocities of the Holocaust,” he added.

The teaching of the Holocaust has been largely absent from governments’ school curricula in Arab countries, but the UAE has been doubling down on Holocaust awareness since normalizing relations with Israel in 2020 in a pact known as the Abraham Accords.

UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah Bin Zayed visited Berlin’s main Holocaust memorial in late 2020 with his Israeli counterpart. In 2021, the first Holocaust memorial exhibition in the Arab region opened in Dubai, and last year, the foreign minister made a highly publicized visit to Yad Vashem, where he laid a wreath.

In an article published in Israel’s Jerusalem Post in 2021, Ali Al Nuaimi, chairman of the Defense Affairs, Interior and Foreign Relations Committee of the UAE’s Federal National Council for the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, wrote that school curricula in the Arab world “have omitted critical parts of history in the West,” including the Holocaust, for too long. Muslims, he argued, “must liberate themselves from the burdens of history to move ahead toward the future.”

The move is “a natural outgrowth of the Abraham Accords,” Kristin Smith Diwan, senior resident scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, told CNN.

“The UAE leadership has been engineering cultural change to support its strategic objectives,” she said. “Embracing ethnic diversity has accompanied the expansion of a global workforce, and interfaith dialogue has aided in countering pan-Islamism and religious extremism.”

It isn’t clear whether the UAE’s move will apply only to government-run schools or the hundreds of private schools in the country. The UAE’s ministry of education didn’t respond to CNN’s request for comment by the time of publication.

Approximately 90% of the UAE’s population of about 10 million is made up of expatriates, according to World Bank data, many of whom send their children to privately run schools that teach international curricula that often include Holocaust education.

Emiratis on social media were largely silent about the decision to teach the Holocaust, but Abdul Khaleq Abdul, a prominent UAE commentator and political science professor, commented on the announcement in a tweet, saying there was no need for it.

(Continued on page 13)
SOLOMON PEREL, JEW WHO POSED AS A HITLER YOUTH TO SURVIVE, DIES AT 97

His masquerade — a tale recounted in a memoir and in the film Europa Europa — saved his life. But “to this day,” he said, “I have a tangle of two souls in one body.”

Solomon Perel, a German Jew who saved himself from death by posing as a member of the Hitler Youth during World War II and later felt gratitude for the Nazi he pretended to be in order to live, died on February 2 at his home in Givatayim, Israel, near Tel Aviv. He was 97.

His great-nephew Amit Brakin confirmed the death.

Mr. Perel, who was also known as Shlomo and Solly, recounted his survival story in a 1990 autobiography. It was adapted into a German movie, Europa Europa, released in the United States in 1991, which won the Golden Globe for best foreign-language film.

Like many other Holocaust survival stories, Mr. Perel’s began with Nazi oppression, which led his family to move in 1936 from Peine, Germany, to Lodz, Poland. After the German invasion on September 1, 1939, they were forced into a ghetto that would house as many as 164,000 Jews. He fled later that year with an older brother, Isaac, in the hope of finding relative safety in Soviet-controlled eastern Poland.

In Bialystok, where he parted with Isaac, Solomon was placed by a Jewish assistance organization in a Soviet orphanage in Grodno (now part of Belarus). He stayed for two years, until Germany invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941; he recalled that the Jewish children at the orphanage were roused from their sleep and told to flee the German attack.

Solomon became one of many refugees captured by the German Wehrmacht in an open field near Minsk.

Fearful that his captors would learn he was Jewish and shoot him in a nearby forest, he dug a small pit in the soft ground with the heel of a shoe and buried his identification papers.

After waiting on a long line, Solomon was asked by a German soldier, “Are you a Jew?” Heeding his mother’s last words to him, “You must live,” but not his father’s, “Always remain a Jew,” he lied: “I’m not a Jew. I’m an ethnic German.”

Not only did the Germans believe him; they welcomed him into their unit under the name Josef Perjell, and made him an interpreter. One interrogation in which he participated was of Joseph Stalin’s son Yakov Dzhugashvili.

“I became a split personality — a Nazi by day and a Jew by night,” Mr. Perel told The Week, an Indian magazine, in 2019. He remained there until his commanding officer sent him to the Hitler Youth boarding school in Braunschweig, Germany, during the winter of 1941-42.

