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continues today via e-mail
correspondence. Optional Edu-
cational Workshops assisted in
guiding the educators among us
along the precarious path of
teaching the Shoah at all levels.

I would like to wholeheart-
edly thank the '45 Aid Society
for this invaluable opportunity,
as well as the organisers at Yad
VaShem, and my fellow
students. As a result of this
programme, I have made many
vital contacts and been offered
various opportunities, for
example, to apply as an intern
at the Washington Holocaust
Museum. My studies have been
unsurpassably aided, and I have
sought the advice of an inter-
viewer for the Spielberg Project
with a view to interviewing
Survivors and their grandchild-
ren in Britain for a potential
centre for third generation
Survivors to network and to
impart their knowledge,
insights and wisdom regarding
the Shoah, with all of its atten-
dant implications for interfaith
and inter-racial relations in the
post-Holocaust world.

★ ★ ★

Report on Holocaust Seminar at Yad Vashem 28.6.99 - 21.7.99

By Steven Kern

Over the last three years I have
been reading and writing on the
Holocaust. I feel an unexplain-
able passion and drive to learn
about the almost unbelievable
horrors experienced by so many
of European Jewry over 50
years ago. I have previously
spoken to survivors, some of
whom are in the '45 Aid
Society, and they have all
offered me a most valuable
insight into just some of the
many terrible happenings in
their lives. I have also visited
some of the death, concentra-
tion, and labour camps such as
Auschwitz - Birkenau,
Majdanek, Mauthausen, and
Theresienstadt. However, I try
to picture in my mind how it all
occurred and I just can't, it just
does not make any sense. I
know that I can never truly
imagine the suffering, but
I need to be able to grasp some
form of understanding so that
one day I can teach the future
generations in the hope that
the memory of those who died
and survived will never be
forgotten.

I was very appreciative that
the '45 Aid Society helped fund
my journey to Jerusalem for
what Ben Helfgott assured me

would be an unforgettable
experience.

This was my first time in
Israel and I had a fantastic time
visiting places such as the
Western Wall and the Dead Sea,
of which I had heard so much.
The weather was beautiful and
the heat was not too unbear-
able. I saw so many truly mem-
orable sights such as sunrise
from the top of Masada, sunset
from the top of the Mount of
Olives, and I really enjoyed
camel riding in the Judean
desert and swimming near
waterfalls. I was conscious of
history everywhere I looked in
Israel. The old city in
Jerusalem was like stepping
back in time and I soon mas-
tered the art of haggling. We
were taken on tours around
Jerusalem and had a trip to the
Diaspora Museum in Tel Aviv. I
have always wanted to know
what a Kibbutz was like and so
I was delighted when we were
taken to the Ghetto Fighter
Kibbutz near the Golan Heights
and the Jordan Valley. The
Kibbutz is one of the most suc-
cessful in Israel and it housed a
most fascinating yet moving
exhibition on children in the
Holocaust. The kibbutz really
does stand as a symbol to the
good that can be accomplished
by sheer determination and co-
operation.

The course itself was first
notable by the fact that the vast
majority of those who attended
were American and there were
only a handful of Jewish people.
This offered the opportunity to
learn about how Holocaust
education is handled in the
States compared to that of
England. It felt that the teach-
ing of the Holocaust in America
is way in advance to back
home, especially with it being
mandatory in some states.
There were also a number of
Catholic priests on the course
and it was interesting to hear of
their approach and responses to
the Holocaust and the issue of
anti-Semitism. My academic
approach to the Holocaust was
purely historical and so it
broadened my way of thinking
when discussions adopted a
more theological or literary
approach.

It was encouraging to see so
many people on the course,
most of whom have set up or
want to start courses
on the Holocaust in their
Schools and Universities. Being
the youngest, I listened to the
voices of experience and made
note of the issues that need to
be confronted when teaching
the Holocaust. I was made
aware of one of the difficulties
in teaching the Holocaust is

the fact that it is not just an
historical event and so it has to
be studied from a variety of
aspects.

I had no idea what to expect
from Yad Vashem itself. Many
have told me about the impact a
visit to Yad Vashem had on
their lives and I can now fully
understand their reactions. The
historical museum provides a
basic but most interesting back-
ground about the Nazis' twisted
route towards the attempted
annihilation of the Jews and the
immediate aftermath. I was
extremely impressed with the
Valley of the Communities as I
believe its almost maze-like
network of passages clearly
demonstrates the sheer scale of
destruction. You soon realise
when reading the names of the
many, many towns and villages
carved into the rock that all of
these places once held whole
Jewish communities that are no
more and in many cases the
village itself has been wiped off
the face of the earth. The
Children's Memorial is a very
haunting experience as you
descend into the darkness to be
faced with what appears to be a
never-ending universe of
candles. This memorial has
such a dramatic effect in
warning people of how
humankind is capable of
destroying innocence without
any remorse.

It is only with the Avenue of
the Righteous that I was
reminded that human nature is
not solely evil and that we are
capable of good even under the
most extreme conditions of
hardship. However, I sat look-
ing at the many trees, ponder-
ing whether I was capable of
being a rescuer, would I risk my
life to save another? I believe
that, although many rescuers
were not actually remarkable
people, they performed remark-
able feats that must have
required tremendous courage.

The lectures we received by
many distinguished academics
were extremely impressive.
They were all given in an
enthusiastic and powerful man-
ner, although some do stand
out in my mind. Yehuda Bauer
was excellent at examining the
distinctiveness of the
Holocaust. Even recently, with
the trouble in Kosova, the
Holocaust is constantly used
as a comparison. I feel this
trivialises the fact that the
Holocaust was unique despite
there being some comparable
factors to other terrible events.
I gathered from the lecture that
it was the fact that during the
Holocaust there was no choice
for the Jews other than persecu-
tion and murder by the Nazis

that makes it so distinct. This
was the only time in history
that simply being born a Jew
was a sentence of death.

Another great lecture was
Ephraim Kaye's talk, on
Holocaust denial that tackled a
dilemma that presents a threat
to what the general public
know as the truth about the
Holocaust. We were made
aware that when teaching the
Holocaust it is likely that we
will be challenged by someone
asking how we know, and how
we can prove that six million
were killed and we were taught
how to respond to such ques-
tions. I firmly believe that
education is the most powerful
tool in protecting those with
little knowledge of the
Holocaust from a distorted
version of history.

One method of combating
the Holocaust deniers is
through oral testimony. At Yad
Vashem we were given many
moving accounts by survivors
of the Holocaust from different
perspectives. We heard about
life in Jewish communities in
Lithuania, Poland and Hungary
before the war that I consider
very important to know. It is
often easy for many people to
forget that all of a survivor's
experiences are not just of the
Holocaust. I feel it is necessary
for people learning about the
Holocaust to realise that before
the ghettos and camps each
survivor had an upbringing,
family, friends and aspirations
just like everyone else today.
We were also given testimonies
of survival in the Kovno,
Sosnowicz, Bedzin, Warsaw,
and Lodz Ghettos and in the
camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau
and Sobibor. A liberator of
Bergen-Belsen also spoke to us.
Personally, listening to a
survivor is an integral way of
learning about the Holocaust.
The impact of oral testimony is
phenomenal and each and
every experience I have heard
remains vividly in my mind.

My four weeks at Yad
Vashem has been one of the
most important and valuable
experiences in my life. I made
some good friends and have
learnt a lot about myself and
what I hope to achieve. As I
finish my Masters and begin
my PhD, I know that I will
definitely return to Yad Vashem
to utilise the many learning
facilities and there is so much
more that I want to explore in
Israel. I would like to give a big
thank you to the '45 Aid Society
for making this unforgettable
experience possible. I am cer-
tain that in the near future I will
be able to do some good with
the knowledge I have acquired.

cent to the Historical Museum, Kaddish is said in a formal service memorialising the victims. A certain restlessness was felt at the service that we attended. The talk delivered from the lectern concerned Zakor (remembrance), and the 614th Mitzvah to deny Hitler a posthumous victory. A cantor sang "Eli" and "El Molei Rachamin", and six families participated in the readings and laying of wreaths; one for each of the six million who perished. Beneath the trap-door in front of the podium, are the ashes from the camps whose names are inscribed on the stone floor. The rising of smoke from the eternal flame through the chimney is chillingly affective. The Children's Memorial memorialises the 1.5 million children who perished. One must physically descend, as though into the depths of depravity, in order to reach the room lit by bedazzling candles, reflected and thus multiplied with the aid of mirrors. The recital of the names and place of birth of individual children serves to move one's mental grasp of the Shoah beyond statistics, to the spirit of each child, represented by the light from the candles. As the visitor ascends to the exit, Jerusalem is viewed, perhaps, as one guide explained, to symbolise the victory over death by the continued living of the Jewish people in their spiritual home; over half a million survivors came to live in Israel after the Nazi atrocities. Yad VaShem is littered with monuments and memorials to the Shoah, conveying the creative impulse which has not been dampened by such desolation. The importance of creativity is also indicated by the art and sculptural installations (for example of Elsa Pollak's fired clay works) of the Art Museum. The "No Child's Play" Exhibition displayed here in an essential means of communicating the tragic fate of children under Nazism.

Building work was in progress at Yad VaShem for the duration of our stay, in preparation for Project 2001, which will link the various disjointed areas. Unfortunately, this entailed our being denied access to much of the archive material. However, we were fortunate to be informed, at length, of the vital work being undertaken in computerising the names of the victims, which will eventually mean the reconstruction of whole communities across Europe on the basis of individual identity and

genealogy. The Washington Holocaust Museum is also collating such lists, and the competitive bargaining between representatives of the two centres during the lecture on these developments, witnessed the business-like attitude towards this project, despite its many other merits. Pages of Testimony, containing information provided by friends and relatives of victims, are received in their thousands each week by this department of Yad VaShem.

Our trip to the North, and particularly to Kibbutz Lochamei HaGhettaot (The Ghetto Fighters/Kibbutz), provided a second major learning environment. The serenity and efficient organisation of the Kibbutz was a welcome respite from the noise and dust at Yad VaShem, and during our two days there our comprehension of "Resistance" was clarified. A distinctly memorable element of our sojourn here was an exhibition of the Memento Series of drawings by Olere, one of the Sonderkommando in Auschwitz, whose haunting work captured the fearsome routine of the Jewish "muselman" in the crematoria. An extensive visit to the inspired installations of Yad Layeled (the Children's Museum) also yielded much of worth, in terms of education and symbolism; the hard grey floor representing the harsh reality of the Shoah, stood out in stark contrast to the symbols of butterflies and flowers in stained glass, representative of the dreams of children in the ghettos and camps. As with the Children's Memorial at Yad VaShem, one could listen to the voices of individual children, and descend as though into a whirlpool, towards the eternal light. An exhibition of the life and educational philosophy of Janusz Korczak, murdered along with the children he had cared for in the Warsaw ghetto, stood as an example of righteous action for all. Another installation, that of "The Sand Game", an analogy of the Nazi treatment of Jews from an autobiography by Uri Orlev, provided insight into the nature of the Shoah as evil for evil's sake. Yad Layeled was built with third generation Survivors in mind; as a place where they could meet and dialogue. This idea of community interaction through memorialising has sparked the embryo of an idea within myself, as a future project for Britain, focusing upon the third and fourth generations' need to grapple

with the Shoah in the new millennium, as inheritors of the testimonies of their grand and great-grandparents.

There is no doubt in my mind that my listening to Survivors speak, and having personal contact with them, was, and always will be, fundamental to my experience of Israel and to my sense of purpose back at home. At Schindler's grave, on Mount Zion, a memorial service, led by both Jewish and Christian representatives of our group, was accompanied by testimony from Nachum and Genya Manor, who spoke lovingly of their rescuer and friend, "The unforgettable lifesaver of 1200 persecuted Jews". Although I could not estimate or empathise with the pain of the survivors whom I questioned, the vital spark of life within them spoke volumes to me. Miriam Ron, a German Jew who escaped death with her father in Paris, spoke sentimentally of her family's siddur; the only item that she managed to reclaim from the French Railways after the Shoah. Havka Rabab, once active in the Warsaw Ghetto Underground, and a founding member of Kibbutz Lohamei Haghettaot, spoke courageously of her acts of resistance. Ruth Brand, a Hungarian Jew who survived Auschwitz, memorably communicated to us the ringing of church bells as she was deported from her home, and enabled us to understand what it actually means to have nothing, particularly in terms of family. Ruth conveyed the importance of friendship in Auschwitz, and its motivational quality amongst the stench of death. She extolled the virtues of new life in the State of Israel in the post-Holocaust era, acting, in her view, as revenge upon the enemy. Ruth brought home to us the need for positive action and for daily appreciation of the gift of life.

Masha Greenbaum, who suffered in the Kovno Ghetto, spoke of the difficult nature of forgiveness in the light of the Shoah (though she did not implicate second and third generation of perpetrators in this). Dov Freiberg, one of the few remaining survivors from Sobibor, attested to the support of his fellow inmates and advocated the telling of personal accounts as duty. Rabbi Herschel Klepfisz, a Polish Jew who helped to liberate the concentration camps as Jewish chaplain of the Polish army in exile in Britain, added to my understanding and passion for Jewish Christian discourse,

by relaying an account of his leading the Christmas Eve mass for the Catholic soldiers in the army, in the absence (through sickness) of the Catholic Chaplain. Rabbi Klepfisz explained the essence of co-responsibility, of being the keeper of one's brother, and of finding a language among the peoples of God that could never be achieved by barbarians.

Formal lectures covered the gamut of themes pertaining to the Shoah; for example, Denial (Ephraim Kaye), Survivor psychology (Moshe Sternberg), the History of Antisemitism (Professor Moshe Herr, Professor Jeremy Cohen), Nazi Racial Ideology and the Final Solution (Professor David Bankier), Holocaust Literature (Professor Hann Wirth-Nesher), Auschwitz (Gideon Greif), Response of the Allies (David Silberklang), the Righteous Among the Nations (Dr Mordechai Paldiel), Unprecedented Characteristics of the Shoah (Professor Yehuda Bauer). The varying topics covered and wide-ranging styles of delivery helped to maintain interest during a course that might otherwise have been disheartening and difficult to contend with. Pesach Schindler's lecture on Jewish Faith during the Shoah, and of Jewish Spiritual Resistance was of particular interest and inspiration to me at this stage of my research for my M.A. dissertation, as was Ephraim Kaye's playing devil's advocate in a skilfully designed workshop on Denial.

Outside of lecture-time, the organisation of trips and extra activities was supreme. The group visited the Diaspora Museum in Tel Aviv, enabling us to contextualise the Shoah pre-1933 (Hitler's rise to power), attended a Shabbat Service at the Great Synagogue in Jerusalem, toured the Old City, visited the Hadassah Medical Centre in order to view the incredible Chagall windows, planted trees with the help of the Jewish National Fund, and much more besides. These were an integral part of the overall experience. Further, an optional lunch-time dialogue class, attended by Polish, South African, American, Israeli and British students/educators, was instigated by the class itself as a response to burning issues which could not be fully addressed in the lectures, due to time-constraints. The subject matter tended towards Vatican relations with the Jewish community, and the process

We have long struggled to preserve the memory of those who were killed by the Nazis and the memory of the vanished world, unique in its life style, language, culture and art that was wiped off the face of the earth. We have also been striving indefatigably to ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust are not forgotten lest they be repeated. It was a lonely struggle for many years. Memorialisation was first started in Israel, but it was not until the Eichmann Trial in 1961 and the Six Day War in 1967 that Holocaust education and its significance began to be seriously considered.

In the Diaspora it was mainly restricted to the survivors, refugees and those who were directly affected by the Holocaust. To the non-Jewish world it was only of ephemeral interest. This state of affairs began to change more recently and accelerated since the end of the Cold War.

Our Society's ethos has been first and foremost to look after the needs of its members, but it has also been outward-looking, supporting humanitarian causes, particularly in Britain, as well as in Israel. We have always been conscious of those less fortunate than ourselves. A demonstration of this was our recent moral and financial support to the Kosovar's children, as well the help we gave via the W.J.R. to an orphanage in Odessa.

Our Society is multi-faceted and Holocaust education has always been a cornerstone of our activities.

It is interesting to recall that since the mid-70s, our Society was already actively involved in promoting a Holocaust education. We organised essay competitions and offered scholarships. We established a Chair for Holocaust studies at the Oxford Centre for Post-graduate Hebrew Studies and our members have been speaking to schools and telling of their experiences in an

CHAIRMAN'S message

attempt to teach the lessons of the Holocaust.

The Yad Vashem Committee of the Board of Deputies was established in 1977, followed over the years by other institutions like The Holocaust Educational Trust, The Spiro Institute, The Anne Frank Educational Trust, The Museum of Jewish Life, The Beth Shalom Holocaust Memorial Centre, and other organisations. In recent years, The Wiener Library, although in existence since 1939, has, like the other institutions, been playing an increasingly important part in promoting Holocaust education and remembrance.

Educational authorities have been encouraged to include the subject of the Holocaust in schools' curricula and many more students are studying the Holocaust at University level.

Specialist teaching material is now more widely available and the opening of a National Holocaust Museum, as part of the Imperial War Museum, in the year 2000, will further strengthen the awareness of the Holocaust, as will the International Scholars' Conference, Remembering For The Future 2000 next July, inspired and organised by Dr Elisabeth Maxwell.

However, what is very exciting and of great significance is the recent initiative taken by the national governments. A Task Force For International Co-operation On Holocaust Education Remembrance And Research was set up last year by Britain, Sweden, the USA, Israel, Germany, Poland, France and Holland under the auspices of their respective Foreign Ministries. International efforts to widen Holocaust education is a recognition that the victims' individual worth and personal

dignity will never be forgotten and will help to ensure that their memory will provide lessons for all humanity as we enter a new millennium.

Our own government is now considering a proposal for a Holocaust Remembrance Day. The Prime Minister recently said "I am determined to ensure that the horrendous crimes against humanity committed during the Holocaust are never forgotten."

The question which haunts anyone who reflects on the history of this century is how human beings can behave with such appalling cruelty to each other. One would have thought that with all the exposure of the Holocaust and other horrible massacres that have been such a striking feature of this century, that these human catastrophes would have been avoided. Yet, there is a glimmer of hope. The sanctity of frontiers and the sovereign immunity of nation states can no longer be used as an excuse for non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, as NATO action against Serbia and UN intervention in Indonesia has shown. Their action was and is directed against the horrors of internal repression and ethnic cleansing. The moral imperative is beginning to take precedence over political expediency. This new development has its dangers, but how can the world stand by and watch innocent people be driven out from their homes and massacred in an attempt at ethnic cleansing? Most of the leaders from NATO countries were born after the Second World War. They have not been directly affected by the Holocaust, but it seems that they have been more than touched by it and they recognise the need to protect internal minorities against genocidal attacks. At least, this is one, but

a very important, lesson that some leaders have learnt from history, that they are endeavouring not to be condemned to repeat.

There have also been some other moral advances in recent years. For the first time in more than half a century, the United Nations General Assembly decided to list antisemitism as a form of racism. The official stance of the Catholic Church towards the Jewish people and religion has changed immeasurably. In a recent statement Pope Paul II said "We cannot forget that the history of Europe is tightly entwined with the history of the people from whence came our Lord Jesus. Unspeakable suffering was inflicted on the Jewish people in Europe and we cannot affirm that all the roots of this injustice have been eradicated. Reconciliation with the Jews is one of the most fundamental duties of Christians in Europe."

As we are about to enter a new millennium and we reflect on our century, it is important not to delude ourselves that the mental processes, racial hatred and suspicion, prejudice, ignorance and intolerance, which made the Holocaust possible, are likely to vanish. However, we have become much more conscious of them and we know that our vulnerability requires eternal vigilance.

The lessons of the Holocaust should be studied like the germs of a deadly disease. It is a lesson our leaders seem to have taken on board and it is crucial that they are successful with their efforts to redress the wide gap that exists between our state of morality and the accelerating progress of technology.

Ben Helfgott

PAST AND PRESENT

ABRAHAM GUTT

Witold Gutt DSc., PhD., MSc., C.Chem., FRSC., FCS., came to England with the Southampton group in November 1945 and lived in the Finchley Road Hostel. He was Senior Principal Scientific Officer and Head of Materials Division at the Building Research Establishment of the Department of the Environment. He is now a consultant in chemistry and Chairman of the British Standards Institution Technical Committee of Cement and Lime.

The Gutts, a moderately orthodox family, were established in the ancient fortress town of Przemyśl in the main Mickiewicz Street, at No. 85 near its end, almost out of town. Two three-storey apartment houses stood in an orchard of considerable size with the railway line passing in an arc on the perimeter of the orchard at the back. There were many family members, aunts and uncles, and flats were let to provide a living for them.

The generation of my father, Abraham, broke out from the mould and attempted successfully to join the professions. My father went to study in Vienna at the Technical University and became an architect. His qualification related to buildings, roads and bridges. His enthusiasm for creating a building or structure was conveyed to me by frequent references to features on buildings, and I accompanied him to building sites.

In about 1933, the Polish government passed a law that architects qualified outside Poland had to re-qualify, and Abraham spent a year attending a course in Lwow and passed the Polish examination, regaining his right to practice.

He then became a junior partner to the most important Jewish architect in the area, Schaffer, who had a great influence on him. Schaffer's talent was fully recognised in the profession but, because

he was a Jew, many of his proposals for public buildings, although tacitly known to be the best and his fees lowest, were turned down. He failed to get the commission for the new courthouse in Przemyśl, but he succeeded, surprisingly, with his proposal for the principal Post Office, a modern building with sliding front doors, in Mickiewicz Street. My father helped him with this project, drew the plans and supervised the construction as the site architect. He took me to the site often and later, whenever I visited that building, I thought

of him. In the mid nineteen-thirties, he was commissioned by an enterprising Jewish owner, Mrs Broch, to design and build the first modern holiday hotel in Sianki in the area of the Beskidy mountain range. The hotel, near the Czechoslovak border, was a great success, attracting visitors from abroad.

At one stage Abraham was insulted in the Przemyśl town Hall by a Christian architect who, within earshot, said that 'parszywy zydy' (scabby Jews) were getting all the work. My father, who had been an officer

in the Austrian Army and had the rank of a reserve Lieutenant in the Polish Army, challenged the accuser to a duel. The seconds arrived and the duel was arranged but, fortunately, the dispute was settled without the duel.

As the recession was lifting and work was coming in, German Jews escaping from Hitler appeared in the town. We were, of course, fully aware of the Anschluss of Austria on 16th March 1938 and its consequences for Jews. All promise of a good life ended rapidly in September 1939, just before my

denial, disinformation and new forms of anti-Semitism and to remember for the future.

The special day for the Survivors' Gathering, Sunday 16 July 2000, will include speakers such as Yaffa Eliach, survivor, author, Professor of History and Literature at Brooklyn College and creator of The Tower of Life at the US Holocaust Museum in Washington, and Helen Epstein, daughter of survivors, who was one of the first to examine how the Second Generation were affected by their parents' experiences.

This Gathering will be one of the last opportunities for international scholars to seek guidance from a significant number of Holocaust survivors.

Throughout the week of the Conference there will be a programme of cultural events in London: educational film premieres, an Art of the Holocaust exhibition and a commemoration in music. On Friday, 21 July, there will be a public meeting at Central Hall, Westminster.

For further information on the Survivors' Gathering, please watch for announcements in the Jewish and national press, or contact Nicole David at RFTF 2000, P O Box 20349, London NW11 0ZE. E-mail: nicole.david@virgin.net.

★ ★ ★

FUND FROM THE CLAIMS CONFERENCE FOR THE ASSISTANCE OF NEEDY SURVIVORS

We want to remind you that funds are still available from the money given to us by the Claims Conference.

The money is for those of our members on low income who need assistance with medical or health aids which are not available on the National Health Service and which they themselves cannot afford to purchase. Items that come within this category are such things as dentures, lenses, hearing aids, orthopaedic devices and various other items.

Applications should be sent to Ruby Friedman, 37 Salmon Street, London NW9.

THE ANNUAL OSCAR JOSEPH HOLOCAUST AWARDS

The '45 Aid Society offers up to two Awards of £600.00 each to assist successful candidates to participate in the Holocaust Seminar at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, which is held from 28th June to 21st July 2000. The overall cost of participation is about £1,000.00.

Applications are invited from men and women under the age of 35 who have a strong interest in Holocaust studies and a record of communal involvement. After their return, successful candidates will be expected to take a positive role in educational and youth work activities so as to convey to others what they learned and gained from their participation in the summer seminar at Yad Vashem. However, before applying for these Awards, candidates should obtain permission from Yad Vashem to participate in the seminar.

Those interested should write, enclosing their CV and other details, not later than 3rd March 2000 to:

Ruby Friedman
37 Salmon Street
London NW9

The following are two reports by Clare Ranson and Steven Kern, the two recipients of the Annual Oscar Joseph awards, which should be of interest to our members.

Report on the International School for Holocaust Studies Summer Institute at Yad VaShem; 28th June - 21st July 1999

Clare Ranson

In retrospect, this most stimulating and thought-provoking of academic undertakings, was anticipated with a sense of mission prior to its commencement. As a theologian travelling out to Ha Aretz for the first time, and an M.A. student of Jewish-Christian Relations embarking upon an intensified course dealing with the Shoah, expectations ran high. The privilege of imbibing the imparted knowledge of world-renowned lecturers, of dialoguing with educators of diverse backgrounds, of listening in bewildered awe to Survivor testimonies, and of experiencing this in the State of Israel, did not fall short of the mark; indeed, all expectations were surpassed. I had fully anticipated being one of a small number of Gentiles on the course, the reality was in fact a predominantly Christian (particularly Catholic) body of students, eager to return to their communities with new insights and renewed resolve to teach this complex and emotive subject. This, in itself, was a source of inspiration. My personal agenda centred upon gleaning information specific to memorialising the Shoah in the next millennium via the witnessing of the third generation of Survivors; this, I only discovered in my second week at Yad VaShem.

The programme offered a combination of academic and leisure-orientated pursuits; the two not being mutually-exclusive, for much of value was learned outside of the formal lectures, in terms of Jewish history and Jewish life in the modern era. This report does not seek to set out in detail a synopsis of the programme in its entirety, but an overview of that which has spoken to me personally. Firstly, the impact made by Yad VaShem (the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, established in 1953 by an act of Parliament) will be discussed. The library itself contains material of such scope, including over three thousand memoirs, that one cannot help but reflect upon the seminal nature of the Shoah in shaping and interpreting history in the modern age, and in raising questions

concerning the phenomenon of anti-semitism throughout the ages. Yad VaShem, meaning "A place and a name", draws upon the concept of eternal remembrance from Isaiah 56, through the creation of a physical place and the collection of archives attesting to the atrocities of "The Whirlwind", as set out in the mandate given at the entrance. One is struck by the atmosphere of silent contemplation and respect permeating this area on the Mount of Remembrance, and I often felt a sense of guilt for the ease I felt there as time passed, and for the familiarity I felt with the place, (though not in terms of nonchalance), whilst first-time day visitors appeared shocked and sometimes numbed by the experience.

Yad VaShem seems to take on a meaning beyond itself, and is therefore open to varying interpretations. The tree-lined Avenue of the Righteous Gentiles bears witness to the special significance of the tree in Judaism, and in particular, the carob tree, said to have sustained one of the Sages, bears seeds of a uniform weight, perhaps lending itself to the belief that all will be judged equally. This avenue was to provide an area for us to interact and to develop discussions beyond the lectures, which planted the seeds of future projects within our minds and consciences. The Valley of the Communities, constructed from large block stone from the hills of Judea, brings to mind the concept of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel, and physically reminds the visitor of the Western Wall, although no conscious connection with the destruction of the Second Temple is intended. Engraved in both Hebrew and Latin characters upon these hewn rocks, like tombstones, are the names of the European towns and villages destroyed by the Nazis during the Shoah. Yahrzeit candles are meaningfully placed by particular place-names, and one is reminded that the victims of the Shoah were not born in Dachau or Auschwitz, but each had an identity and culture. This was brought home by the showing of a documentary on Yiddish films at the cinema in the Beit hakehilot (House of the communities). The Memorial to the Deportees is a cattle car overhanging the valley, visible to drivers on the main road outside Yad VaShem as they go about their daily business. It faces the Old City of Jerusalem and appears to symbolise the abrupt deaths of the six million. In the Hall of Names, adja-



1954. David and Olive Herman's wedding party.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

YOM HA'SHOAH

The communal Yom Ha'shoah Commemoration will take place on Sunday 7th May at 11am at the Logan Hall, Bedford Way, London EC1.

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2000 REUNION OF OUR SOCIETY'S BROCHURE

The 55th Anniversary of our reunion will take place on Sunday 7th May at the Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ.

As always, we appeal to our members to support us by placing an advertisement in our souvenir brochure to be published by the Society. Please contact:-

Harry Balsam
40 Marsh Lane
Mill Hill
London NW7
Tel. 0181-959 6517 (home)
0171-372 3662 (office)

International Assembly of Members of the '45 Aid Society in Israel
May 9th - 22nd 2000

★ ★ ★

INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF MEMBERS OF THE '45 AID SOCIETY

May 9th - May 22nd 2000
in Israel

Dan Panorama Hotel
Tel Aviv

All members of our Society are welcome

7 Nights B/B
£645.00 P/P

10 Nights B/B
£795.00 P/P

14 Nights B/B
£995.00 P/P

Including Tax

For further information contact
Rita
at Mozes Travel
0171-430 2230

REMEMBERING FOR THE FUTURE 2000

THE HOLOCAUST IN AN AGE OF GENOCIDES

An International Scholars' Conference, Oxford
and London 16-23 July 2000

Dear Friends,

As the twentieth century, the most violent hundred-year period in human history, draws to a close, an Assembly called REMEMBERING FOR THE FUTURE 2000 is being prepared for July 16-23 next year.

Our commitment is to have an impact on the way the Holocaust is remembered and taught into the next century.

The time is coming when, inevitably, there will no longer be living witnesses of the Holocaust. RFTF 2000 will bring together scholars and academics from all over the world, who will share their knowledge and insights and meet with survivors.

Further details of this significant event will be sent to your magazine as we approach the date, and I hope you will wish to hear about and be involved in the many events which make up the Assembly, to be based in London and Oxford.

The full title of the Assembly is REMEMBERING FOR THE FUTURE 2000 - The Holocaust in an Age of Genocides. We hope the extension of Holocaust education in this country and throughout the world will lead to greater understanding, tolerance and sympathy among all peoples.

As the Jewish community enters the New Year 5760 and the world looks forward to 2000 CE, I wish you a time of peace, joy and friendship - and also of Remembering For The Future.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Elizabeth Maxwell
Chairman

★ ★ ★

Are you a Holocaust Survivor?
Were you in the camps or in hiding?
Were you a Partisan or Rescuer?
Are you a "Kind" or victim of Nazi persecution?
Are you Second Generation?

If so, make a note in your diary to attend

RFTF 2000 International Holocaust Survivors'
and Second Generation Gathering
Sunday 16 July 2000 at the Imperial War Museum, London

The Gathering will examine how survivors and other victims of Nazi persecution and their children have been affected by their experiences, and how we can ensure that the memory of those who suffered will pass to future generations.

The Gathering will open the Remembering for the Future 2000 Assembly and Academic Conference, which is taking place in London and Oxford, from 16 to 23 July 2000.

This major conference will be a multi-faceted programme, looking at the Holocaust in an Age of Genocides. Its main aims are to assess the legacy of the Holocaust and encourage the development of its study into the next century; to help counteract Holocaust

11th birthday. First, in the mobilisation in August, my father was called up as an officer in the Polish Infantry. The sabre was polished and we saw him off at the station. He wrote frequently and I collected the stamps. One day he unexpectedly returned having been discharged on health grounds. By this time he was 52 years of age and his legs were not good enough for long marches.

The Germans arrived in Przemysl on 7th September after a brief battle for the town and having crossed the river San. The Poles fought courageously but were totally unable to halt the advance of the vastly superior and fresh German army. Many buildings were destroyed by artillery fire before the German army crossed the river with some German casualties.

We soon learned that under the Molotov Pact, the San was to be the border between the German and Russian occupied Poland, so the Germans would retreat across the San, leaving the larger and older part of Przemysl, with the Jewish quarter, the Zamek Park and the old fortress, to the Russians. It seemed that we might all be saved. However, on 18th September, before their departure, the Gestapo visited the houses of listed Jewish professionals. Both Schaffer and my father were among them and the fate of this group was soon discovered by a Polish farmer who came across a mass grave outside the town even before the Germans retreated across the river. The Germans had also burnt the 400 years-old Synagogue and the new Jewish liberal Temple, as well as the old 'Jewish Town' (Miasto Zydowskie) before the retreat.

While this was going on, my mother and the relatives of other victims of the massacre visited the mass grave which was being excavated. The victims had been shot in the back and the bodies decomposed so that identification was very difficult. Every day I waited at home while my mother was at the grave and from the second

floor balcony of our house at 6 Ratuszowa Street I watched her returning in the late afternoon. Each day I tried to figure out if she had identified my father's body, which could only be done by articles of clothing. Despite attending all the exhumations, my mother failed to identify the body of my father, but that of Schaffer was identified by his socks. My father and Schaffer had been taken together from Schaffer's apartment in Dworski Street. His butler had witnessed their arrest, and gave us my father's silver cigarette case which he managed to leave with the servant. The husband of Mrs Broch was also identified by her among the buried victims. Eleven bodies of unidentified victims, undoubtedly including that of my father, were buried together in the Jewish cemetery.

The arrival of the Russian army, taking over from the Germans, which was greeted with relief in the town, was too late for my father. It was additionally sad that architects were valued by the Russians, and he might have had two more years of life before the return of the Germans to Przemysl on June 28th 1941 at the outbreak of the Russian-German war. But the 'Final Solution' of the 'Jewish Problem' then followed, which he would most probably would not have survived.

My father's brother, Ignac Rosenblatt-Gutt, a gifted barrister and defendant of Communists - for which he charged no fees - died in the Lwow camp in Janowska Street in about 1942. All the members of the Gutt family from the Mickiewicz Street estate were taken and killed in the first 'Action' from Przemysl in June 1942.

I am the only survivor of the Gutt family of Przemysl.

Witold Henryk Gutt
16th March 1999

Plaszow-Krakow 7535,
Natzweiler 224411,
Dachau 147597

A camp survivor's nightmare

He dreamed that his children have rejected him, has done irreparable damage to them they said. His proximity undermines them. They know this through their sensitive antennae which reveal what he thinks whether he thinks it or not.

No account taken of the struggle to survive survivor's guilt and depression and to do something useful.

According to Confucians what matters is the time between birth and death. The table is made of solid teak, anyone with eyes unclouded by religions of escape can see this.

They ditched God too, the ablaters, together with their father, and adopted the religions of the East that substitute wooden idols for the idea of a universal God. The idols too are made of solid wood and they have no souls.

His children rejected the work ethic that helped Horowitz to survive in Krakow-Plaszow when he was electrocuted high on the roof as he was working while below the camp guards were beating the Christian Poles who were breaking up stones.

And later in freedom, when depression struck, work was therapeutic.

They have learned nothing from their psychotherapists, not even the first thing, that their feelings are their own not projections from others.

They deny him hope in early old age.
May God/Buddha forgive them.

The beetles are safe with them but the greenflies have no feelings. It is people who matter first.

Future will show the validity of the old values but it will be too late for him. There is no way back. 'Einmal ist Keimmal' as Kundera says.

Witold Henryk Gutt 14.3.90.

The return to Lodz

- biographical episodes

By Victor Breitburg

Victor came to England with the Windermere Group and then lived in the Cardross Hostel in Scotland. He emigrated to the States in the late forties and kept in touch with us throughout the whole time. He is actively engaged in Holocaust education and is held in high esteem by the educational authorities in New Jersey.

Kaminsk: a shtetl between Piotrkow and Belchatov, and about ninety kilometres south of Lodz. It was a typical Polish small shtetl, like hundreds of others in Poland. Half of the population were Jewish and half were Christians. Neither group cared for each other, but the necessity of survival made them tolerate each other. Both parties barely survived from one day to another, each one depended on the other to carry the day to an end. Poverty was everyone's worst enemy. In the centre of the shtetl was a market. Every Wednesday, the peasants used to bring their commodities there. Money was seldom exchanged. Most of the time they used the old fashioned way of bartering. On the right side of the market there was a church, a little farther on there was the Jewish synagogue, and right across from the church and the synagogue was the police station.

So why am I telling you about Kaminsk, when the story is supposed to be the return to Lodz? First of all, I was born there. I was born May 8th 1927 to David Leo and Chava

Brajtburg. Seven days after my birth, I was circumcised and named Shlomo Avigdor, after my grandfather who had died several years previously. I was the second Shlomo Avigdor, who was named after my grandfather, who was the only melamed in Kaminsk.