If anyone discovered he was Jewish, “they’d deal with me like cannibals,” he said in Because You Must Live: The Story of Shlomo (Solly) Perel, a part of the Survivors Testimony Films Series produced by Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust memorial.

He was relieved that the school’s showers had separate stalls, which prevented anyone from seeing that he had been circumcised.

But, he said, “nobody suspected me because it was impossible to think that some Jewish boy would sneak into the center of that protected country.”

He became, to the young Nazis surrounding him, a true believer, absorbing the lessons of National Socialism, wearing a uniform with a swastika and a Nazi eagle on his chest and preparing for military service.

“I was a Hitler Youth completely,” he said in the Yad Vashem film. “I began telling myself, ‘Wow, I’m part of a force that’s conquering the world.’”

But he could not switch off his real self entirely. In 1943, during the Christmas holiday, he received a holiday pass and took a train back to Lodz. For 12 days, wearing the black winter uniform of the Hitler Youth, he searched for his parents in the ghetto.

He rode a streetcar, which Jews could not board, back and forth. He walked the city’s streets. He saw men rolling carts piled with Jewish corpses. But he did not find his mother, his father or his sister, Bertha, none of whom he would ever see again. His brothers, Isaac and David, survived.

Solomon was nearly eight years old when Hitler seized power in Germany in 1933, but his life did not change appreciably until two years later, when anti-Semitic laws stripped Jews of their rights and citizenship. He was expelled from school.

“It was my most traumatic childhood experience,” he said in Because You Must Live, “that barbaric expulsion from school because somebody considered me different.”

The family moved to Lodz after his father was forced by the Nazis to sell his store for nearly nothing. Solomon attended a Polish state school for Jews. It was after the Germans invaded Poland and Jewish families were ordered into the Lodz ghetto that he started on the path that led to his lifesaving masquerade as a Nazi.

Simmy Allen, a spokesman for Yad Vashem, said that Mr. Perel’s life as a Jew among the Hitler Youth was more than unusual.

“We know of Jews using false papers and presenting themselves as non-Jews, even Aryans, during the Holocaust in different places throughout Europe, even in Berlin,” Mr. Allen said in an email. “But to be in the heart of the lion’s den, under that level of scrutiny all the time and, in a sense, part of the ideology of the ‘enemy,’ as Shlomo was, is a very unique and rare position.”

Mr. Perel recalled how invested he had become in the Nazi philosophy even as the war turned against Germany.

“I was deeply involved in a world that had been forced upon me, my reasoning powers had finally been completely anesthetized,” he wrote in his memoir, published in English and French as Europa, Europa, “and my mental faculties were so befogged that no ray of reality could penetrate.” (Continued on page 15)
WHY AN ARAB NATION HAS OPTED TO TEACH THE HOLOCAUST IN ITS SCHOOLS

(Continued from page 11)

“There has been repeated talk about adding the topic of the Holocaust to our school curricula, despite the absence of any national value, educational (benefit), and knowledge need for (it),” he tweeted.

Much of the reaction from Arabs outside the UAE was critical, with some accusing the country of handing over control of its syllabus to Israel, while others questioned whether it would come at the expense of teaching the history of the Palestinians, particularly the Nakba. The Nakba, which means catastrophe in Arabic, refers to the establishment of Israel in 1948, which saw approximately 700,000 Palestinians forced to leave their homes.

“We don’t deny the Holocaust and we sympathize with its victims,” tweeted Dareen, a commenter on Twitter who identifies as Palestinian. “But including it in the curriculum for young students makes it easier for the occupation (Israel) to infiltrate the Arab people.”

The UAE, which has a sizable Palestinian community, has said in local media reports that its normalization with Israel would not affect its commitment to the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Yasser Abu Hilala, a former managing director at Al Jazeera, tweeted that teaching the Holocaust in the UAE was “useful for knowing the history and brutality of the West,” adding that “it is the same West brace of Israel. A survey by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy in July 2022 shows that more than 70% in the UAE and Bahrain hold a negative view of normalization.

Analysts say that despite the gap between official and popular views on Israel, the UAE is likely to move forward with strengthening ties with Israel.

“The Emirati public might not be entirely on board, but the leadership has decided this is the path they will pursue and so they will continue to do so,” Dina Esfandiary, senior advisor for Middle East and North Africa at the International Crisis Group, told CNN. “They believe that they have greater influence over Israel and Israeli action by maintaining these good ties.”