At the age of six months my family packed up all our belongings and we moved to Lodz. I can't write to talk of my early experiences till the age of four. At four I was sent to the cheider, which I immediately hated with a passion. The melamed was an old man, with a white beard who always coughed and sneezed. If this was not enough, he also smoked like a chimney and smelled like a camel. As he tutored us, every time he exhaled cigarette smoke, we involuntary inhaled. Not only was that bad, but we all became addicted to smoking. My father also smoked. Between those two people I became a cigarette junkie at the ripe age of four. Well, my father caught me trying to smoke half of his cigarette; I got a shellacking with a belt on my bottom and

never had to go back to the cheider. Instead, I got a private tutor at home.

Lodz: We lived on 11go Listopada 58 on the first floor. Directly in front of the stairs was a nice shiny bell, which I would ring to let everyone on the floor know that I came home. It was a large one-room apartment, with three windows facing the front. In order not to pay rent for three rooms, we subdivided and created three separate rooms. The walls were two feet under the ceiling; therefore, it was still considered one room. One section was my father's shop. There was a cutting table and two sewing machines. My father was a ladies custom tailor. I always was fascinated by the trade journals, showing the latest styles, which came to us directly from Paris, France.

There were always two people working with my father, and at times my mother had to help out too. Next, there was a small kitchen, and then there was our bedroom. There were two beds there; one for my parents and the second was supposed to be for my brother

and me, but we seldom slept in our own bed because we always had guests from the shtetl and we wound up sleeping on the floor. We were told that sleeping on the floor is good for us, that this is the way the people in Palestine sleep. From then on we never complained again. Above the beds we had to have a large painting of Samson with his muscular arms outstretched, shifting the pillars of the Philistine temple which supported the whole structure. I always dreamt that someday I would be that Samson. We were rich, we had electricity and cold water in our apartment. Can you imagine? Two forty watt bulbs, and what a luxury that was. The apartment house we lived in had a front building with two large doors leading to our yard, and two apartment buildings on each side, and the toilet building was all the way in the back. By being enclosed on all four sides it created our yard (this was not to be taken lightly). Our yard was our football stadium, our skating rink, and our dreamland. There were over 119 families, all Jewish except

SECOND GENERATION NEWS

Caroline Huberman received a BSc. 1st Class Honours Degree at Kings College. Caroline is the daughter of Shirley and Alfred Huberman. Congratulations to Caroline and her family.

★ ★ ★

THIRD GENERATION NEWS

Congratulations to Daniel Shane who gained 3 As in his A level examinations and will be taking up a place at Cambridge University. Daniel is the son of Linda and Michael Shane and the grandson of Anita and Charlie Shane.

Congratulations to Pauline and Harry Spiro on the success of their grandson Justin Spiro, son of Lannis and Gary, who partici-

pated in the Under 13s' Great Britain Athletics League where he won a bronze medal for the Shot Putt. His throw was 10.88 metres, breaking the Harrow Athletics Club record, of which he is a member, for his age group, which was 8.60 metres. Justin is a great sports enthusiast and is an excellent footballer playing for Haberdashers Askes School.

This is the first time that we have had an opportunity to write about the achievement in sport of the third generation.

My grateful thanks to those who pass on to me news of what is happening amongst our members, and would ask you to please let me have your news, which is of great interest to our readers. If we are not informed, we can do nothing about it. Please either write to me or phone me at: 37 Salmon Street, Kingsbury, London NW9 8PP. Tel/Fax 0208-205 6878.

NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS IN MANCHESTER

Compiled by Louise Elliott

BIRTHS

- December 1998: Mazeltov to Mendel Beale and the late Marie Beale on the birth of a granddaughter to his son Simon and his wife.
- Mazeltov to Susan and Pinkus Kurnedz on the birth of another grandson (making 12).

★ ★ ★

BAT CHAYIL

October 1998: Danielle, granddaughter of Zena and Adash Bulwa.

★ ★ ★

BIRTHDAYS

December 1998: Mayer Bomsztyk, 70 years young.
Blanche Laskier, 65 years young.

★ ★ ★

MARRIAGES

June 27th 1999: Hynda Sommers married David Silver at the Steincourt Shul. We wish her every happiness.

★ ★ ★

OTHER EVENTS

April 13th 1999: The Yom Hashoah service was held at the New Century Hall, which was well attended by our members and about 800 other people. Six members lit the candles which were then guarded by the Third Generation being the grandchild of each survivor. The presentation which followed was very well put together and was based on the towns of Vilna, Amsterdam, Bratislava, Berlin and Lodz. Arnie Melchior, a member of the Danish Parliament, was the guest-speaker.

April 24th 1999: Our yearly service at the New Steincourt Synagogue was packed and the congregation enjoyed a Kiddush hosted by our Society.

April 28th 1999: Susan and Pinkus Kurnedz hosted an evening to celebrate another year of liberation, which was certainly enjoyed by all. A suggestion was made by Marita Golding that we should have more social get-togethers and she, Estelle Kleiman and Elaine Walshaw agreed to opt as a Social Committee to see if a get-together could be arranged, say, at least each four months. So far, nothing has materialised.

6th September 1999: The annual Memorial Service at the grave for the 6 million Jews who perished took place at Agecroft Cemetery and this was well attended by members, second generation and friends. The participants had an opportunity of seeing the work being done on the Stone and Grave which is yet to be completed. Mayer Hersh, Pinkus Kurnedz, Sam Walshaw and Brenton Walshaw participated in the readings.

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APOLOGY

I would like to apologise for the mistake in our last issue when announcing the engagement of the son of Estelle and Karl Kleiman. It should have said that Lee, not Andrew, got engaged. It is getting to the stage that by the time I have to send out lists of events to London, I have nightmares as to anyone or anything I miss out. No-one ever phones me and asks me to include their events in the next Journal and the job, which I seem to have done for eternity, is many times more stressful. I only wish that those members who have cause to complain (and there have been many over the years) would please phone me and volunteer to take over.



Sarah and Menachem Waksztok celebrate a family occasion.

MEMBERS NEWS 1999

Compiled by Ruby Friedman

BIRTHS

Mazelto to all our members who during the past twelve months have been blessed with the arrival of grandchildren.

- Solly Irving a grandson Benjamin Zvi born to Ruth and Jeremy.
- Dian and Stanley Faull a granddaughter Emily Elizabeth born to Laura and Maurice, and a grandson Harrison G born to Heather and Ashley.
- Margaret and Harry Olmer a granddaughter Chloe born to Julia and Andrew.
- Valerie Geddy and the late Leo Geddy a granddaughter Ariella Lebe born to Rachel and Lloyd.
- Arza and Ben Helfgott a granddaughter Amy Rebecca born to Thea and Michael, and a granddaughter Alex Georgia born to Danielle and Maurice.
- Olive and David Herman a granddaughter Georgia Rebecca born to Julia and Phillip.
- Betty and Charlie Lewkowicz a grandson Steven born to Karen and Jack.
- Ulla and Sam Dresner a granddaughter Sophia born to Johanna.
- Shirley and Alfred Huberman a granddaughter Faye Rifka born to Susan and Maurice.
- Thea and Yisroel Rudzinski a great-grandson born to Ettie and Moisly.

★ ★ ★

BARMITZVAH

Sincere mazeltov to our members who have had the pleasure in seeing their grandson's barmitzvah.

- Rochelle Nelkin, grandson Jeremy son of Rosalie Shaw.
- Malka and Mati Leal on the barmitzvah of their son Moran, grandson of the late Masha Dobrowolska.
- Judith and Reuben Sherman, grandson Michael son of Ora and Eric.
- Betty and Charlie Lewkowicz, grandson Robert Adam son of Eve and Howard.
- Olive and David Herman, grandson Nicholas son of Maja and Charles.
- Carol Farkas, grandson Ben son of Helen and Jacob and the grandson of the late Frank Farkas.
- Sarah and Abe Wertman, grandson Mathew son of Debbie and Stephen.
- Barbara and Jack Kagan, grandson Adam son of Debbie and Nigel.
- Pauline and Harry Spiro, grandson JJ son of Lannis and Gary.

★ ★ ★

BATMITZVAH

- Mazeltov to Fay and Moniek Goldberg on the batmitzvah of your granddaughter Rachel Charna daughter of Susan and David.
- Gloria and Krulik Wilder, mazeltov on the batmitzvah of your granddaughter Melody daughter of Suzanne and Paul.

MARRIAGES

- Congratulations to Martin Hecht and Aida Barr on their marriage December 1998.
- Sala Newton-Katz, mazeltov on the marriage of your granddaughter Sara to Fred, daughter of Janete and Dennis and granddaughter of the late Benny Newton.
- Thea and Yisroel Rudzinski, mazeltov on the marriage of your grandson Benzion Dov to Yitty Schiff and your granddaughter Miriam Ruchel to Yoily Gluck.
- Anna and Ray Jackson, congratulations on the marriage of your son Shai.
- Ray and Sam Goldberg, mazeltov on the marriage of your daughter Debbie to Brian.
- Doreen and Harry Wajchandler, congratulations on the marriage of your grandson Mark son of Judith and Tony.
- Gertie Finklestein, mazeltov on the marriage of your grandson Daniel to Dalia son of Elizabeth and Lionel and the grandson of the late Issy Finklestein.
- Tina and Victor Greenberg, congratulations on the marriage of your daughter Naomi to Peter.

★ ★ ★

GOLDEN WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

A hearty mazeltov to those of our members celebrating 50 years of marriage. May you all be blessed with many more happy and healthy years together.

- Sala and Henry Kaye.
- Anna and David Turek.
- Fay and Moniek Goldberg.
- Kitty and Max Dessau.
- Essie and Monty Burgerman.
- Goldie and Motel Tabachnik.
- Rita and Abe Singer (Szulsinger).

● Lucille and Victor Brietberg hit on the idea of sending a gift to the '45 Aid Society in honour of Rita and Abe Singer's 50th Wedding Anniversary, with the thought that others may emulate them on similar occasions.

- We thank Renee and Chaskiel Rosenblum from Buenos Aires for their generous donation of £1,000 to the Society.

★ ★ ★

DEATHS

It is with great sadness that we have to inform you of the passing away during the year of some of our members and members of our family. We extend to all the bereaved our sincere sympathy.

- Jack Shepsman.
- Sam Baker.
- Henry Ellen.
- Tiffy, the wife of Sam Borenstein.
- David Pearl, son of Steve Pearl.
- Yehuda Freikorn, son of Zvia Freikorn and the late Menachem Freikorn.
- Tina and Victor Greenberg on the loss of Tina's mother.

the janitor. Living there, with each family having more than two children, this was our dreamland.

At seven I started to attend the public school, which was only two blocks away. It also gave me a chance to come home for lunch. Even though this was a regular public school, there weren't any Christian students. I don't know why. It may be because Christian children went to a Catholic school. What I liked most about the school was that I started to learn how to read. A new world opened up for me, and as the time progressed, my love for reading took hold of my imagination. On the corner of Zeromskiego there was a news kiosk. Every Wednesday they pasted the latest serial stories. I used to pay two groszy for the vendor to let me read behind the kiosk, with a promise that I would keep the magazine clean. Here were my dreams. There were King Arthur and his Knights; Prince Valiant; Sherlock Holmes, and Tarzan and his adventures.

I am sure I could write a couple of pages more about that period and maybe in the future I will, because it is important. I want to tell about my mother and how she made sure she read stories to us about far-away countries like Palestine and that Halutzium who were building a new nation, and America the land of the free. She told me that my grandmother did not want to depart for America until I was born. She took a piece of cake from my brit to share with my two aunts in Brooklyn. She told me that I was born with a golden spoon in my mouth, and the aura of my grandfather was with me. When I was in her arms I always felt secure because I was her father's grandchild.

At ten, a new world opened up for me again, as I was allowed to go to the movies by myself. Every Saturday my father would give me 25 groszy to see the latest cowboy movie and 10 groszy to take a trolley. Well, for ten groszy I was able

to buy two bars of chocolate and still have some change left. I asked myself, what is more important, chocolate or trolley? The answer was chocolate. I walked to every corner of Lodz, wherever there was an adventure movie playing.

June 1945 Theresienstadt:

Julek Zylberger, my partner in the concentration camps, has contracted typhus. Adek Wasercijer left for Lodz and I was stuck in Theresienstadt. I also wanted to go back to Lodz. Maybe I will find someone alive. In my own mind I knew that nobody had survived, but there was still hope. I went to see the Russian doctor and asked him about Julek's condition. The prognosis was not good. The fever had not subsided. I decided not to leave him until he got healthier, and then I would go back to Lodz. I, myself didn't feel so hot. I had a touch of dysentery as I was eating food which I was not accustomed to. One day I found two cans of lard and ate it all up and consequently I paid the price. Two of my friends died from typhus, and I was scared for Julek. I felt about him as though he was my own brother. We suffered together through many camps, and now, after six years of struggling for our lives and being liberated, he might die. A couple of days later I received some good news. Julek's fever dropped, but it would take four weeks before he could be released. I was not permitted to see him. I wrote him a note that I was going to Lodz and would wait for him there.

I arrived in Krakow around noon. The station was full of returnees, most of whom were not Jewish. All were interested in their train schedule. I saw a man who was still wearing the stripes from the concentration camp. As I tried to approach him, two Polish people started to question him. "Hey Jew, where are you going? Why aren't you going to Palestine? We don't want you here!" I was dumbfounded. I saw tears come down the man's face, and nobody came to his defence. I

was scared too, and angry. How dare they? Yes, I am a Jew, but I am also a Pole. How dare they? I felt that the multitude of people were looking at me. I met their glare of hate with my own hate. I felt like shouting at them: "You didn't help us; you turned us in; you are worse than the Germans. I watched you in the Ghetto through the barbed wire and saw how your stores were full of meats, fruits, dairy products and other commodities, while we were starving. You could have helped us, but you didn't. My father fought for Polish independence in WW1 and was wounded. He received a medal for valour. He died in the Ghetto at the age of 41, a broken man, from the wound he got following General Anderson to Rumania. He returned to be with his family, only to die in the Ghetto. He loved Poland and so did I. I don't need you! I have a choice. I am going back to Theresienstadt. From there I will go to Palestine or to England. I swear I will never go back to Poland. I will forget you and your Polish anti-Semitism and your language and forget you ever existed. I am a survivor. I will get married and build a new family, and let me assure you that I will surpass you."

I went back to Theresienstadt. Two weeks later Adek came back from Lodz and Julek was discharged from the hospital. He looked like a scarecrow, but it was a new beginning for all of us.

August 1945: Three hundred boys and fifteen girls, young holocaust survivors, left Theresienstadt for England to face a better tomorrow.

August 1945 - February 1947: I remember how the British planes plucked us from the ruins of Europe and deposited us in Westmoreland, Carlisle and Windermere, in England. We were so smart and sure of ourselves, but this was only a facade. We were in a new environment, and people spoke another language. I remember the little cubicle of rooms each

one of us received. I remember how we started to grow, not in height, but with knowledge. From Windermere, I went to Scotland, and from Scotland to Briarfield, Lanarkshire. Above all, I can't thank the British Jews or Christians enough for their help and I never had a chance to thank our staff and teachers who nurtured us and worried for us, and who helped us along the way. Thank you, and you can be proud of how we turned out. The eighteen months I spent in Britain shaped the rest of my life. On February 27, 1947, I left Britain for the United States, and within three years I got married, and started to build a future for my wife and me.

August 1997: For several years I started to yearn to go back to Poland. I questioned myself as to the reason to go back. Above all, I wanted to show my wife Lucille a little bit of my heritage, but at the same time my experience after the war left me cold. Many of our boys went back with their families to show where their roots started. Many of my friends were still bitter against the Polish people for none of them helped during the war. Moniek Goldberg, my cousin Harry, and many more couldn't understand why I would go to Poland and spend money there. After consulting my wife Lucille, we decided to take a fourteen-day tour and then go back to Lodz for five days by ourselves. I decided to wear a pin of the Yellow Star of David on my lapel. I didn't want anybody to misunderstand who I was. My anger hadn't subsided. I also had a chip on my shoulder. I was not the same person who was standing on the station in Krakow.

We arrive in Warsaw, with a reservation at the Forum Hotel. Next day our tour started. I went to all the places I ever wanted to go as a kid. If I said it was a good vacation, I would not be telling the truth. It was a goodbye trip. I saw the horror of the concentration camps, ghettos and villages where once

upon a time Judaism used to flourish, and I felt emptiness in my heart. I also saw the beauty of Poland, the mountains of Zakopany, Wieliczka, Krakow and the Wawel etc. And once again we were in Warsaw, and the next stop would be Lodz.

**In 1939 the Lodz population was 660,000
Jewish population was 225,000**

We got first class tickets and made ourselves comfortable for our journey to Lodz. As the train was leaving the Warsaw station my anticipation started to grow. I started to tell Lucille things about Lodz. "The first thing you are going to see is the tall chimneys. We are going to stay in one of the most beautiful hotels in Lodz and you are going to see the beautiful stores on Piotrkowski Street." Slowly the train was picking up speed and within a couple of minutes we passed the outskirts of Warsaw. I was glued to the window trying not to miss anything, and once again I was a little kid, and time stood still. We saw a woman picking up potatoes in a field with her bare hands. We saw a farmer still ploughing with a horse. I felt excited as my eyes were trying to drink in the view. After three hours we arrived in Lodz. What happened to the tall chimneys? We took a taxi and with a commanding voice told the driver to take us to the Grand Hotel. Within ten minutes we were there. As I looked around, nothing looked the same. On parts of Piotrkowska Street the lights were out and the street was partly broken up. "Are you sure we are at the Grand Hotel?" "Yes sir", the driver answered. I remembered that it used to be much further. I used to walk from the station past the hotel down to Plac Wolnosci. I was told, "Don't go back, you will be disappointed." My suitcases were deposited on the sidewalk and I paid the driver and gave him a hefty tip so he will not say that the Jews are cheap. He could not thank me enough. We were ushered into our room, but it didn't look as

luxurious as expected, but then, I was judging as an American. We decided to leave our suitcases in the room and take a walk down Piotrkowski Street to Plac Wolnosci. I wanted to show my wife so much of the things I told her about the glitter. We walked slowly. As we proceeded I felt hurt. Where were the bright lights? Where were the stores? Lodz was not bombed. The Germans didn't destroy this city. I felt like the street was saying to me, "I also suffered", since this street was part of my childhood and my emotions were hurt. I remember when I asked my mother for permission to take my little brother (Felek) to show him this street. I held on to his hand and time and time again I kept showing him the stores and explained all the new things which were displayed. We passed the Grand Hotel and there was a Chinese doorman, and carriages were pulling over to the sidewalk of the hotel. The doorman tipped his hat and helped them to step down. I explained to my brother "those people are the rich people and they must be living in the hotel." My brother never saw a Chinese person, and his question, "Why do they have slanted eyes?" The only answer I could think of was that "they were born that way" and he accepted my answer. As my thoughts were in the past, I realised that we were on Plac Wolnosci. The first thing I wanted to look upon was the statue of Tadeus Kosciuszko looking towards Piotrkowski Street. My eyes were searching to see something from the past, but all I saw was that the glimmer and soul of the city was gone. I felt disillusioned, but it was the middle of the week and late, and we went back to the hotel.

The next morning we had breakfast at the hotel, and we were ready to explore Lodz. I telephoned my driver to meet us outside the hotel within 30 minutes. As I turned around, an elderly gentleman came over and introduced himself to us;

he said, "My name is Jakub Bromberg, do you need a guide?" I thanked him and started to walk away. Suddenly, I realised that he might be the only Jewish person in Lodz. I called him back and asked him "How much will you charge me?"

"Whatever you will give," he answered. There wasn't any question in my mind that I wanted a Jewish person to be close to me. "Shalom, Kajub, thank you for volunteering. I am sure you will be a great help." The driver showed up and I told him where I wanted to go, but I wanted to direct him. He didn't object and we were on our way. First, I wanted to go to my home at 11 go Listopada 58 where I lived before the war. I directed him to Piotrkowska to Plac Wolnosci, make a left turn and take the first street on his left, but I asked him to drive slowly. He did as I instructed. I looked at the street sign that said "Ulica Stlingrada." I recognised the street immediately and started to point out many of the places from the past. Pointing to the street, I told Lucille to watch for number 6 and she will see a fire house, and a little further on there used to be a movie house and then a bicycle racing track during the summer and an ice-skating rink during the winter. I kept pointing out all the points of interest. When we approached Ulica Cmentarna I told the driver to park. We were standing across the street from where we lived. My heart was rapidly beating. My doubts once more set in; "Why am I here?"

I asked that nobody speak to me. I looked at the number. It was 58. I looked up to see the three windows; all I saw was closed draperies. I crossed the street and went through the gate toward the entrance of the stairs. I looked around. Gone were the brass banister, some of the windows were broken, and the same paint was on the wall from nineteen thirty-nine peeling away from the wall. The shiny stairs were worn and dirty. Once I turned the first set

of stairs I faced the two doors leading in to our apartment. I felt brave, but my whole inside was crying. Gone was our name and the bell and the red painted mahogany on the door. For a minute I closed my eyes. Maybe I will wake up and my mother or father will open the door and ask where were you? How many times did I run those stairs two or three steps at a time, grabbed the bell and rung it, only to be admonished for my behaviour.

The driver and Jakub were standing next to me when I knocked at the door. There wasn't any answer. Again I knocked and the same thing. The door on the left side opened up and a woman inquired what we wanted. Jakub explained to her that I had lived here and I wanted to show my wife the apartment. For a while there was a silence. Then she apologised and told us that the people who were living in this apartment were on vacation. She invited us into her apartment. We talked for a while and thanked her for her hospitality and left. As we were walking down it dawned on me, why weren't we going up to the identical apartment on the floor above our apartment, and knocking at that door.

We walked up to the floor above and knocked at the door. A woman opened the door. After explaining to her why we were there, she invited us in. She asked us to sit down and she brought out cookies and tea. She was very gracious and charming. We talked for a while. I felt from her that she honestly sympathised with us. She showed us the improvements which were done in her apartment. She still didn't have any toilet and I guess if she had used the toilet, she had to go down to the yard or use the neighbour's toilet. I spoke to both neighbours and each one went out of their way to be helpful. One thing was haunting me. Just suppose that somebody would have opened the door of our apartment and invited us in. Would I have seen our furniture and the

he retired to Hampstead where we became friends and neighbours. He died in 1977 and in celebration of a life lived among a vast circle of admirers, a booklet was compiled and distributed in limited number, containing the memories, impressions and tributes of friends and acquaintances. I was among those who made a contribution and I treasure a copy of the anthology.

About four years ago, encouraged and persuaded by Ben Helfgott, Sir Martin Gilbert embarked on the documentation of the lives and experiences of many of the members of the '45 Aid Society. His book "The Boys" was published in 1996 to universal acclaim and interest but in the course of its preparation, Sir Martin, who came to learn of Dr Friedmann's pivotal role in the unfolding saga, apparently asked Ben if he could obtain a copy of the anthology that commemorated Dr Friedmann's life. Ben approached me. I was glad to lend my copy and, as a result, though unbeknown to me, my name appeared in the book among Sir Martin's list of acknowledgements.

On a December morning last year, my post included an envelope bearing a return address in the USA I did not recognise. It contained a letter which, with excitement verging on incredulity, I read:

Dear Mr Homa,

I came across your name in the Acknowledgements of Sir Martin Gilbert's book, "The Boys". It immediately struck a chord. I remember meeting Ramsay Homa in New York in the summer of 1941 and I wonder if you and he are the same person. I wrote Sir Martin who kindly sent me your address. The occasion of our meeting was at Macy's department store. I was one of the children of the radio program The Quiz Kids. I look forward to your response.... and send warm greetings of the season.

Cordially,
Claude W Brenner

I remembered his name and the occasion and responded at once:

Dear Claude,

What a delightful and completely unexpected surprise to have received your letter and be transported back over 57 years and 3,000 miles.... (There followed two pages of personal history and how my name came to be mentioned in Sir Martin's book. I concluded:)

You will, I suppose, have gathered from reading between the lines that I am Jewish. I tentatively suggest that you may be too, but if I am wrong, I hope you are not offended at my presumption. Furthermore, since you come from South Africa we may even have a common ancestor who hails from Lithuania, in which case I not only reciprocate your warm greetings but wish you a happy Hannukah. Alternatively, (perhaps even additionally) a merry Christmas and either way, a happy New Year.

Thank you so much for writing and I shall be delighted to hear from you further.

Sincerely,

Ramsay.

Claude, apparently as excited as I was, replied within a week; and after some preliminary niceties:

... you are indeed right that I am Jewish - I would never have guessed that you were. In fact I have this memory that I was a bit on my guard because I was sure you weren't. And a Litvak, too. My paternal grandparents were from Vilna, my maternal from Riga...

Our correspondence continues and we are hoping to meet again soon, thanks to Sir Martin's documentation of your heroic experiences; to my friendship with both Dr Friedmann and Ben Helfgott, and to Claude Brenner's impressively sensitive memory and resolve. Meanwhile, we are searching for an elusive mutual ancestor who post-dates Abraham.

OBITUARIES

HENRY ELLEN (ELENBLUM)

Victor Greenberg

Henry Ellen (Elenblum), who lived in Zimbabwe for most of his adult life, passed away on 15 September 1000, aged 71.

Henry was born in Demblin, Poland. He miraculously survived several Nazi concentration camps and came to Britain with the Southampton group in 1945.

His greatest pride was volunteering to join the Israeli Haganah forces in the war of independence in 1948 in the early 50s. Henry settled in what was then Southern Rhodesia. His career was as a travelling salesman, which suited him as he was very talkative and had a friendly and outgoing personality, for which he will be remembered. He made a name for himself in the pharmaceutical field in Zimbabwe.

Henry left a lasting impression on the small Jewish community in Harare, with which he was involved and where he was much appreciated. He was a committed member of our '45 Aid Society; he attended our reunion and other gatherings quite frequently and he was always delighted to be with us, especially in the latter years when he made every effort to join us.

He will be particularly missed by the Jewish community in Harare and his friends in England, and especially by his loyal friend and partner, Betty Welfare.

DAVID PEARL

Ruby Friedman

We were all shaken to the core when we learned of the very sudden passing away of David just two days after his 46th birthday. David was a fine man who overcame the troubles he encountered in his younger days, and found fulfilment in his work with handicapped people. He was a very kind and caring person and will be greatly missed by his father Steve, sisters Helen and Kim, brother Laurie and their families, as he will by all of us who have known him for most of his life. May His Dear Soul Rest in Peace.

CORRESPONDENCE

This is the story of an amazing coincidence that members of the '45 Aid Society may find to be of particular interest. It involves five people and a large cast of unnamed individuals, one of whom may be you, apart from which you probably know, or certainly know of, at least two of the five identified persons.

Of this quintet, one is an historian and a prolific author with an international reputation; one is a former Olympic sportsman and a veritable dynamo of activity almost totally immersed in solving other people's problems on an international scale, and he is everybody's friend; one is (sadly was) a rare personality and scholarly educator, a Jewish "Mr Chips" who devoted much of his life's interest to the rehabilitation of many young survivors of Auschwitz and other camps when they arrived in England in 1945/6; one is a semi-retired American aeronautical engineer with a remarkable memory and commendable perseverance, and the fifth is me. In sequence, the first four are Sir Martin Gilbert, Ben Helfgott, Dr F M Friedmann and Claude Brenner.

My story begins in June 1940. A brave, battered and exhausted British Expeditionary Force, trapped in Dunkirk by a powerful German war machine with overwhelming air superiority had, against all odds, been brilliantly evacuated across the Channel by a motley flotilla of small motor boats, sailing craft, river cruisers, seaworthy and unseaworthy dinghies owned and manned by a few hundred unbelievably courageous weekend enthusiasts living on the south coast.

The clouds of war concentrated over France followed across the Channel and gathered over an England unprepared for relentless bombing and full-blown aerial warfare. Britain battled against the heavy and unremitting Luftwaffe raids which drove Londoners to huddle in shelters night and after night where,

AN AMAZING COINCIDENCE

By Ramsay Homa

We continue to receive correspondence arising from publication of "The Boys - Triumph Over Adversity" and Ramsay Homa was happy to share this experience with us. Ramsay has many friends within our Society and has for many years been a close and loyal friend to Kurt Klappholz.

inevitably, rumour and fear generated the expectation of a German invasion.

My father, a doctor, had volunteered for military service some months earlier and due to be posted overseas, made arrangements for our family to leave London; so, with some two million youngsters living in the capital and other large cities, I was evacuated to the relative safety of the countryside. Later, in October 1940, I found myself en route to America to spend the war with relatives in New York, the view being that it was safer to run the gauntlet of a U-boat infested Atlantic than be exposed to the greater dangers of a perceived invasion.

For a boy of eleven it was great excitement, and life in New York was something akin to Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. But there seems to have been a feeling, initiated perhaps by an over-zealous attaché at the British Embassy in Washington, that impressionable English school-boys exposed to the values of the New world were in danger of losing their cultural identities, and to avoid such a calamity occurring, semi-official steps were taken to ensure a continuing degree of contact between members of this young and innocent expatriate community. Whether I lost interest in the initiative or whether it just petered out, I cannot remember, but I do recall one spectacular occasion when it was arranged that I would meet a Quiz Kid! Wow!

I should explain: "The Quiz Kids" was a radio programme broadcast from Chicago in

which a few exceptionally bright and gifted children, selected each week from a hand-picked larger group, took it in turns to answer, in competitive fashion, specialised and general knowledge questions of a very advanced order. Their ages ranged from about eight to twelve and because the extent of their knowledge was so seamless and so astounding, half America tuned in regularly to be utterly impressed! And I had been invited by a (now forgotten) anglophile set-up to meet one of these national celebrities in downtown New York!

I suppose at the time of our meeting, Claude told me he had recently come to America with his family from South Africa - which being part of the British Empire I presumably accepted as being close enough to England to regard him as a compatriot - but in any case, for me, the most exciting and enthralling part of the arrangement which drowned all other considerations, was to actually meet a Quiz Kid on a one-to-one basis, irrespective of his country of origin! The anglophiles had arranged for the two of us to meet outside Macy's on 34th Street, which we did, and we went straight to the toy department. Toys or no toys, for me it was a moment of reflected glory, of vicarious fame!

What we said and what we did I cannot recall with clarity, but when I got back to school and recounted my experiences to a roomful of envious classmates, I was on cloud nine, although within a week or two after memories dimmed and

interest waned, my fame and exultation evaporated.

Time passed, and as a consequence of tragic circumstances not germane to this story, I returned to England in 1943 and resumed schooling in London. It was a different world. One immediately felt England was at war while in New York, America seemed to be only remotely involved. Yet it took no time at all to re-acclimatise to air-raids, blackout, rationing, the more intense feeling of proximity to conflict and war-torn Europe and all that that entailed.

Apart from the never-ending stream of BBC news broadcasts reporting on the vicissitudes of the war, rumours and sporadic reports filtered their way through to the Jewish community enabling us to learn with shock bordering on disbelief of the horrific atrocities being perpetrated by the Nazis; and it was really not until the war was over that exposure to eyewitness accounts and newsreel film compelled acceptance of the enormity and magnitude of the bestiality inflicted.

By the end of 1945 and the arrival in England of several hundred young survivors of the camps, we were confronted with the shattering reality of man's inhumanity to man. I met many of them (of you?) at different times and different places, but particularly at the Freshwater Hostel on 833 Finchley Road, not far from my parents' home, and the experience was both unforgettable and humbling.

It was in the context of this experience that I first heard of Dr Friedmann, a Bavarian/Edwardian intellectual (if such a combination is possible) whose pedagogic background, culture, gentleness, linguistic and other abilities led him to devote time and energy with such success to the rehabilitation of so many camp survivors in their first year or two in England.

Subsequently, "Doc" taught history, English literature and drama at Carmel College and I came to know him there before

painting of Samson and just maybe I would have seen some artifacts and have been able to touch them? All I can do is think of what if.

My yard: Once again I stood at my yard, but this time I wasn't 10 or 11 years old. This time I was 70 years old, a father and a grandfather. I looked around trying to visualise where my friends used to live. Pointing my finger at a window, I told Lucille where Max Cliff used to live, and here Moishe Markowicz, and Finkelstein the shoemaker who used to have two daughters. There was no laughter of children; all the windows were dirty and shut. 119 families lived here and maybe one hundred children. I spent my childhood here from the age of three to the age of twelve. How sad the yard looked with the paint and the stucco coming off the walls of the building exposing the raw bricks. I was thinking how poor those people live; I felt sorry for them. Two men approached me, and I started to converse with them. I was describing to the men that none of the people who lived here were rich. They were workers like the shoemaker, carpenters, tailors, glaziers, and they all lived here and had children and most of them perished in the gas chambers or in a common grave somewhere. I felt their sympathy as one of the men raised his hand pointing to the windows above. He said, "Look at our palace." He didn't mean to be funny. We left and I felt that we had had enough for today. I was emotionally drained. I discharged our guide and asked Jakub to join us for dinner. At dinner Jakub told us about his life, and how he fought with the Russians for the liberation of Lodz. He lives in Zawadzka 12 apt. 24. His wife died a couple of years ago and he lives on a small pension only. (He didn't solicit any money). He has two children in Israel and both are serving in the army. We spoke in Polish and Yiddish. He told me that in Lodz there are less than five hundred Jews left and half of

those are really not Jews. I left it as such.

The next day I decided to take a ride to Kaminsk and visit my grandfather's grave. It took us less than two hours to get there. I knew what to expect over there. In 1939, in the first few days of the war, the town was totally destroyed.

My cousin, the first and oldest Shlomo Avigdor was killed. I remember how the families in Lodz mourned for this young twenty-one-year-old man. He was the first, but not the last victim of the war. We arrived in Kaminsk. We parked where the market used to be. Now it was a beautiful square with a memorial statue in the centre. I was looking for something of the past and the only thing that was still standing was the church with its tall steeple. I decided for our own safety to go to the police and state the purpose of my visit. I asked them where the Jewish cemetery was. They told me that there is now a housing condominium where the old Jewish cemetery used to be. I decided that as long as I was here, I might as well see if I could obtain my own birth certificate. Not only did I get my own, but I also obtained my father's birth certificate, including depositions of witnesses of my father's birth and me. We spent another hour looking around in Kaminsk. No-one had to tell me that there weren't any Jews living in this town any more. We left and we headed back to Lodz. I felt like spending the rest of the day just driving and walking through the streets of Lodz. Once again, I took command to direct as I wanted to see. We went down Ulica Zieromskiego to Poniatowskie Park, going past where my Uncle Moses lived. We went where Poznanski's factories had been. The one mile of factories a former shell of the past. The chimneys were down and gone, the glass in the windows were broken and the buildings were vacant. Lodz was built around those textile factories and all this belonged to a Jewish family. As the facto-

ries went, so did the economy of Lodz.

Jakub was of great help in obtaining some other documents. It seemed he knew everyone, and everyone knew him.

The next day we went to the Ghetto and once again we went to my other home where I spent five tragic years. Rybna 17 was in much better shape than the building I lived in previously. I went to the room where we had lived and a lock was hanging on the door. People started to ask me what I was doing there and I explained that I used to live here. I asked who had the key. A man volunteered to ask the janitor for the keys. A woman came down quite distressed. As she was putting the key in the lock I noticed her hands and body were shaking. By this time Lucille and the people gathering around us were wondering whether it was possible for five people to live here. I pointed out that we managed to put in two narrow beds and a crib. We also had an iron stove. And this was all we possessed in the Ghetto. I turned around and I saw two women with tears in their eyes crossing themselves. I thanked the woman who opened the door and I shook her hand. We went into the yard and pointed out where the water well was. We hid about seventeen children in that tunnel. Unfortunately, they all perished. (I can write a couple more pages describing all the

places I saw myself and where I was. I will finish it someday).

Later, I went to the cemetery where my father was buried and found that there was a road over his grave - how sad it looked. Most of the grave stones were vandalised and the marble or brass plates stolen and used for decorations elsewhere.

I am not sorry I went back to Poland. (I didn't go to Poland to make anybody richer). I went there and spoke to many students about the horror of the concentration camps. I saw their tears and their sorrows. I made sure that whomever I spoke to knew that I was a Zyd (Jew). When students in Krakow asked me how come it took fifty-two years to come back, I told them about the episode on the station. I also told them that Jews were killed by Poles when they returned from the Concentration camps to their home towns after the war. I also told them about the forty-eight Jews who died in the Kielce program. I was not afraid to talk to anyone. At the same time, students and Poles shook my hand. Looking at their faces, I knew that I had reached out to them and they understood the message.

I didn't come to Poland to hate - I came to say goodbye. I feel much better having been there. I also want to thank Ben for forcing me to write, which I promised myself I would do.

Thank you Ben.

I never had a chance to say goodbye to anyone I went to Birkenau and I stood at the exact spot where the railroad widens and there I saw them for the last time. I saw my mother, my brother and my sister on that fateful day of August 18, 1944. I said goodbye and asked them for forgiveness. I went to my father's grave, wherever it was, and I said goodbye. I went back to Kaminsk and I couldn't find the grave of my Grandfather and I said goodbye. And finally I was standing at the grave of my Grandmother here in the United States and I asked for forgiveness for not being able to save her children and grandchildren. I also was afraid and I also wanted to live. If I would have died, then Hitler would have succeeded.

JULEK'S DREAM *of a better* FUTURE

By Julek Zylberger

Julek wrote this account soon after he arrived in Windermere. He emigrated to the United States in 1947 and married his wife Judy in 1953. He worked there as a cutter and sadly died tragically in December 1986. It was only after his death that Judy became aware of the existence of this most moving and poignant article.

Rain, rain and rain. For five days it has rained, and there are no prospects of improvement. The black clouds cover the sky all over and the darkness seems to say: "No, boys, your time has not arrived yet." And another day passed. A day of impatient expectation, a day which has exasperated our feelings to such an extent that we could not fall asleep.

The night seems to last a century. In our room, dead silence reigns, but I am sure that nobody sleeps. From time to time, I can hear a boy whispering to his friend, but I don't pay the slightest attention to it. I am absorbed in thoughts. Yes, we are going to Britain. I try to recollect what I know about Britain. It is a highly civilised country; an island; a developed industry. Undoubtedly, I remember it from the geography lessons I used to have.

We have been in Prague five days and we are eagerly awaiting our departure, but the weather is not favourable and this is probably the reason why the aeroplanes are not punctual. The five days passed pleasantly.

Prague, a city of over a million inhabitants, was a place where we could find enjoyment. After six years of sorrow, it was extremely delightful to go to cinemas, theatres, and to visit the art gallery, which impressed us very much. We visited the famous castle of Prague, the palace of President Benes, and many other historical buildings. But it did not last very long. After a few days it became tedious. We knew that something extraordinary awaits us.

The six years of German concentration camps passed like a dream and a new life opened its gates widely for us. I lie in bed and consider it. Yes, it is a significant moment in my life. I recollect the past. The outbreak of the war, mental suffering, four years of dreadful life in the Ghetto, evacuation, the last parting from my family, concentration camps, hunger, heavy strokes of the whip, and then, at last, liberation. I survived the various tortures, recovered health, and I am physically splendid. But the losses were tremendous. My family perished in an unnatural way, in the same way as millions of European Jews. I

am lonely; solitary like a small isle in the middle of the ocean. I think about my future life. I tremble like a leaf when I think of it. What is it worth? I have no home, and what is worse, there is nobody to give me comfort. How can I start a new life? It seems almost impossible. I feel it. My energy fails me, my mental power too. Oh, but how ridiculous! Why did I have such a fight for existence? I suffered six years in the belief of seeing freedom, to see the sun which would shine for me once more. And now this has happened. The terrible time is over, and a new world invites me. A new world offers me its assistance but I have no strength to accept it. I feel a pain throughout my body, and my head falls heavily on the pillow. A cold chill passes down my back. I am half-conscious - but it does not last long. A mysterious power awakes me, a power which whispers: "Get up, you senseless fool, and begin to work." I am furious, furious like a ravenous beast which is thirsty for blood. But what troubles me? What has suddenly produced such a rage?

I know what it is. It is a desire for revenge, a desire for vengeance over the Nazi murders who are responsible for everything that is evil. They have broken my heart and doomed my future. But have they only broken my heart? Am I the only one who suffers from Nazi cruelty? Am I their sole victim? No! Millions of Jews have been exterminated in an inhuman way, by barbarous means which were not known in history before. Human beings have been mercilessly killed, children were taken away from their mothers. I feel that nothing would stop me now from committing a crime. My mouth is half open, and my eyes look expressionlessly at the wall as if waiting for advice. I endeavour to say something aloud but I am not able to utter a word; my voice refuses, my mouth does not obey me. I look timidly round me but I cannot see anything. My eyes are now filled with tears. I weep softly. Then for a few minutes I am lying in such a position. Gradually, tears disappear from my face and I resume thinking.

I look now scornfully on the

participate first in the "MAN-ISHTANA" and then have fun with the "AFIKOMEN". The adults have a fun evening with a 'slap-up' meal, and fun and games with the various symbolic foods (hard-boiled eggs in salt water, haroset, bitter herbs, the sacrificial lamb, etc., not to mention the fun shared with their children's fun). All of this makes sure "the story gets told". Purim and Hanukah similarly. I, certainly, have no illusion that, were the element of fun removed, the 'tory' would NOT have survived to our times.

THE HOLOCAUST is history already to two generations of people. Soon there will not be anyone to say, "I have been there. It's the TRUTH."

Returning to the story of the film. It is towards the end. Guido, the father, knows that the war is over, but, knowing the Germans and their fanatical adherence to "obeying orders", he senses this to be a most dangerous time (the cornered beast syndrome). So he persuades his son to hide in a metal cabinet and to "keep quiet until all the Germans have gone. He, the father, goes in search of his wife, the boy's mother. Needless to say, the father is caught in the beam of a sweeping searchlight, climbing up a drainpipe. A German soon has him cornered and lying on the ground, the muzzle of the gun pointing. Just then an officer appears: "No, not here, it will make too much mess. Take him round the corner." Obediently, the soldier takes him out of sight and a machine discharge is heard. The soldier re-appears, adjusting his rifle strap on his shoulder. The matter-of-factness of this scene speaks volumes of the desensitisation of the German military.

The audience are unlikely to miss drawing their own conclusions.

THE FILM REVIEW CLUB

LA VITA E BELLA

By Andrew Burton

This review was sent in by Henry Green who read it in "Occasional", the Ipswich School's Weekly Newsletter, dated June 1999. The author, Andrew Burton, is a student at the school in the Lower 6th and we have his permission to publish.

La Vita E Bella (Life is beautiful) is a moving story of love and the strength of the human spirit set against the horrific background of a Nazi concentration camp. Set in World War II, the film has an almost Chaplinesque humour to it at the start, the slapstick raising a laugh or two. The extreme and unexpected change from laughter to horror had the ability genuinely to shock. The two distinct and definite moods shown by the bright colours used in the first half changing to darker, moodier shades meant leaving a sombre atmosphere. It was appalling to see the racial insults that Guido endured changing to anti-semitic laws, with signs such as "No dogs or Jews" appearing in shop windows. In a clever way not showing all the sub-human atrocities had a deeper effect than had all been seen.

Guido (Benigni) uses his imagination to conjure up a game to protect his son and eventually makes the ultimate sacrifice for him. The humour, love from Guido's wife, Dora, and Guido's sheer will not to give up lead to survival in the face of impossible odds. Roberto Benigni is the true star of this film. As both lead actor and director he's not only a comic genius but to have combined such a sensitive subject with such style is truly stunning.

THE CONTROVERSIAL FILM "LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL" BY BENIGNI

By Victor Greenberg
(Kushy)

Victor was brought to England with the Czech-Hungarian "Boys" from Prague in February 1946 and lived at the Milisle hostel in Northern Ireland. He is a very active committee member.

Let me say from the outset that I welcome any film of testimony, documentary or writing about the Holocaust or Concentration Camps, providing it is factual and indeed I feel it my duty as a survivor to publicise and teach on the Holocaust and to this effect I often travel to schools and colleges.

I found the film to be very disturbing. I know that there are those who consider any attraction to the Holocaust or Concentration Camps valuable. This film, however, sends out wrong messages to people who know little of the realities and suffering in the camps. To them the comedy, farce and the ridiculing of the SS cannot fall far short of imagining it to be a holiday camp.

There are those, including the Chief Rabbi, who think that we survived because of Jewish humour. What nonsense: I have vivid recollections of the camps that I experienced, namely, Auschwitz and Mathausen, of people walking like zombies after a couple of weeks, with their heads bowed, walking very slowly, their hopes destroyed. I saw no humour or heroics or even a smile. The only smiles I saw frequently were those of two SS guards grinning like mad dogs when they got drunk and started, for their sadistic enjoyment, to hit people all over with boards.

When we showed the film to

our members at the ORT Centre, I noticed a number of people walk out during the showing, crying with disgust and shaking with anger and disbelief. To put it in a nutshell, I feel that for a serious horrific subject of Nazi Concentration Camps to be made into fables and dragging it into a farce, is sickening and an insult to all those who suffered so tragically and is hurtful to survivors. Furthermore, there is danger that this film has set a precedent for future distortion of the Holocaust, therefore playing into the hands of the revisionists.

The Concentration Camps should be remembered for what they were, horrific places of sheer misery and destruction and no capital gain should ever be made of this. Life was not beautiful in the camps.

The following letter was published in The Sunday Times:

NO SAFE HAVEN: Tom Shone is right to hint at the danger of the implication in the film, *Life Is Beautiful*, that ready wit and a quick smile could have saved you in the Holocaust. Nothing could. It is important not to introduce the belief that there was a way out for the millions of victims. Equally, the idea that a child could be concealed in the camps is absurd. - Dr Witold Gutt, Dachau concentration camp prisoner No. 147597, London NW3.

orphanage in Cracow, which otherwise could not be known to him.

After the showing of a documentary film made by Israeli television in Poland in which Wilkomirski played a minor part, news reached him in a roundabout way of a certain 'Mrs Gross' who - according to his recollection - was the woman who, at the time, had taken him out from the orphanage in Cracow and taken him to Switzerland. 'Mrs Gross' died later, but her daughter, who lives in the USA, confirms that the description of her mother in Wilkomirski's book is accurate. At the same time, she asserts that it is quite improbable for her mother to have been able, at that time, to travel from Poland to Switzerland.

That same film had another, more dramatic effect. Some woman drew attention to the striking facial resemblance of Wilkomirski and members of her husband's family. Her brother-in-law, Yakov Maroco, a Jew of Polish origin, now in Israel, lost his wife and a two-year-old son in Majdanek. That son was also named Benjamin.

Yakov Maroco was at first sceptical but soon warmed to the matter and was ready to take Benjamin Wilkomirski into his large family circle as a long lost son. They started writing letters to each and decided, before they met, to submit their blood samples to a DNA test. The test proved negative. There is no doubt that Yakov Maroco is not the biological father of Benjamin Wilkomirski. Nonetheless, he continued to think of him as if he were his son (he was told by the rabbi he consulted that this was permissible). When, on 15th April 1995, Wilkomirski landed in Ben-Gurion airport in the presence of journalists, television crews and sympathisers who came to witness a reunion of father and son, their warm embrace was photographed and widely circulated round the world.

"I am not concerned with

scientific proof," said Wilkomirski. "There are too many coincidences for this to be fantasy. For fifty years I lived without parents and now I found you, father. Is this not a miracle?" Wilkomirski became an intimate member of the Maroco family, studied Torah with the father, played with the children...

How does this fit in with his 'Swiss' profile and life story? What is one to believe? What does 'Wilkomirski' himself believe - if, indeed, one can speak of such a person? And is it not just possible that there is yet another layer to that story, and the one that will ultimately emerge when the controversy dies down will be different and even stranger than the one that has been plaguing us so far?

**REVIEW OF THE
ITALIAN FILM
"LA VITA E BELLA"
(LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL)
FOR THE '45 AID
SOCIETY JOURNAL**

By Henry Green

Henry came to England with the Windermere Group and subsequently lived in the Cardross Hostel. He emigrated to the States but soon returned to England, and he now lives in Essex with his wife and son David.

It starts with a jolly, carefree romp through the Italian countryside, on a sunny day in 1939.

Laughter and jollity soon turn to anxiety and a hair-raising, though amusing, spectacle of a car going downhill at an ever-increasing speed. FAILED BRAKES. A foretaste of the dangerous days ahead?

Under an exuberant, jolly and extrovert exterior, there lurks, in Guido, a serious, considerate and deeply loving husband and father who will go

to extreme lengths to shield his young son from the awful truth of their perilous situation.

By making light of the boy's discovery that they are scheduled 'for the ovens, to be made into soap and buttons', the awful truth, being voiced by a child, barely understanding what he is saying, is brought home to the viewer like a hammer blow.

The point to keep in mind is that this is a story being told to an audience out for an evening's entertainment, at best, only mildly interested in what happened in the Holocaust, who will have their attention riveted, through laughter and generally light-hearted knock-about comedy of the introduction, and keep them spellbound in absorption of the later, deadly serious narrative.

While the father tries, jokingly, to dispel, by feigning incredulity, the boy's tale, (overheard from adults and only half understood) has an even greater impact on the viewer when the awfulness of the child's words take root.

A conventional portrayal of what is in store could never be brought home so starkly. The boy is persuaded that he has got it wrong. The viewers make no mistake.

This is a film which, in the writer's opinion, will ensure that the Holocaust is NOT FORGOTTEN. Precisely because it coats 'the bitter pill' of truth with sugar to make it more 'palatable', or watchable by an audience that are unlikely, in normal circumstances, to go to a cinema to see a film about the Holocaust.

It is NOT a film for SURVIVORS. We do not need convincing. Laughter through tears is, normally, a pleasurable experience. NOT HERE... Not for us. The truth is too near the bone.

But the film is so carefully crafted, so sensitively put together, that it 'traps' its audience, through enjoyment, to absorb an otherwise

'indigestible' message.

After seeing the film in the company of our fellow survivors at the "ORT" Centre, the word "TRIVIALISED" seemed dominant by those who saw the film, almost as a blasphemy on the memory of our Near and Dear who perished. This feeling is understandable. As a knee-jerk reaction. Considering that this film is not targeted towards us, Survivors. We, THE SURVIVORS, are a small (and fast diminishing) band of people, so it will fall to films of this nature, telling the story this way, that the story will continue to be told and will not be forgotten. JUST THINK how folk songs often keep alive memories of disasters or atrocities in people's minds.

Whether through song, theatre, a mixture of laughter and tears, the result is the same. It keeps alive the memory of what happened. An actual survivor of such an event, enshrined in song, if he could witness such a performance, would, probably, feel, as some of us do, that this is NOT a matter to make a song about. "I was there", he would say, "I suffered, and it is not a singing matter." But, if you want following generations to know of the event, then the song, the joke, the theatre, are going to do it.

Since seeing the film, I have been with my family on a visit to Israel, over Pesach, and we participated in a SEDER. As we were reading the HAGADAH and working our way through a hefty and enjoyable meal, a thought struck me that here we are engaged in re-telling, by very agreeable means, the story of the enslavement of the Jewish people 3000 years ago. I marvelled at the wisdom, foresight and ingenuity of our forefathers, in putting the Hagadah TOGETHER IN THE WAY THEY DID - A hagadah 'OF FUN FOR EVERYBODY'. The result? The story continues to be told. You don't need me to tell you that the HAGADAH has 'something for everybody': the children

idea of revenge. How could I have thought so, even for a moment? Is this according to principles of humanity? Would such an infamous deed avail the dead souls in the least? I am a member of a nation which has suffered various persecutions and which has not yet sullied its name with blood. A new idea flashes into my head. I reflect a moment and soon I determine. I am talking to myself. 'Don't hesitate, start life anew. Try to forget about the past. Don't look backwards, look constantly forward. Get in touch with your brothers and sisters. Unite with them. They will help you and you will help them.

Together, together we shall acquire strength. Together we will achieve our common aim. Surely, there will be obstacles. But what are obstacles against a will? With our common effort we shall defeat our enemies and crush our oppressors. We will show the world that our profession is not money lending as we have been judged by anti-Semites in European countries. We will show the world that we can think, work, and create.

But what has happened? Who makes such a noise? A loud voice penetrates our room. The voice becomes louder and louder. Now, several other voices are audible. A boy comes puffing into our room. He commences hastily, "Get up, boys. The aeroplanes are here; our departure is taking place at ten o'clock," and in a second he is outside.

Everyone rises as if it were a command. In ten minutes we are dressed and washed. Yes, it is true. We get direct orders from the aerodrome to get ready. In two minutes, I have packed my things. We eat breakfast quickly and after one hour buses take us to the aerodrome. The weather favours us this time. The sky is clear and the sun casts its warmth upon the earth. Some birds are flying round and warbling sweetly. Probably announcing the arrival of summer. A breeze blows quietly as if murmuring a song.

We are at the aerodrome.

Some journalists are trying to get into conversation with us and want to know everything, as is their habit. Others take photos; one even develops a film. It is precious stuff for them, the right opportunity to make money.

Our leader wants to say a few words of farewell. He has not permission to enter Great Britain. He is the founder of the youth hostels in Terezin. He worked inexhaustibly, day and night, in order to relieve us, and is attached to us like his own children. He starts in a low voice but with such a spirit that these calm words penetrate our minds vigorously and move us entirely. He speaks about our future and several times emphasises the word "belief". "You must believe in your own strength, in your power to create."

The due time arrives and at last we are going into the aeroplane. The aeroplanes move forward and in one minute we are in the air. We are mounting higher and higher. The buildings of Prague vanish from our sight and the aeroplane cuts the air. Ten minutes later we cannot perceive anything; we are under the clouds. Everyone is in his best humour. We sing various songs and seem to enjoy it very much, but soon it becomes evident that we are not used to such a journey. Singing ceases; some boys begin to vomit and others try to fall asleep.

A pilot asks me (with a gesture) to go with him. I agree, and take a friend with me. We enter the cockpit and sit opposite the pilots. They look curiously at us, eager to exchange a few words, but we don't know a single word of their language. One is tall and fair. His calm and handsome face has regular, delicate features. The other is short and stout, with curly hair, and a peculiar expression. Both are sympathetic and very friendly. Their eyes are searchingly fixed on us, hoping to read something from our faces. We would be delighted to hear something about Great Britain but, unfortunately, we don't know

English, and therefore we cannot come to an understanding. We demonstrate with a gesture that their effort is in vain and we smile slightly. But they do not give it up. One takes our coins and gives them to us. The other shows us pictures from all over Britain. The time passes.

The aeroplane emerges from the clouds and before us appears a marvellous view. We admire in amazement the beauty of nature. From one side, the shores of France and, from the other, the coast of Great Britain. Ships in the English Channel look like toys and the water has a brilliant colour. But the aeroplane shoots forward and soon we are under the clouds again. We are now busy surveying the construction of the aeroplane. We study intensively every corner and we don't omit the smallest screw. The time passes quickly and we don't know how we landed at the aerodrome at Carlisle. We are examined by doctors and then we go into

buses which were arranged to take us to our hostel. We are rather tired after a whole day's journey and we would be glad to go to bed. We go off and look around.

Our madrichim (leaders) who have been waiting for our arrival over a week, greet us. Their faces express the utmost happiness and indescribable attachment. Their look embraces us with a motherly love, with a love that is more than precious. I think that for the first time I understood the Jewish character. We are scattered all over the world, but we have the same heart. One may be religious, the other not; one may be right, the other left - but everyone is ready to sacrifice himself in order to help his brothers and sisters.

Oh, no! I am not lonely. I have found new brothers and sisters. I have found my own brothers and sisters whom I will love and who will love me in return. Oh, never, never, will I separate from them.

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My EXPERIENCES during WORLD WAR II

By Julek Zylberger

When the Ghetto was established, there was a ration system. There was little food on the ration. We were four people in one room. My father, my mother, my brother Shabsa and me. We had to go to work. My father went to work in a textile factory. He worked in one all his life. My brother was working in a tailoring shop. He was a tailor before the war.

I also worked in a tailoring shop during the war years. There was starvation at all times. It was very hard, especially for my mother, to see us starve. These things left a lasting impression on me. My father died of starvation, bad sickness. We tried to help him but we were not successful. My brother was shipped out of the Ghetto in 1944. We had an indirect letter from him by way of a third party. They were saying that he was well. It was a lie. We now know that they were all killed.

In September 1944, my mother and I were sent to Auschwitz in closed cattle cars. I was frightened but I was with my beloved mother. On arrival we were separated. I believe I saw my mother's face but I either cannot or I am unable to remember. I was selected to go to the right, to life. I recall that

I pushed the Nazi's arm when he tried to feel if I was still strong. After going through a shower procedure, which was very demeaning, I was shaved of my hair.

Memories

Gypsy camp! Tzigane Lager! There I was selected to be together with other children. We were sent to a kind of arm-camp. Hunger was not as great as in the Lodz Ghetto. I believe that I fitted in well with the other children. I made friends with Victor. We have been friends ever since. I was beaten very severely when I tried to steal a potato. I remember this beating very well.

In January 1945, when the Russians came towards us, the Germans evacuated us in open cattle cars. There was snow in the cars. It was very cold. Some people died. I survived. I don't know why? I was sent to Buchenwald. I remember standing at attention in the cold weather half the night. The reason was that somebody tried to escape.

From Buchenwald I went to a camp called Rheimsdorf near a camp called Rheimsdorf near Zeitz, where they make lenses. The camp was a death camp. When we arrived they took our half-dead people from the

wagons, whom they killed. It was frightening. Hunger was great and lice were eating out our bodies. Allied planes bombed the water supply and we had no water to wash ourselves with. My hands became like alligator skin. I worked in a large chemical factory where they made aviation fuel from brown coal. The ALLIES were bombing it constantly and we were in the midst of it. We were happy to see the planes hit the factory.

In April we were again put on railroad wagons and started on a course of unknown destination. Food was very scarce. After two or three days' journey, our train was bombed. The SS were trying to round us up but three of us, Victor Breitburg, Adek Wasercier and myself escaped. We walked and at times hid in the forest. Finally, we saw a cottage or two in the distance. I, because I had civilian clothing, went to see if I could get some food. As I went to the cottage, someone, a prisoner of war, came to the door. I asked him if he could find some food for me. When he came out he said that everything was already lost. A Nazi guard put a pistol to my head and told me to raise my hands. He already caught my two friends Victor and Adek. The

penalty for escape was, of course, death.

But a miracle happened. Two older Germans took us back to our group. They were walking apart from us. I asked the one nearest to me for food. I told him that their end was already sure. I was fearless. He took out a cheese sandwich and gave it to me. I shared it with Victor and Adek. It was the best food we ever ate.

Then it became Victor's turn to save our life. Normally the SS would have shot us, but when we came close to our group, Victor recognised a guard from our camp. He was loaded down with packages which he let us carry for him. This saved our lives. Two days later we arrived at Terezienstat, a so-called model ghetto. About a week later we were liberated by the Russian army. I was happy but could not rejoice. I was drained of emotion. I teamed up with a group that was supposed to go to England. In the meantime, I became ill with typhus. I was taken to a Russian-run, make-shift hospital. After a period of unconsciousness, I recovered. I did not look for my parents. I felt sure that they were dead. Soon after that our group flew to England and my NEW LIFE had started.

Levi; there is no higher praise. Translations into many languages followed. Wilkomirski was invited to speak at international conferences, gave interviews, became the subject of essays, articles and television programmes (the BBC is preparing a major programme at this moment; a reporter has visited Cracow in search of former inhabitants of an orphanage where Wilkomirski is said to have spent time at the end of the war).

Wilkomirski was awarded many literary prizes. Some while ago I was asked to serve on the jury of one such prize. I read the book and asked to be relieved of the task, now I am not sure why. What I read made a great impression on me; maybe I did not want to expose myself to such emotions. But the subject matter is not unfamiliar to me and I am not in the habit of sparing my feelings - so it must have been something else. I felt somewhat uneasy, there was something in the book that worried me, and perhaps instinctively I did not want to sit in judgement on it. That child's voice behind which the author is hiding disarms the potentially sceptical reader. At the same time one realises that these are not perceptions of a child but projections of an adult mind (for instance a remark like: "this is not a real peace, this is their peace, the peace of the victors" - there are many such examples).

In the afterword the author implies, half-heartedly, that Benjamin Wilkomirski may not be his only identity: "Many hundreds of children survived the Holocaust having no idea who they really were," he writes. "They were given a new identity and false documents. That false identity shielded them in Eastern Europe against discrimination and in the West against deportation. As a child I was given a new identity, a new name and place of birth."

And suddenly - a new sensation, not to say scandal. A Swiss journalist of Israeli origin, Daniel Ganzfried, whose father survived Auschwitz and

about whom Ganzfried wrote a novel placed in that time, published in the leading Swiss magazine 'Die Weltwoche' an article in which he purports to 'unmask' Wilkomirski, accuses him of faking the whole story, of having invented all these autobiographical details; he claims that the author of 'Fragments' has never been in any death-camps and that 'Benjamin Wilkomirski' is a figment of the author's imagination, a wilful deception. These 'fragments,' leading from the ghetto in Riga, through time spent in Majdanek and Auschwitz, to an orphanage in Cracow - there is not a word of truth in it, and it is an abuse of confidence and an insult to genuine survivors. Ganzfried uncovered in Swiss registries authentic documents which prove that the author was born on the 12th February 1941 in Biel, in the Canton of Bern, the illegitimate child of Yvonne Grosjean, and was given in care to a Swiss married couple by name of Dosseker who later officially adopted him and after whose death he received a large inheritance (as he had earlier, much smaller, after the death of his real mother). Neither his real mother nor his adopted parents were Jewish. Ganzfried questioned 'Wilkomirski's' first and second wives as to whether he was circumcised - they both, allegedly, declared that he was not.

To all these facts Dosseker-Wilkomirski has more or less convincing counters (the birth-certificate is not a real birth-certificate, it was not issued at the time of his birth and does not carry the name of his father; many Jewish boys born in Riga at that time were left uncircumcised on purpose, etc).

One needs to form a view on the two disparate life stories, and doubts are mounting. As a small boy Benjamin Wilkomirski witnessed terrible horrors which marked him for life (or not). He survived death-camps: Majdanek, Auschwitz, Brzezinka (or not), saw with his own eyes how his

father was murdered (or not). He saw how children dying from hunger gnawed their fingers to the bone (or not), saw how rats jump from the heaped corpses of women (or not). He was a Jewish child in the worst time and place to be Jewish in history (or not).

A great deal of ink has been spilt on the topic; one of the best researched and most penetrating pieces on the subject was written by Ellena Lappin and published by the prestigious magazine "Granta" in London this summer. Lappin has pursued every trail, she interviewed at length Wilkomirski himself, his wife, Daniel Ganzfried, the publishers of the book, the film producers, virtually everybody who had played any part in the story. She sought the opinion of the leading historians - Prof. Israel Gutman in Jerusalem, Raoul Hilberg in America. Gutman's view is particularly valuable, for he himself is a survivor of the Warsaw ghetto, of Majdanek, Auschwitz and Mauthausen.

"We are faced with a singular phenomenon," says Gutman, "which proves that what happened during that period does not allow the human conscience to rest in peace... Things were taking place which surpass our imagination. It does not mean that I take Wilkomirski's story necessarily as true - every detail has to be checked, but it is not the surface authenticity which is here most important... Wilkomirski is describing a deeply felt experience. Even if it turned out that he was not Jewish, the fact that these events left such a mark on him is significant in itself."

Raoul Hilberg, the author of the key work, 'The Destruction of European Jewry', is more critical. When at one of the international conferences, he asked Wilkomirski head-on whether his account, which he went on to embellish with further details, is "fact or fiction". Wilkomirski insisted that these were "recollections". "Were I to remove all the inac-

curacies which I see in this book," says Hilberg, "there would be nothing left."

Tracing these recollections and, allegedly, in order to refresh his memory, Wilkomirski has repeatedly travelled in recent years to Riga, Majdanek, Auschwitz and Cracow, and people who accompanied him on these journeys testify that Wilkomirski often described places they were aiming for with uncanny accuracy. A question presents itself; one of many. Where does this detailed knowledge of the subject come from and, above all, this attachment to Judaism? "All that can be learned," says Ganzfried. Can it really?

And so - does Wilkomirski fantasise, does he deceive himself, does he suffer from 'false memory syndrome'? Or does he simply (no, not simply) take this to be literature, material which he is free to treat as he wishes and which for greater literary effect he dresses up in the form of a child's narration? Would this, because of the subject matter, violate acceptable norms and call for censure? Had he warned the readers beforehand that this is "a story" and not insisted on calling it "a memoir", nobody would have raised an objection. But he obstinately persists in the claim that he is not a writer (in private life he is a music teacher and a repairer of clarinets) and that he writes solely what he retained in his memory.

Ellena Lappin, with all her personal sympathy for Wilkomirski and her initial faith in him, feels forced to the conclusion that the 'memoir' is a work of fiction.

He has his defenders: Lea Balint is the director of an organisation called 'Children without Identity', with its seat in Israel, in the 'Kibbutz of the Ghetto Fighters', and its museum. Lea Balint, who survived as a child in a Polish nunnery, asserts that she has no doubt as to Wilkomirski's veracity since he has detailed knowledge of matters, like the

there was nothing to return to. Months, even years, were spent by some survivors in displaced persons camps, food queues, Belsen, Theresienstadt. For the Boys, England was intended as a temporary port of recuperation. Characteristically, the British Home Office, having initially agreed to admit only a certain number of child survivors only under a certain age and only for a specified period of time, subsequently expressed concern that these refugees might become permanent residents, and that they might be drawn to occupations in commerce. In fact, they agreed to admit one thousand Jewish children under the age of sixteen, and as it is pointed out, a thousand child survivors could not be found.

On the one hand, one would expect the continuation of this situation of homelessness to be unbearable, when they had been displaced for so long and so completely. But then one might think that after the torture and ordeals they had been through, this was not so terrible in comparison. Far beyond their recuperation period, the unsettlement continued with some Boys being shunted from hostel room to hostel room, from lodgings to lodgings, from job to job. The coldness and indifference to their circumstances by the authorities is revealed particularly in the case of Arthur Poznanski who was refused a permit from the Ministry of Labour, and was therefore unable to take on his first paid singing role with a touring opera company.

On a more positive note, tribute is paid to the dedication of individuals and Jewish communities desperate to help them on their way back to normal lives. In particular, the Primrose Hill Club is remembered as having a crucial role in their integration in their new society, and of serving as home, a place to go to to meet with their "family" of other survivors and other Jewish youth, and in countering the loneliness of a new life in

London. The kind of normality they found in England was something they built for themselves: recreating a family with all its characteristics, from mutual support, and pleasure in each others' achievements, to sibling rivalry. This family subsequently becoming known as the '45 Aid Society.

The phenomenon of the Boys is truly a triumph of the human spirit, for they witnessed and experienced the worst kind of atrocities that human beings can inflict upon other human beings, and yet they transcended it. This was possible, as becomes clear, because of the lives they came from before the war - in particular the love, values and education received from their parents and families.

"The Boys - Triumph Over Adversity" immortalises the names and memories of the family members who perished. Their accounts remember, and bear witness on behalf of all the families without members who survived, and communities without members left. Some Boys have been unable at this stage to come forward with their testimony - continued survival surely depended, for many, on attempting to block out the memory of such experiences. It is to be hoped they will one day recreate in recorded memory the vanished world they came from before the war - for many important reasons, but also for those of us and posterity who can never know this world.

With thanks to my brothers, Leonard and Geoffrey Herman, for their helpful comments on this review, as well as to Denise Alonzo.

FRAGMENTS OF TRUTH

By Rafael F Scharf

Rafael F Scharf was born in Cracow and came to England in 1938. He served in the British Army during

the Second World War and by the end of it was a member of a war crimes investigations unit. He has written and lectured extensively and most poignantly about the vanquished world of Polish Jewry. He was a co-founder of the Jewish Quarterly, as well as of the Institute of Polish Jewish Studies in Oxford.

The Shoah Foundation founded and financed by Steven Spielberg (from the profits of the film "Schindler's List") records on video the testimonies of survivors, eyewitnesses of the Holocaust. "We have collected so far," says Spielberg, "over 50,000 testimonies, in 30 languages. To play these films through would take 14 years; the film used in the recordings would encircle the globe."

It is obvious that in that flood of words, in the recollections over half a century, in the description of events which make one's blood run cold, not all the details will have been recorded with absolute accuracy. Human memory is fallible and tends to embellish, but this does not diminish the general value of these testimonies. Historical truth does not only mean accurate description of events as they happened but also the veracity of the broad picture. Should this or that detail in a testimony prove inaccurate, this by itself does not undermine the whole process and does not strengthen, as some fear, the case of the so-called 'reversionist' historians who claim that the Holocaust is a Jewish invention.

I do understand how infuriating it is for some people to encounter 'reversionism', the denial of the existence of gas-chambers or the whole truth about the destruction of the Jews; it is particularly infuriating for the survivors, eye-witnesses, and for those who lost their nearest and dearest in those 'non-existent'

gas chambers. But I do not consider those 'reversionists' to be dangerous fakers who have an influence on serious public opinion now or in the future. The Holocaust is the most thoroughly documented period in all history and those (there are not many such) who try to set themselves against the body of proven facts merely expose themselves to ridicule - they are evil or demented or both, and I would not waste time debating with them.

In a short time, nature taking its course, there will be no one alive who took part in those events and is still able to tell us something about them. Writing, art and literature will be the only source from which future generations will draw their knowledge, and this vast accumulation of material will prove invaluable. Creative imagination will play its part. A film like 'Schindler's List' mixes fact and fiction, but it is that film which enabled millions of viewers to become acquainted with the story; for many, all they know comes from that film. And that knowledge influences their view of the world, not only in the abstract. The reaction of the people and governments in Europe and America to the recent events in Kosovo was very largely influenced by their understanding of what led to the Holocaust and their conviction that the so-called civilised world must not allow it to happen again...

In 1995 there appeared in the prestigious German publishing house 'Suhrkamp' a book by a certain Benjamin Wilkomirski under the title 'Buchstuecke' (in the English translation, 'Fragments: Memories of Childhood, 1939 - 1948'). That subtitle, 'Memories of Childhood', is at the base of the controversy now raging around the book.

From the moment of publication, it became a literary sensation. Critics compared it with the writing of Primo

JUDITH SHERMAN

Judith (nee Stern) lived with her younger sister Miriam in Weir Courtney. She studied Social Science at the London School of Economics and later emigrated to the U.S.A., where she lives with her husband Reuben in New Jersey.

To the Organiser of 50th Commemoration of Liberation of Ravensbruck:

My return journey to KZ Ravensbruck to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the liberation was a journey of memories and contrasts. Ravensbruck stands for terror, but this time I go voluntarily at the invitation of a German State Government. I am permitted to bring a family member and do so with the confidence that we shall both return. When I hesitate at the entrance of the gate of Ravensbruck, a friendly guard says - "Come in - you are free to enter." Opposite the former S.S. Administration building a huge hospitality tent is set up and food is served all day long - soup also and lunch bags to take out. Where we Halflinge previously stood for countless Apel hours, we now sit comfortably during the ceremonial speeches and volunteers bring us drinks. The local inhabi-

tants from Berlin and neighbouring towns stand in the back behind the ropes. Our hotel in the countryside provides matzo and kosher wine for Jewish survivors to celebrate Passover.

And true also - 50 years ago in Ravensbruck I look at Lake Svedsee with swans on it and think there is a normal place out there - life works normally there. This time I learn that the ashes from the crematoria were dumped into this same lake. I look at the sad memorial statue of the two women and think "The women I remember were even thinner - much thinner."

Where is there mention of Jews on the memorial wall of the camp naming the nations of the Nazi victims? The plaque on the crowd is too small for the enormity of our extermination. We must have more visibility and attention.

YOM HA'SHOA - APRIL 26, 1995

Judith Sherman

I have arrived from KZ Ravensbruck two hours ago. Robert - my husband - came with me. The Brandenburg Region of Germany has invited the survivors of KZ Ravensbruck, Sachsenhausen, and Bergen-Belsen, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the liberation.

On the Lufthansa plane going there, whilst still on the ground at Kennedy airport, I asked the stewardess for water and later for wine - not to celebrate but to impress upon myself that this is a different journey from my last one to Ravensbruck - from Czechoslovakia 50 years ago.

In our hotel dining room, deep in the German country-

side, a woman said to the owner "Wier können heute kein Brot essen - wier sind Juden - es ist Pesach." Shortly after they brought us Matzot and Kosher wine. A Jewish woman ex-prisoner says to a German man in the vicinity of Sachsenhausen and Ravensbruck, "We cannot eat bread today - we are Jews - it is Passover." A normal interaction, but to me - mind blowing. A total Exodus experience.

In Sachsenhausen I said Kaddish for my father and his brother - both died there.

I said Kaddish under the Israeli flag carried by a survivor. I wanted to place a flower on the grave-pit for my father. I wanted a margareten - a daisy - he lived in the country and would have wanted a country

A survivor from Poland sits in front of me during the commemoration ceremony. She opens her umbrella for shade. My vision is blocked. She refuses my request to close it. I know I can insist and decide not to - let her have a moment of victory in Ravensbruck. It is a full moment for us both. She has comfort and I have options. In the Ravensbruck of 50 years ago there was no margin for options.