Some Emiratis will be uncomfortable with coordination with an Israeli institution “in a sensitive area like education” since there is popular sympathy with the plight of the Palestinians, said Diwan of the Arab Gulf States Institute.

“But this should not negate the value and importance of understanding the historical facts and context of the Holocaust,” she added. “Disinformation is a problem and serves no one.”

BY MOHAMMED ABDELBARY, CNN

LAST TRAIN TO AUSCHWITZ

(Continued from page 11)

role of hero during the war. Interestingly, being cast in this role would come to particularly appeal to the organization, and hence was especially publicized after the war. “For years, a wall-size bronze mural “was proudly displayed on the first floor of the SNCF’s headquarters...” “The mural celebrates the moment when the Allies landed at the Normandy beaches and some SNCF workers, in conjunction with the Resistance organizations, sabotaged their own trains filled with German armaments to thwart the German response to the Allied invasion.” In 1947 a popular French film appeared called La Bataille du rail that “immortalized the saboteurs and cemented the image of the SNCF Resistance fighter in French consciousness.”

“On May 10, 1951, the SNCF received the government’s highest medal of honor — the Légion d’honneur — for acts of resistance.” Then, commissioned by the government, a book was written by “Paul Durand, a son and grandson of railway workers,” entitled La SNCF dans la guerre: Sa résistance a l’occupant (The SNCF during the War: Its resistance to the occupier). Lost in all this, however, was the fact that during the war years “nothing was done to stop the convoys headed east to the death camps” — even after the Normandy invasions. For that matter, “most acts of resistance challenged the German occupation rather than Jewish ostracism and subsequent deportations.”

So the question stubbornly remains... Was the SNCF a victim of the Nazis? Were its people perpetrators themselves? Were they heroes? Were they all of the aforementioned? Were they more of one than the other? Are they guilty of having helped in the murder of Jews? How guilty? How do we “measure” their guilt? And if they are guilty, how should they “pay” for their actions (or rather, inactions)? Is this all fair when so many other corporate organizations that are guilty of crimes against Jews have escaped punishment and “hope to bury their pasts with the dead”? (Interestingly, the companies noted here in Last Train to Auschwitz include Ford, IBM, Hugo Boss, Siemens, Bayer, Fanta (Coca-Cola), J.P. Morgan and Barclays.) And then, after all is said and done, who should judge whether justice has been served? Federman examines all the above-noted questions and the controversies swirling around many of them in the five succeeding chapters of her absorbing volume, purposefully left for the readers of these words to discover on their own... and ponder.

Needless to say, The Last Train to Auschwitz deserves a place in the library of any student of the Holocaust and, for that matter, any student of law who has ever thought deeply about crime, punishment and, most especially, justice.

REVIEWED BY DR. DIANE CYPKIN
Professor Emerita at Pace University
THE LOST HISTORY OF TYNEMOUTH’S HOLOCAUST SAFE HOUSE FOR GIRLS

Number 55 Percy Park looks much like all the other town houses on a well-kept seafront parade in Tynemouth. But more than 80 years ago, it played a small yet significant part in the rescue of Jewish children from the Nazis.

Following a BBC investigation, a blue plaque was unveiled on the house to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day and to mark the property’s forgotten past.

When Martin and Rosemary Anderson moved into their home in July 2017, they had no idea about what once took place within its walls.

“The previous owners, who’d lived here for a number of years, clearly didn’t know, because a unique bit of history like that would have been a good selling point,” Martin says.

During World War II, the Andersons’ home served as a sanctuary for more than 20 Jewish girls who had fled Nazi persecution.

They came to the UK on the Kindertransport, the rescue effort in 1938 and 1939 which brought thousands of mostly Jewish refugee children to Britain.

The girls lived in the terraced house for about a year, but all trace of their presence there has since disappeared.

The story also appears to have been lost among Tyneside’s Jewish community, which has dwindled in size since the 1940s but made a huge effort to rescue the girls.

“I think a lot of the Kindertransport was forgotten,” says Brenda Dinsdale, honorary life president of Newcastle Reform Synagogue. “How old are the survivors now? We’re an older community and there are very few people left who remember. We should have taken oral histories of these people, but we didn’t.”

However, the house was well remembered by those who found refuge in it. At least three of the girls from the hostel are still alive.