Our young volunteer escorts are sensitive and respectful. Our interaction is important for us and them. For us to trust and take - for them to give. I am curious about them. I wonder what their parents tell them. How do they integrate their family legacy? A young newspaper photographer takes my picture. I tell her, "I know why I am here, but why are you?" She says, "Es ist ja meikne arbeit," and starts crying. And I do too.

We survivors are visible here - significant. A most significant experience for me is the visibility of the Israeli flag - an Israeli flag in KZ Ravensbruck and Sachsenhausen. My father was murdered in Sachsenhausen. His brother also. I want them to know I said Kaddish for them at the grave pit under the Israeli flag. Lord, you should see to this.

I am asked to do a taped interview at the Ravensbruck museum - "This is so important for our archives." I consent, though to date have refused all such requests. And so for me it is Ravensbruck where I can finally become a witness. Painful and free.

A gift of a new memory. On our last day in Ravensbruck a Kletzmer band plays Jewish music. We dance a hora and a nun, an ex-Haftling, and her friends sing "Die Gedanken Sind Frie." Such is this journey.

I send a postcard to myself from Ravensbruck - to a home address that will be unchanged when I return.

My reactions to this journey are very subjective. The national NAZI policy to exterminate the Jews was a policy - to me it was my brother, my mother, teacher, shoemaker, my father. And me too. I live on two tracks and take it for granted that this is part of my daily routine - I automatically think of Auschwitz when I take a shower. I hurt when I have no parents to send the first baby pictures to.

I thank you for this return journey. I should not have been there 50 years ago - but I needed to be there now.

Sincerely yours,

flower. I could find one only on a wreath with a German flag - placed there by German survivors. I really struggled with that and decided the Germans owed him a flower and took one for him and another for my uncle.

The logo of this commemoration programme is "45-95." '45' marked pale in the background - '95' strong in the foreground. It is not such a clearcut demarcation for us survivors. When my small grandchildren ask for water I give it to them, but in my head, in my heart, in my whole being, I ask - "And in the wagon train what - what then - what of their thirst?"

In Ravensbruck on the Memorial Wall all nations who had prisoners in the camp are listed, but there is only a small plaque on the ground remembering "the Jews and others." We must help correct that. Our

presence was marked too clearly by the Nazis for extermination - we must have visibility today in life and in remembrance.

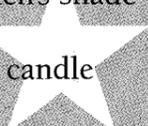
Yom Ha'shoah - It has taken me 50 years to say Kaddish here in this Synagogue for my brother Karpu, age 9, killed in Auschwitz; my mother Ilona died in Sammlunlager Sereid; my father Eli - murdered in Sachsenhausen.

I also placed a flower on the bank of the lake in Ravensbruck where the ashes from the crematoria were dumped - a flower for those who have no-one to place a flower for them.

It was the same journey and it was a different journey. Those who were murdered were still there - as were the memories of our own personal experiences. And there was also bread and matzo and the flag of Israel.

If God is dead

If God is dead
 where is he dead
 above which Auschwitz sky?
 At rest perhaps in garden's shade
 in empty Eden's grace?
 Where do we light the candle
 if God is dead?
 If God is dead
 we must not leave him
 unattended -
 nor us
 nor us



11.21.98

Judith H Sherman



A Survivor's Legacy - Wish to Her Children

Bread, always bread;
 Stars that lighten the heavens
 - not brand your chests;
 always, always - water;
 Trains to journeys of delight
 - with seats, windows,
 tickets of return;
 no accent;
 fathers to hold your children's hand
 children who outgrow their shoes;
 your mantle of "Jew"
 of cloth so light
 so safe
 so Kol B'Seder;
 mothers - oh yes - mothers -
 mothers you can stand up to!
 Israel to fill your soul.



and what of Auschwitz memory?
 that too is in your legacy.

Judith Sherman
 November 14, 1998

HUGO'S

Address to the boys.

MAY 1947

This copy of an address given by the late Hugo Gryn was found amongst his many papers and was sent for inclusion in our Journal by his daughter Naomi.

Today as we celebrate the second anniversary of our liberation, we look back at the past two years, and then we ask ourselves the question: "Was it really worth being liberated, or would it have been better if we didn't survive?" Of course a question like this can be asked only by an utter pessimist, but how can we be optimistic if we see that today, two years after our liberation we are still homeless, still without a country, still being misunderstood and many on the continent still starving.

When we were liberated we thought the world was going to change from one day to another, we thought our wounds would be healed immediately, we thought our sorrow would turn into joy. And what happened in reality? Some of us went back to their hometowns, and what did they find? The lucky ones found four empty walls. Many didn't even find that much either. Family? The word family - for us - exists only in fairy tales.

But Life didn't stop. It went on and on, and we had to go on too. Most of us were forced by the circumstances to return to Germany, to camps. We, the younger and luckier ones, we found shelter in various hostels all over the continent, where

committees took care of us. And things started to develop. But we realised soon that Europe wasn't for us any more; and we weren't for Europe either.

We were pitied by everyone, but not understood. People felt it was their duty to pity us. But this period of being pitied didn't last very long. We were obliged to admit that although Hitler lost his war against the Allies, he won against the Jews.

There was only one solution left: *Aliyah*. But the gates of Palestine were guarded stronger than ever. For *Aliyah B* we were too weak. And all our hopes were just about to leave, when we got a chance to come to Britain, to train in a free country, and at that time a friendly one too, for Palestine. The *Aliyah* - we were told - was only a matter of a few weeks. Slowly it became a matter of months, and today? Today there is hardly any legal hope left.

But the two years were not wasted. In these two years, our aim for a free homeland of our own became even stronger. We were, and still are preparing ourselves for a free life. Our aim is to create a new world, and new values in which the future generations will find all that we - unfortunately - didn't.

ued in the ghettos. Then, at the time of deportation, the SS did their utmost to hunt out every single Jewish child, and the fact of this war against children became even more evident at the selections where none were permitted to live.

Those Boys allocated the task of clearing the ghettos after the deportations were forced to destroy diaries, journals, books, papers, letters... In their thoroughness, the Nazis aimed at wiping out not only the Jewish people, but also any memory of them as human beings - living, feeling, thinking, understanding...

How is it possible for anyone to maintain that the Nazis and those in their service were simply following orders? Here we have eye witness accounts of uncountable acts of the most horrible and willing sadism and brutality.

The Nazis created a perverse order ruled by thugs, murderers, sadists, psychopaths, and ordinary men. Among the Germans, Volksdeutsche, Poles, Ukrainians, Hungarians, Rumanians, Lithuanians, Latvians and Croatians, such elements were given free rein to their violent and sadistic inclinations. Even the lowest elements among Jews - those of "low morality" - were given certain powers which enabled them to mistreat or betray other Jews. So much was perverted and savage behaviour the norm, that any individual acts of human decency, such as those of Schindler, had to be carried out discreetly and in disguise, with the overt pretence of being as sadistic and brutal as the SS.

Those among us who are not survivors cannot imagine what starvation, slavery, the endurance of constant fear of death, the witnessing and experiencing of such extreme savagery, brutality and violence, must feel like, or its effects on the human mind. Yet somehow, in the fact of this, we receive accounts of how so many of the Jewish victims, those who survived and those who died, maintained the ability to form strong bonds of mutual caring

and help, and to maintain their dignity where this was possible. In the most inhumane conditions, they managed to maintain their humanity.

In this book, we have eye-witness testimony that the infliction of the holocaust was not simply a military operation perpetrated by the Nazis.

We see the behaviour of German civilian onlookers during the death marches - one point being when the march entered the German city of Chemnitz, and it was announced by an official that anyone who wished could provide the prisoners, who were desperately thirsty, with water, but no-one moved to bring water to the walking corpses.

Another of the many striking and disturbing incidents which occurred after the war was over was when German villagers murdered a fellow villager for sheltering two Jewish men, together with one of the men he sheltered.

More shocking, was that survivors, when travelling back to their home regions, were being murdered by local Poles who tried to finish off Hitler's work. The survivors' own experiences upon their return to Poland after the war was over, hint at the untold stories of those who survived the holocaust, but were then murdered by local Poles upon their return "home" - the numbers are unknown.

The behaviour of these civilians is especially thrown into relief when contrasted with the survivors' compassionate reception by the Czech people.

My father recalled that during the death marches, when the prisoners were marched through German areas, women and children would smash bottles at their feet so that these prisoners, whose footwear consisted, at most, of rags tied around their feet, would rip their feet on the broken glass. By contrast, while walking through Czech territory, Czech people were throwing bread to the prisoners, and my father remembered that a woman

risked her life to run out and hand him a piece of bread, ensuring that he got his piece of bread amidst the scramble, and she was hit on her head by a guard with the butt of a machine gun for her troubles.

Through the survivors' accounts, we therefore have evidence of the complicity by local populations in Eastern Europe in the destruction of the Jews. The pit of evil revealed in this book is bottomless, and drives home the point that Hitler could not have wreaked all the destruction and devastation alone, without his masses of willing collaborators who carried out his policies with thoroughness, zeal and sadism beyond any bounds.

Amidst the darkness of the testimony, appear sparks of human kindness by individuals - Germans, Poles, some of whom found themselves to be unwilling cogs in the German war machine and helpless to make a difference except in small ways, which contributed to the survival of a few. These were people who were resilient to the intensive anti-semitic propaganda drive, or who found compassion within themselves. Such acts of kindness were simply normal behaviour practised by individuals who were able to hold on to their humanity, their human identity, their sense of what is right and compassionate, amidst a sea of indoctrination, of distorted thought forms, twisted ideas within perverted societies. These sparks of compassion offer some hope for humanity.

The eye-witness accounts given are by a tiny fragment of Jewish victims who survived. Gone from human memory are those who perished with no-one left to remember them. And gone from human memory is the testimony of those millions of other victims who were murdered: accounts such as these of terror, sadism, brutality, cruelty, yet also of acts of kindness by individuals.

Much of the multifaceted value and uniqueness of this volume lies in the fact that as well as bearing witness to the atrocities of the holocaust, it provides a documentation of life before and after the holocaust. The Boys survived the camps - "the selections, the beatings, the starvation", the death marches, the physical and psychological torture. But before that, they came from every distinct and ancient Jewish world which they were the last to know and to see directly. Thus, in the Boys' accounts, we are shown the normal lives they led before, and the process afterwards of achieving a very different normality in a new, unfamiliar environment and a strange language.

During the war, all their energy went into surviving one more day. Yet afterwards, it was still a matter of survival. How is it possible to survive with the visions of what they had witnessed? With the suffering, horror and abuse beyond comprehension within their experience? With the pain of such loss - of everything - family, home, community, country? The loss of their people? How is it possible to live with all that?

This book shows that such survival is somehow possible. The Boys, after the war, expressed the wish to become "normal". Yet, they represent a unique group of extraordinary, human beings who not only survived the unsurvivable, but whose subsequent achievements as a group are abnormally high.

The book recounts the battles that faced each individual in recuperating and readjusting to normality. For even apart from the task of living with the nightmare they had experienced, the challenge of dealing with survival - of the body, mind and spirit - did not end with the war. Many had to spend years recovering from illness, unable to pick up their lives in the meantime. It took some further years before many were able to settle down. Having lost their homes in all senses of the word - residence, family, community, nationality,

**MARTIN GILBERT:
"THE BOYS:
TRIUMPH OVER
ADVERSITY"**

A Review by
Marilyn Herman

Marilyn is the daughter of the late Abe Herman, the rother of David. Marilyn was awarded a Ph.D (Oxford) in Social Anthropology and Ethnic Musicology. Her thesis was "Ethiopian Jews' Secular Music" which she hopes to publish in the near future. She has tutored undergraduates at Oxford in anthropology and spent some time as a lecturer at San Francisco University.

Ben Helfgott asked me to write a review of Gilbert's "The Boys". A book such as this requires a number of reviews from different perspectives - whether from the point of view of survivors themselves, or whether historical. In my case, I set down here a number of thoughts which came to me upon reading this book, from the point of view of a daughter of a survivor who was one of "The Boys". From the perspective of someone who has felt the gaping hole in the fabric of the earth left by my unborn generation.

The vital importance of this book is manifold. In the early chapters, this lies in the recording of Jewish life in Eastern Europe before it was destroyed. Subsequently, it provides eye-witness testimony of events and atrocities which made up the holocaust, and the extent of the devastation, brutality and cruelty inflicted by the Nazis and their collaborators. Its further purpose is to serve as a memorial to those who died at their hands. But the book also gives a message of hope, as it records the triumph

of the human spirit both in those who endured the torture to death, and in those who survived the atrocities and the path back to normal existence.

Yet how is it possible to contain so many stories - each one requiring a volume in its own right - in a single volume?

Martin Gilbert does this by letting the Boys tell their own story. He treats the survivors' testimony with sensitivity and implicit understanding and respect, supplying an appropriate and unintrusive commentary. At the same time, he brings his own specialised expertise and knowledge in the history of the period to set the broader historical context in which we receive these personalised eyewitness accounts, which he pieces together according to historical context. It is this way of organising the material that makes the volume a coherent, historical text, but at the cost of making it more difficult to follow individual accounts all the way through. It is very painful to read about such extreme suffering, and of such extreme ways in which humans can cause suffering to others. Yet it is necessary reading to anyone seeking to grasp the events and magnitude of the holocaust, and wishing to learn its lessons.

The book begins by piecing together the Boys' childhood memories using their own - often poetic - words. In this way, we are presented with a picture of the vibrant and colourful life in the Jewish communities in Poland and Trans-Carpathian Ruthenia, which were wiped out so completely. The Boys present their own memories of happy family and community life before the onset of the war, as seen through the eyes of the children that they were. They come from a diversity of backgrounds - some having come from well-off families, others having been too young to realise their relative lack of material advantages.

Remembered are family members, classmates, and

various colourful characters who formed a part of this world. We also see the international nature of these communities with similar features of life running through them - the Bund, the interest in Palestine, the conflict between Zionists and those among the ultra-Orthodox who put stress on awaiting the arrival of the Messiah. My father, a survivor from the town of Mukacevo (Munkacs) in Ruthenia, also recalled such conflict, relating that the Chasidim would throw stones at the Zionists.

Anti-semitism was something which most communities had to deal with, and many note that the Polish Catholic schoolteachers either engaged in, or ignored, anti-semitic attacks on Jewish schoolchildren. The church is also revealed as a major vehicle in transmitting such attitudes in Poland.

Subsequently, the volume provides a documentation of individual experiences bearing witness to the unimaginable cruelty of the destruction of the world of Eastern European Jewry and some ninety per cent of its population, on the streets, in the synagogues, in the ghettos, in the slave labour camps, in the concentration camps, on the death marches. In the process, they also bear witness to the deliberate murder of more than three million Russian prisoners of war, and of the gypsy populations of Europe.

More than can be grasped by reading about statistics, through these personal accounts we can approach some degree of comprehension of the scale, the enormity, of the destruction, horror, and atrocity.

We make the brief acquaintance of mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, uncles, aunts, cousins, community members, before they are destroyed forever, with their one or two surviving family members to remember them. We know such families are multiplied more than a thousand times with no-one left

to remember them. We see moments - which represent worlds - of parental love, sisterly self-sacrifice, brotherly care - of those who then disappeared from life in the torture chambers of Hitler's hell. Each word in these accounts describing the loss, and the events which took place, expresses deepest oceans of the most unbearable pain.

The Nazis' deliberate policy of the liquidation of world Jewry - physically and spiritually, began with placing Jews in Eastern Europe under siege in ghettos, where many endured a slow death of starvation.

It seems that the moment the Jews of Europe were dispossessed of their homes and possessions and forced into the ghettos, marked the point of their doom, for this weakened them in all respects to a point of no return, and diminished their changes of fighting back, and surviving. Since they were under siege and therefore slowly starved, they were weakened physically and morally; the regime sought to make food and anything else inaccessible from outside the ghetto, and the move to the ghettos, and conditions under which they had to live, would have disorientated the people and weakened them psychologically. It concentrated the Jews, and made them an easier, more spatially-defined target.

When the time came for the Jews to be transported to concentration camps, we see the zeal, thoroughness and relentlessness with which the SS carried out the deportations - ensuring as far as possible that not a single person was left behind. No hiding place was left unturned. The point is driven home, here, that within the scope of being a war against all Jews - the elderly, the disabled (whether or not they were Jewish), this was most specifically a deliberate war against Jewish children; this became immediately clear with the prohibition of their schooling. Despite all this, education of children contin-

The time was ripe. I was ready to accede to the requests of my daughter, Angela (who lives in California), and son, Victor, to take them to Poland. After more than fifty years, I was prepared to return to the land of my birth; and to show my children and my wife, Renée, where my family originated and where so many of its members perished during the Holocaust. Whilst there, I hoped also to pursue my claim to inherit the money my parents had deposited in the Polish banks.

On Tuesday, 8th June 1999, we left Heathrow for Warsaw. A hired car sped us directly from the airport to Treblinka, the deathcamp north-east of the Polish capital. Here my parents and youngest brother, Tadzio, my maternal grandparents, and our extended family and friends from Piotrków, perished in the gas chambers. We drove alongside forests, past fields and through villages and small towns festooned with decorations for the visit of Pope John Paul. My heart skipped a beat at the uncontrolled crossing of a railway line, which carried so many thousands of victims, locked in cattle trucks, to their inevitable doom. I shivered involuntarily as, for a while, we drove parallel to the track.

Soon we entered a dark lane which penetrated dense woodland. Following signposts, we arrived at a small wooden booth, its walls covered with posters in Polish and German, plans of Treblinka and drawings of its horrors. Behind a counter a young woman was selling simple guides to the camp and some books on its history. More signs led us to some huge stones, inscribed in Polish and Hebrew, which marked the camp's perimeter. Beyond the stones, in a vast clearing, lay a long row of flat concrete slabs. Surely these had served as the foundations for a railway siding, near a ramp where arriving victims were unloaded. The day was warm and sunny. A myriad of midges and mosquitoes swirled around us, as we moved slowly between rough stone monoliths embedded in the ground and marking the

Poland Revisited

By Arthur Poznański

sites of mass graves. Victor walked beside me, urging me to remain calm; my wife and daughter followed at a slower pace.

A narrow path drew us to a monument in the centre of a large glade. Around it rose a slightly arched and circular concrete ridge, in which were embedded numerous rough stones. On many of these were engraved the names of Polish towns, from which the camp's victims were transported to their deaths at the hands of the SS, and their Ukrainian henchmen. In silence, we circled this terrible place, continuously pestered by the swarming insects. Soon, we gravitated to what seemed to be a mass burial of considerable extent. The grave site appeared to be covered by what looked like charred human remains preserved in a layer of bitumen. Surrounding the area was a ring of illuminated candles. I paused here, identifying the image as the substance of so many of my nightmares over half a century. With eyes tight shut, I chased the vision of my martyred parents, and little Tadzio, whose ashes may repose beneath this place, alongside thousands of other Jews from the Polish ghettos. We were virtually alone, the camp having few visitors that day. We could hear birds in the nearby trees; and I wondered whether their melancholy song told of the immense tragedy which had unfolded here.

After many years and from a great distance, I had returned

with the support of my wife and children, to recite Kaddish for the souls of my lost family, murdered in this dreadful place. As I intoned the words of the prayer, many thoughts assailed my mind. Could the killing fields of Treblinka, the epitome of industrial mass extermination and the scene of such bestial inhumanity and sadistic depravity, be considered hallowed or holy ground? I was choked and confused. Renée's pale face and fixed expression clearly revealed the depth of her own feelings. Angela, affected by laryngitis and a cough, stoically began to take photographs. Strangely, we felt no lingering sense of evil in this tranquil forest area; and the paradox of normal life continued just beyond the trees.

The suburb of Bugaj was our next stop. The slave labour camp at the Di-Fi timberworks was where I composed, in German, the official camp song! I also constructed a hiding place in a stack of drying timber; and wasted the best part of my youth on very hard physical work, dreaming of survival and the time I would return to normality. Today, the site houses a furniture factory. The noise of the machinery and the smell of the wood were exactly as I remembered them. A polite Solidarity Union official guided us through the factory, explaining the various processes and industrial relations. But he emphasised his belief that Poland's years under the Communist regime, with many Jews in the highest posts, were responsible for the country's economic decline. Though he did not expressly say so, he alluded to the fact that this factor was one of the causes of resentment of the Jews by the Poles. It was a pity to discover that the main brick building, which held our sleeping quarters, had been sold to a car sales company and we were unable to gain access to its interior.

Back in the main square at the city centre, I showed my family the post that was used

It was very late when we arrived in Piotrków, where I had spent some time with my parents and brothers in the town's ghetto. Next morning, we visited Hortensja, the glass factory where my brother Jerzy and I were encamped during the deportations in 1942. Despite our humiliating treatment at the hands of Polish workers, I have regarded the establishment as a haven which sheltered us during the transportations. To my disappointment, the factory, now bankrupt, had not only ceased production but was being dismantled. I was therefore unable to demonstrate to my family the true atmosphere in which we, as children, were compelled to work for so many long and backbreaking hours. Nevertheless, we were welcomed very politely by a young woman who guided us through the factory floor and its showrooms.

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Back in the main square at the city centre, I showed my family the post that was used

for the public torture of convicted felons. It was here that the Jewish martyr, Matatihu Kalahora, found guilty of blasphemy against the Virgin in the 17th century, was tortured and burned at the stake. It was a short stroll from this spot to the town library, a building that was once the Great Synagogue. Plaques sponsored by Piotrków survivors, now living in the USA, helped to identify this edifice as a past place of worship and martyrdom. Searching for the boundaries of the old ghetto, we were fortunate to meet two Jews who actually reside in the town. One was a teacher in a local school. She told us her harrowing story; and explained that there was a total of fifteen Jews forming the community. Her son proved to be a useful guide, leading us to parts of the town where the ghetto stood. I couldn't recognise any of the places to which we were taken. Buildings damaged by bombardment during the war had been demolished and rebuilt. Most of the previously derelict areas, and the former shells of ruined structures are now covered by lawns, shrubs and flowerbeds, or they have been reconstructed as petrol stations, parking lots and cafés. It was later in the day that we visited a location in Raków Forest. Here stand memorials erected to the memory of 520 Jews who were murdered at that spot, after their inhuman incarceration in the synagogue.

Thursday dawned to see us begin our long journey to Praszka, the small township where I was born and started school. The town's layout is the same as I recalled it; though, naturally, advances in technology have transformed its character beyond my recognition. Smooth road surfaces have replaced the Dickensian, round-headed cobblestone of my childhood. The water pump and horse trough have disappeared from the market square. Water is now piped direct to citizens' homes, which also enjoy electricity, phones and televisions. Instead of the horse-drawn carts within my memory, there are vehicles everywhere with their attendant

petrol stations, parking lots and ticket collectors. We entered the Registry Office in the Town Hall. On recognising my name, the Registrar became very friendly and unearthed some ancient volumes for me to study. She spoke at length about the fate of the town. It used to boast a population of about 5,000, but nowadays it has no more than 2,500. It transpired that over half the original number had been Jewish. Finally, she advised us how to get to the "dwór", the place where I was born.

We followed her instructions scrupulously but were unable to locate the area. Perplexed, I asked directions from a man standing outside a small house. I was surprised to hear that we were actually standing on the site where our home once stood. Apparently, it had been demolished some time ago, to be replaced by several dwellings. In fact, our informant inhabited one of them. His wife and daughter emerged and invited us into their home for coffee and strawberries. They were extremely amiable; and the daughter insisted on taking us, in her car, to view the Jewish cemetery. Now covered by woodland, some headstones were still visible, stacked against each other and overgrown with vegetation. The inscriptions on the monuments were illegible, but we would just discern that they were engraved in Hebrew. Back in Praszka, we visited the Hall of Culture in a building which used to house another Great Synagogue. As we explored further, I recognised the house with an apartment to which we had moved from the "dwór"; and the school where my father was the headmaster. Today, there are no Jews left in the town.

Progress had also caught up with Wieluń, our next destination. It's a small town where my family had lived at the start of the war. I recognised the general layout; but, again, modern structures have replaced the buildings destroyed by bombs and artillery nearly sixty years ago. After checking into the town's single hotel, my son and I left Renée and Angela and

proceeded to the building housing the Divisional Court. Here, I intended to lodge an application for Letters of Administration, to enable me to claim money deposited by my parents in Bank Polski. After perusing the documents I had painstakingly prepared, the Registrar threw them back at me. Without death certificates for my parents, she could not register my application. Vainly, I argued that no records existed of Jews murdered in Treblinka. Moreover, there were no living witnesses who could identify individual victims and whose testimony could lend support.

After a long debate, a clerk suggested that I should try the Official Registry. Victor was becoming restless. He was bewildered by the lengthy discussion beyond his grasp; and amazed at my ability to argue a case, before a registrar, in a language I had not spoken in many decades. Comprehending neither Polish nor the legal ramifications, he felt frustrated by his inability to assist me. Unfortunately, I met with the same contentions as deployed by the registrar at the Municipal Registry Office. No death certificates could be issued without documentary evidence validated in a court of law. Catch 22? Exasperated by the official attitude, we joined Renée and Angela in the town's tree-shaded central square. I noticed that at the edge of the square's lawn there stood a recently erected monument. We approached the monument and discovered that it commemorated the district's Polish teachers who were murdered by the Nazis. Amongst the many names engraved on the stone column were those of my beloved parents. Was this the proof I needed for my claim in the courts?

It was too late to return to the town's officials, so we walked to the local museum to see whether more could be discovered. In the museum library, I located a book describing the recent history of Wieluń. It included a photograph of the teachers' memorial with my parents' names clearly identifiable. This, I thought, must surely be documentary

evidence sufficient to afford proof of my parents' death. From the museum, we searched for and found the house where I had lived. I recollected that the entrance was at the rear of the premises; but we were confronted by a padlocked gate and failed to gain access. Next morning, armed with the book as evidence, I returned to the Registry Office. This volume of history, accepted as accurate by the museum, proved unacceptable to the Registry's officials. I telephoned Professor Olejnik, the author of the work, but he was unable to help me. I felt more angry than disappointed at the failure of my efforts. But I had to accept that there was little more I could do to convince the bureaucrats of the validity of my claim.

The next stage of our journey led us to Auschwitz and Birkenau. I will not attempt to describe in detail our pilgrimage to these notorious death-camps, named respectively in Polish, Oswiecim and Brzezinka. Several of the buildings in the camp area have been converted into a museum, more horrific because of its gruesome authenticity. We did not like the commercialised arrangements; and were disturbed by the hordes of schoolchildren, their teachers and guides shouting to be heard. My view is that such conduct deprives the memorial of the dignified silence it deserves; though, admittedly, there is much to be said for youngsters being educated in what happened here.

It also concerned us that most of the inscriptions, hoarding and guidebooks in Auschwitz, are dedicated to the sufferings, enslavement and murder of Polish people. The wooden bunks, communal latrines and long troughs with a few water taps, brought back a flood of painful memories for me. Apart from the more extensive extermination facilities in Auschwitz, it is a paradigm of most other Nazi concentration camps. In solemn silence we entered one of the gas chambers and viewed the crematorium ovens. By now, my wife looked unwell; both Angela and I were

MY HOPES AND DREAMS FOR MY ISRAEL

Joe and Shirley Zeller's granddaughter (Zelikovich)

Jennifer M Rubin
November 5 1998
Essay Israel

My Israel, that's what I think about when I hear the word Israel. It's my country. I have a place on the other side of the world where I know I will always be welcomed. This small country holds my past ancestors and I am proud of that. My love for Israel is like the light over the bimah in a synagogue, that light will never burn out, as my love for Israel will never die. As a Solomon Schechter student for the last eight years, I have developed a love for Judaism, Solomon Schechter, Israel, the Torah, and my Heritage. Solomon Schechter has taught me so

much about Israel from the teachings of the Torah to the simple alphabet in Hebrew. I remember coming home from kindergarten and being so proud because I learned the Hebrew alphabet. I have always wanted to go to Israel, to see the many beautiful sights. The teachings of the Torah all have lessons to each of the books, and throughout my years at Solomon Schechter I think I have uncovered three of the teachings of the Torah. It is to visit the land of milk and honey where everything about Judaism occurred and to pass the stories of the Torah down from generation to generation and to go see Israel.

For Israel I have many expectations and dreams. Sometimes at night I think about what if there were no ter-

rorist attacks, and no more fighting between the Arabs and the Israelis. These are only some of my dreams for Israel. I always dreamed about going to Israel and being bat-mitzvah. Now those dreams are coming true. I just started my bat-mitzvah lessons, and now I am going to Israel. I certainly could not ask for more. I am very happy that I can represent Solomon Schechter as I go to Israel and to finally see what my teachers and some of my friends have been talking about. I believe that in my heart I know that soon there will be peace in the land of Israel for all the Jews and we will receive our land that God promised to Abraham. God promised Abraham lots of children, as many stars as you can count in the sky, and that happened. We

have our people and soon there will be no more fighting about our land.

I hope to see many amazing sights as I am on my trip to Israel. I am so delighted that I was chosen to represent our school as 49 other children join me from around the world to gather together from Jewish day schools to honour the 50th anniversary of Israel. I could not be prouder. Israel is such a special place in my heart and I know my love for Israel will grow from year to year and someday I hope to be able to teach my own children about Israel, the Torah and its teachings, Judaism, and to be proud to be a Jew. I am very lucky for my dream to come true and to be able to go see the land of Israel.



Chanukah party in Dollis Hill in 1965 for our children.

but it was not a happy time. My father was at the forced labour camps in Russia while my brothers stayed in Budapest because it was much safer there. At this time we had no rights. One of the things that we were not allowed to do was to own a store. The Hungarian Nazis made us wear a yellow Star of David on the clothing that we wore.

The German Nazis entered my village in the middle portion of 1944, before pesach. Right after pesach, the German and Hungarian Nazis gave us an order to gather inside the synagogue with packages of food and clothing. The next day, they took us with horse and wagons to the Ghetto, which was located in the big city of Solish. I was getting worried because I did not know what was going to happen next. We got out of the wagon and walked to the Ghetto. It was enclosed with barbed wire. There were German and Hungarian soldiers standing there with guns and dogs. We barely had enough food to eat. We stayed there for about four weeks. One morning the Germans made us walk to the train station. They were taking us away in cattle cars. They shoved in as many people as they could into every one. There was no room to sit. We had to stand. Old men, young children, and babies were crying. There was no food and very little water. The trip took two to three days. People died standing up and you would not even know. All of a sudden, the cattle cars came to a screeching halt. When the Germans opened the doors of the cattle cars, they were standing there with guns, rifles and dogs. We had arrived at Auschwitz/Birkenau. We got out of the cars all together and followed the Nazis. They selected women with young children, old men and old women who could not work to go to the right and the men and women who could work to go to the left. I was separated from the rest of my family and I was now alone. We did not do any work there. We had to change into prison uniforms and sleep on wooden planks. Six people slept in a row and we had

to sleep sideways so that nobody would fall off. This was a horrible way to live. We were all very frightened and nobody thought that they would survive.

The Germans' favourite thing to do was to count the number of people in the camp. They used to count us twice a day. If one person was missing, we would have to stand all night, if necessary. They would hunt the missing person "dead or alive" until they found him. Then they would hang him or shoot him right in front of us to set an example.

One September night, the Nazis took all the gypsies and burned them. I remember that night. We heard a lot of screaming and gunshots. We were in this terrible camp for about four months. Nobody tried to help anyone else because you had to save your own life. The only way that you could survive was by luck. It did not matter if you were thin, strong, or good looking. It was just luck. Since the Nazis were aware that they were losing the war and that the Americans, Russians, and several other countries were coming closer to their territory, they started liquidating the camp. We had to go on a death march from Auschwitz to Hirshburg, which was located in Poland. The march lasted for about six days. About half the people on that march died. It took place in the middle of November. We were wearing prison uniforms, wooden shoes and a hat. If you fell behind, two things could have happened. Either you could have run away without them seeing you or they caught you and shot you immediately. We had to work from 8am to 6pm. We built barracks. If you said one word, they would shoot you. They would not ask you any questions; they would just shoot you. This was how it was everywhere we went with the Nazis. In February of 1945, they took us on another death march as the allies were gaining ground. We walked from Hirshburg to Buchenwald in Germany. The march took five to seven days. For many of us, this was our last trip. We didn't do any work there. The allies were coming closer and closer

and the Germans were starting to flee. We were there for about two months.

In April of 1945, the Americans liberated us during Passover. At first, we were afraid to come out, but then we did. We were very happy that the war was over. The Americans gave us food that we thought we would never see again and were very nice. We stayed in the camps with the Americans for several weeks. After they let us leave the camp, we were going in all different directions and did not know where to go next. I finally decided to go back to my home in Czechoslovakia. The Americans took us in trucks to Prague, which was the capital of Czechoslovakia. Then I took a train back to my home. I was very excited about going back to my home but, as it turned out, there were only fifteen to twenty Jewish people who returned. We all stayed in one house. I still had not found my family and I knew that I would probably never see them again. I stayed in my hometown for about four to six weeks. I then decided to go to Budapest for two to three weeks to look for relatives who might have gone there after the war. Following that, I went back to my hometown one more time and stayed a couple of weeks. There was nothing to do so I decided to go with friends to Prague. I heard rumours that they were taking boys and girls who were under 16 to England through a Jewish organisation. I decided to go. When we arrived, we were taken to Scotland and given shelter, food, clothing, and were examined to see if we were sick and then given the proper care to make us healthy. We were taught English and given a choice to pick a trade to learn so that we could support ourselves. I wanted to learn how to be a jeweller. While learning the trade, I went to London, got a job in a jewellery factory and made a salary that I was able to live off. I joined a club called the Primrose Club. The boys and girls met there and we had social activities. I also joined a Soccer league, which was located in London near Swiss Cottage. Even though I was small, I was one of

the best on the team. Many people were going to America so I decided I wanted to go too. After being in England for about four years, I got a visa and went on a ship called the Queen Mary. The ship arrived safely in New York City in 1950.

"As It Turned Out"

As it turned out, when the Hungarians took my father away to the forced labour camps in Russia, I never saw or heard from him again. I assume that he was killed because at that time I heard that a lot of people who were prisoners of war in Russia died. When we were at Auschwitz (the biggest camp), we saw a lot of smoke coming out of these huge chimneys. We heard that the smoke was coming from the dead bodies that were killed in the gas chambers and burnt in the ovens. The only ones who survived were the lucky men, women, and older girls and boys who were able to work. As it turned out, all the women, babies, and old men and women were on their way to death when we got separated. Unfortunately, out of my entire family, I was the only survivor. The story stops or actually begins again when I arrived in New York. I went to Cleveland and lived with my aunt and uncle for a year and a half. I got a job and worked in a jewellery factory. My aunt and uncle were religious and gave me ten dollars a week not to work on the Sabbath. I then decided to go back to New York because there were more opportunities in the jewellery field there. Later on, some friends lent me money. I then started my own business, which is still around today. In the meantime, I got married and had three children and six grandchildren. Now I live a very happy and secure life.

** This is a tribute
to my grandfather,
Papa Joe*

By
Michael Landsman

experiencing headaches. Victor was suffering an asthma attack but tried hard not to complain. He stayed bravely at my side, even when I visited the General Office to examine the camp records. I was not surprised to discover nothing of relevance for me. Finally, we could take no more, and finished up in the cafeteria for what I called a macabre snack and some water for the tablets we needed to take. Emotionally shattered and physically exhausted, we departed for our long journey back to Warsaw.

The next morning we called at the National Bank Polski, where I enquired about my parents' deposit. The director of the legal branch was unavailable, but his secretary took a copy of my earlier letter to the bank and promised a postal response. Next we explored parts of what had been the old ghetto area, including the impressive monument to the Heroes of the Ghetto Uprising in 1943. I stopped a Polish man in the street to ask for directions. He was happy to point out that the district had been originally a Polish quarter and that the Nazis had expelled "the poor Poles" from their dwellings and incorporated the borough into the ghetto. Like the trade union official at the furniture factory in Bugaj, the man contended that the former Communist regime with its many Jews at the helm, had ruined the Polish economy and impoverished the country. Many Communists are Jews, he reasoned, therefore most Jews are Communists. Thus enlightened, we hastened away to visit the beautifully restored old town and its imposing castle.

During our flight back to London, I pondered whether any of the parties visiting Auschwitz and Treblinka recognised not only the clear evidence of genocide, but also the legacy of evil left by the Nazis. Again and again, the same epidemic of wickedness flares up somewhere in the world, even on our own doorstep. Will they ever learn?

Mr W'S LOVE

By Janina Fischler Martinho

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

My brother Joseph and I, the only two members of the family to survive, parted on the 13th March 1941. He led me out, in the first hours of the Cracow Ghetto Liquidation Aktion, through the sewers into "Aryan" Cracow. Joseph was nineteen years old. I was twelve. Joseph survived the war in Plaszów, Mauthausen and Linz concentration camps. I tramped the Polish countryside for two years, hiring myself out as the lowliest farmhand. We were re-united in August 1945. We bought immaculately forged documents in Cracow's main market square, close to St Mary's Church, and left Cracow, left Poland...

From Poland to Czechoslovakia where, I remember, we met with an act of kindness as well as committed an act of larceny. We were sitting in a third class compartment of a train travelling to Prague. A middle-aged woman, poorly dressed, sitting opposite us, spread out a sheet of newspaper on the empty seat next to her and placed several slices of bread upon it. She motioned to us to help ourselves. We did. We thanked her.

We spent two or three days in Prague itself, alas not sight-seeing, nor admiring that beautiful city's architecture or works

of art, but looking for food and somewhere to lay our heads. I remember we came to a white villa standing in a large walled-in garden. There were peach trees growing right next to the wall. Branches burdened with ripe, golden peaches overhung it. Joseph was tall enough to reach a fruit-laden branch and gently bend it and bring it down. In no time at all, I had filled his casquette with the sweet, juicy fruit.

From Czechoslovakia to Austria. We reached our destination, the town of Linz in Upper Austria, early in September. Our long, rough ride was to culminate at a Displaced Persons' Camp at Leonding, a suburb of Linz.

This was our first autumn of freedom, after six years of murderous, brutal thralldom. We had been stripped of our loved ones, of close and distant relations - of all those we had loved and cherished; of school friends, family doctors and dentists; good, friendly neighbours, grocers, cobblers... All those decent, well-disposed people with whom we had inter-acted at various levels of everyday life were no more. The old world had vanished forever. We were now on alien territory - in a new world - a world which was not anxious to open its door to us, to make us welcome. The Austrian countryside was beautiful and peaceful. We saw meadows of mown grass, fields of corn stubble, orchards laden with fruit and tall old trees whose foliage - russet, scarlet, yellow - was gently drifting to the ground, forming a soft, deep carpet. We saw ribbons of clean, clear water - the rivers;

and pools of shimmering blue - the lakes. In the evening, the Austrian sky was blue - a deep, dark, velvety blue...

The Displaced Persons' Camp, as I recall it today - a grandmother with hair as white as milk, and I was a girl just in her teens then - was a communal structure - not so much tall as wide, spread out. It must have served communal purposes, for it had hundreds of rooms. Some as tiny and narrow as monks' cells; some as large and commodious as classrooms or public recreation rooms. The kitchens, situated on the ground floor, were large and antiquated, their walls blackened by smoke and steam. They were permeated by that stale odour of food cooked and eaten long ago.

The Displaced Persons' Camp was full. There was "No Room at the Inn..." Joseph, however, was very warmly invited to share a ground floor room with two ex-Mauthausen Concentration Camp inmates. Blood-brothers and sisters could not have been more closely knit than were the survivors of the same camp, the same barrack, the same bunk - the endless misery, hunger fear... Both men had been in the same barrack with Joseph. This kind offer provided Joseph with a roof over his head. A corner, somewhere, still had to be found for me. Our needs, our expectations were very modest.

Looking around for accommodation for me, we ran into Edwina Rottman. She and I knew and remembered each other from the days of the Cracow Ghetto. It was pure

joy to meet someone from Cracow; to learn that they had survived the war; that they could still smile. The by now stereotype greetings and enquiries followed: "Edwina," I called out. "Yasia" she responded. We hugged each other. We clung to each other. We kept repeating the same somewhat tired, worn phrases: "You are alive! How wonderful!" And then: "You have your brother Joseph with you... How wonderful!"

Edwina, too, had had a brother - an extraordinarily handsome, bright, cultured young man. Cautiously, quietly: "And your brother?" She closes her eyes, barely perceptibly shakes her head. A long, silent pause. No words. Just a slight inclination of my head. I hardly dared ask if her husband, whom she did not love, was alive. "My husband is alive, he is still in Germany... trying to find work and organise a home for us..." Yes, Edwina, nCe Wnuk, one of Cracow's most distinguished and affluent Jewish families. Headgear - caps, berets, hats, yarmulkas... Hatters for generations. That was how they had made their fortune.

"We have just arrived" - I said. "I am casting around for somewhere to stay..." Those generous, warm-hearted, hospitable Cracow Jews! "I am sharing a room with a girl-friend. We can easily fit a third bed in" and taking my hand, hugging me, lightly kissing my cheek, she led me to her room on the first floor of the building.

Edwina had been one of the Cracow Ghetto's loveliest women. The word "class" invariably crept in when she was mentioned, spoken of. Indeed, she was a lady to her fingertips. Gracious and charming, she was self-restrained and calm. I later came to understand that she possessed the elegance, the femininity, that indefinable aura of a Paris mannequin. Even towards the very end of the Ghetto existence, in the winter of 1943, when most people just attempted to keep warm, and only some took the trouble to

keep clean, Edwina remained the same. Exquisite. I would meet her in the Ghetto's cold, unswept streets and I would feast my gaze on her. A vision of pure enchantment. A being from another planet. I remember to this day running into her in the Ghetto square. She had just come out of her doorway. I remember so clearly her sumptuous, flared grey winter coat, the cosy, splendid grey-felt knee-high boots trimmed with black patent leather; the wine-coloured, beautifully patterned large head-square edged with a broad band of tasselled lattice work over her soft brown hair. Her expertly applied maquillage, so natural, so becoming - the eyebrows delicately arched, every eyelash separated from the next. Her carmined mouth. Her even sparkling teeth.

When we met again the Displaced Persons' Camp it was not quite three years since I had last seen her in the Ghetto, but it may as well have been a life-time. Edwina was not yet thirty years old in 1945. She had been an inmate of various concentration camps - the last one having been, I believe, Bergen-Belsen. It was nothing short of a miracle that she was still alive; walking, speaking, understanding, smiling...

She was dying of typhoid when she was liberated... She had lost her lovely silken brown hair, and her face was thin and scarred. But her clothes, second-hand charity handouts, much too big for her frail body, had been carefully washed and well-pressed...

I settled down in Edwina's room and quickly became part of the Displaced Persons' Camp's life.

When I think back to those days, I remember clearly that there were very distinct social strata within the camp. The well-educated, once well-to-do, professional Jews did not mingle, did not fraternise with their pre-war poor, barely literate brethren.

In our block, on the ground floor, there lived a family of three; husband, wife and the wife's sister, Sonia. The couple, Mr and Mrs Schreiber, were presentable, cultured people, so

obviously middle-class and once so obviously affluent. Well-groomed, and already well-dressed, they were aloof, reserved, kept themselves to themselves...

On one occasion I saw Mrs Schreiber crossing the camp compound - a book in her hand. It was the first time I had seen a book in the camp and I so yearned for books. I said "Good morning" and asked: "Is your book in Polish?" (it was the only language I could read in). Mrs Schreiber returned my greeting somewhat coldly, as if I were meddling in what did not concern me and, in reply to my question, uttered a curt "yes" and walked on. I felt hurt.

Edwina's friend, Madam X, who shared the room with us, was a young widow; freshly widowed in a macabre, spine-chilling manner. I understood from the various snippets I had been able to glean, and which Joseph corroborated, that her dead husband, a Jewish Kapo at Mathausen, had been feared and hated even more than the German guards themselves. To save his own skin, to remain alive, he ingratiated himself, kept in his masters' good books by performing his duties with unparalleled brutality. A big, strong man, he humiliated, tortured and tormented those bags of yellow, withered skin with their brittle, rattling bones, with inborn talent, with natural skill - and obvious enjoyment. His come-uppance came with the Americans - when Mauthausen was liberated in May 1945. The camp inmates - those, that is, who still had a spark of life and an ounce of strength left in them - would not wait, would not allow a proper, civilised crime and punishment procedure to take place. With their last breath they yelled, they screamed: "Vengeance is ours!" And they literally tore the man from limb to limb. Spat on him. Trod on him. Relieved themselves upon him. Ground his flesh into the mud and danced an obscene dance over and around the bloody pulp of his body. And, thus, Mme X became a widow. Widowhood became her.

As we shared a room, I came to know Mme X quite well. Unlike Edwina, she appeared physically untouched by the camps and the hardships she had endured. And her spirits were high. Maybe deep down, in her innermost being, she rejoiced at having been released from her marital vows. She was alive, healthy, breathtakingly beautiful and free. A Semitic beauty burning with a lively inner flame. The passion which her body emanated, were one to touch it ever so lightly, would have consumed one. Mr W not only touched it, he allowed both his flesh and his spirit to be scorched by it. Eventually to be burnt by it to a cinder. Like one possessed he had grasped that bright-burning flame with his bare hands...

When Mme and Mr W - who dared to warm himself by that flame, to meet that passion with his own just as savage, but subtly for appearances' sake - strolled through the camp compound, young and old alike raised their heads, and focused their gaze, for they were a sight to behold. Two tall, slender, yet robustly built people, both very Semitic in appearance. A handsome Jew. A beautiful Jewess. Their features, characteristic of their race, were not unlike; dark smouldering eyes, full sensuous lips and fine aquiline noses. Mme X's black hair was very short, cropped like a boy's, which only served to underscore the extreme femininity of her body, the loveliness of her face. They were in love. Ravenously, insatiably in love.

Mr W - highly educated, already successful in his profession before the war, was a married man, or rather he had been. Before the war. The concentration camps had been liberated in May 1945 - some weeks, even months earlier... Now in the autumn of 1945, in September, Mr W sensibly, logically, no doubt with great sadness - yet the war experiences, the war losses had strangely toughened us up - had, like everybody else, accepted immutable reality. Not having the palest, the most tenuous intimation of hope, he quite correctly presumed his

A TRIBUTE TO MY GRANDFATHER

Joe Zeller came to England with the Hungarian group from Prague in February 1946 and emigrated to the United States in 1950. We are delighted to include this contribution from his grandson Michael and his twelve year old grand-daughter Jennifer.

108 Windsor Gate Drive
North Hill, N.Y. 11040

Dear Editor,

My name is Michael Landsman. I am a student at Great Neck South High School. Throughout this past year, we studied World War II and as a result, I became very interested in the Holocaust. After many studies, I wrote a diary about my grandfather's experiences during the war. In an effort to inform others about this tragic event in history, I wrote an essay.

I am hoping my work can be published in your journal because I feel it is important for everyone to know what prejudice can do. Included with this letter is a copy of my writing. Thank you so much for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Michael Landsman
(Joe and Shirley Zeller's
grandson)

Could You Imagine

Could you imagine if you were playing on a soccer team and one of the kids found out your religion and started making fun of you? Then the coach came and told you that you were not allowed to be on the soccer team because of your religion. Many horrible things happened during World War II, including the murder of six million Jews. There were great atrocities such as random shootings, torturings, killing through poison gas, and then burying them in the ovens. As a result of the Nazis' acts of hatred, Jews died from hunger and beatings. What you are about to read is from a Jewish person's point of view and is a tribute to all the survivors of the Shoah or the Holocaust and all those who died in it as well. As a Holocaust survivor, Joseph Zeller (Zelikovich) is the subject of this piece and he is my grandfather. I hope that while you are reading this you think about the many people who were killed during this war.

My Diary

By Michael Landsman

I was born in Czechoslovakia on October 16, 1929 in a small village called Cerny Ardov, located in the Carpathian Mountains. The weather of the village was cold during the winter with a lot of snow, and the summer was warm. Before the war, Czechoslovakia was under the Austrian-Hungarian empire. In 1939, it became Hungary and, in 1945, it became Russia.

I had four brothers and one sister, including a twin brother. My older brother's name was Abraham and he was three years older than me. My father's name was Heshel and my mother's name was Gitel. There were three hundred people in the entire town, including fifty-two Jewish families. In my small town, there was a kosher butcher and one synagogue. My rabbi's name was Rabbi Hirsh. We were Orthodox, meaning we kept kosher, observed the Sabbath, and prayed in the synagogue every morning, at night, and on the holidays.

I went to public school from 8am to 12pm. Later, I came home for lunch and went to cheder, "Hebrew school" from 2pm to 6pm. There were a mixed variety of people in the village, including Hungarians, Russians, Greek Orthodox, Protestant and Catholics. There were three churches in town. In my house we spoke Yiddish.

My house was located in the middle of town right near the synagogue. Our kitchen had a mud floor, with the rest of the house being made out of wood. The bathroom (toilet) was outside. Getting wood from the forests that were nearby, the farmers would sell it at the market every week. In order to use our stove, we needed wood, which gave us a warm fire and that was how we got heat and the ability to cook. We used kerosene lamps to get light since there was no electricity in the town. There was one radio in town and everyone used to come to one central place to listen to it. Once or twice a

week a man came from out of town and beat the drums. He brought us the news. At this time everybody was happy. My father was a shoemaker for the entire town. We also owned a little grocery store and sold items such as yeast, sugar, oil and kerosene. Food was not a problem at this point in time. Almost everyone had a garden in their backyard, including us, but we also had chickens and one cow.

My most favourite times of the year were when the holidays came. First of all, we went to temple on each and every holiday. I remember on Passover (pesach) we used to do many things such as painting our house and putting new straw in the mattresses on the bed. The whole community used to bake matzah at one special place in town. Everybody in the community helped each other out. Usually six families went at the same time to bake the matzah and within a week to ten days the whole town had baked matzah.

I never really left the village because I was the oldest one left in my family. My older brother and my twin brother were away in Budapest learning trade. In 1942, my father was taken away by the Hungarians to a forced labour camp. After they took him away, we closed our store. From that point on, I had to take care of our cow, garden and chickens.

In the later portion of 1942, Jews were not permitted to go to school any more. We all figured, however, that the war was going to end and that everything was going to be alright. My father then came back for a few days. He said that he had to pack warm clothes because they were taking him back to the forced labour camps in Russia. Male Jews between the ages of 16 and 45 were taken away. It was getting worse and worse every month. In 1939, the Czechoslovakians (who were very close with the Jews) left because the Hungarians were coming. There was one Jewish doctor who worked for 6 - 12 towns nearby, including our town. There was also one Jewish dentist in town. I became a Bar-Mitzvah in 1943,

numbers or statistics. These had been people with hopes and dreams, brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers. It was hard to take in.

In the room with the luggage, I found myself looking at every name on every suitcase almost as if I was searching for someone. Our tour guide said that of all the groups she had taken round there had been one old man who had recognised his own suitcase. Amongst the mountain of hair one beautiful, delicate blond plait stood out. I wondered who that young girl might have been.

In the main Auschwitz museum I wandered round looking at the black and white photographs, many of which were familiar to me. I stopped in front of a picture of dead babies. I couldn't tear myself away. It was such an impossible image, I couldn't understand how it could be real. Perhaps if I looked at it long enough I would understand, but I could not. I still can't. Approaching the gas chambers, I saw an elderly lady coming out. She was upset. She couldn't understand why you needed a 'guided tour' of a gas chamber. Wasn't it self-explanatory? What can one say about a place where thousands of innocent people were murdered?

Since my visit, one thing that I cannot and will never understand is how the Nazis could have been so calculating. They had worked everything out down to the last Mark and had even put in writing the cost of keeping an inmate alive for a month, the cost of the gas to kill him and the cost of disposing of his body. To my horror, they had even calculated that it was too 'expensive' to gas children under the age of two, they should be simply thrown on to a fire. What kind of people sit around a table and work out something like that?

Rosalind:

I was struck as the coach drove into the town of Oswiecim how closely the road paralleled the railway line, and how little must have changed in 50-60 years. Derelict railway cars on the line looked eerily like those I had seen in photos and film footage, but were now devoid of people. As we entered the gates of the camp, I was appalled at how close to the town it was. No high walls or fences to prevent locals from seeing what was happening inside. The only security was a wall of barbed wire and guard towers to prevent escape.

Our emotions all began to churn at this point. My father is not one to cry easily, but I could see he was near to it as he reached for his prayer book. I swallowed hard, feeling so overwhelmed at his bravery in wanting to come back to this awful place. A journalist took our photograph outside the infamous gates. Looking at it now, I am shocked at what was captured on our faces; distress, anger, indignation. An extraordinary family photograph.

It felt important to us all that our father was returning to the site of so many horrors with his family beside him. One thing that still haunts me, which had not come home to me until my visit, was the sheer scale of it all. Those inconceivable numbers of people who had been through the camps became much more real when I saw the dimensions for myself. Imagining my father's experiences at that time, I am now more able to understand how, to survive, you had to cut yourself off from your emotions. To 'feel' what was happening to you and those around you would have been fatal. I have always been an optimist, but I find myself now feeling a little less sure about the world, that everything may not in fact 'turn out all right' in

the end. If such evil has been let loose once, could it happen again? And could we do anything to stop it?

Charles:

My father was the only survivor returning with the group of 300 people, so it was pleasing to see so many not as directly touched by the Nazis wanting to return and bear witness for the millions who had perished.

Maybe it is a measure of the kind of background from which we come, with the exposure we have had to the Shoah, but our visit to Auschwitz could not shock me. I had seen the collections of shoes, the suitcases, the glasses, the piles of hair. I have visited Yad Vashem and seen countless images on television. Nevertheless, experiencing the real thing, a direct link to my past, was powerful. We were walking the same paths our forefathers had been forced to march and only time was hiding them from us.

I tried to imagine my father's thoughts and wondered how he could deal with the memories that must have returned. I was left thinking that he could only look upon himself as he was then, as another, removed; the boy and not the man. How else could anyone have survived something so massively repugnant, incomprehensible, inhumane?

My visit to Auschwitz marked a realisation that the most important thing that we can do is bear witness, not just for our own families, but for the millions who died anonymously. There is no one story more tragic than the other. Undoubtedly the Shoah has affected our lives, and the lives of future generations. Even today, when I tell someone of my background, I hear the gasp of disbelief. And I believe that this attitude to horror will persist as long as we continue to tell the story. We cannot deny our past. And although the number of survivors is diminishing, succession ensures a path from the past to the future will be maintained and will not be eradicated.

legally wedded wife to have perished without trace in the melting down of a whole people.

Mr X was, at the time of this narrative, in his middle-thirties. Love, and what love, had a positively beneficial, rejuvenating effect on him. He looked, he acted, he carried himself like a young man head over heels in love. One had to see the gleam in his eye to understand how deeply, how thoroughly his whole being, body and mind, had been permeated by that timeless aphrodisiac - the fully reciprocated love of a beautiful woman.

Autumn was upon us. October. The trees were shedding their leaves. The branches denuded, stripped of their thick summer foliage exposed the pale, overcast Austrian sky. The walking lanes, the narrow paths in the camp compound became muddy - filled with runny, black gunge. Puddles of water dotted the camp site - their surfaces glistening with greasy, rainbow-coloured bubbles. It was cold.

The lovers, Mme X and Mr W, closely huddled together under one umbrella, went for long walks; she in an American officer's military trenchcoat tightly belted at the waist to accentuate her hour-glass figure; he, sporting modernity, in a long silver-grey mackintosh. Mme X picked her way with fastidious care, not wishing to soil her footwear. Mr W, all attention, cupping the palm of his hand around her elbow, guided her, kept in step with her.

One grey, misty afternoon an American lorry arrived at the Displaced Persons' Camp. A handful of women travellers, from all corners of Europe, had reached Leonding Camp. Women - old, tired, shabby women. Shorn of all feminine grace. Divested of their very gender. There was no light in their eyes. There was no springiness in their gait. They were led to the office to register... How many times had they registered in the last six years?

An old woman of thirty-five in mud-covered galoshes was

surveying the autumnal landscape - the grey afternoon light restful to her eyes. She had a man's jacket, long and loose, thrown over her floral summer frock. Her scrawny, marked arm kept pushing back the wisps of white hair escaping from under a pink, woolly hat. A knocked-about cardboard box - containing her worldly possessions - at her feet... Mr W's legally-wedded wife had arrived at the Displaced Persons' Camp. A tremor ran over the camp. It may not have

registered on the Richter Scale, but it was considerable. It shook the camp community.

The news spread like wild fire; Mr W's wife is alive. She has arrived from Germany. She had been very ill when liberated... It had taken her a long time to recover; to find her bearings; to become accustomed to freedom; to join the living in their upward struggle... The camp was throbbing, pulsating - agog with the news...

I do not know what took

place behind closed doors. Many years later, when Mr W had attained great fame, I read a description of a scene: Mr W kneeling before his wife kissing the very hem of her dress. His eyes brimming with tears praising The Almighty's wisdom and magnanimity. Sobbing, sobbing his heart out in joy and gratitude...

I do not know how it was... I only saw the lovers' faces and the misery written upon them was painful to behold.

After 50 years, it's OK to tell

By Solly Irving

Solly came to England with the Windermere Group. He later lived in the Gateshead hostel and in 1948 went to fight in the Israeli War of Independence. He is a valuable member of our committee. He recently had a liver transplant and we are delighted that he is continuing to make good progress.

Having survived several camps and following my arrival in England with the Windermere boys, I decided in 1948 to volunteer, together with many of the boys, to go to Israel and join in the fight for Israeli independence.

Being under the age of 18, I had to wait until my birthday. I arrived at Marseilles and was waiting for the famous ship Pan York - you can imagine my surprise when I met up with a very close friend, Shamai Fuchs, who had arrived from a DP camp in Germany.

Shamai and I had spent most of our times in various camps together, we were separated just before I was taken to Buchenwald and he was sent elsewhere. Naturally we decided this time to try to stay together.

When we finally arrived in Israel we were enlisted into the Palmach.

After a short period in an army camp near Pardes Chana

we overheard that the whole camp was being sent to Latrun. It was the policy of the then Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, to send soldiers, whether they were trained or not, almost straight from the immigration boats to Latrun to fight the Jordanians. Not many returned alive. Anyway, to come back to the purpose of the story, when we heard over loudspeakers that everybody was required to assemble for departure, we looked at each other and decided simultaneously that this was not for us. We decided not to report for departure and made ourselves invisible.

The camp was cleared of most able men and a short while later we were found and of course arrested for desertion.

Whilst in prison awaiting our fate, a sergeant, by the name of Moshe Oppenheim, came to see us. He was most surprised to see us. Moshe, who still lives near

Haifa, spent a lot of time in the different camps, together with myself and Shamai. He comes from my home town of Ryki and in the days of the ghetto his family shared my parents' home.

Moshe advised us to leave this particular camp and we eventually turned up in Ber Yacob, near Sarafand, which was also part of the Palmach (Negev Division). After a while we were sent to fight in the Negev and our unit was one of the first to capture Be'er Sheva. It was here that we heard everybody who had been sent to Latrun had been killed.

Eventually I met up with an aunt who lived in Tel Aviv. She could not believe that I had again managed to stay alive.

Often I am asked how I survived when millions perished. The motto of this story is that *I was destined to survive, and not to question why.*



The Herman family during their visit to Auschwitz 28th April 1999.

The day I learned to respect horses

By Sam Dresner

It was just over a week since my father and myself were taken away to Jedlinsk. It was just a small camp with several huts behind barbed wire. There were no guards, as the camp was situated in the middle of a large territory where Russian ex-prisoners were being trained by German officers in German uniforms and the outer periphery was guarded.

We decided that I should run away and try and reach my mother and sister. I set off in the early evening. It was still very light. The landscape was very flat, nowhere to hid except for the abandoned farmhouses dotted over the landscape. I had not gone very far when I spotted a rider in the distance. I ran to the nearest farmhouse and hid behind a barn, hoping I had not been noticed.

He came up on his horse behind me. A middle-aged man in civilian clothing with a riding crop with which he started hitting me. He never said a word. To escape the blows I started running and came on a freshly ploughed field. As the rider kept on chasing and hitting me, I kept falling down and every time I fell down the rider tried to get the horse to step on me, but the horse just would not. At one time, I fell with my face upwards and could see the way the horse lowered its leg so very carefully and gingerly so as not to step on me. By that time the rider was very annoyed and kept hitting the horse even more than myself. He eventually gave up and chased me back to the camp and handed me over to the German master who was in charge.

I have since talked to people who know horses and work with them and they all say that is the natural way a horse would behave. If this is the case, then I feel they deserve more respect than some humans.

Faivel the HATMAKER

By Salek Benedikt

In July 1942 I escaped from the ghetto in Szydlowiec to the nearby town of Wierzbnik. Szydlowiec became untenable, since hordes of SS men and their Lithuanian auxiliaries would arrive in waves and grab Jewish men off the street. These people were carted away and never heard of again. Of late, they had started raiding the ghetto at night as well.

In Wierzbnik, I enrolled for work at the local munitions factory, named the "Herman Giring Werke". Issued with a works identify pass, I felt safe. At last I could enjoy a peaceful night's sleep. Albeit, not for very long!

On the 27th October 1942, in the early hours of the morning, the ghetto was awoken by loud banging on the doors and calls of "Alle Juden raus!" The liquidation of the Jewish community in Wierzbnik had begun.

I left the house promptly. Seeing an SS man, I flashed my works pass at him. He directed me to one corner of the market square and helped me on my way with a mighty kick.

Soon, I was joined by other employees of the munitions factory.

From where we were gathered, we had an unhindered view of the brutality and murder being perpetrated against an innocent and defenceless people. The SS made a selection of strong, young people, who joined our group, and we were marched off under armed guard to a slave labour camp in Starachowice.

The column was halted at the gates and we were ordered

to surrender all monies and jewellery. Our baggage was confiscated. We entered the camp only in what we wore. I was assigned to a barn-like building in the centre of the camp.

The following morning, we were marched to the factory under armed guard and made to carry on work as if nothing had happened.

Back in the barrack after work, there was a depressing quiet. People were taking stock of their loss, in silence.

It was to take some time before they could make themselves share the grief with others.

At this time, my own thoughts were with my family, both in the Lodz ghetto and in Szydlowiec.

In the camp I was a complete stranger. Nobody knew me. The vast majority of inmates were locals, they knew each other from "Home". They were either related, friends or neighbours etc.

So I was happy when a young man greeted me from a bunk on the opposite wall. I had noticed him before because of his headgear. He wore his cap at a jaunty angle and the peak of the cap was formed into a perfect arch. He seemed to be quite popular with passers-by, for they would stop at his bunk to talk and laugh with him. Others still would call out to him, mentioning his name - Faivel.

Faivel was working in the transport commando. Sometimes, I would see him pass by the open gates of Werk 'C' (where I worked), pushing a trolley load of shells. I would

then wave to him.

In Werk 'C' I worked at a "breaker", a machine that broke long rods of steel into pieces, suitable for anti-aircraft shells. The work was hard and exacting. We had to work 12-hour shifts and sometimes two consecutive shifts on a starvation diet. Conditions in the camp were appalling, filth and vermin abounded. People were shot for the least infringement.

One early morning, while I was working night shift, Faivel turned up. He approached me and in a lowered voice told me that he just passed the shed on the road to the gate and noticed there was a heap of shirts laying in front of the shed. He intended to go there and take some as soon as it got lighter. If I could get away, I should join him.

When it got a bit brighter, I told my mates I was going to the toilet and made my way to the shed. Faivel was already there, and somebody else too. They were picking up shirts for inspection, putting the good ones to one side. Without saying anything, I stepped onto the heap and lifted up a shirt, thinking about taking off my own, as it was crawling with lice. At this very moment, I heard a call "Hände Hoch!" I dropped the shirt, raised my arms and turned slowly round, to face a Ukrainian officer pointing a handgun at us. He accused us of stealing company property and leaving work without permission. He ordered us to the guard house.

Once in the guard house, he announced that we would each receive 15 lashes on our bare

asked him if the restaurant was kosher. Mr Klein told me that he had been in Krakow eight months and that he had never been to see the camps. He is a widower and his children live in Brooklyn.

It was time to push on the Warsaw. Yanki also wanted to stop on the way, a place called Piszczac (we pronounced it Peshischa.) Along the way we either dozed off or were reflective. After a while, Daddy started to tell stories about the boys, including Kamyonka and others. We passed a police radar trap along the way. Upon reaching Peshischa we travelled up side roads then some dirt roads until we came to some gates. The driver went to get the keys. The cemetery was like a dense bush. The Rabbi's tomb (actually two mausoleums) had been restored by an American. Yanki said that the Rabbi buried there were relatives of Gita. We prayed there. The tomb had no electricity. We took pictures and movies. Daddy spoke to an old man there. He was 74 and he told Daddy that before the war there were 3,000 Jews and 2,000 Gentiles. In the distance, not too far, was the synagogue. Yanki said that the synagogue was at least 400 to 500 years old. Outside was something like a leather hook where the rabbis used to sit in judgement. The son of the family who had provided us with keys came with us in the car and opened the doors to the synagogue quite easily. There was a group of children milling about outside. They kept asking for money for the 'Synagoga', so they obviously knew that we were Jewish. We were glad to pray in a synagogue that probably doesn't have too many visitors. We gave the boy a few zlotys (we had given the father \$10 U.S. earlier) as he had been quite informative and had remembered lots of details.

It was time to head back to Warsaw. We checked in at a motel near the airport. Before I forget, the driver spoke a few words of Hebrew periodically, 'Shabbas', 'Yid', were a couple. He said that in one town there were a hundred Jews. He was

the 101st Yid. And once he said that he was half a Yid. The check-in clerk kept our passports overnight, a usual practice. In the morning our driver and tour guide took us back to the airport. We shook hands with him and he thanked us profusely, saying "Tabacznik family nice family." Yanki and Daddy bought some kosher, Polish Schlivovitz at the Duty Free, some postcards of Warsaw and a Polish map.

HOME - We saw and accomplished lots during these hectic three days. Even so, there is much that I would like to ask Daddy, but I'm not sure that it is the correct thing to do. I definitely could have spent longer in Auschwitz and Birkenau, as could have Alex, whom I'm convinced will make a return visit. Daddy undoubtedly made the right decision for himself in not going to the camps. I wish that at Auschwitz there had been a 'guest book' in which to write an inscription, but maybe some things are best left alone and unsaid. Personally, it is difficult to describe my feelings. I feel physically exhausted and emotionally spent.

Daddy said that he was disappointed with his home town, that his house wasn't there, that on the property where the synagogue and mikveh stood was now a disused factory. Street names were basically the same, but the buildings that he had known from his childhood were all different. His childhood Poland was gone, but the memories were still there.

I am pleased that I made this trip. I have no doubt that the four of us, each in his own way, benefited from the trip and that it was very therapeutic for my Dad. This trip had been a very emotional, educational and enlightening experience for all of us. Daddy told us, "I'm glad I made the trip. I wouldn't have wanted to miss such an opportunity. In Krakow there were 80,000 Jews before the war, now there are 100 known Jews." We felt that we had made this trip for the sake of those 100 Jews, for the sake of our families, and so that we should never forget.

VISIT TO AUSCHWITZ

Charles, Rosalind, Julia & Paul Herman

Charles, Rosalind, Julia and Paul, are the children of David and Olive Herman. David was born in Munkacs and came to England with the Hungarian group from Prague in February 1946. Charles, an investment broker, Rosalind, a University lecturer, Julia, a textile designer, and Paul, a musician, all live with their families in London.

Wednesday 28 April 1999 is a day we will all remember. It was the day we returned with our father to revisit the start of his nightmares in Auschwitz. He arrived there in April 1944 and his first few weeks in Auschwitz II - Birkenau - signified the loss of most of his family and friends.

Paul:

For the few weeks before my family and I accompanied my father back to Auschwitz (for the first time in 55 years), I felt extremely apprehensive. Black thoughts weighed on my mind - what could it be like? How would my dad react? But I knew this journey would be important to all of us.

On the day itself I think everything was just too much to take in. Certain images have stuck in my memory, though: the notorious gates at Auschwitz with 'Work is Freedom' above them and my sisters and my father standing beneath them; the unbelievable mountains of human hair, glasses and shoes - some of which looked like shoes I might wear today. I think I'd imagined it all to resemble a world two or three hundred years old, and was shocked to find it so close to my world.

At Birkenau, where our father had actually been, things took on a more chilling realism: the train tracks and area where the 'selection' took place, where our father arrived with his family, the stables built for 52 horses where Jews were crammed in by the thousand. From these same stables, my father remembered how he had

been able to see the chimneys from his cramped top bunk through a slit in the roof. We concluded our visit standing amongst the blown up ruins of the chimneys and furnaces saying prayers for the dead. It seemed right that these massive structures had been left to decay.

Julia:

It is difficult to think about it, even now, as I write this, because it brings up such strong feelings: incomprehension; anger and disbelief. For me one of the most shocking things was actually being in the 'real' place. I could actually touch it. Walking on ground that my father's family had walked on. I remember being amazed that even here, in this most despicable place, the sky was blue, the grass was green and the birds were singing. My father told me that when he arrived there was no grass, just mud; the sky was cold and grey and with the smoke from the chimneys there were not many birds.

In one of the barracks of Auschwitz I was a long corridor covered with photographs of faces with shaven heads and prison uniforms and underneath each face was written their names, their date and place of birth, together with the dates they arrived and died in Auschwitz. Some lasted several weeks, perhaps a month, and some only a few days. I looked at all their first names, they were all so familiar, everyday names of people we all know; Rosalie, Emile, Josef, etc. These were real people with names like all of us. They were not

thick undergrowth. We are all naturally disappointed as one of the Summerfields was busy making a family tree and he was expecting some photos or information.

Our next stop was Dynow. At the cemetery we saw that Gita's relatives were buried there and one of her children, Chana Mindle, is named after her. The rest of the place is overgrown and the metal door leading into the mausoleum had been vandalised. The caretaker with the keys told us that they were planning to clean everything up. By this time we had an audience watching us wash our hands. Daddy overheard one of them say, "the Jews with the horns are here." We left the cemetery after praying there and headed for the next town.

By the time we reached Ryamow Daddy was tired and didn't come with us to the two tombs there. There was a plaque there that was donated by the Lipsitz family who Daddy knows well from London.

We now continued on to Zans. We passed an Aptka (pharmacy); Daddy recollected how when he was a child, all the pharmacies were owned and run by the government. If you went in, it was basically like going into a government office. He even remembered having to take off his cap.

Zans was a major city. We left the city centre and drove up a side (dirt) road. It was pitch black on the highways. A lot of them didn't have street lighting of any kind. We approached a large cemetery and got the keys from a neighbour. It was quite a walk up to the tomb and as it was pitch dark we used flashlights to navigate. We approached several tombs which were lit. We lit candles that we had taken from the van and said a few prayers. Yanki was amazed to find that some of Gita's relatives were buried in the tomb. There was another tomb, a new one with no hydro, a little way down on the way out to the gate. The lady opened it up for us. We didn't stay there more than several minutes as there wasn't even a

headstone on it. The lady said that 'some Rabbi' was buried there but didn't know who it was. We went back to the car, washed our hands, gave the lady \$10 for waking her up at night.

The consensus was that we should drive to Krakow. We arrived at midnight at the Central Hotel of Krakow, which was full, but the clerk helped us locate another place to stay. The next morning we visited the Synagogue in Krakow. There were lots of tourists there. We spoke to a woman from Orange, N.J., who told us that she was a pianist and she played for the movie *Shindler's List* and she had spoken with a lot of survivors. She told me that she had been to Auschwitz. Around the side of the Synagogue there was a cemetery with many graves. The Rabbi of the synagogue was a relative of Alex's. After Alex finished praying, we went to the cemetery and prayed at his 'grandfather's' grave. The synagogue itself was very impressive. I wrote an inscription in the beginning of a big prayer book, as had many other people.

AUSCHWITZ

Daddy didn't want to go to Auschwitz as he felt he had had enough. Alex and I travelled on. I asked Alex what his feeling was about going back to Auschwitz, and he said that he had no special feelings; his emotions had left him. We passed a few small towns and they were doing construction work a few miles outside the town of Oswiecim (correct spelling in Polish). We then went through the town of Osiecim and after a few minutes we turned left into the Oswiecm Museum, as it is called.