The youngest is Inge Hamilton (then Inge Adamecz), who came to the UK from Poland, in 1939, aged five.

She was photographed with her sister Ruth after arriving at Liverpool Street Station, in a picture which became one of the defining images of the Kindertransport.

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“We always hoped that next year, the war will be over and we’ll have a normal life again. It didn’t happen that way. But you have to get on with life and look for the good things,” she recalls.

“We always hoped that next year, the war will be over and we’ll have a normal life again. It didn’t happen that way. But you have to get on with life and look for the good things,” she recalls.

Both her parents were killed while she was in the UK.

Another of the hostel girls was Alisa Tennenbaum, who is now in her 90s and lives in Israel. She was 10 when she left Vienna, in Austria, with the Kindertransport and remembers a frightening journey from London to Newcastle, a place she had never heard of.

“I was put on a train on my own and I was told to get off in Newcastle and I sat and cried and I repeatedly said ‘Was ist Newcastle?’”

The story of Alisa and her fellow refugees’ journey to the northeast of England begins after Kristallnacht in November 1938, when Jewish homes, businesses and synagogues were ransacked throughout Germany and Austria.

Following the attacks, the British government agreed to speed up the immigration process for children, although there were strict conditions and their parents were refused refuge.

In Tyneside, a committee was formed to try to help, led by jeweler David Summerfield and his wife Annie. Their granddaughter Judith Summerfield was very young during the war but has vague memories of the time.

She says they wanted to open a hostel for girls, who they thought were more vulnerable than boys, but it was a huge undertaking.

“Each girl had to be sponsored for £50 — the equivalent of about £3,000 today — at a time when there was very little money about,” Judith says. “The house had to have the builders in, it had to be decorated, they had to kit out the kitchen, and they had to recruit matrons to look after the girls.”

The house was owned by Sylvia Fiskin, a member of the Jewish community.

It had been used as a holiday home, but she was happy to hand it over, says her grandson Paul Stock.

For Sylvia it would have been an easy decision, he says. “There’s a concept in Jewish law called tikkun olam — repairing the world — and there’s also a concept of charity called tzedakah. “My grandmother would have been conscious of this, and therefore it would have been the right thing to do.”

The girls were cared for by two women from Vienna, who were themselves fleeing Nazi persecution. One was the celebrated cook Alice Urbach and the other Paula Sieber, a successful businesswoman.

The girls were well fed but, as was the norm at the time, the matrons ran a strict regime, according to historian and Alice’s granddaughter Karina Urbach.

She says: “[Alice] thought looking after children would be easy — she had two sons — and she thought it would just be for a very short time, but it turned into seven years.

“When she looked at the children, she knew she might have to tell them their parents would never turn up again.

“The letters stopped usually after the parents wrote to say they were going to try for a long journey.”

The girls stayed in Tynemouth until 1940, when it was decided it would be safer to move them to Windermere, in the Lake District.

The committee expected to look after (Continued on page 15)
THE LOST HISTORY OF TYNEMOUTH’S HOLOCAUST SAFE HOUSE FOR GIRLS

(Continued from page 14) them for a few weeks but instead paid for their care for seven years.

Nicola Woodhead, who is writing a PhD on the Kindertransport at the University of Southampton, says this was really unusual.

“A community of kinder being kept together for seven years was quite rare. If a hostel shut down, or they were forced to evacuate, often the children weren’t kept together.

“Sometimes children were moved several times. You don’t see many examples of a community funding a hostel, even after they were evacuated, and paying for their upkeep and keeping them all together.”

After the war, the girls were largely left to fend for themselves.

Most discovered their parents had been murdered. Many settled in other countries. Some — like Elfi Jonas, who died during the COVID pandemic — never spoke about their experiences.

Her daughter, Helen Strange, recalls: “Even when I went to school, my mom used to say to me, ‘Don’t talk about your past.’”

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Most discovered their parents had been murdered. Many settled in other countries. Some — like Elfi Jonas, who died during the COVID pandemic — never spoke about their experiences.

Her daughter, Helen Strange, recalls: “Even when I went to school, my mom used to say to me, ‘Don’t talk about your past.’”

“I think as a child they’d been told the lower profile you kept, the less likely you were to be discovered. Even very close friends had no idea of her background.”

Elfi did keep in touch with her hostel friends, though, and in 1988 some of them gathered for a reunion.

One of them, Ruth David, described it in her autobiography, A Child of Our Time. She wrote: “Oddly enough, in spite of our advanced years, we all saw ourselves as ‘girls.’

“It was an unexpected delight. The intervening years made little difference. We were not among strangers”.

In 2022, Ruth’s daughter Margaret Finch and other descendants of those who lived in the house on Tynemouth, and those who had helped them, gathered there for their own reunion.

For Margaret it was a chance to offer her thanks, as she believes her mother would have wanted. “Without the kindness of the Jewish community here, it’s unlikely these girls would have got places on the Kindertransport,” she says.

“They would probably have faced the same fate as most of their parents — to have been murdered by the Nazis. As a child, my mother was too miserable to recognize, that but later in life she came to realize what the community had done for her and the other girls.

“She was very grateful.”

BY JOANNA LONSDALE AND JANE DOWNS, BBC

SOLOMON PEREL, JEW WHOPOSED AS A HITLER YOUTH...

(Continued from page 12) trate. I continued to feel just like one of them.”

A s the war neared its end, Mr. Perel was sent to the Western Front, assigned to a unit guarding bridges. When American soldiers arrested him and his squad and briefly held him in a prisoner-of-war camp, his war was over. He was no longer Josef Perjell. He was once again Shlomo Perel.

Mr. Perel moved to Munich, where he was a translator for the Soviet Army during interrogations of Nazi war criminals. He emigrated to the British mandate of Palestine, fought in the Israeli war of independence and managed a zipper factory.

In 1959, he married Dvora Moreisky. She died in 2021. He is survived by a son, Uziel, and three grandchildren. Another son, Ronen, died in 2019.

For many years Mr. Perel put his memories of the Holocaust aside. But in the late 1980s, after a near-fatal heart attack, he began to discuss his past and to write his memoir.

The film adaptation, written and directed by Agnieszka Holland, starred Marco Hofschneider as Mr. Perel. It earned Ms. Holland an Oscar nomination for best adapted screenplay.

In addition to winning the Golden Globe for best foreign film, the movie was named best foreign film by the New York Film Critics Circle, the Boston Society of Film Critics and the National Board of Review. But the German Export Film Union declined to select it as its entry for an Academy Award for best foreign film — a decision that prompted many of Germany’s leading filmmakers, including Wolfgang Petersen and Werner Herzog, to sign a letter of protest that was published in Daily Variety.

Mr. Perel attended the film’s premiere in Lodz.

In 1992, he reunited with some of his former Hitler Youth comrades and revealed to them that he was Jewish. Some years earlier, he had gotten together with surviving members of the Wehrmacht unit that had accepted him as a German.

He lectured about his experiences in Israel and around the world.

“He insisted on including, with every lecture or talk he gave, a message for accepting the other,” Mr. Brakin, his great-nephew, said in a text message, “including the one that is different, and a message against racism in any form it might take.”

But Mr. Perel never fully purged himself of the Nazi identity he had adopted.

“To this day, I have a tangle of two souls in one body,” he told The Washington Post in 1992. “By this I mean to say that the road to Josef, the Hitler Youth that I was for four years, was very short and easy. But the way back to the Jew in me, Shlomo, or Solly, was much harder.”

“I love him,” he said, referring to Josef, “because he saved my life.”

BY RICHARD SANDOMIR, The New York Times
ZBOROWSKI Legacy Circle

The Legacy Circle, named in memory of Eli Zborowski, is open to anyone who includes ASYV/Yad Vashem in their estate plans.

This includes:
- Bequest by will
- Making ASYV/Yad Vashem a beneficiary of a Charitable Remainder Trust or Charitable Gift Annuity
- Donating a paid-up life insurance policy
- Contributing the proceeds of an IRA or retirement plan

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

With your support, ASYV can strengthen the efforts of Yad Vashem as together we remember the past and shape the future.

The American Society for Yad Vashem, founded in 1981 by a group of visionary Holocaust survivors, was led by Eli Zborowski, z”l, until his passing in 2012.

For further information about the Zborowski Legacy Circle, please contact:
Robert Christopher Morton, Director of Planned Giving at ASYV
212-220-4304 or rmorton@YadVashemUSA.org

*1974-85, as Newsletter for the American Federation of Jewish Fighters, Camp Inmates, and Nazi Victims