The parking lot was filled with buses, taxis, and many tourists milled around. We came in through the main entrance and visited a kiosk and bought post cards and brochures. We then proceeded to walk through the various buildings. It was emotionally draining. We watched a 15 minute movie in a large cinema

about the war camps and then examined the photos that lined the walls of the buildings. Alex took particularly long to see if he could recognise anybody; alas no. I noticed a couple with the same name as his - Klein. Tragically, I believe it was a father and son, and I gently had to coax Alex to continue as we were on a very tight schedule. I was especially sure to be very tactful and sensitive to his needs as outwardly at least he seemed to be holding up very well emotionally. One of the buildings we went into was predominantly Jewish and we saw all the 'sights' there - pictures, quotes, etc., from the Germans. Downstairs there was a chapel and a pre-recorded tape was playing a Cantor intoning the "Kel Moleh Rachamim" prayer. The prayer and the dark atmosphere was an especially moving experience. We had brought a box of candles with us and Alex lit three candles in memory of his immediate family. I also lit one. We then sat down on a bench and Alex took off his glasses and held his hand on his eye for what was approximately 10 minutes, but it seemed like an eternity. We also looked at the others who were in the chapel, mostly Jews, but also some Jehovah's Witnesses. Embellishing the chapel was a quote in Hebrew and English reading "And the people cried to G-d from the ground (earth)." At Auschwitz, we saw the most moving sights, including the cells and the starvation punishment block. Alex told me that he knows a fellow, Yiddl Stibeski, who was locked in one of those cells with three other people. He started banging on the door, screaming that he was suffocating and the SS guard opened the door and let him and the other prisoners out. No-one has ever heard anything like that before. It was a moving story. Outside the Jewish building (Block 27), there was a plaque in Hebrew and English that was erected in 1992 by Haim Herzog, the Israeli President. A woman obliged us by taking our photo and then upon learning that Alex was a survivor, told us that

it was important for him and other survivors to tell the story. We were surprised to discover that there was no guest book to sign. Upon enquiry, we learned that they only keep records of people from various countries for statistical purposes. Alex and I told the girl recording the information the names of our countries.

Birkenau was our next stop.

When we got there, we saw the infamous railway lines outside the gate. We also saw the main tower and moat, just like you see in the movies. There were hundreds of people there. We went through the main gate. The camp was huge and laid out completely differently to Auschwitz. In fact it had been called Auschwitz 2. Alex told me that the infamous chimneys were destroyed right after the war. The railway line was so sophisticated that it even had crossing points for the cars. We also saw the barracks. Realising that we had to return back to Daddy and Yanki, Alex and I were both subdued. It is hard to put into words one's feelings, emotions, etc. On our way back to Krakow, Alex and I both talked and reminisced about our past. I asked him what his feelings were about going to the camps, and if he felt in any way fulfilled. He told me that he felt closer to his family, that he was glad that he went and he would like to visit again. Upon returning to Krakow, Daddy and Yanki were waiting for us. They had walked around the town and had been to the Jewish cemetery but Daddy couldn't find anything there regarding family. There had once been 80,000 Jews in Krakow. Now there were 100, all elderly.

It was lunch time and we decided to eat at the kosher restaurant next to the synagogue. A waiter brought us a menu. I wanted to tell Daddy and Yanki about our visit to the camp, but Daddy didn't want to know. During the meal we were introduced to the shomer, a Mr Kleikn, who comes from Bnai Brak. I found out he had worked for Perl's in Toronto for a short period of time. Daddy had met him earlier and had

backsides. Anyone who cries out will get an extra five. He then instructed his subordinates to mete out the punishment.

None of us cried out.

When we left the guard house, the night shift workers were already lined up outside, waiting to be counted and searched. We joined them.

The return march to the camp was a painful one indeed, but Faivel still managed a smile, and said "That was a close shave."

From then onwards, we would march to and from work side by side.

Faivel was an amusing companion, a great optimist and full of zest.

One morning, on our way to work, he told me that the fellow next to his bunk died during the night. He wished me to move there. I readily agreed. This bunk was close to the iron stove. Winter was looming and this one stove was the sole heating in the barrack.

We now spent a lot of time telling each other about our background, family and style of life before the war. Faivel never travelled outside his home town. He was quite inquisitive about life in the big city. He made me promise that after the liberation, I would invite him to Lodz.

His father was a hatmaker. Faivel was helping him since he was 10 years old. He also helped selling the hats in the market. He further told me that he smuggled into camp, needles, cotton, and even a pair of scissors. If only he had some cloth, he sighed, he could make a hat and barter it for food.

It was my responsibility to clean the machine I was working at. For this purpose, I was allocated a bundle of pieces of cloth (wipers), none bigger than a handkerchief. For the next few months I examined every bundle carefully and at last I was rewarded with almost a whole sleeve of a tweed jacket. I hid it in my trousers.

On the way back to camp I told Faivel jubilantly what I had. He became very excited.

The moment we entered the barrack, I took it out and

handed it to him. After holding it up to the light, looking for moth holes, he examined the inside of the sleeve. Practically jumping for joy, he exclaimed: "It's wonderful. It even has enough lining for the hat."

We had little free time to spare, but the following week Faivel spent all of his planning, cutting and loosely stitching together the pieces. He procured pieces of cardboard for the crown and peak of the hat. Satisfied they all watched, he proceeded to stitch the components together properly, with great concentration, occasionally licking his lips.

It took practically another week before the hat was ready. As a finishing touch, he covered a small coin with cloth and stitched it to the top of the hat. He then made me put it on and examined it in situ. "Well, what do you think of it?" he asked. Pleased to see him happy, I answered, "This is the most beautiful hat I have ever seen!"

He sold it to one of his father's ex-customers for a bag of potatoes.

We decided to keep some of the potatoes for roasting and sold the rest in the women's camp. With the money, we bought bread and sugar.

Faivel confessed to me that this was the first time ever that he had made a complete hat. "The next one will be even better", he assured me, for we were already planning another one.

In July 1943, an epidemic of typhus broke out. Faivel contracted it in August and was interned in a barrack converted into a hospital. One day in September the Gestapo arrived and shot all internees in their beds. Faivel was one of the victims. I missed him sorely.

At the beginning of 1944, I fell ill with typhus myself and was carted off to hospital. The beds and walls were still splattered with blood.

I survived.

Ever since, I have often thought of Faivel. I feel privileged to have enjoyed his friendship. As long as I live, Faivel will live in my memory.

"KIVEH with the FIDDLE"

(A face I cannot erase from my memory)

By Sam Dresner

Sam came to England with the Windermere Group. As he was suffering tuberculosis, he was taken from Windermere to Westmorland Sanatorium just a few days after his arrival. He was subsequently transferred to Ashford-Quaremead Sanatoriums where he lived till the early fifties. He went to art school and now lives in London as an artist with his wife and family.

His name was Kiveh. Nobody knew much about him although we were only a small group of 80 people who had been rounded up from the same village Magnussew and set to work in a camp called Jedlinsk.

We nick-named him 'Kiveh mit dem fiddle' because he always carried a violin case, hugging it to his body as the handle was broken. Nobody ever heard him play it. The first thing he would do when we came back from work would be to pick up the violin case and sit there hugging it. Nobody paid him much attention.

One morning German soldiers and Lithuanian auxiliaries appeared. We were divided into two groups of 40. One group was taken out to the sand dunes outside the camp and shot. The remaining group was put on a lorry with the Germans sitting in the driving seats while the Auxiliaries were at the back of the lorry. They relieved everybody within their reach of their

watches and rings. After a while we stopped for some reason and we were driven down from the lorry on to the nearest field. The guards spotted Kiveh clutching his violin case. They tried to get it off him but he would not let go. Then they started hitting him with the rifle-butts in the arms and fingers. It seemed to have gone on for ages. His fingers were all smashed and bleeding. Eventually the case just fell from his arms. I don't know what they expected to find but when they saw it was just a violin, they stamped on it with such force that it splintered into pieces. We mounted the lorry again and were dropped in Szytowiec. The territory became Judenrein and Szydtowiec was the collection point for Treblinka. Kiveh with his smashed fingers had no chance of survival. I never found out whether he could play the violin but I will never forget his face when his violin got smashed.

PINCHAS gutter's story

Pinchas came to England with the Windermere group and lived in the Ascot hostel. He lived for many years in South Africa and now lives in Canada.

I was 10 years old when the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto took place. My father, mother, twin sister, Sabina, and I were living in a bunker at Nalewki # 49. The bunker was built in front of a building under ruins from the 1939 bombing of Warsaw.

After about two or three weeks, we were betrayed by an informer and were taken to the Umshlagplatz, then shipped, under the most bestial conditions, to Majdanek. My parents and my twin sister

perished there.

After about six weeks or so, I was sent to the factory of death, called Skarzysko Kammienne. That is where my story of the Jewish policemen begins.

Sometime in the summer of '44, the Russians were getting nearer. H.A.S.A.G., the German firm that bought us as slaves from the S.S. Jemach Shemam, decided to liquidate the camps and ship its slaves, those that could still work, to other factories that it owned.

One evening when we came back to the camp after work, we were told that we would have to appear in front of the Wachmaister and tell him our name. The Wachmaister sat in

front of a small window. You appeared before him and gave your name. He made a sign next to your name on a list that he had in front of him listing all names of the particular camp, Werk C, in Skarzysko.

Nothing happened that evening, but rumours were flying around as to our fate; we all knew that the morrow would bring us no good.

Early the next morning, we were told to go out on appel as usual, but after the counting was over, we did not go to work. We were told that those whose names were called out should leave the main group and line up on the opposite side. My name was called out amongst many of my friends. We were told that those whose names were called out would be evacuated by train and the others would march by foot to our next destination. As the names were being called out, it became quite clear that it was a selection, as all those called out were weak, yellow from Pikrina, a chemical, and dressed in rags. Suddenly there was a great murmuring and panic through the ranks of those chosen to be liquidated.

I don't remember how it started, but the ranks of the condemned broke and we started running in all directions. First, not knowing where to hide, I jumped into the place where dead bodies were put then, in great fear, I jumped out and tried to hide under the foundations of one of the barracks.

I did not lie there very long when a Jewish policeman, by the name of Katz, pulled me out. He told me that hiding there will not help. "I am going to try and help you, don't be afraid, come with me." Trembling, I followed him to the police barracks where

police and the Jewish camp administration persons lived with their wives. He made me undress completely and gave me new clothes, high boots, and rubbed lipstick into my cheeks. He said "Go out now. There will be another selection and, with G-d's help, I am sure you will make it."

Soon after this we were marshalled onto the square in front of the barracks and told to line up in rows. Nobody wanted to stand in the front and I finished up standing in the front row. Next to me was a boy with a crippled leg who was dressed in rags, the same ones like I wore before the policeman, Katz, took them off me when he gave me the new clothing. The boy's feet were wound with paper, tightened with wire like mine were before Katz gave me high boots like the police wore.

The selection started and shots were heard. A daughter did not want to let her mother go when she was selected and ran to the gate trying to pull them back. The Wachmaister shot them both on the spot.

The dreaded Wachmaister slowly made his way through the ranks of camp inmates, choosing his victims with savage satisfaction on his face. He came up to me and stared at me for what was an eternity, and then quickly turned back and pulled out the crippled boy, who was one of my friends in Skarzysko.

The guilt and relief that I felt at that time has still not left me, nor will it ever leave. I still shiver and tremble when I think of that moment. Even now, as I am writing, I am all petrified.

Once again, a Jewish policeman saved a Jewish child. I am sure there are many such instances and they should be told.

but Alex, Yanki and myself took a very short walk out in the street. We seemed to be on the outskirts of the main Lublin town and there wasn't really anything much to see. We bought postcards in the hotel store and the clerk surprised us by speaking a few words of Hebrew, "todah rabah, shalom and layla tov." I doubt that he was Jewish. My dad was awake and we talked about the day's events. He was pretty sure that the fellow who guided us from the police station in Deblin was Jewish or at least partly Jewish, as the man had said in Polish, "this is our Synagogue" and by his mannerisms. But my Dad's overall impression was the majority of Poles still looked at Jews with blatant hatred. He wondered if there were any people who hate Jews like the Poles do.

The next morning we returned to Deblin's City Hall to see if we could obtain any birth/death certificates. We noticed a fellow in a field reaping by hand. Daddy kept saying how everything had changed and we reminded him that in a small child's eyes, everything is bigger and different. It had been over 50 years since he last saw Poland and probably the buildings had been modernised. Daddy was talking freely about the roundups, about politics and the various Prime Ministers. One lady especially was renowned for trying to ban Jews from slaughtering meat. We located a woman in the City Hall who took down the information that my Dad gave her in his broken Polish. She told us that only death certificates were kept there and to come back in a couple of hours. She seemed to be very proficient and very businesslike. Anyway, we left there and drove to **Barinoff**. There in the "City Hall" the people were very nice, and took out all the journals from the cupboards (no computers here). The building was very dark and dingy and we were unable to locate any information. A lady who seemed to be in charge told us that all the records of the Jewish births were burned and the synagogue

was also burned. Daddy was obviously upset but at least he was pleased that we did all we could to try and find out. The only records that they had were from 1894 to 1907. The rest of the journals were of Christian Catholics. Daddy told the ladies that I was from Canada and Yaakov was from Israel. The ladies showed me a letter written in Polish; on the bottom of the letter was written CC: Dr J Cooper, 301 Forest Hill Road, Toronto. I intended to call him when I got back to Toronto.

We left Baronow and headed back to Deblin. As we waited for the records to be ready, we reminisced with an old fellow who approached us. He remembered Mr Kaminsky and his sister, plus other people. My dad said that he was really knowledgeable and that his family was very sympathetic to the Jews. The man told us that he had delivered bread to the houses and later to the ghetto. He also said that whenever possible, they smuggled chickens to the ghetto; people used to fight over each other for a piece of bread. We started to take his picture and capture him on video. However, as people started to notice us, he got a little apprehensive. Most people were wary of being filmed and of talking publicly. At last we returned to the City Hall and went to an office where the desks were piled up with journals. Daddy and the lady in the records department conversed. We told her that we had been to Baronow and what had transpired there. She picked up the phone and called a couple of places but it was just as we had suspected - those records had been destroyed. But she had our grandmother's death certificate. Daddy was only 11 years old when his mother died. The lady started to ask about his father, but Daddy looked at her, lifted up his hand and she knew not to pursue it further. Daddy's father perished in the camps (maybe Treblinka, not sure). Dad later told us that from the certificate he was able to learn that his older brother, who had perished in the camps, was named after his grandfather.

The certificate was an official document and we paid her the 10 zlotys. She licked the stamps and put them on the death certificate and rubber stamped it. Dad was elated. This undoubtedly was the highlight of the trip so far. On the way out of the City Hall, we saw a pump in the street, and Dad thought that this was the pump that he remembered.

We headed for **Lublin** and its Jewish cemetery, which was locked because of vandals. A woman with the keys greeted us with the word 'Shalom'. Her husband joined us; he was an original Polish Yid and spoke Yiddish. He was in Majdanek in the war. We gave him a few dollars and he showed us all the graves of the great Rabbis. It was really quite moving. The graves and the cemetery itself are really in a terrible condition. Alex and Yaakov prayed there. The fellow said that before the war, 42,000 Jews lived in Lublin and there were 36 synagogues. Now there were 18 known Jews and no synagogues. He said they called it Mini Jerusalem. Paper messages had been thrown onto the graves and candles had been lit. We then went back to the van and headed to the famous Lublin yeshiva. (Rabbi Weitzman, who married us, was a pupil there, Daddy said). It is now a nursing college. A lady who was in the building took us upstairs to the Beth Hamidrash, which was now a lecture hall. Another visitor had left a date in Hebrew on the chalk board. We gave the lady a few dollars and she went out and got the keys and took us to a small room that had an ark, lots of emblems from Israel and photocopies of the sheets from the Talmud.

When we returned back home after the trip, we learned from Rabbi Domb who had attended Lublin Yeshiva, that the yeshiva was a very cloistered community. Pupils were allowed to leave the Yeshiva for only two hours maximum and only for an exceptional reason. When you came back, they asked in great detail where exactly you went and how long you stayed at

each place. The yeshiva was very self-contained; it had an infirmary, a doctor came every week, something like a tuck shop - you could buy candies, postage stamps. There was also a laundry room, kitchen, etc., so basically there was no need for anyone to leave the building.

We continued on the way to **Lezanjsk**. We passed lots of farms, including some with satellite dishes, but some were real shacks. We visited the tomb of Rav. Melech, a very great Chassidic Rabbi, who lived just over 200 years ago. His was the biggest tomb in the world. Coach tours come from all over the world just to visit this grave, a mausoleum attached to the side of the building. His five sons are buried there also. There were others also buried there and their stones are laid flat like stepping stones. The Rabbi composed a very well known prayer that we recited; also psalms. We put notes into the cracks.

Our next stop was the cemetery in **Ladzinsk**. There were a couple of tombs (mausoleums). One Rabbi buried there was a relative to Gita, my sister-in-law. We prayed there at both tombs and left after giving the lady with the key \$5 U.S. We are now on the way again. We stopped to fill up with gas on the highway. When we came up from Rabbi Melech's tomb, we had to walk down the hill to the lady's house to wash our hands. It was a really old house that Daddy recollected and they also had an old fashioned stove that he remembered, that they all had.

In the **Tuszyn** (or **Tuchin**) Cemetery we searched for the tombs of the Summerfield family. Unfortunately there is only one mausoleum that doesn't have a plaque or inscription. We noted that people had left notes with candles and there were also prayer sheets. The lady who had the key told us that a fellow from New York had paid to have it fixed up and people came there until a year ago. It was just bushes, trees and a

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FROM THE SECOND GENERATION

A JOURNEY INTO THE PAST A BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE

By Harold Tabacznik

Harold is the son of Motel and Goldie Tabacznik. He and his Canadian wife, with their two children Barry and Danielle, live in Toronto. He is employed in sales and marketing.

August, 1996. We are four travellers about to embark on the trip of a lifetime. With great anticipation and some trepidation, my father Monty Tabacznik, brother Yanki, friend Alex Klein and I are headed to Poland. This is to be a journey of discovery and reminiscences. The following is an account of our trip.

We landed at Warsaw airport and were met by our driver, who was to also guide us through our travels. People at the airport looked at us but I'm not sure if they were staring because we were Jews or because we were tourists. We boarded an 8-seater van, presumably a luxury by Polish standards, and proceeded to drive along a 3-lane highway en route to Warsaw. My dad said that his Polish was slowly coming back, even though he didn't speak Polish at home, and he conversed nicely with the driver. We passed buildings that are common to any major city, including an IKEA store and a GE Westinghouse plant. We also passed a railway station, what appeared to be a trade centre and a Holiday Inn Hotel. Dad said that almost all the buildings were new and not too many of the old buildings were left.

Warsaw: Our first stop was the synagogue, which was quite impressive and inspiring. My brother knew the Rabbi. There were a couple of older men, including one who was acting as Shamash. My dad was very pleased that he davened in the great synagogue. The synagogue was used to having tourists - Jews and those of other religions; a caretaker

guided people in and out and asked men to cover their heads. There was also a fellow in an office who said he was the director of the synagogue. Dad recollected that the synagogue was built by a family named Nozyk at the beginning of the century. Apparently, one of the family was killed in an accident and used the insurance money to build the synagogue.

Upon leaving Warsaw, we passed a deep, dense forest. My dad told us that the Partisans hid in the forest and there were lots of forests in Poland like it.

We travelled on to Gora Kalawaria (Ger), better known as the home of the Ger Chassidic dynasty. I spotted three uniformed soldiers on the street, near an army base. We stopped to pick up our guide, Velvel, who spoke Yiddish well. We headed to the Ger Rabbi's house and synagogue. Velvel had a good memory and was good at explaining details. Apparently, there were lots of politics between him and Rabbi Joskowitz regarding the distribution of money. We then visited the cemetery and saw the graves of the great Ger rabbis. The cemetery was relatively well kept up. We lit candles there. Yaakov, my brother, threw a kvitl into the graves of the Rabbis and we recited T'hilim (Psalms). We were also taken upstairs to the Rabbi's private synagogue. There was an old-fashioned stove there. Dad said that most places had those kinds of stoves. The Rebbe baked matzah there for Pesach. Velvel told us that he lost a son, who died at 48 of a heart attack. He survived Treblinka and a

brother got to America.

We visited the town of Koziencice. There was a Jewish cemetery there and we got the key from the owner, a farmer. The farmer brought a jug of water so that we could wash our hands after we had been to the cemetery. Although it was once a huge cemetery, it was now dilapidated. The fellow tried to open the lock on the tomb of the Koziencicer maggid, but was unable. On one stone near the entrance we could read the words "Juden Raus" and saw the "SS" symbols and possibly a swastika on it. Dad also noted a gallows on the side of the wall, with the German equivalent of Jews, 'Juden', scribbled on it. We said a few prayers and left after washing our hands. We gave the fellow \$10 U.S.

Deblin: We climbed in the van and continued our voyage to Deblin. It rained constantly. On the road we passed many Catholic symbols and statues. After much detective work and some lucky breaks, we found the synagogue. We went into the police station. Daddy remembered the term for synagogue in Polish and a young fellow there (perhaps a policeman in plain clothes) said that he knew exactly where the synagogue was and he walked there with us. It was all boarded up, as was the mikvah next door. An elderly man who was passing by stopped to chat. We all got the impression that if he wasn't Jewish himself, he had good connections to Jews. He was quite knowledgeable, but also seemed very nervous and was afraid of photographs. He asked several times if we

were shooting a movie but we stressed to him that we were making a family movie and that made him feel a little easier. He said that he remembered a couple of Jews by the name of Berkowitz and Teichman so we wondered if he was any relation to Herschel Teichman (my father's brother-in-law in Montreal). We then located the Town Hall with a registry of births and deaths, but the offices were closing for the day. A lady who worked there gave us a brochure for the town. She was very pleasant. Outside the town hall we started to speak with a fellow who was walking by and we asked him about a market that Daddy seemed to remember and this fellow provided us with lots of information. Dad was especially overjoyed as most of the things he said corresponded with Dad's memory.

We then went back to the van and headed for Babienica, a small town a few km away, where there is one main monument that was put up by Mr Bubis, who was the President of the German Jewish community whose family came from Daddy's town. There were also a couple of small monuments in the ground further down in the field that were overgrown and worn. We didn't stay long as it started raining heavily.

We then proceeded to Barnow where Daddy's aunt had a store. It was dark, raining and generally very dreary. We found a brook that Daddy remembered, that was near his Auntie's store. There was no synagogue any more. It had been destroyed. Everything was rebuilt and basically new. We asked a lot of people, even elderly people who were shopping, but no-one remembered too much of anything at all.

Lublin: By general consensus, we headed for Lublin. We all agreed that it had been a fruitful, productive day and we had accomplished a lot. Our experiences had been particularly beneficial and therapeutic for Daddy. We reached our hotel and ate supper in Dad's room, watching the home movie that had been shot so far. Daddy was tired,

My name is WOLF (known as Johnny) Gutman and I was born and lived in Lodz, Poland

Johnny came to England with the Southampton group and subsequently lived in the Nightingale hostel in London.

I was one of a family of five, with parents, a brother and a sister. My father owned a textile factory in Lodz and we lived quite comfortably until the German Occupation in September 1939 - when 'hell' broke loose.

During the first days of occupation there were warnings of severe laws that were about to be introduced! The Germans instilled fear into the whole of the public in Lodz. The people had to queue for food and there were queues everywhere - in particular, the bakeries. In one bakery where I happened to be with my family, the German SS arrived and shot at us just for 'fun', killing three people. (This was a typical daily occurrence!)

Special orders were placed upon the Jews by the SS. These were:-

- Jews were not allowed to leave town.
- There was a curfew imposed on us (we were allowed outside only a few hours during daylight).
- All had to wear yellow 'Stars of David' at the front and back of our clothes.

There were daily kidnappings of Jews from the streets who were taken to SS office departments to be inflicted with atrocities of gross inhumanities! This was the situation for a few months until orders were given to leave our homes taking only belongings that we could carry, and go to a fenced-off area in Lodz - the 'ghetto'.

Here we were subjected to the most inexplicable forms of suffering. The most obvious was starvation, as food was scarce and people had very little

or no means with which to obtain it. Soon afterwards a law was introduced which forced everyone from the age of twelve to work.

The daily executions and beatings were of extraordinary proportions, i.e., the higher German Authority required from the Gestapo a daily quota of Jews to be exterminated either immediately, or to be taken to one of the gas chambers erected for that purpose. Every day there were clearances of dead bodies from all ghetto areas by a squad of eight Jews, drawing a cart - as there was no other means of transportation and Jewish labour was very cheap! In these circumstances there were occasions called 'appels' whereby the officers would order everyone in a specified area to stand in line in front of their homes to be selected and taken away in trucks, never to be seen again. There was a higher intensity of being shot in the street, therefore internal walkways (through the buildings) were created in order to save us from random executions.

Due to poor sanitation, starvation and general conditions, illness and disease was rife. As a result, many lives were lost daily from these natural causes. One such personal example concerned my brother who, because of malnutrition, contracted a swelling of fluid under the skin over his entire body. His condition deteriorated to such a dangerous level that my parents took him to hospital. They soon realised that the hospital was being used as an evacuation point for subsequent exterminations - therefore, he was brought home again. However,

the Jewish police came to take him back - my parents resisted their demands until they were told that as an alternative, they would have to arrest any other member of the family to make up the daily quota. Consequently, my father and mother took my brother back like a 'lamb taken to slaughter'. At the hospital the SS squad arrived in specially designed motorised gas chamber vans to dispose of him and others.

A few months later my mother died of grief and hunger.

During my long stay in the ghetto, I could never come to terms with the intensity of hatred and how one human being can impose such suffering on another. One example, that I have never forgotten and will remain with me forever, involved a kindergarten which adjoined our home. One day the overwhelming screams from next door turned my attention to the street. They were from mothers who were witnessing their children being cruelly loaded onto a lorry by SS officers. They were being thrown from the first and second floors like 'sacks of potatoes'. On hearing the screams, one particularly sadistic officer grabbed a child, swinging it against the wall thereby causing its head to crack open like a coconut and also shooting the mother because of the sheer noise of her horrifying screams!

In 1944 we were forced to leave the ghetto for an unknown destination. We were packed into a cattle train and stood in hundreds per truck for several days. There was no ventilation and many died from suffocation etc., during the

journey. It finally ended at Auschwitz Concentration Camp. The atmosphere was terrifying as we discovered that we had arrived at the threshold of death.

Contrary to what we were led to believe, apparently it was the main purpose of this and other camps to execute and dispose of as many Jews as possible within a minimum period of time. This was achieved by an efficiently organised system of *selections* to either work in the camp or be sent to the gas chamber. The gas chamber contained a large shower room with external signs instructing everyone to take soap on entry (this was an effective means of deception). Once all the people were in the chamber (shower room) the outside doors were sealed and poisonous gas instead of water, was released onto them. Following the completion of this process, the floor which comprised flaps would open automatically in order to drop the bodies onto railed trucks situated beneath the chamber, which transported them en-masse to the ovens. This was the fate of my father and sister.

The people who were destined to work had prison numbers tattooed on their arms and given prison uniforms. Because I was a young man, I was selected to work on a farm for the Germans. Here we were subjected to long periods of hard labour and beatings. The conditions were despicable and, with very little food, poor sanitation and inadequate heating, many people became too ill to work and were eventually executed.

In February 1945, the advancing Russian forces forced

the German army to retreat from Poland and therefore were compelled to take all prisoners to a German concentration camp located hundreds of miles away. The journey to Germany began with the 'infamous' DEATH MARCH: any sign from the prisoners of inability to walk would give the SS guards cause to murder the individual immediately - and there was a continuous line of dead bodies each side of the road.

Food rations were scarce, our clothes were thin and with the severe frost (minus 25-30°) it was a miracle that a few hundred people survived the journey out of so many thousands. The Death March ended over the German border where an open-truck train was waiting to take us to Buchenwald. Due to damaged railway lines, the train was forced to make several detours and therefore we were many days travelling. I protected myself from the cold by using dead bodies for cover.

The conditions here were much worse than the last camp. The barracks held over 1,000 men, with up to 60 forced to sleep on a bunk normally for 20. Because of these conditions, the extreme cold and the inhuman sanitary facilities, people were dying in hundreds and bodies were heaped in mounds outside the barracks every day.

Roll call took place at 4.00 or 5.00am each day. This involved standing for about 2 hours in the freezing cold (which was normal procedure) before the head count was conducted. Then all of us were counted several times over, in order to ensure accuracy of inmate totals. Afterwards, selection took place for work to clear the bomb debris in the nearby town of Weimar, where we worked with our bare hands from dawn to dusk.

After one month we were transported to Bisigen where the atrocious living and working conditions were beyond human imagination! Every day there was a two mile march to the oil mines. Our

thin prison uniforms made it impossible to stand in mud up to thigh level carrying extremely heavy metal pipes (normally the workload performed by a crane!). These were taken to where oil was being extracted from rock by a process of heating. However, due to the intolerably heavy workload, there were daily slave-labour replacements to take account of the numbers of death losses.

The last camp that I was sent to was Dachau, where the Germans concentrated us for their final solution - mass extermination.

Around April/May time, German authorities became aware that American forces were advancing into Germany to take control. It was in their interest, therefore, to destroy all of the evidence of 'genocide'. They deployed the last train from Dachau to take the bulk quantity (of many thousands) of prisoners destined for execution, into the Tirol mountains. Here was sited a huge machine - a mechanical means of disposing bodies and the remains of which were dropped into a lake in the mountains. While we were still on the train, we observed the German surrender and miraculously the Americans liberated us from the 'clutches' of murder.

We were taken to an American liberation camp in Feldafing in Bavaria where a 'de-licing' process took place, clean clothes were distributed and nourishing food was in plentiful supply. The American authority helped us settle into ordinary civilised living, and everybody began to seek their roots - searching for family or friend connections by various means of communications.

From the American Zone I travelled to the British Zone and registered for American emigration in order to be with the rest of my mother's family. However, due to limited transportation, I was sent to London (on a temporary basis) and still live here with my own family today.

ARTHUR SZYK

1894 - 1951

By Michael Lee (Lewkowicz)

Michael was brought to England by his family and has been a member of our Society for many years.

I was born in Lodz at Srodmiejska 30. When I was eight or ten years old, I remember going up to a top-floor flat at Srodmiejska 20 where I saw men and papers strewn about. Somebody dropped a bottle of methylated spirit which burst into flames. It was quickly put out. This memory and the name of Arthur Szyk has remained with me on and off for years.

About two years ago, I mentioned this in passing to my friend Lili Pohlman. She told me she knew Szyk's daughter Alexandra and that she was living in Florida and Lili gave me her address.

By chance, my wife Ivy and I were going to Florida to stay with some friends who happened to live near Alexandra. I wrote to Alexandra and arranged to visit her and meet some of her family. Alexandra and I got on well. She told me that she had lived for some time at Srodmiejska 20 with her grandmother whilst her parents were travelling. On my return to London I started to search for information to find out more about Arthur Szyk.

ARTHUR SZYK was born on June 3 1894 in Lodz, Poland. Between 1909 - 1913 he studied art in Paris and Krakow. In 1914 he visited Palestine on a scholarship to paint and became a lifelong Zionist. In 1919/1920, he served in the Polish army as an officer in the war against the Bolsheviks.

In 1926 Szyk began his 2½ year project, illuminating the 45-page 'Statute of Kalisz', the 13th century Bill of Rights for the Jews of Poland, or 'Jewish Magna Charta'. For this the Polish Government awarded him the Golden Cross of Merit. Kalisz was one of the oldest Jewish settlements in Poland. In 1264 the Kehillah received one of the first charters granted in Poland from Grand Duke Boleslav the Pious. It was confirmed by King Casimir the Great in 1334, and by King Casimir the Jagellon in 1447 and 1467. This work is now in the Jewish Museum in New York City.

In 1932 Szyk toured Poland with an exhibition of his works sponsored by the Polish Foreign Minister Zalewski but at a lower level one director of

the Arts Department said the Jews should have no place in the artistic life of Poland.

In 1933 there was an exhibition in London of his work at the International Art Gallery, 33 St James's Street. It included 123 examples in all. The art critics of 'The Times', 'Daily Mail' and 'Jewish Chronicle' were enthusiastic. In 'The Times' of June 1st 1933, their critic referred to the works as "highly accomplished craftsmanship. The artist shows great fertility of invention as well as remarkable powers of execution. His works derive from the early Renaissance rather than the Gothic tradition of illumination with the fully realised pictorial composition taking the leading place."

In Poland he did a series of miniatures relating to the history of the American Revolution which President Moscicki sent to President Roosevelt. These are now among the prized possessions of the FD. Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park, USA.

Szyk's most famous work is perhaps his 'Haggadah'. Produced in 1937, it was

modernising, liberating force. That was clearer to me than it had been before. It also became clearer to me that before that all successful revolutions of this kind - I do not mean the imposition by military means in advanced states, like Czechoslovakia - but where they have actually happened, they happened in peasant societies. When the revolutions of pre-bourgeois societies happen, they sow the seed of their own backwardness. They perpetuated the gap between themselves and bourgeois societies. Of course, there is always an initial burst of modernisation, when the newly-installed regimes, trying to catch up with capitalism, often quite successfully achieve what may elsewhere be brought about by capitalism: the creation of an industrial structure, universal literacy, the establishment of medical services. But once that had been done, the rulers of these revolutionary states did not know where to go next. Their

only idea was to manufacture more steel, to put up more prefabricated council flats and have bigger collective farms. This is a recipe for disenfranchising the individual and for the disintegration of civil society, which depends on a legal system that protects privacy, encourages autonomous associational life and tolerates a plurality of life-styles and career plans.

What can we learn from this brief retrospect of a century? Instead of offering you my own words, let me end by quoting from two writers who have, in my view, best plumbed the mystery and the tragedy of our age. The first is Primo Levi,

"It is... necessary to be suspicious of those who seek to convince us with means other than reason, and of charismatic leaders; we must be cautious about delegating to others our judgment and our will. Since it is difficult to distinguish true prophets from false, it is as well to regard

all prophets with suspicion. It is better to renounce revealed truths, even if they exalt us with their splendour or if we find them convenient because we can acquire them gratis. It is better to content oneself with more modest and less exciting truths, those one acquires painfully, little by little and without shortcuts, with study, discussion and reasoning, those that can be verified and demonstrated."

The passage comes from *If This is a Man*, surely the most truthful book to have been written about the heart of darkness that is the middle decades of our century. My second author is Albert Camus. *The Plague*, published in 1947, is at one level a moving account of a plague outbreak in a North African town, but at another - considering who wrote it and when - an obvious allegory of the agonies France and Europe had just gone through. The hero and narrator, Doctor Rieux, setting down an account

of the epidemic as the survivors are celebrating their liberation from it, reflects that

"The tale he had to tell could not be one of a final victory. It could only be the record of what had to be done, and what would assuredly have to be done again in the never-ending fight against terror and its relentless onslaughts... He knew what the jubilant crowds did not know but could have learnt from books that the plague bacillus never dies or disappears for good; that it can lie dormant for years and years in furniture and linen chests; that it bides its time in bedrooms, cellars, trunks and bookshelves; and that perhaps the day would come when, for the bane and enlightening of men, it roused up its rats again and sent them forth to die in a happy city."

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your attention.

How Michael Sturtzer saved £21,000

When Michael Sturtzer from Hertfordshire decided it was time to make a Will, he came to KKL Executor & Trustee Company. He wrote to us afterwards to say how impressed he was with the expert legal advice he received and with the fact that, since he was supporting JNF in his legacy, the service was free of charge.

Michael's estate will save £21,000 in legal fees alone through KKL acting as Executor. Michael also avoided expensive mistakes and made sure that his family, friends and favourite charities, rather than the tax man, benefitted from his Will.

Call me, Harvey Bratt, for a free booklet about making or changing your Will or to arrange a free meeting.



Harvey

Freephone 0800 358 3587

(Figures based on average estate value administered by KKL. Name and identifying details have been changed to protect confidentiality)
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delivered to the addressee since she was no longer at that address. Well, we knew where the next destination was and we knew that the postman didn't call there. Now this had a very traumatising effect on my, not only because of the loss of a relative who was very close to me, but because I discovered something about myself that I had not previously suspected or perhaps had tried to hide from myself. I discovered that I was capable of hate. I discovered within myself the thoughts that were expressed many years later, much more eloquently, by the poet Paul Celan in his *Death Fugue* (written in German).

Der Ted ist ein Meister aus
Deutschland
Sein Auge ist blau
Er trifft Dich mit bleierner
Kugel
Er trifft Dich genau.

Death is a master from
Germany
His eyes are blue
He strikes you with leaden
bullets
His aim is true.

It took me some years to recover from this state of mind, to accept the much wiser counsel that Edmund Burke had offered at the time of the War of American Independence - "I do not know", he said "the method of drawing up an indictment against a whole people."

The war came to an end, though it was, of course, succeeded by another war, better known as the Cold War, and I won't take you through the 50s, or the 60s, the 70s and the 80s, you will be relieved to hear, with the exception of one incident which, again, illustrated, or reinforced, everything I had learned up to then. It had to do with what Milan Kundera called the kidnapping of Central Europe. In 1969, one year after the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia, I was invited to a conference in Prague, and this was before the impact of the invasion had registered, so that my hosts were, in fact, those who had

been the principal participants in the Prague Spring. One of my fellow delegates had the good fortune to be a violinist and one of the advantages of being an amateur musician is that you can carry around with you a world-wide register of amateur musicians, so that wherever you may find yourself, if you have an evening to spare and you feel like scraping together a quartet, you pick up the phone. That is all you have to do. An extraordinary feature of this register is that it did not respect the Iron Curtain; whether you were in Warsaw or Cracow or Prague or Budapest, you could pick up the phone and spend an evening playing Haydn, Schubert or Mozart. So we made contact with musicians in Prague, rang them up, got instructions, trailed along endless streets lit by 40-watt lamps, while looking in a rather shame-faced way at our contraband street plans, rang the bell, were invited in. And after half an hour's rather perfunctory Haydn, we got down to the real business of the evening, which was to discuss the condition of post-Spring Czechoslovakia, and we talked into the small hours. There is one sentence that one of the Czechs uttered that has stayed lodged in my mind. He said - 'For 30 years we have had to tell our children that in order to survive, they need to lie, and at last, we thought, we would be able to give them the good news that from now on they would be permitted to tell the truth. But now it's all over and we have to go back to the old message.' This statement touched me not only because of its inherent pathos and because it reminded me of my own experiences 30 years earlier, but because it was an almost exact repetition of that conversation between Joseph K. and the priest in the porch of the church of Prague. 'It is not necessary to accept everything as true', the priest said, 'one must only accept it as necessary.' 'A melancholy conclusion', Joseph K. replies. 'It turns lying into a universal principle.' Well, Czechs, Poles, Germans, Hungarians, had to

wait another 20 years before this was no longer the case. As I sat before my television set in 1989, watching one Bastille after another being stormed, I reflected that I was surely witnessing the most important events since 1945, possibly since 1917 - probably more important than 1917. I was witnessing the end of an ancient heresy, which had covered one part of Europe or another for something like 60 years. I use the term to totalitarianism to describe this advisedly, even though it can be used by some for propagandist purposes, and is rejected by others because it can be abused propagandistically. Yet I would defend its use, because we need a term for a type of regime that differs essentially from other forms of political oppression, such as despotism, tyranny or dictatorship. It attempts more, it demands more and, if successful, it achieves more. But it isn't quite as simple as that. What totalitarianism regimes have in common is their need to oppress. But beyond that, I think we need to ask: what are the objects of this particular variant of totalitarianism? What is the ideology in the service of which the terror is exercised? What effect does this have on the nature of the state and of society? What distinguishes the variants of totalitarianism from each other? And what effect does each variant have on our experience, on our consciousness?

Let me deal with Nazism first: What is Nazism and what did Nazism stand for? It stood for conquest, plunder and murder. But it had, principally, a very primitive programme. What it needed for implementation was an effective military machine, a pliant bureaucracy and a plentiful supply of labour. All of these were available. It is also evident that a system of government based on these principles is inherently unstable, which is one of the reasons why it did not last more than twelve years. Communism, it is evident, differs from Nazism in important respects. It calls itself

forward-looking. Its advocates and supporters proclaim that they want to make everybody happy, provided only that they accept the programme. And that is why I think that the end of Communism had a different effect from the end of Nazism. The end of Nazism brought about a reconstruction of the liberal order that had preceded it. The end of both Communism and Nazism had the effect that most people have been inoculated against to liberating the repetition of this kind of regime. Surviving sympathisers have in common that they are isolated and, I am sure, will stay isolated for ever. I do not think there could ever again be a regime like that of the Third Reich, whatever other unpleasant regimes may arise. The end of Communism, however, was different, because Communism had an older intellectual lineage. The end of Communism was the end of a particular kind of optimistic Utopia, the hope and the belief that a state based on scientific principles, pursuing rational policies, could succeed in bringing about universal happiness. I think that to embark on that particular investment, to believe in that particular great ray of hope, is now very difficult, even if not impossible. But insofar as there is a lesson to be learnt from the collapse of Communism, it is that one should not expect too much from politics but, far more, that one should resist the temptation to rest all one's hopes in one single programme for the improvement of mankind, because that fails to take account of the variety of human nature and the variety of human needs. That is why fewer people forecast the demise of Communism. The suddenness of the demise of Communism left the same legacy everywhere of a disrupted society, of a polluted environment, a corrupt bureau, of a system in which the abuse of power was the guiding principle. All of which has burdened the successor states. All of this convinced me that the one thing that Communism was not, was not capable of being, was a

inspired by the beautiful old illuminated *'Haggadah'* which are the prized possessions of museums and libraries in Europe and America. The *Haggadah*, illustrated and written in Hebrew on vellum and beautifully bound in leather, was translated by Cecil Roth, the famous English-Jewish historian. The engravers employed needed two years to complete the half-ton plates because of the exacting delicacy of Szyk's design. The first copy of this gigantic book, of which only 240 copies were printed at the price of 100 guineas each, was dedicated to King George VI. I was privileged to view this first copy at Windsor Castle and I have seen a copy of a letter from the then Librarian of Windsor Castle, dated 8th March 1941, written to the publishers, Beaconsfield Press, which states 'it is no mere form of words to say that the King was immediately impressed with the beauty both of the illustrations themselves and the dazzling success with which you have been able to reproduce them.'

In 1939 Szyk worked as a freelance cartoonist, turning his attention to anti-fascist cartoons, satires and caricatures, to fight oppression and tyranny. In 1940 he arrived in New York to take up residency. Newspapers there reported that Hitler had placed a price tag on Szyk's life.

In 1943 Szyk's mother was taken from the Lodz Ghetto and killed in Maidanek concentration camp.

At the end of the war, Szyk returned to the art of illumination and book illustrations. In 1948 he illuminated the *'Declaration of Establishment of the State of Israel'*. During the same year he received American citizenship.

He was in the midst of a commission from the Canadian Government to make illustrations for a history of the Canadian Commonwealth when, on September 13 1951, he died of a heart attack at the age of 57. He will be remembered as a modern 'sofer' of the first rank, a gentleman and a Jew.

HERE AND NOW

LETTERS FROM SCHOOLS

By Leon Rosenberg and Harry Fox

Both Harry and Leon came to England with the Windermere group in August 1945. Harry lived in the Loughton and Belsize Park Hostel and Leon in the Cardross Hostel in Scotland. Both, like many of our members, are now retired and devote much of their time in talking to pupils at schools. We publish two letters of the many they receive, which amply show the kind of impact they make on those to whom they speak about their experiences.

HABERDASHERS' ASKE'S SCHOOL FOR GIRLS
Aldenham Road, Elstree, Herts WD6 3BT

HEAD MISTRESS:
Mrs P A Penney, BA, FRSA, FIMgt, MInstD

7 May 1999

Leon Rosenberg
151 Ordnance Road
ENFIELD
Middlesex EN3 6AE

Dear Mr Rosenberg,

Thank you very much indeed for coming to speak to our girls last week. It was, for all who came, an unforgettable occasion. The atmosphere and attention you evoked from the audience was unique; you held the fascinated attention of everyone who was there in a way that is I think unique in all my experience of inviting visitors to speak. Your words were profoundly moving, yet never sensationalist, and your story has deeply affected those who heard you, many of whom are still wanting to talk about it in lessons.

We are extremely grateful to you for your time, and for your willingness to share those unique and horrific memories with us. Your message of tolerance, and your rejection of hatred was clear and unmistakable - and sorely needed in these dark times. Perhaps the best way we can respond to your visit is in carrying that message with us to all we meet.

Thank you again.

Yours sincerely,

Patrick Moriarty

95 Barnston Road
Heswall
Wirral L60 1UA

Dear Mr Fox,

I was fortunate enough to be in the audience for your lecture last Friday at Birkenhead School, and am writing to you for two reasons. Firstly to thank you for coming to talk to us, and secondly to tell you just how moved I was by your lecture. After hearing your amazing story, I took the liberty of speaking to some of my colleagues in the sixth form, and they all join me when I say how grateful we are to have heard your story.

I am a pupil in the Upper Sixth Form, and am studying German, Music and Frenchy for A-Level. Next year, I hope to go to Germany, in order to gain more knowledge of the language.

I have sat through approximately fifty lectures during my time at Birkenhead School, and I can safely say that yours was by far the most interesting and informative lecture that I have ever been to.

On behalf of all the sixth form, and especially myself, thank you once again for coming to talk to us, and I hope that you can continue telling your story to many more young people.

With kind regards,

Michael Scott
Senior Prefect
Birkenhead School

Two of "THE BOYS" - Alec and Ivor

By David Ryde

Dr David Ryde is the brother-in-law of Ivor Perl. He has been a keen supporter of our Society since the days of the Primrose Club. He has written and lectured extensively about the benefits of a vegetarian diet. He lives with his wife Marian in Oxford.

Mengele selected you both as slaves
In the stench of furnace and gallows,
In Auschwitz one could barely survive
And the scantiest of hope soon froze.

In the death camps of the Nazi task masters
All anguished in their own hunger and dread,
Merely machines for the grimmest of labour
And, beaten and starved most dropped dead.

How did you survive such harshness
Where parents and seven sibs perished,
When all you possessed was skin, bone and luck
And the Jewish tradition you cherished?

Luck was the real way to stay alive
But a sure heart beat strong in your breast,
Tragedy engulfed most relations and friends
But fate saw you through every test.

Six million souls were consumed by fire
And nine Perlmutter's, save Alec and Ivor,
Yet revisionists dare call the Holocaust a hoax!
I salute you and every Auschwitz survivor.

June 98

ESTHER BRUNSTEIN

Esther is the sister of Perce Zylberberg. She was liberated in Belsen and then sent to Sweden. She joined Perce in England in 1947. She has written and talked eloquently about her experiences.

On the morning of December 10th I found myself in New York both excited and quite nervous as ahead of me lay the daunting prospect of speaking to a large audience at the United Nations that very afternoon.

The occasion was the 50th anniversary (to the day) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The initiative of marking this special day at the very place where the Declaration was affirmed, came from Vanessa Redgrave, the well known actress, on behalf of International Artists against Racism.

My involvement with Vanessa Redgrave dates back to the summer of 1993; a time when the National Front was getting far too much media attention and a war of ethnic cleansing raged in Yugoslavia. I was quite busy then with public speaking, mostly on an Anti Nazi League platform as they were the most outspoken organised group against the National Front at that time.

The actress Miriam Karlin was quite involved with the Anti-Nazi League and, when asked by Vanessa if she knew a survivor speaker, she put her in touch with me.

So I got to know Vanessa Redgrave, who I found to be a charming, unaffected and easy-going person. She was then in the midst of organising a special event in Manchester in aid of UNICEF Emergency Appeal for children of former Yugoslavia. Many well known personalities from the acting profession, among them Daniel Day Lewis, Corin Redgrave, Anthony Andrews, Robbie Coltraine, as well as artists from Sarajevo, gave their services free. I was

invited to speak about my experiences of life in the Ghetto and concentration camps and read a Yiddish poem relevant to the occasion. The theatre was packed to capacity, the atmosphere electric. Three Rabbis and other religious leaders also spoke on behalf of their communities. Vanessa Redgrave chaired the day. Altogether it was a most meaningful experience.

On and off since then I have kept in touch with Vanessa and sometimes participated in events she organised.

Way back in January 1998 she told me of her plan to organise the special 50th anniversary event at the UN and invited me to take part. Although a bit apprehensive at first, I am very grateful for having been asked. For me it was an unforgettable and moving experience and, I think, the events of the day have made quite an impact on the 750 strong audience, among them many ambassadors to the UN from different countries. Focus of the day was the Worldwide Right to Asylum.

Being there afforded me the opportunity of meeting many interesting people and, more importantly, listening to people like Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Yevgeny Yevtushenko, the famous Russian poet, author of Babi Yar. Vanessa Redgrave is an incredible woman who is concerned and deeply cares about injustice in our society. I know that she does all in her power to come to the aid in many different ways to those in need. Long may she continue in good health to carry on in her important work.

asked, 'What is all this about?' and what I was told did not mean anything to me. It is as if my life and the events that I heard and saw were happening on different planets, as if 'out there' there was a world that was mysterious, incomprehensible and, at times, exciting, but I myself was enclosed in a world bounded by my building bricks, my train set or, at the most, by the little park by the Danube where I exercised first my tricycle, then my sister's pram and then my scooter and where one day in 1938 the benches bore stencilled signs that said 'For Aryans only', but I don't think we took much notice. A very eminent social scientist has pointed out that children observe but do not necessarily connect. Children in my experience are highly observant. They swap observations for the obvious reason that everything is new to them, whereas the older we get, the more blasé we get. That, I think, is the reason why I still have clear recollections of these disconnected events.

Well, when did I begin to make sense of what I had seen as a child? My learned colleague, Fritz Stern, for many years Professor of History at Columbia University, has written that his political education began on January 30th 1933, when he was not yet quite seven years old. Another colleague of mine, now in America, Peter Gay of Yale University, in a recently published book "My German Question", which I do recommend to all of you and which relates his life in the first five years that he spent in Nazi Germany, tells a different story. It is a record of organised escapism. He took to collecting stamps, he became keen on sports and athletics and his hero was, of course, Jesse Owens. He also, and this I suppose is the final resort for a truly alienated youth, became an Arsenal supporter.

My political education began - I know the exact date - on March 12th 1938, the day of the Anschluss. It began when my parents explained to me that from now on easy times

were over. I had to be careful of what I said and to whom I said it, that I could trust nobody, neither neighbours, nor strangers, neither fellow students nor teachers. Not because they were necessarily enemies, but because at this stage it was impossible to know who was and who was not, because it was safest to assume that anybody was an enemy, unless proved to be otherwise. In other words, I noticed that for the time being my childhood was over. In order to survive, I had to behave like an adult.

I lived under Nazi rule for a little under a year, but managed to leave Austria with my family just before the outbreak of the war - a more fortunate way of escaping from the Third Reich than many of those in this room experienced. I still remember the enormous feeling of relief as the train in which we travelled crossed the frontier from Germany into the Netherlands and Dutch passport officers entered our compartment. I felt that, for the moment at least, my world was once more safe. It was, truly, a liberation.

And so I arrived in England, not knowing a word of the language, never having heard of the expression 'culture shock', but I certainly experienced new sights, new impressions; double-decker buses, black taxis, red phone boxes, red pillar boxes but, perhaps most curious of all, the uneven York stone paving slabs that are characteristic of the side streets of NW6. But there was an even more impressive change. It was clear from that moment onwards that I no longer had to watch what I said, or to whom I said it; that it was no longer necessary to assume that any stranger or neighbour, any fellow pupil or teacher, was an enemy but, on the contrary, it was once more safe to assume that anybody not proved to be an enemy was a friend. So I was once more able to revert to being a child. Of course my political education continued and became more intense with the outbreak of the war. Initially, the war for me was, I suppose, as for any male

teenager - a picture show. It was exciting. There were dog fights overhead. There were newsreels of sea battles, of submarines and aircraft carriers. There were multi-coloured maps with flags on pins that one could move backwards and forwards. Newspapers and the radio gave daily information of the fortunes of the war.

These events for the moment took my mind off my more personal concerns. The first lesson that I had learnt on arriving, the first lesson to be drawn from my experience, that I could once more go about in a carefree way, not to be careful what I said to them. Only those who have lived in a police state can know what it is like not to live in one. But let me return to the war, which affected me in two important ways.

For all that I regarded the war as an exciting occurrence, for all that my father had served in the Austro-Hungarian army during the First World War with distinction, for all this, I had grown up in an atmosphere, in a family ideology which, while not exactly pacifist, assumed that to resort to violence, and to attempt to resolve disputes in this way, was uncivilised. This proposition presented me with a moral challenge. How could one both disapprove of violence and yet relish following the course of the war? The lesson I learned from that is that for all kinds of reasons which became clear to me only later, I could not be a pacifist, that I could not accept the proposition that to engage in war was the absolute evil greater than any others, that, on the contrary, the world was not an ideal place divided into absolute good and absolute bad, but rather into shades of grey; that for most of the time the moral choices one needs to make are between lesser and greater evils, that, under certain circumstances, to resort to war meant averting an even greater evil.

Although we had friends who were pacifists and although pacifist propaganda and pacifist newspapers were freely available during the war, I found myself encouraged when

one day I did what I did on most days on the way home from school, namely, to call in at the public library, which was my first university. There I read an article by George Orwell in which he asked the inconvenient question whether to be a pacifist in the circumstances in the Second World War was not to amount to being objectively on the side of fascism. I was reminded of this again when Michael Tippett died not long ago, and when most of the obituaries praised him for his moral courage, his willingness to face imprisonment in order to stay true to his principles as a Conscientious Objector. And I am all for sticking to principles, but I also have to revert to the question that I first asked myself in the early 1940s - "Suppose more people had thought and acted like him, would this have resulted in less killing or in more?"

That was the first question. The second was even more disturbing. My immediate family had managed to come to England, others to the United States, to South America and, in one or two cases to Palestine. The older generation - grandparents, great aunts, great uncles - had not managed to do so. They were too old, too unadaptable. Some of them died natural deaths, natural deaths which were no doubt accelerated by the stresses under which they were living. Others were deported to the ghettos of Poland. I remember in particular a favourite great-aunt of mine with whom we were able, thanks to the International Red Cross, to carry on a correspondence. Every two months one could send a message of 25 words handed in at a Red Cross Office and a few months later one would get a reply of 25 words. This was reassuring to the extent that it was proof that the much loved relative was still alive. On September 4th 1942, I sent off a message, wishing my aunt many happy returns. The reply form came back, datemarked 12th February 1943, with a blue stamp from the Polish Red Cross to tell me that the letter could not be

Annual Memorial Service

Our Annual Memorial Service, in honour of our families who perished in the prime of their lives during the Holocaust, took place on Sunday 5th September 1999 - 24th Ellul 5759 at the Borehamwood and Elstree Synagogue.

The Service was attended by many of our members, their children and grandchildren, and was officiated by Rabbi Alan Plancey, the Rabbi of the Synagogue. The guest speaker was the Chief Rabbi, Professor Dr Jonathan Sacks, who spoke eloquently, impassionately and with great poignancy. He made a deep impression on our members who appreciated very much the sentiments he expressed about them. The atmosphere was greatly enhanced by having the Service conducted with appropriate solemnity and dignity by one of The Boys, Solly Irving.

Taken at the Hahnasat Torah at the Elstree and Borehamwood Synagogue May 1995.



MONTEFIORE MEMORIAL LECTURE

THE 23RD LEONARD G MONTEFIORE MEMORIAL LECTURE
LOOKING BACK ON THE CENTURY

Given by Professor Peter Pulzer

Peter Pulzer is Gladstone Professor of Government and Public Administration and Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. He is an outstanding lecturer and author of many works.

It gives me the greatest pleasure to be here this evening on the occasion of the 23rd Leonard G Montefiore, whom I knew. I did not know him through his work for the '45 Aid Society, since I fortunately don't qualify for membership for that, but I did know him in one of his many other capacities and that is as the rescuer and presiding genius of the Wiener Library, which he not only helped financially and morally, he also took an enormous interest in its day to day work, and frequently turned up at the library. I met him on many occasions and we talked about my work in which he was genuinely interested and on which he was genuinely well informed. So, for that reason in particular, I am grateful for the opportunity of being here this evening.

Now, I chose the title of my talk deliberately because I don't think one can, in 40 or 50 minutes give a meaningful history of the century. What

one can do, and what I shall try to do, is to give one's own retrospective of it. A little bit of autobiography, a little bit of subjective retrospect and a little bit of personal conclusion in the hope of stimulating some thoughts about the years and the decades that we have lived through. Above all, to say something of the lessons that I hope I have learned from my teaching and my research. If one had been predestined to reflect on the course of the 20th century, one could have done worse than to be born, as I was, the wrong side of the Danube Canal in Vienna, some months before Black Friday, when the meltdown of the New York Stock Exchange triggered the meltdowns in the markets of most of the countries of the world. This is not so much because my own family suffered directly from these effects. We did not have any bullion to stash away in the vaults of Swiss banks, we did not have any Old Masters that we might one day try and retrieve from some of the distinguished museums of various continents. While poverty is a grave disadvantage, there is also some convenience in not being too well off. But indirectly, that event in New York affected many of us, it affected us because of its consequences. It had political consequences in those European states in which there was little support for democracy, in which liberal institutions had been rather superficially implanted after the First World War and where, as it turned out, they were not strong enough to withstand the storms that followed from the economic and social dislocation. They did not have

the sort of defence that could withstand the Depression in Britain or the United States. That period, the first decade and a half, was characterised by politics, by public acts, that were predominantly intolerant, violent and destructive. I wouldn't pretend that by the age of 4 or 5 I was already a potential Gladstone Professor at Oxford, but I do have memories of that period which are quite clear, because most people have clear memories of most of the incidents of their childhood. My memories of those years are of isolated incidents, incidents which began to make sense only many years later when I had the opportunity to talk to my parents and other contemporaries. What did I see? What did I hear? The window of the drawing room in our flat overlooked in the distance, over a lot of waste ground, the municipal flats of the Karl Marx Hof. One day, I could see smoke billowing from these flats and fire caused by the ammunition of Chancellor Dollfuss' militia in the civil war in Austria in February 1934.

Some months later, I heard the bell of St Stephen's Cathedral booming from the radio and when I asked the reason for this, I was told that this was the funeral of Chancellor Dollfuss, who had been murdered by the Nazis several days before.

I went to the cinema from time to time and in between the Mickey Mouse films and the other entertainment that was considered suitable for my tender eyes and ears, were the newsreels, which showed violence in Ethiopia, violence in Spain, violence in China. I

Speech for UN 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

By Esther Brunstein

I am honoured to be here today. Thank you, Vanessa, for inviting me to participate in this important event which marks the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

For the record: I am not a politician, nor a diplomat, no historian, writer or academic. I am, however, part of a fast diminishing group of people known as "survivors".

Yes, I am a Jewish Holocaust survivor of the Lodz Ghetto, Auschwitz, a forced labour camp and Belsen, and by this token I am very rich in the experience of suffering, pain and loss; loss of my mother, father, brother, all my aunts, uncles and cousins, countless friends, as well as the loss of the life I was born into. A life which had meaning, shape and colour and a way of life that imbued me with a sense of love for life and humankind.

Most disturbing is the knowledge that those responsible for such heinous crimes under the Nazis were people from a culture that gave birth to giants in every sphere of creativity - some of the finest thinkers and philosophers, musicians, writers, artists and scientists. If the same nation can give rise to such extremes of human behaviour, we must always be aware that this is potentially true for all nations, for all people.

No matter how bitter this universal truth is to swallow, the more that we know it in our hearts and minds, the sooner we might recognise the power of evil before it takes hold.

More than half a century on, I still cannot come to terms

with, let alone comprehend, the calculated destruction of the life I knew.

So maybe I have a qualification after all - a qualification that could equal a PhD in endurance and in the determination to retain a sense of what is important and in an obdurate refusal to become demoralised. On this special day I wish to add my voice to the International Artists against Racism, along with all those who cherish and uphold the principles of justice and freedom, to speak out in defence of the worldwide right to asylum.

Maybe if together we shout loud enough we will be heard and move those in power to act with wisdom and compassion to lessen the plight and misery of asylum seekers who hope to find shelter in safe lands. Except for the very few, it was almost impossible for the oppressed to escape the persecution and ultimate horror of the Nazi gas-chambers in war-torn Europe. It is now well documented that many, many lives could have been saved. It is also well known that even after liberation, survivors, like myself, alone and traumatised, had to face yet more obstacles before being able to find some semblance of peaceful settlement in new lands.

My brother Perec, who, I am happy to say, is here in the audience today, is the only other survivor, apart from myself, of our entire family. He too was in the Lodz Ghetto, in Buchenwald and Theresienstadt where he was eventually liberated by the Russians. At this time, England had offered to take in 1000 youngsters

under the age of sixteen. It is an irony that only 732 could be found. My brother Perec, who was a little older, had to lie about his age in order to qualify for entry into England.

The Jewish Relief Committee, the Joint Distribution Committee of America and the Central British Fund helped organise and finance this undertaking.

When Perec and I learned of each other's survival, we longed to be together. But this was no easy process.

Following liberation from Belsen, I was taken to Sweden where I gradually regained some physical strength. One would have thought that after surviving this unparalleled tragedy, help and support to unite the remnants of families might have been forthcoming. But no. Strict rules were in operation and no visas were issued to anyone without visible means of support. I wonder what means of support were expected of us, having lost all but our lives in the most literal sense. I waited two more long and lonely years before I was able to come to England in 1947 on a special permit - as a domestic worker. And even for this, my brother had to find a sponsor to guarantee that I would not be dependent on the state.

So I arrived in England as a maid to an elderly couple. But what I wanted more than anything else at the time, was to be given a chance to gain some formal education so that I might eventually choose the kind of work which would be fulfilling. So while we're at it, I could add another loss to my list - and that is the total loss of

formal secondary education during the stolen years of my adolescence. It still bothers me.

It was only after my marriage, two years later, that I was given residency rights in England.

Half a century later we ask: Have things changed for the better? Is life made any easier for refugees and asylum seekers? Does our behaviour today, fifty years on, reflect insights gained and lessons learned from the horrors of the past?

We must not remain silent or indifferent to people's suffering as they flee from oppressive regimes, often with the threat of death over their heads.

It took me a long time to find my voice. Ghettos, concentration camps and gas chambers had been taboo subjects for far too long and needless to say, my self-confidence was low.

However, when it seemed as though the National Front in England was getting too much media attention, I became frightened. The scene was familiar and threatening and I knew I had to speak out.

It is my hope that everyone here today will speak out on behalf of those who need our help.

Finally, I can only be at peace with my conscience if I am true to the oath I made after Belsen; that I will never be indifferent to human suffering.

As I remember my struggle to survive and the time that I spent as a refugee in a new and strange land, I will speak out whenever I am able for those whose journey is known to me.

Memorable Sederim

By Martha Friedman

Martha is the wife of the late Oscar Friedman who was responsible for our welfare when we first came to England. This is a thank you letter written by Martha to Rabbi Larry Tabick after a communal seder organised by "Shir Hayim" - the small reform "Steibel" in Hashomer House in Broadhurst Gardens NW6.

Dear Ben,

I am enclosing a copy of my comments on the communal Seder at Burgh House, organised by "Shir Hayim", the small Reform "Steibel" in Hashomer House, in Broadhurst Gardens.

Judith and R'even, who came over for the Pesach holidays, had asked me to reserve places.

My letter of thanks to Rabbi Larry Tabick was printed in the monthly newsletter, and Judith thinks you might wish to have a copy for your "45 Journal". So here it is.

With all good wishes and shalom greetings,

Martha.

3.4.99

Memorable Sederim

The wonderful Seder last night at Burgh House reminded me of a Seder-evening exactly 50 years ago at Villa Gabi in Marseilles. I was escorting a group of 20 youngsters to Israel, and instead of departing 'in a day or two' as promised by Youth Aliyah, we were stranded there for 6 weeks. Villa Gabi was a rented place for the purpose of gathering the Olim, a place of past splendour, but rather neglected, under the guardianship of a young Israeli couple.

About 100 children and teenagers with a few Madrichim from many countries had arrived, with Hebrew and Body-language as our means of communication. And there were no ships while Aliyah was at its peak. The disappointment of not being in Israel for Pesach was great, but so was the challenge to organise a Seder. In high spirits the Madrichim and the youngsters rolled up their sleeves, cleaned and scrubbed pots and pans and an exhilarated community in white shirts gathered around the tables decorated with blue-bells, celebrating the Magic of YETZIAF-MIZRAYIM. That's what our Seder last night at Burgh House reminded me of.

In due course a ship did arrive, the 'Independence' an ex-English warship, renamed ATZMAUT, already over-crowded with Olim from Morocco and other North African countries, and our happy embarkation was crowned by celebrating the first anniversary of ATZMAUT (Independence) on high sea, singing and dancing, and the blue and white flag was waving under the sunny skies.

David's story continued

By David Borgenicht

David has lived in the USA for nearly fifty years and has only recently renewed contact with us. We are delighted to share his reminiscences about his stay in England.

David Borgenicht
2500 Parkview Drive
Apt 418
Hallandale, Fl. 33009

February 11, 1998

I arrived in England from Theresienstadt with the first group of 300 to come to Windermere in August of 1945. From there I was assigned to Bedford with 25 friends; a friendship nourished in Theresienstadt during the 3 months under Dr Groak's supervision, while waiting for our trip to England. The lady in charge, who awaited our arrival, was in for a disappointment. She was in charge in 1939 of a group of girls who were obedient and did what was asked of them; such as washing dishes after dinner. But our boys would have none of it; they wanted to have a good time. The Jewish Refugee Committee sent a teacher for us to learn English and maths. There were only 2 students in attendance; at 17, I was the older of the two. The teacher and members of the Kibbutz nearby (who were looking to our boys to settle in Palestine) came to me for help. In as much as it was necessary to conform with the rules, I agreed to try my hand at it, if some favourable conditions were met.

We had a ping-pong table, without net, paddles and balls. There was no writing paper, envelopes or stamps for the boys to keep in touch with their friends in other youth hostels. I suggested that money be provided for me to take the bus into town and buy all the necessary supplies mentioned above. Then came the largest task of all. To get the boys to wash and dry the dishes. I divided the work, for 2 boys to do it and then be free until their

next turn came around again. Many nights some had different plans, so I had to substitute. I wonder how many of the boys still remember me from those days.

When the O.R.T. school opened in London, I moved to 93 Stamford Hill. My major objective was to become an electrician. I used to follow my uncle, watching him doing electrical work in the homes and hotels of Krynica Zdrój; the city where I was born and lived until the Fall of 1938, but, I was told, before I can reach my objective, I have to attend training for other trades. I took up Radio, Toolmaking and then Welding. I did well in welding, but when I started on electrical welding I ran into problems. My teacher was very happy with the progress I was making as a welder but, at the end of the day, I did not feel well.

I was sent to a hospital for X-rays. The physician explained that when I suffered from pleurisy in Biezanów (Yulag #2 near Cracow), I never fully recovered. It was due to lack of food and rest. He suggested that I should resign myself to spend the next 9 months at the Grosvenor Sanatorium in Ashford, Kent, for proper nutrition and rest. I protested to the doctor, saying: "How can I afford to lose 9 months after all the time I already lost between 1939 and 1945? His practical reply: "You are 18 years old, you have another 50 years to live. This is 600 months. What is 9 months out of 600 months for you to fully recover?" I followed his advice; I spent the time resting, weaving my own sweater and making doilies. From there, I returned to London, this time to 833 Finchley Road. During the years of 1948 and 1949, I was voted in as Treasurer there. I worked together with Moishe

- he was the spiritual leader. When the boys complained to me about the meals, I had a meeting with the cook and provided her with a menu for the week.

As I read the Journal from cover to cover, I recognise the names and many of the faces. I take pride in many of their accomplishments.

In 1949, on the 26th December, I arrived in New York, together with Jack Krovicky, on the "Queen Elizabeth I".

I missed out by not keeping in touch with my friends in England for the next 42 years. In 1993, I came to London for the reunion at the Hilton Hotel in May. I hope someday to do it again. In the meantime, I keep in touch through the Journal.

On March 4th, I am reaching my 71st birthday. Instead of feeling that I am getting old, I count my blessings for getting there. I have no major ailments to keep me from my many activities. I still do some electrical work, am very active in our condominium complex and find time for volunteer work. My biggest project in this respect is The Holocaust Documentation Center.

In Florida a law has been passed that students have to learn about the Holocaust. We have between 300 and 500 students, meeting in a college or center, with 9 students and 1 survivor and 1 facilitator (usually an American volunteer) at a table. I am supposed to appear once a month but, due to the shortage and ill health of some survivors, they call on me very often.

I spoke on the 9th of February. Today is only the 11th; I have already been asked to appear on February 18th, March 10, 18, 24. I never refuse. I also speak as an individual, to about 30 or 40 elementary 6th graders, a few times per year.

I always wondered what happened to Dr Groak? I was happy to read about him in the Journal.

On June 8th, my wife Rose and I will celebrate our 47th Anniversary, looking forward to our 50th - Golden Anniversary.

At the same time, Buncel has become increasingly involved in international activities, notably in developing countries. He is currently the Director of a CIDA-funded project for the establishment of a Centre of Agrochemical Technology at the University of Agriculture in Makurdi, Nigeria. Furthermore, as the Canadian representative on IUPAC-CHEMRAWN (Chemical Research Applied to World Needs), he is the Co-Chair of a forthcoming CHEMRAWN world conference on "Chemistry in the Service of Sustainable Agriculture and a Healthy Environment in Africa and the Developing World." After being appointed Professor Emeritus, his research has continued "as usual," with continuing generous support by NSERC and an active research group in the lab. These various activities are keeping Erwin busy, though he maintains that he misses teaching undergraduates, from whom much of his inspiration was derived. Erwin Buncel continues to feel the same pull of chemistry that he felt upon entering university and looks forward to the continuing challenges that the world of science holds.

P Kazmaier



Taken at the Golden Wedding party of Fay and Moniek.



GOLDEN WEDDING

By Gloria Wilder

As you will gather from the article, Gloria is Krulik's wife. She has long been a staunch supporter of our Society and helps willingly whenever the need arises.

We were delighted when we received an invitation from our dear friends Fay and Moniek, to celebrate with them their grand-daughter's Batmitzvah and their Golden Wedding.

On our arrival in Miami, Fay and Moniek were at the airport to meet us. We were all very excited and in the car, among other things, they told us about some of the American "Boys" who would be at the Simcha. We knew all of them. Moniek then told us about two of "The Boys" who would be there.

One of "The Boys" was Sam Hilton (Holtzkenner), who now lives in Arizona and who was with Krulik in the Cardross Hostel and had not seen him for 52 years. He had lost contact with everyone for all those years. The story of how he

re-established contact with "The Boys" is told by him in an article printed in our 1998 Journal.

The other "Boy" was Abe Singer (Shulsinger), who had another story to tell. Ruth Singer (his wife) discovered "The Boys" when a lady came into their jewellery store and, in conversation, it turned out that the customer was Harry Olmer's niece. One word led to another and that led to Moniek Goldberg!!!

These two stories connected to Moniek who, when he asked "Who of 'The Boys' do you remember?", both mentioned Krulik's name. When Moniek told Sam and Abe that Krulik planned to be at the Simcha, he promptly and without hesitation invited both of them and their wives to the

Simcha in Florida.

Back to the Simcha... On the Shabbat we all went to Shul. Rachel performed beautifully and Moniek conducted the service in excellent manner. They made a wonderful "knife-and-fork" sit down Kiddish afterwards and in the evening a function at which 200-300 people, including 42 of "The Boys" and their wives, were present.

We came from around the globe - Israel, Canada and points across the USA. The English were very well represented by Gloria, Krulik; Evelyn and Aron; Ida and Mick; Doreen and Harry. We all had a splendid time and didn't want the day to finish.

Our host and hostess made a brunch the next day for family and all the visitors from "out-of-town" and abroad. I can't describe the atmosphere, but it was wonderful. At one stage, Krulik - who some of you know is a keen video producer - set up his camera. This resulted in a spontaneous response from many of "The Boys" and their wives. The speakers included Sam Hilton, Howard Chandler, Jack Rubinfeld, Rita Singer, Josi Ribon from Israel, Lucille Breitburg from New York and Moniek and Fay's cousin's husband, who spoke so movingly about "The Boys". There wasn't a dry eye in the house, and not forgetting David Goldberg, as well as Fay and Moniek.

Krulik started the ball rolling by saying "This weekend confirms my belief that our Society is unique - it thrives because of our love and respect for one another."

Sam Hilton was overwhelmed by the occasion. He became very emotional when he met Manny Preter and discovered Manny had been with him and his father in Skarzysko Labour Camp and remembered them well.

The vote of thanks to Moniek and Fay stressed that their hospitality was all-embracing and their recognition of the need to accommodate a reunion between any of "The Boys" absolutely embodies the spirit of the '45 Aid Society and the feeling of fraternity that exists within it.

A REDISCOVERED MEMBER

The following is a tribute to Erwin which was written by P Kazmaier in the "Festschrift" of the Canadian Journal of Chemistry, dedicated to Professor Erwin Buncel.

Queen's University
Kingston, Canada
K7L 3N6
June 27, 1999

Dear Ben,

As it is approaching probably 50 years since we last met (over 40 years in any case), it's difficult to know where to start. So I'll start by saying that it is through Martin Gilbert's "The Boys", and that he gave me your address.

Although nearly 50 years ago, I well remember the times we had at Primrose Club, the dances on Saturday nights, table tennis, and football on Sundays. In those days, after Bunce Court School (1946-48), I shared a room with Willy Frischman while I attended William Ellis School in London (1948-50), together with Sewek Finkelstein. Abe Herman, with whom I was together in Bunce Court, usually played centre forward. Willy was also forward and I on left wing. Abe stayed some of the time with David (Babu), his brother, and Olive. David and I were together in Montford Hall after coming to England from Prague in March '46.

I will not go on with the years that follow - the outline is given in the brief bio at the front of the Canadian Journal of Chemistry Special Issue, published in recognition of my contributions in chemistry, as a "Festschrift".

As you are now the senior of the "Old Boys", I thought you would want to have that. I now regret that I did not go to the Annual Reunions over the years. Belatedly, I am now trying to renew the contacts broken so many years ago.

In closing, I want to say that I was strongly moved by your words in Martin Gilbert's book. You said it for us all.

Perhaps there will be an opportunity for us to meet again.

For now,
Best wishes,
Erwin.

Erwin Buncel

Erwin Buncel was born in Presov, a small town in eastern, rural Czechoslovakia, now Slovakia, in 1931. He found his elementary schooling not especially inspiring but this, in any case, came to a halt soon after the start of the war and resumed only in 1946 after he made his way to England. So it was at Bunce Court, a boarding school in Kent, where his education really began and his interest in science was kindled. After two years and a Cambridge School Certificate with Matriculation Exemption, Erwin went to the William Ellis Grammar School in London where his first exposure to chemistry began. He recalls with pleasure the high quality of the teachers, notably the maths, physics, and chemistry masters. On entering university in London with a Higher National Certificate, Erwin felt captivated by the appeal of thermodynamics and the New World that organic chemistry revealed, with the aid of classical texts like Fieser.

It was organic chemistry that won out and so, after graduating with a 1st Class Honours B.Sc. Degree in Chemistry, Erwin started research with Professor Alwyn Davies at University College London, which with Professors Hughes and Ingold at the helm was leading the world of physical organic chemistry. Erwin's own research on organosilicon chemistry formed part of the school's effort to extend mechanistic organic chemistry to the Group 14 family of elements following carbon, where a strong inroad with silicon had already been made by Eaborn. On obtaining his Ph.D., he crossed the ocean for a postdoctoral year at the University of North Carolina with Joe Bunnett, where he was introduced to the fascinating world of aromatic azo ether hydrolysis. Going up North as a National Research Council of Canada postdoctoral fellow to work with Arthur Bourns at McMaster University, enlightened him to the insight that isotopic substitution could

provide in reaction mechanisms. Erwin then returned to the United States for a brief period as a research chemist at American Cyanamid Central Research Labs in Stamford, Connecticut, where he learned much from the insight of Edwin Ullman. In 1962, an opportunity arose to accept a faculty position at Queen's University, with promotions to Associate (1966) and Full Professor (1970).

At Queen's, Erwin developed various career-long avenues of investigation in physical organic, bioorganic, and bioinorganic chemistry. Perhaps the predominant characteristic of Erwin's research has been his ability to pursue a number of different areas in depth. As a result, he has made truly fundamental contributions to organic chemistry and the fruits of his research now permeate the fabric of current organic chemical thought. Thus, stereoelectronic factors ("anomeric effects") are now recognised as determinants of nucleophilic regioselectivity in anionic complexation, and classification of this regioselectivity now follows "Buncel's nomenclature." His studies of nucleophilic processes at C=O, P=O, and SO₂ centres have focused on metal ion catalysis and inhibition, on the origin of the abnormal reactivities of *a* nucleophiles, and have led to a new method to construct Bronsted plots, a strategy now referred to as "the Buncel method." His study of the Wallach rearrangement led to the establishment of a new solvent polarity scale using the solvatochromic azo dye products; these compounds have been termed "Buncel's dyes." Studies of H-D and H-T exchange in coordination compounds formed by DNA/RNA bases (and analogs) with Hg and Pt have provided insights into heavy metals toxicity in the former case and design of intercalating anti-cancer agents in the latter. His work has illuminated our understanding of Group 14 anions, photoconducting dyes (molecular electronics), and solvent effects on organic reactivity. Erwin's research has

engendered numerous citations in undergraduate and graduate texts, as well as reference works (March, IUPAC Glossary, etc). In 1985 he was the recipient of the Syntex Award in Physical Organic Chemistry presented by the Canadian Society of Chemistry, for "distinguished contributions."

Professor Buncel is an acknowledged expert, worldwide, in physical organic chemistry. He is addressing current important problems with both experiments and theory. Buncel's contributions have become landmarks for others in the field of nucleophilic substitution, ion pairing and catalysis, carbanion reactivities and structures, isotope effects, and general methodology in physical organic chemistry. His work combines a thirst for understanding of the basics with a keen sense for potential applications. It is characterized by both high levels of originality and thoroughness, and is widely used and cited. Overall, Buncel has been ranked as one of the leading physical organic chemists in the world.

Buncel ascribes most of the credit for this body of work to the enthusiasm of the very able graduate students and postdoctoral fellows who chose to work with him over the years. The devotion of over 50 graduate students and about the same number of postdoctoral fellows made possible the publication of about 250 research papers, as well as 20 book chapters and review articles, 3 books, and 15 edited monographs. Especially rewarding have been his collaborations with a number of colleagues in different countries, where he has held several Visiting Professorships. However, he maintains that all this would not have been possible without the inspiring support of his wife, Penny, and his children, Irene and Jacqui.

Buncel has served the scientific community at large in various capacities. Of great challenge have been his editorial activities, for the Canadian Journal of Chemistry (1981-1993) and currently for the *Journal of Labelled Compounds and Radiopharma-*

A few months ago you reported my trip to Piotrkow with a picture of the newly erected Matzeivoh in memory of those that were murdered by the Nazis Ym's in the Rakow forest. May I take this opportunity to report the whole of our trip, as I am sure it will interest your readers. I will also add at the end an article printed in 'The Voice of Piotrkow Survivors' that recalls the terrible episode that occurred in the Rakow forest.

I travelled to Poland with my son and einikel. We arrived in Warsaw early Sunday afternoon. We had booked a driver and our first stop was Gur. My son suggested that we should visit the old Beis Hamedrash first before going to the Beis Oilam. When we walked in I was a bit frightened at first, imagining what went on here at one time. How many Heilige Yiden had davened here and now an empty shell. After walking around both floors of this Holy site, we decided to daven Mincha. We had just started Korbonos when we heard a noise outside. At first we got a shock but we then realised that a coach with about 40 frum girls and eight male teachers had arrived. They were from Kiryat Arba. You cannot imagine how overjoyed we all were that we now had a Minyan and could daven Mincha in such a Mokom Kodoish. We were all full of tears and thanked Hashem for Hashgocha Protiyus that we all met just at the right time.

I must tell you that when I was in Eretz Yisroel I recalled this whole episode to the Gerer Rebbe Shlit"a and although there was a long queue outside, he wanted to hear every word and was awed and very emotional.

Our next stop was the Beis Oilam at the Kevorim of the Sfas Emes Zt"l and the Chidushei Harim Zt"l. The key to the Beis Oilam is kept by a local Yid named Velvel Karpman. We then set out for Lublin. On the way we passed through Kozshnitz. We asked our driver, who knows the keyholders of all the visited Jewish cemeteries, if a Beis

TRAVELLING IN POLAND WITH MY SON AND EINIKEL

By Yisroel Rudzinski

Yisroel came to England with the Windermere Group and studied at the Yeshiva in Gateshead. He is a committee member of our Society and he ensures that he keeps us on the "straight and narrow."

Oilam still exists here. He answered of course and also an Ohel. Here we had a shock as the Ohel of the Koshnitzer Maggid Zt"l is daubed with graffiti and is completely dilapidated. The man who keeps the key asked for extra money to repaint the Ohel but apparently I hear that he's been asking everybody for the last few years.

We then drove on to Lublin. A Yid who is nebech blind keeps the key to the Beis Oilam and a young girl helped him. We davened at the Kever of the Choizah Zt"l. Although it was after nine, we still paid a visit to the beautiful building that once housed the famous Yeshiva of Jarav Meir Shapiro Zt"l. Today it is used as a medical college. The security guard let us in and we saw the hall that was once the great Beis Hamedrash and also the private study room of Harav Meir Shapiro Zt"l that still has various seforim and an Oron Hakoidesh with a Sefer Toirah. We then headed for Piotrkow and arrived at our hotel well after midnight.

This gathering in Piotrkow and the putting up a Matzeivoh had a different meaning to each of us, as I will explain. The arrangements were that we should all meet outside the Shul at 10 in the morning. The large Shul is still standing intact in its full glory and is used today as a public library. Next door still stands the Beis Hamedrash and

is used as a children's library. I was expecting to see about 20-30 people. You can imagine my surprise when I saw about 200 people gathered from all over the world. Approaching the square my mind went back to my childhood days when on Shabbos mornings after we finished davening in the Radoshitzer Shtiebel we would go to the main Shul to hear the Chazan and choir. The crowd of Yidden gathered there reminded me of the crowds that used to leave the Shul every Shabbos. Speaking to others, some of whom I remembered, each one had a different story to tell. One man was crying, "my sister was shot on this very spot." Another, his parents were shot in the Shul.

Slowly we all made our way by coach and cars out of town to the woods in the Rakow forest. All the local dignitaries were there, the MP, the Mayor and various religious leaders. The service included the unveiling of the plaque and speeches in English and Polish. Most moving were the two Chazonim, one from Lodz and one from the USA, reciting Tehilim and a Keil Molei Rachamim for those who perished at this site by the hands of the Nazis Ym's. All the survivors then said Kaddish, everyone was crying and broken hearted.

We all then made our way back to town to the Beis Oilam.

After the war some survivors had returned to Piotrkow and had reburied many of those who were killed in the Rakow forest. There is a large matzeivoh at this site. There were more speeches and many said Kaddish here too. We then all went over to the newly erected Ohel over the grave of the renowned Tzadik Harav Chaim Dovid Bernard Zt"l who was known as Reb Chaim Dovid Doctor. Most of us then spent the next hour walking around the Beis Oilam either visiting or looking for relatives graves.

We then left the main gathering and made our way to my childhood home. The people who currently live there let us in and as you can imagine it was a very moving experience. I then wanted to show my children where my Zeide had lived. When I approached the building I saw a large notice stating that the building was about to be demolished. Having made enquiries by some neighbours, we arranged for the keys to be brought. Again, it was very moving as I showed my children the rooms that had so much history and memories and are now a thing of the past.

Our next stop was at the glass factory where I worked when I was a boy. Part of the factory is still in use. We were shown around but most interesting was when they showed us the book where they recorded all the workers for the years 1940-1945. We actually found my name and date of birth and the date I started work.

By now it was about four in the afternoon and we left Piotrkow to start a long night of travelling around Galicia to be Mispalel at the gravesides of Tzaddikim Zy"o. We visited Radoshitz, Zanz, Bobov, where we davened Maariv in the old Shul, Rimanow, Dinov, Lanzut, Shinov, and we davened Shacharis in Lezshentzk. We left Lezshentzk at eight in the morning and left Warsaw at two, back to London.

MIR ZOLEN HOBEN
GEPOILT ALES GITS

BEIT LOHMEI HAGHETAOT

Paul Oppenheimer

Paul came to England in 1945. He had survived two years in Westerbork and Bergen-Belsen with his younger brother, Rudi, and sister Eve. Both their parents died in Bergen-Belsen - their four grandparents were killed in Sobibor. His memoirs "From Belsen to Buckingham Palace" were published by Beth Shalom. He was awarded the MBE for services to industry. He joined our Society in recent years.

Which was the first Holocaust Museum in the world? No, it was not Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, created in 1953. It was Beit Lohamei Haghetat, the Ghetto Fighters' House, also in Israel, but some 100 miles north of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Beit Lohamei was founded in 1949 and this April marks its 50th anniversary.

Few people seem to have heard of Beit Lohamei and even fewer have been there; which is a great shame, because it is an exceptional experience and a

beautiful site.

It reminds me of another Holocaust Museum, which is also some 100 miles north of a metropolis, and which, similarly, has not enjoyed as much interest, visitors and support that it deserves...

Beit Lohamei is one of the world's foremost museums and documentation centres on the Holocaust and Jewish resistance. It was conceived by a small group of Holocaust survivors, among them ghetto fighters and partisans, from the Kibbutz Lohamei Haghetat,

who dedicated the remainder of their lives to the memory of Jewish resistance and the tragedy of the Holocaust.

Beit Lohamei is situated along the main Israeli coastal road, between Akko (Acre) and Nahariya, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea and on the way to Rosh Hanikra at the Lebanese border. There is a village for Ethiopian Jews just across the road.

The main museum looks like the Knesset (Israel Parliament) and there is also an ancient aqueduct and an open-air amphitheatre, which attracts 15,000 visitors for the annual Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony.

The work of Beit Lohamei covers commemoration of the Holocaust, education of the coming generations, historical documentation and academic research.

The main museum is on four floors, presenting:-

- Jewish life in Europe before the war
- The period of the Holocaust
- Jewish resistance during the Holocaust.

There are numerous permanent exhibitions to illustrate the above subjects and some additional temporary exhibitions of paintings and other art work by Holocaust survivors. In fact, there is so much to see, that I found it difficult to follow any predetermined route and I don't believe that I saw everything - and I did not have time to visit the archives where I had hoped to find lists of names of our family.

I found the "Jewish Youth before the Holocaust" section most fascinating; it showed the

development of the various European Jewish Youth Movements between the two world wars (lots of names of clubs and societies that I had heard of, but was too young to join), their influence as Zionist pioneers in the making of Eretz Israel and their leading role in the underground during the Nazi occupation; there is also an accompanying audio-visual presentation.

"The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising" was probably the most impressive section; life in the Jewish community of Warsaw, prior to and during the war, up to the deportation of all the Jews from the ghetto to the death camps.

Not surprisingly, special emphasis is placed on the uprising of April 1943; this exhibition is accompanied by a dramatic 24-minute audio-visual presentation.

Three years ago, a new circular building was added to the site: "Yad Laveled", the Children's Edu-Museum, tells the story of the Jewish Child during the Holocaust.

The building comprises a three-storey white central cone, encircled by a descending lane without any apparent end. The beautiful stained-glass windows were designed by Roman Halter, an architect and Holocaust survivor living in London.

Through three-dimensional scenography, the exhibition recounts the life and fate of the Jewish child during the Holocaust. There is a special area "Korczak and the Children" which offers an interactive setting for children and adults to meet and learn about Janusz Korczak - doctor, writer and educator.

Beit Lohamei claims to welcome 120,000 visitors a year, but there were very few during our visit.

For anyone who has not yet visited Beit Lohamei Haghetat, I can thoroughly recommend a day's outing during your next visit to Israel; we spent 3 or 4 hours there and it was not enough.

As a Holocaust survivor who has lived in this country since 1945, I have had the opportunity of observing hundreds of my friends who came with me to England after the war.

During the first few years, although on the surface we seemed a cheerful and boisterous group, many of us, if not all, suffered from recurring nightmares, which lasted for some one year and for others much longer.

For some twenty years we did not discuss the Holocaust or our life in Poland before the war, as if we were trying to erase such thoughts from our memory; but after two to three decades most of us became very active. Many spoke to school-children or became involved in Holocaust exhibitions, or wrote of their wartime experiences. Many visited Poland for the first time since the war and took part in commemorative ceremonies.

It seems to me that a form of catharsis was essential for us in order to lead normal lives. My observation is that those who engaged in the various activities connected with the Holocaust purged themselves of their deep-seated psychological fears stemming from their earlier experiences, whereas those who tried to suppress their past history still suffer.

Those who wrote about the war, gave lectures, expressed their emotions in art, and revisited the camps, seem much freer and more relaxed and less afraid of their past than those who try to suppress their fears. Whatever applies to the survivor also applies, to a much lesser extent, to British Jews and many of them for a long time were almost completely ignorant of the Holocaust and were trying to blot out the subject from their consciousness.

This no longer happens and the younger generations have a much healthier attitude to the subject. They want to know and understand as much as possible. Non-Jewish people who visit Poland, Germany and the camps, benefit greatly from that experience. They are being immunised against racism and ethnic cleansing.

A COMMENT ON THE DISTORTION OF THE HOLOCAUST

By Michael Etkind

Michael came to England with the Windermere group and lived in Cardross hostel in Scotland. He is a poet of high standing and was dubbed by our President, Martin Gilbert, as the Society's poet. He has been a frequent contributor to our Journal.

In our multi-racial and ever-moving society nothing can be more important than some understanding of what can happen to humanity if it adopts Hitler's Nazi philosophy. In view of the hatred that still exists against human beings of different colour, ethnic and religious background, or sexual orientation, can there be anything more important than the teaching of the Holocaust to all young people?

It is obvious that we know more about the 20th century than we do about the millennia preceding it. Our knowledge of the last one hundred years is more detailed, more accurate, and more profound than that of any other period of time.

In spite of the fact that some of the main characters such as Hitler and Stalin tried to distort the truth of what was going on, in spite of the advances in propaganda, our information about that period of time is by and large true and accurate. Yet there are forces at work trying to pervert the truth about relatively recent events.

One example is the deniers of the Holocaust. They do not seem to be very successful at the moment, but the question remains whether they might become more successful in the 21st century when the eye-witnesses of those events are gone.

The other problem is that the religious authorities might invent "miracles", which would undermine the credence of real eye-witness evidence.

The following are two stories which I and some other survivors have heard.

A woman gives birth to a boy in concentration camp. She is walking with the baby in her arms and passing an S.S. officer notices that he has a penknife in his pocket. She asks the officer to give her the knife. The startled officer

obeys. The woman then circumcises the boy and hands him to the S.S. man with the words "Now you may murder him!"

The second "story" involves a rabbi and a number of Jews about to be shot. They stand beside a deep trench ten metres wide. The S.S. tells them that if they manage to jump across the trench their lives would be spared. The rabbi jumps while the group of people hang on to his "capote" and seem to fly across. The amazed S.S. man cannot believe his eyes. "How did you manage to do that?" he asks.

"We hung on to the rabbi's capote", says one of the Jews, "whilst he hung on to God!"

Such stories are an insult to the memory of the victims of the Holocaust. I dread to think what will happen when the survivors have gone and there is no-one to correct such rubbish. Such stories give credence to the deniers of the Holocaust.



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day, by being very active in charities, in the religious life of the community and public life, where I speak throughout Georgia, Florida and other states about the Holocaust.

I can still remember the camaraderie and joy of playing on the Primrose Club soccer team and, of course, I participated in boxing, being trained by one of the finest, Jack Delaney, and I learned dancing and other activities there, and most of all I had a chance to learn to become a better man.

Our 45 Aid Society friendship really endured, which makes me very happy. I enjoy seeing my lifelong friends in England, Israel, or Atlanta, Georgia, and especially now in Bal Harbour, Florida, where I walk almost every day with Paul Gast, David Goldschild, and others from the nearby areas, snow birds, or visitors from England.

T.G. many of us are still alive and in fairly good health, or at least most of us are trying to exercise to help us stay young. I am keeping up my exercises, playing racquet ball, lifting weights, stretching, or walking briskly with our boys on the beautiful Bal Harbour Miami ocean beach walks.

I used to play competitive racquet ball throughout the state of Georgia and played in the Conyers-Atlanta adult

soccer league till age 67 (three years ago) when I had a heart attack which required angioplasty surgery. T.G. I am doing fine, and I am still very active in exercising, devoting a lot of time and money to charities and speaking on the Holocaust.

I headed up the Hemshech-Organisation of Survivors in Atlanta, as President for several years, then I was Chairman for Israel Bonds and am still on the Board in Atlanta. I have been blessed by receiving many honours for my work - especially an honorary Doctorate of Law from the prestigious Emory University, also the Elie Weisel Israel Bond award in New York, and many honours from civic, charity, and other organisations which I am very proud of - it proves that good deeds bring rewards.

Presently I am the Vice Chairman of the Georgia State Holocaust Commission appointed by the Governor, and I am active on the boards of Israel Bond, O.R.T., Hemshech, Yad Vashem, veterans organisation, and past board member of the Atlanta Jewish Federation.

I am married to a wonderful Jewish lady from Cuba whose son is a devoted Lubawicher, and I am spending most of my time in sunny Florida, but I still have to spend time for business in Georgia.

I have been blessed in so

many ways to have good children - our three exceptionally good daughters are married to wonderful men and I even got a good start, good dividends; my oldest granddaughter, who calls me her Zaidy, is ten years old and is a bundle of joy. And almost one year ago my middle daughter blessed us with twin girls who are absolutely precious.

Our family is spread out - our youngest daughter, Robin, is a lawyer in Washington, DC, and is married to a nice Jewish lawyer. My middle daughter in Marietta, Georgia, is busy with the twins - her husband is a good Jewish man, the son of survivors - he is an engineer with Martin- Marietta. My oldest daughter is married to a very fine man with whom I play gold occasionally - he is wonderful to us. They recently moved to Boca Raton, Florida which is only an hour away from us. She and her husband are very active in many Jewish and other charities.

My sister Rosalyn, who was with me in England, has three daughters and one son. She has retired and lives in Boca Point, Florida - only a few minutes from my daughter. My brother Sam, who was also in England with us, lives in Tampa, Florida, where he is very active in the Holocaust Center there. He has two sons and a daughter and is doing fine. Two more

brothers, Bernie and Fishi, also moved close by to Pembroke Pines, Florida, which is about one hour away from us, and we see and talk to each other often. There is only one brother, Bill, now left in Ohio, and one brother, Ben, lives in Georgia, and T.G. we are still alive and in decent health.

I am basically retired and married to a wonderful, caring wife, who has a great family that I love very much. Life in retirement should be great. I look forward to going often to see and spend time with our people in Israel, our boys in England, but especially our boys here in Miami.

Paul Gast, Dave Goldschild, several others, and I are looking forward to a possible reunion of the 45 Aid Society this coming year here in Florida. It would be very enjoyable and rewarding.

It would be great because we hope to get more of the boys and girls in America, Canada, and other countries involved to get reacquainted and have more get-togethers so that we can enjoy each other's company for the remainder of our lives.

We look forward to hearing from as many of our people as possible, and we hope to see you for our get-togethers to have the best turn-out ever.

Toda Raba.

Jackie Mason and Krulik at lunch

By Krulik Wilder

Krulik came to England with the Windermere Group and lived in Scotland in the Cardross Hostel. In 1948 he went to fight for Israeli Independence. After his return to England, he set up a successful jewellery business. He is the Treasurer of our Society, as well as its official photographer and Master of Ceremonies on official occasions.

I first met Jackie Mason on Saturday 28th November 1998 after the show, to deliver a book "The Boys" which Sir Martin Gilbert had signed and asked me to give to him. It was a very brief meeting, as he was in a hurry, and he made an appointment to meet me at the hotel on Sunday at 2.30pm. We arrived on time; in fact, a little early. After waiting 20 minutes, we enquired about his whereabouts, only to be told he was out. We hung around for a little longer and

then decided to leave, as he wasn't going to show up. We were greatly disappointed to be let down, but soon got over it, and saw the funny side.

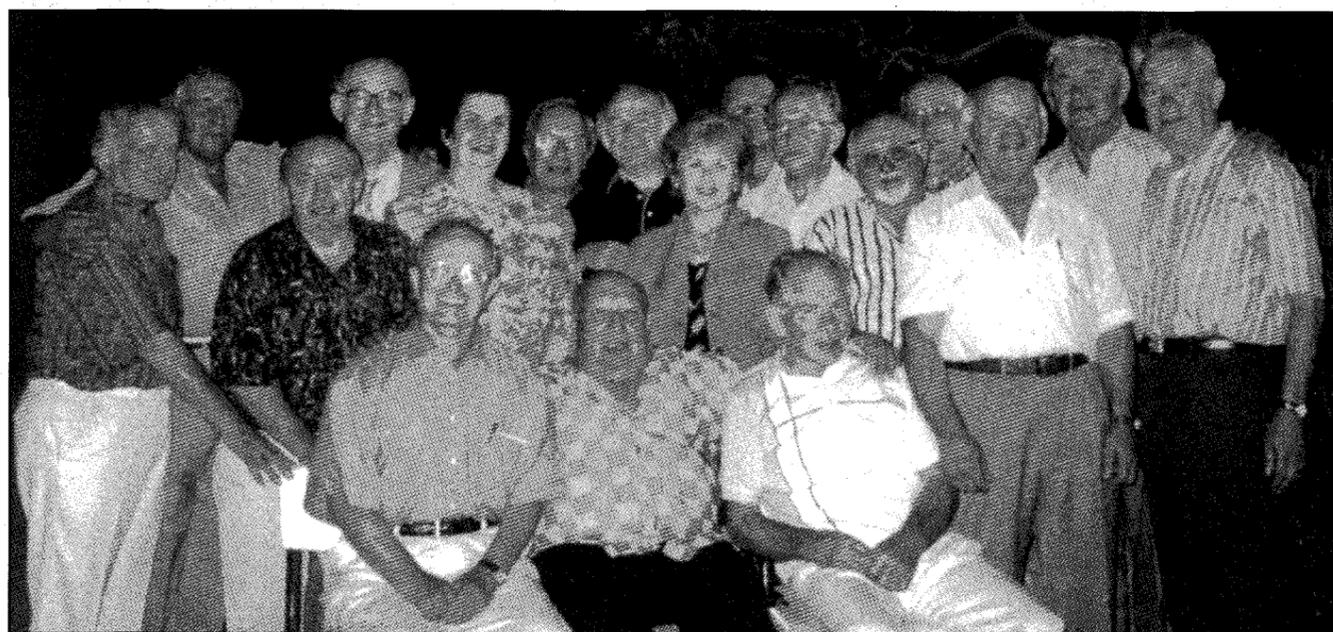
The next day I was working in my office when a call came through. It was Jackie Mason, very apologetic, and in due course we arranged to have lunch together at Fortnum & Mason. We met and lunched. He was very interested to hear about our Society and the book. In between these few serious moments, he was a laugh a minute. I, of course, told a few

of my jokes, to which he replied "Kruklik with jokes like these I could not make a living."

He was greatly impressed with our President Sir Martin Gilbert who he had met in New York and praised him for producing such a fantastic book, "The Boys". He continuously said "I want to ask you a serious question about The Boys and your Society." Once I started to tell him, he kept very quiet and just listened. He was very impressed and deeply moved with admiration of all of us, the way we look after each other

and other charitable work our Society does.

It was a great pleasure and delight for me to spend two hours with the funniest person I have ever met. To me he came over, not only as a great comedian, but as a Big Mench, for a busy person like him to find time to phone me twice, he didn't even know me before this and to end up calling me Kruklik, I felt we became great friends. He promised next time he will be in London, to call me and continue our conversation.



A few friends gathered at the home of Olive and David Herman to welcome Alex Gross and his wife Daisie.

BBK

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I toyed with the idea of going home to Poland and Ukraine for many years - but somehow did not have the courage to do so.

I'll tell you briefly about myself - it will help to explain my hesitation.

I come from a little shtetl: SADOWA WISZNIA (which is near Lvov). From September 1939 to June 1941 we were under Russian occupation and then under the Germans. In October 1942, the Germans made our town Judenfrei - and Jewish life was completely destroyed.

My father was killed in Janowska Camp, my mother in Yraworow - the rest of the family were annihilated in Belzec. I, the only survivor, jumped from the train taking me to Belzec - and somehow survived.... In 1946 I came to England with Rabbi Schonfeld children.

Poland and Ukraine were very painful to visit. About two years ago I read in the Jewish Chronicle that the Hampstead Garden Synagogue is twinned with Lvov and they visited the town and were planning another visit - so I thought this would be a good way to go back. I got in touch with them, but the proposed visit did not materialise, so I decided to go by myself. But I want to emphasise that without their help (and especially Yole's) their kindness and advice, I could not have made it. They also introduced me to Melech - a leading figure in the Jewish community in Lvov - an exceptional man, who dedicated his life to the community there. I could write a book about him, but I have limited space. My gratitude to this kind, helpful man is immense. He found time (however busy he is) to meet me at the Lvov Airport, introduced me to his driver, who took me to all the places I wanted to visit. He even sent his secretary to go with me to SADOWA WISZNIA so that I did not travel on my own.

I had three objectives in making this pilgrimage:

- 1) I wanted to visit the town of my childhood;

THE JOURNEY INTO MY PAST - A PILGRIMAGE

Helen Goldman

Helen came to England with the Rabbi Schonfeld group. She studied Chemistry at London University and is an active member of WIZO and B'nai Brith.

- 2) I wanted to find some of the people who helped me in my survival;
 - 3) I wanted to visit some of the places of our destruction (Yaworow, Janowska, Belzec, Auschwitz) and especially Belzec, the "forgotten Death-camp", one of the cruellest extermination camps where about 600,000 to 800,000 Jewish people were killed between March 1942 to December 1942, and to see what can be done there.
- 1) I did not recognise my shtetl - it changed completely - but our house is still there.
 - 2) The Ukrainian woman (my age) who gave my mother her birth certificate, which was the basis of my new identity and helped in my survival - was still alive and I was able to thank her and help her financially (Ukraine is very, very poor).
 - 3) The monument to the destruction of Yaworow's Ghetto is in the middle of a forest - the Yawowsken camp is now a government prison, so you cannot go inside. At the gate there is a memorial stone with an inscription, and where the Ghetto stood there is a large monument - sculpture - surrounded by a garden. My visit to Belzec left me numb. The Germans erased the camp when they stopped using it in December 1942 and what they learned there

they transferred to Auschwitz. It is now a very quiet, peaceful place... planted trees cover the area. There is a gate and a small monument. There are some bunkers which are supposed to be over the mass graves. It is very green now - very still - a holy place. After visiting Auschwitz, which has now become a very busy tourist place, I would like to leave Belzec as it is - a holy place...

I know that it is important to keep Auschwitz and its museum and the other places of our martyrdom open to the public so that the world and future generations should remember what has been done to us and perhaps learn to prevent it happening again, but if I had any influence, I would like Belzec as it is - a place to contemplate in silence.

Yes, it should be documented, its history published, but let us leave it undisturbed by the tourist industry.

After Belzec, I went to Kraków - a beautiful city. I spent some time in Kazimierz - a well preserved old Jewish town - where they have eight synagogues and a small cemetery. Only one - the Rhemu Synagogue - is in use. The "Staren Synagogue" is converted into a Jewish museum, and the others are being restored.

As I mentioned, I went to Auschwitz. Kraków has also an active Jewish cultural centre in Meiselsa Street, where I was present when our own Felek Scharf was being honoured and presented with a book published about him on the occasion of his 85th birthday. He deserves all the honours and praises bestowed on him.

From Kraków, I travelled to Warsaw and again I searched for the relics of the Jewish Warsaw. I walked from the Monument to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising to the "Umschlagplatz" from where 300,000 Jews were deported to their destruction. I walked through the streets, now rebuilt where only the old names remain - streets like Stawki - Zamenhof - Muranowska - Mila... On the corner of these streets, there are monuments to the leaders of the Ghetto uprising; names like David Apfelbaum, Dawel Freukel, Meir Majerowier, Mordechaj Akielewier, Asic Wrluer, Emanuel Ringelbaum, Korczak and others. There is also on top of the bunker at Mila Street a monument to the leaders of the uprising who committed suicide at the end of the uprising.

The day before my return, I went to the Nozyk Synagogue (beautifully restored) where they had a local boy's Barmitzvah. The Lauder Foundation is very active in restoring some kind of Jewish life in Warsaw (and in other towns). The two young American Rabbis were very proud of the boy and in their newly acquired Polish, praised the boy - "a rescued soul."

I looked on with mixed feelings - on one hand it was very sad to look at this small pathetic gathering. There were about 30 people - according to them a large gathering, due to the Bar-Mitzvah - when one remembers what a vigorous, lively and rich community celebrated before the war at this Nezyk Synagogue... But on the other, I felt elated, that after all our tragedies and sufferings, we are here - we are celebrating a Bar-Mitzvah - we continue - Hitler did not succeed - Will there be a Jewish life in Poland? Is there a future for us there? I don't know.

As most of you know, I was born in the Carpathian mountains of Czechoslovakia. Our family was middle class, our father was a tailor, but by today's American standards we were very poor but happy. Our area was annexed by Hungary, then taken over by Germany. As a young boy of thirteen I had to run away from home - hiding from village to village - then to Budapest, the capital of Hungary, where I had it rough; they banished me because I was not from there, so I went home.

First they took our three older brothers to labour camps and soon the rest of us were arrested and thrown into the ghetto. From there my parents, the three younger brothers and our sister were taken to Auschwitz where our beloved parents, all of our European uncles, aunts and most of our cousins were murdered.

All of us, as you all know, endured hunger, beatings, abuse, and diseases in the several Auschwitz I, II & III camps. I was on the death march to Gleiwitz - from there we were put on open coal-carrying cars in January to Buchenwald, where I finally found and was liberated with brothers Bill and Sam. After a very slow recovery and as soon as we could get going we were taken to Praha, Czechoslovakia - finding two more brothers Ben and Bernie, and finally our sister Rosalyn arrived - she was liberated in Bergen-Belsen. We found out that our brother Filip was also alive. When we went back for our brother Filip's wedding, we were almost trapped in Russia because they annexed that area which is now Ukrain.

First Rosalyn, then I, were fortunate (as were most of us) to be brought by the Central British Fund to England. I struggled with the English language first on the outskirts of Edinburgh, Scotland, and then in Nelson, Lancashire, where I worked in a knitting mill and improved my other skills, especially football (soccer). We were then taken to London, England - my brother Sam arrived from Prague and was accommodated

SYNOPSIS OF MY LIFE

By Alex Gross

The underlying feature of Alex's life in the United States is a combination of success and tragedy. His energy, dynamism and positive and forward-looking attitude are an inspiration to others.

at the Shelter in London. The camaraderie we enjoyed at the Primrose Club was like a miracle - I was most fortunate to have developed good friends in football, boxing, dancing, and other activities - I still consider our boys and girls that we got to associate with as my best friends and the nicest people I have ever met.

After a few years in England, our sister Rosalyn got her visa and left for America where three of our brothers joined her from Czechoslovakia - soon thereafter she got married and moved to Erie, PA.

On December 10, 1949, I boarded the Queen Mary for America. I left our adored Mom Ralph who had recovered from brain surgery. I was sad to leave my friends at the Primrose Club, especially our fellow survivors, and the Ralph family who were exceptionally good to us.

My start in America was difficult, just like any refugee (newcomer) - first working in a knitting mill for \$18 a week in Ellwood City, PA, then going to Chicago for better pay (\$50 a week) and to join my friend from London, our fellow 45 Aid boy, Jerry Hornstein. Soon thereafter, when the Korean War broke out, I spent two years in the US Army where I learned a lot, got a high school equivalency diploma, attended college in the evenings, and had a couple of jobs (I even taught dancing). I met several of our boys there. When I got out of

the Army, I went back into the housing business with my brother, Bill, which we started soon after I arrived in America.

Business and life in general was rough at first but we worked hard to somehow keep the business going. In 1954, after recovering from injuries, Sam joined us from Israel where he had gone from England to help establish our Jewish State. He fought and unfortunately was badly injured during liberation and fighting in the Israeli Army. After he got well, fortunately he joined us in the USA.

First we lived in the small town of Ellwood City, PA, where most of our uncles and their families lived, then we expanded into the State of Ohio. First I moved to Girard, OH, then Youngstown, OH, where Sam moved in with me and started working for us. We worked hard, long hours and seven days a week, struggling for some time until we managed to achieve business success.

Through our relentless hard work, our business kept improving, so naturally we wanted to expand. In the process I made a commitment to hire and help as many of our boys whom I befriended at the Primrose Club in London. I hired Jack Rubinfeld who was working as a butcher. After he joined us he worked hard, so obviously he did very well for himself. I hired many of our other boys, including Abe Grabia (who is still with us),

Henry Golde, Jack Monkacz (may he rest in peace - he recently passed away), Gene Deutch and many with whom I was in England. Subsequently, most went into business on their own and have done well for themselves. Some of them are still in business or have retired in good financial shape.

We are indeed very fortunate. Six brothers (including Sam, who was with us in England and then went to fight for our State of Israel), our brother Fishi was trapped for 25 years in Russia (now Ukraine), and who finally joined us in America 20 years ago, and our sister Rosalyn Gross Haber, all live in America.

I am the youngest of the six brothers and Rosalyn is the youngest and best looking of those of the family who survived. We are well and in fairly good shape.

I have been most fortunate to have achieved success in business right from the start, expanding into many states.

Luckily I found and married my beloved wife, Linda. I had twenty-five years of joyous married life with Linda, who blessed me with three wonderful daughters and a good, handsome son. Unfortunately, we lost our one and only son at the age of fourteen in a farming accident on our property when we were in the process of moving to Atlanta, GA, to develop a total community on 2,500 acres of land which we had bought. We built sixteen lakes, a fine golf course, single and multi-family homes, office parks, shopping centres and recreation facilities with several soccer fields. There are several thousand families living on that property now.

Linda (may she Rest in Peace) and I visited England especially for the reunions of the 45 Aid Society where we enjoyed the many successes of the Boys. After twenty-five years of blissful and joyful marriage, my beloved wife became a victim of a rape murder. I still miss her and my son terribly. But in spite of the terrible traumas and loss, life has to go on and I try to make the best of each hour, each